

Planning the Industrialization.
The Technical and Theoretical Toolbox for the Post-War
Program for the Industrial Development Areas of Southern Italy

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Last version: July 7, 2015

Keywords: industrialization, territorial policies, development

Abstract:

This essay is part of a research work concerning the territorial policies of industrialization in Italy, especially those which were promoted after World War II in the South by means of a special public institution called *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*¹ (CASMEZ), established in 1950 to plan, coordinate and execute projects of public interest for the development of southern regions.

The research particularly concerns the settlement of “Industrial Zones”: a tool the use of which relates to a legislative and technical tradition dealing with a long-lasting debate, dating back to the beginning of the century, on their function and effectiveness in promoting economic and territorial development, as well as on their possible and best localization.

In the affirmation of such a tradition, actual experiences, theoretical elaborations and public discussions conducted during the fascist period appear to be particularly interesting, especially for the intelligibility with which the idea of a real project of industrialization on a national scale is expressed. The problem of what those experiences and discussions leave open, after the end of the war and the fall of the regime, appears to be a compelling issue.

On the basis of these premises, the article addresses the critical issue of “continuity” in many aspects: of the juridical and administrative tools and cultures, in the actions (and the possible intentions) of some main public actors and key figures of the public management apparatus, and finally in the technical culture; in the field of planning and urbanism, this last aspect particularly meets the topic of the Italian approach to regional planning.

¹ It was a board and special fund for public works and actions in favor of the southern regions, conceived for cooperating with the Ministerial Council.

Introduction

There are few historical studies on these topics and there is especially a limited amount of literature in the disciplinary field of the history of planning, if not considering some studies concerning the urban history of individual cities or individual industrial sites. For this reason, the research mainly considered some contributions coming from other research fields, such as legislative history and economic history.

A major reference was made to a seminal book published in Italy in 1990, Rolf Petri's "*La frontiera industriale*"², which examines with great originality the question of the relationship between territory, large enterprises and special laws before the establishment of CASMEZ. This short essay was in large part possible because of Petri's work, the findings of which appear even more challenging in the light of more recent studies.³

We will propose a brief *excursus* which pays particular attention to the following aspects:

Continuities

1. Juridical and administrative tools and cultures;
2. Actions and intentions of some main public actors: the National Bank and the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI);
3. Some key figures of the public management apparatus

Continuities?

4. Technical culture in the field of planning and urbanism: questioning the attempt to approach regional planning;
5. Relations between center and periphery: investigating the selection criteria that eventually led to the choice of areas subjected to special interventions to foster industrialization.

Specificity?

6. Is there any specific aspect recognizable in fascist regime's policies and industrial planning?

Special areas for industrial development: genealogy

The first act that gave rise to a zone working under special laws aimed at promoting the industrial development in Italy was the law of 1904 for Naples. The type of zone experimented in Naples, which there after would be referred to as "Industrial Zone", was a portion of land not only functionally allocated for industrial facilities, but also "in favor of whom incentives [...] of various kinds are disposed: exemptions from taxes on consumption, customs duties for machinery, income from movable wealth, registration fees, etc.; tariff reductions; grants; assignment of contracts; supply of electricity, State's cooperation in the construction of facilities and infrastructures; expropriation of land".⁴

The special law for Naples falls within a debate purely "southernist" (i.e. inherent to the problem of relative marginality of the southern regions and its possible overcoming) and it is akin to other

² Petri 1990. See also interview in Dattomo 2011.

³ See Cerrito 2010. It is interesting to note that the author shares some of Petri's considerations, even treating the southern areas for industrial development in the postwar period: in particular with regard to the technological innovation of the implemented new plants, their profitability and ability to rooting, resulting in industrial success and propulsive effects, as well as in sweeping change in the long run.

⁴ Definition from: Predieri, Alberto (1969), *Urbanistica, tutela del paesaggio, espropriazione*. Quoted in Petri 1990, 19

special laws which were promoted at the beginning of the century, related to agricultural improvement, to the construction of public works, or aimed at social reforms. Later, this southernist content would be explicitly declared in another measure which was ordered by the fascist government in 1940: the creation of an Industrial Zone in Palermo.

Between the special law for Naples in 1904 and the plan for the Industrial Zone of Palermo in 1940, special laws for the establishment of similar Industrial Zones were actually widely used, although only in northern Italy. Rolf Petri divides these Zones into three different families, defined by their chronology and distinctive purpose. The first “Zones” are included in the general framework of the restructuring of the national port system, and Venice, Genoa and Livorno all followed the example of Naples, by integrating industrial development and harbour development. The second group of “Zones” were implemented in the territories recently annexed, such as South Tyrol and Istria. A third group includes cities or areas affected by crises, caused either by natural disasters or linked to economic and social crises.

This third group, as particularly exemplified by the case of Apuania, shows considerable commonalities with the issues to be discussed after the war about the South, especially because of the introduction of a specific reflection on the purposes and the chances of success for industrialization policies in the so-called “depressed” areas.

Chart 1: Main initiatives preceding the establishment of the fascist regime

1904	<i>Special Act for the Industrial Zone of Naples.</i> Expropriation of land for public use; financing of works and subsidized loans; granting of public lands; tax and duties relief or abolition; direct execution of works for infrastructures and facilities; special conditions for cost of transportation and energy.
1916 / 1920	<i>Special Act for Reconstruction in Messina and Reggio Calabria.</i> Incentives similar to those adopted in Naples, in order to promote the economic recovery after the earthquake.
1917 / 1921	<i>Industrialization in Port Cities.</i> Industrial Ports under Special Laws: comprehensive plans for the arrangement of the port, the construction of infrastructure for intermodal transport and utilities, the realization of industrial zones and new urban districts.
1917	Venezia Marghera; further Industrial Zone Special Statute in 1926.
1919	Genova; further downsizing of special legislation from 1923.
1921	Livorno; further Industrial Zone Special Statute in 1929.

Chart 2: Main initiatives of the Fascist Regime

1928 / 1930	<i>Industrial ports and zones at the frontier.</i> Trieste, Monfalcone, Pola, Fiume
1934	<i>New industrial zone, within a program for urban development, tied with purposes of political, economic and ethnical integration.</i> Bolzano
1936	<i>River port linked to the reclamation of the Po Delta.</i> Ferrara
1938	<i>Special act for the economic recovery of the Apuania's area</i> First special law for a “depressed area”, through strategies of sectorial diversification. Apuania was affected by a severe crisis in the prevailing sector of marble quarrying.
1937 / 1938	<i>Petitions from local actors.</i> Ancona and Trento <i>Not accepted by the fascist government.</i>
1940	<i>Economic requalification, also related to military decentralization.</i> Palermo <i>Not implemented by the fascist government.</i>
1941	<i>Industrial Zone within a program for a metropolitan development.</i> Roma <i>Not implemented by the fascist government.</i>

The chronology of the acts, before and after the establishment of the dictatorship, shows that the tool is used with a certain continuity. It is possible, however, to identify some original elements that describe the evolution in the use of “zones” after 1922. In general, it confirms a policy mainly focused on industrial ports, which also complies with the interventions undertaken in the Balkans.⁵ At the same time, a first partial diversification can be observed, especially in those cases in which the realization of industrial zones is integrated into programs more generally aimed at the economic transformation of areas characterized by the phenomena of underdevelopment. From the point of view of territorial balance and urban hierarchies, two elements deserve to be highlighted: on the one hand, the attempt to foster industrial expansion outside the Milan - Turin - Genoa “triangle” and on the other hand the close link between industrialization and the enhancement of the role of some provincial capitals.

A final remark concerns the emergence of a debate around the role that Industrial Zones are to play in scope of a redistribution of industry at the national scale, specifically by promoting the industrialization of the southern regions. This issue has interesting implications in respect to another heavily debated matter, highly stressed within the rhetoric of the regime: how to control density and to redistribute the population.⁶

⁵ Industrial harbors were planned also in southern Adriatic cities in Albania. See Pallini and Scaccabarozzi 2015.

⁶ See for example: Civico 1942, Rizzetto 1942 and La Torre 1942.

The debate on “the southern industrial question”⁷ developed considerably in some southern entrepreneurial environments (the most active and influential groups were SME - *Società Elettrica Meridionale* and Bastogi)⁸, but – since 1933 – had its main breeding ground at the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI), which was substantially in line with the Neapolitan experience and the positions of Minister Nitti⁹. The question took on a political side in the second half of the thirties, when the need for autarchic economy and the needs of the defense become the main arguments in support of a hypothesis of “decentralization”. The establishment of the Palermo Zone in 1940 (shortly after the rejection of the proposals for Ancona and Trento) was main outcome of this process, but it was not implemented in the years leading up to 1945, during which the war economy intensified the concentration tendencies to the advantage of already established industrial areas.

Post-war policies

The dominant post-war rhetoric about the Industrial Zones of the fascist period is characterized by the concept of inefficiency and describes them mainly as incidental or tied to political intention, unrelated to economic justifications; the Industrial Zones from the fascist period are considered to be limited by a short term vision, not attractive for private companies and harmful for those forced to locate, condemned to failure.¹⁰ This assessment is consistent with the approaches of the liberal economic culture of the post-war period, but is also certainly influenced by the general refusal of the legacy of the regime. However, this is contradicted on the one hand by the success of some cases, such as the Venetian one (to which, not surprisingly, some observers - particularly lawyers - reserve some attention), and on the other by the fact that after the end of the war, in addition to prolonging or restoring the "Zones" already existing, the new government promoted new ones, according to the same technical and legislative model previously used.¹¹ These new Industrial Zones established after World War II have been poorly studied and, in the not large literature, the relationship between them and those planned and executed during the fascist period have been mostly neglected.

Chart 3: Main initiatives after the end of the Fascist regime

	<i>Northern regions</i>
1948	<i>Agro-industrial zone</i> Verona
Until 1958	<i>Industrial Zone in middle towns</i> Padova, Vicenza
Until 1961	<i>Linked to the reclamation of the Po Delta and along the Po Valley</i> Ravenna and Porto Corsini, Mantova
Until 1957	<i>Industrial Port</i> Ancona

⁷ Petri 1990, 222

⁸ The first was the main Electricity company in the South, the second was the Society for Southern Railways.

⁹ Nitti was the Author of the special law for Naples.

¹⁰ Respect to these criticisms, see Mauro 1947. With regard to the impact on the national territory of the industrialization process, see Mioni 1976.

¹¹ See Magagnoli 2011.

	<i>Southern regions</i>
1953-1960	<i>Sicily's regional industrial areas</i> ¹² Catania, Palermo, Caltanissetta, Messina, Ragusa, Trapani
1960-1965	<i>CASMEZ areas for industrial development</i> ¹³ Latina, Pescara Valley, Salerno, Caserta, Napoli, Bari, Brindisi, Taranto, Catania, Siracusa, Palermo, Cagliari
1960-1965	<i>CASMEZ Industrial cores</i> ¹⁴ Ascoli Piceno, Frosinone, Gaeta, Rieti, Avezzano, Teramo, Vasto, Avellino, Foggia, Lecce, Potenza, Basento Valley, S. Eufemia, Crotona, Reggio Calabria, Policastro, Sibari, Gela, Messina, Trapani, Ragusa, Caltagirone, Sassari, Arbatax, Oristano, Sulcis-Iglesientes, Olbia

It is precisely the question of industrialization in the southern regions that most clearly represent the resumption of a thread that was interrupted; with the end of the war, and in part due to the fact that the southern regions were among the first to be recaptured by the Allies, the debate which had begun in the Thirties resumed with a certain intensity.

The main steps to promote the industrialization of the Southern regions were:

- 1947: Minister Togni's decrees, which set tax exemptions in favor of the construction of new factories and exemption from income from movable wealth for ten years, for reactivating, transforming and expanding existing industrial facilities in the southern regions.
- 1950: CASMEZ establishment, mainly to finance interventions in the agricultural sector and for public works and services; it also establishes new forms of subsidized credit for southern industries.
- 1953: redefinition of structures and purposes of particular lenders for the financing of southern industry (ISVEIMER, CIS, IRFIS)¹⁵.
- 1957: Law no. 634, which began the program for the establishment of "Industrial Development Areas" (ASI) and "Cores of Industrialization" (NI) in the South.

The ASI and NI, again, are areas subject to special conditions in favor of the settlement of industry. They are described as being borrowed from the British Special Areas example, while at the same time the law for Naples is considered to be a prototype in relation to previous Italian experiences. Actually, the experience of the ASI / NI blend two traditions; one looking to the regional development plans, mostly based on UK examples, which determines the new scale (the ASI are vast territorial entities) and the integrated approach, the second being grafted on the previous national experience of the Industrial Zones,¹⁶ characterized, in terms of urban planning, for a more specific identification with the devices of the equipped industrial estates, designed in most cases as urban sectors, in cities that have a certain relative territorial importance.

¹² ZIR –Zone Industriali Regionali.

¹³ ASI –Aree di Sviluppo Industriale.

¹⁴ NI –Nuclei di Industrializzazione.

¹⁵ That is, respectively: Institute for Economic Development of Southern Italy, Sardinian Institute for Industrial Credit and Regional Institute for the Financing of Sicilian Industries.

¹⁶ Massimo Annesi's studies on legislative aspects of the southern industrialization policy, take Fascist experiences of industrial zones as a starting point, showing their effectiveness in some "virtuous" cases. The role of the State is sparsely highlighted, in order to demonstrate that these policies are based on principles not necessarily conflicting with the liberal ones and, above all, independent from the specific institutional regime. See Annesi 1968.

Besides these technical aspects, the actual general question which arises is if this continuity, observable in laws and instruments, is also present in the intentions and goals. According to Petri, some main features of the fascist Zones can be helpful in delineating a sort of strategy:

1. homogeneity in choices about localization (“intermediate” regions);
2. avantgarde: priority to “modern sectors”;
3. scale: engagement of big industrial groups;
4. strong tendency to concentration;
5. clear economic *ratio*, even while forcing the capital by driving it through financial and fiscal tools or offer in capital assets (infrastructures, facilities, ecc.);
6. success of the initiatives, even if not increasing the structural quality of the regional contest.

These characters are particularly relevant when applied to a comparative analysis with the provisions of the post-war era.

Continuities and innovations: a reading perspective

Fascist industrial policy intersects a basic problem, which was split-up between the two wars: the stabilization of the population and the control of internal migration, in front of the rapid modernization process affecting the national economic and social structure. The debate about the planning of industrial settlements is linked to a concept of decentralization, according to which the State has the role to guide and correct the natural process of growth and accumulation, which would lead to the concentration of resources where the strongest economies already are. Indeed, this purpose of discouraging urbanization and concentration processes should be considered in a more specific meaning; as an attempt to restructure the hierarchies that regulates the mutual relations between regions and regional centres, as well as the relations between the center (the central power) and the periphery (the local territories).

According to this perspective, the policies pursued by the fascist regime can be seen as part of a long-term process, which also includes the post-war policies for southern industrialization; we propose to describe this process in terms of “a general plan of territorial reorganization”:

- which is mainly guided by the intent of population redistribution, seeking a more balanced ratio of the dense and less dense areas, as well as, more specifically, by the intent to control the concentration in northern main industrial cities.¹⁷ This objective is pursued through an organic program for regulation of economic activities, both through land reform and industrial location.
- which puts the southern problem within the context of a broader national issue, approached through complementary policies in both the southern and northern regions.
- which coincides with a research about the conditions for development, in particular for the emergence, in the economic field, of new theories investigating the role of “external economies”.
- which ties these themes to the urbanist’s attempts to set the operational foundation (and build the technical-cultural know-how) for regional planning.

¹⁷ See Informazioni SVIMEZ 1957. Also Saraceno’s intervention at the IX congress of the National Institute of Urban Planning, in 1961, will focus on the no longer sustainable increase of public spending in achieving the necessary services to the efficiency of large cities: housing, transport etc.

- which gradually assumes a clear urban matrix, while the city is described as an agglomeration factor and as an 'infrastructure' in itself. After the war, the attempt was made toward a different spatial frame, at the territorial scale, with the emergence of figures which, in later years, would assume a more significant importance: the "urban districts", the "city-region", and the "metropolitan systems".

The fascist regime was not completely successful in achieving its goal: the acceleration of the modernization process due to the war, especially with the rapid growth of the industrial sector in the main industrialized urban areas, exposed the limits in the implementation of such a *territorial reorganization*, driven also by the location of industry.

Thus the question remained for the post-war period to look for a solution of both the urban problem and the problem of marginal areas.

English version revised by Karl Eckert

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