
LAND IN LIMBO: UNDERSTANDING PLANNING AGENCIES AND SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE INTERFACE OF THE PORT AND CITY OF NAPLES

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Numerous actors have been involved in the planning of the port and city of Naples; actors who have different ideas and goals, different tools, and even time-frames. The European Union, the Italian nation, the Campania Region, the Municipality of Naples, and the Port Authority act upon the port at different levels of planning. Each entity has different spatialities and temporalities. Their diverse goals have led port and city to develop into separate entities, from a spatial, functional as well as administrative point of view. The different scopes of their planning are particularly visible in the zone between port and city.

Using and challenging the theory of path dependency, this paper explores the diverging ways in which a range of different institutions have planned for port and city starting from nineteenth century until today. It studies how the introduction of different institutions and their evolution has influenced plan making over time. The case of Naples shows the challenges that arise from the palimpsest of plans and goals associated with port and city, and that are particularly visible in the port-city interface in Naples.

Keywords

port-city, landscape, path dependency, planning

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INTRODUCTION

For many centuries before the Unification of Italy in 1860, the port and city of Naples were closely interconnected¹. In the past, the port represented the main entrance to the city. It was the place of market and, at the same time, a public space and meeting area for different cultures². Until the 16th century, the relationship between city and port of Naples was characterized by morphological fusion. The port was in close contact with the historic part of the city. The famous representation “Tavola Strozzi” (Fig. 1) perfectly represents the image of cohesion, between the urban structure, the port, the trade, the public life, and between social relations.

Historical representations of the city, such as the 18th century view by Antonio Joli (fig. 2) show this close connection between the city and the sea, as a link that has been present for a long time in the memory of the inhabitants. This historical and functional integration of port and city, and the perception of the port as integral to city dynamics has changed in the last 150 years. City and port have slowly but surely been separated in spatial, functional as well as in administrative terms. Therefore, during the twentieth century, the city and port of Naples have started to interrupt their secular dialogue. The beginning of the separation between city and port started in the second half of nineteenth century, when the modernization of port facilities and the development of the infrastructure network has been seen as a necessity for the revival of the city³. From that moment, port and city actors began to focus on port and city separately. The port as an integrated and attractive part of the city became a places of work, close to the city⁴.

The separation of port and city has been studied by numerous authors⁵; this study explores the particular case of Naples where, so far, no projects for a reconnection between the two has taken hold, and where the zone between port and city remains still in limbo.

Planning the spatial and economic development of a port and a city is not an easy task. Much like in other European port cities, the actors that have a formal role in Naples' port planning—most notably the municipality, the port authority, regional and national government bodies—have different goals, tools, and agendas. Each actor perceives the port from different levels of scale and (policy) angle. Moreover, each actor has its own powers to influence the planning process, and they will act according its own implementation time frame.

As a result of these different development goals, the interface between port and city, particularly in waterfront zones that form the geographical area between the old city and the modern port, is undefined and its future is in limbo; in fact, the whole relationships between city and port requires rethinking. Since the year 2000, the multitude and heterogeneity of planning authorities has produced many uncertainties for the port-city relationship in Naples, and a stalemate for the areas where the port physically meets the city. Here a real regeneration process of the port areas is not yet started, for different reasons and city and port are really separated. This paper explores why the city and port of Naples, one of the most important historical ports in Italy, seems resistant to urban plans, as well as co-operation between various actors involved in the urban planning processes. Using the concept of path dependency theory, this paper aims to develop an actor-institutional and spatial understanding of the changing port-city relationship in Naples and the resulting urban transformations.

The historical analysis, starting at the end of nineteenth century, reveals how and when port and city actors started to ‘tell two different stories’ about the port-city relationship in Naples, that result in the waiting condition observed today. Considering the strong critical issues of the Italian ports, such as fragmentation of national and regional ports, excessive bureaucracy (113 procedures and 23 public entities involved into controls), lack of logistic intermodal connections between ports and rail corridors, inadequate infrastructure projects⁶, the paper will explore the different national and international reforms that Italian ports have been subjected to over the years. With the re-organization of national ports and the integration of ports into their urban-territorial context as a background, the case study of Naples proves an insightful case in explaining why city and port actors have found it so difficult to define a common strategy for the port-city interface, and what the path dependencies identified imply for its future.



FIGURE 1 Tavola Strozzi, 1472. Naples, San Martino Museum.



FIGURE 2 View of Naples from the sea, XVIII century, Antonio Joli.

PATH DEPENDENCE AS THEORETICAL LENS

The central theoretical lens for this analysis is path dependence. This paper is going to test whether this theory allows for better understanding port city dynamics through the Naples case⁷. The idea of path dependence originated by Paul David and W. Brian Arthur in separated works. Their studies were focused on institutional inertia and difficulties in changing the established approach⁸. According to James Mahoney path dependence “characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties”⁹. Starting from Mahoney’s thought on path dependence, it is possible to say that research on path dependence so far focused on two important points: on one hand it focused on self-reinforcing institutional patterns. These are linked to the formation of a long-period institutional models that generate what economists call increasing returns and positive feedback processes. On the other, path dependence focused on “chains of temporally ordered and causally connected events”¹⁰. This means that the final output is influenced by when the events happen. In other words, some events, if they do not happen at the right time, they have no effect. However, research carried out so far has some limitations regarding the concept of “becoming persistent”.

THE SPATIAL DIMENSION OF PATH DEPENDENCE

Most of the studies have focused mainly on the temporal dimension of path dependency and contingency events. Few scholars, with the exception of Sorensen, have used the lens of path dependency to explain the spatial dimension of this theory and the direct consequences in terms of planning. The idea of path dependence is that some past decisions have resulted in positive feedback for the actors involved and this influences future development, so very often changing path is difficult¹¹. According to Sorensen (2015), new research questions should start from the analysis of the relationship between institutions and urban space.

Why planning institutions in Naples are highly dependent on historical paths, and why are others cities more open to change? It is important to focus on the nature of some particularly critical moments also focusing on previous conditions that generated the current situation.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: THE NEW EU INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY

The youngest among the actors is the one with the widest scale: the Europe Union (EU). This is an important actor also for the Naples port. Already with the Treaties of Rome (1957), Member States had stressed the importance of a common transport policy, but for almost 30 years, the results were quite poor. In particular, in 1985, The European Court of Justice invited the European Council to implement concrete actions with regard to a European transport policy.¹² The Maastricht Treaty, and “The White Papers” of 1992 and 2001 became important starting points with regard to the creation of the single sustainable and efficient transport space policy. The aim of these books was to increase the competitiveness of the port system through the use of more efficient transport systems. These documents also introduced the importance of the integration between various planning tools, as well as new cooperation with the actors involved in logistics systems.¹³.

In 2013, European Commission presented the most radical reform of the infrastructure policy ever made since its beginnings in the 1980s. The documents published by the Commission, reported the nine main corridors that will form the transport arteries in the European market, creating for the first time a central transport network¹⁴. The aim was to turn the current patchwork of ports, airports, roads and railways in and integrated Trans-European transport network (TEN-T). The new central network would link 94 seaports, 38 airports, 15,000 km of high-speed railway, in 28 State Members. The European Parliament decided that there ought to be nine major European corridors map of transport for which they have been earmarked 26.3 billion euro for the period 2014 - 2020. This European transport network, should be completed in 2030. Italy is crossed by four of these corridors¹⁵. In this scheme, the port of Naples is one of the main Italian ports, and it is located on the Trans-European corridor (TEN-T) Helsinki-Palermo (in rose) (Fig.3). Going back to the national context, the National Strategic Plan for Ports and Logistics, starts from the indications of the European Commission in order to improve the role of the Italian system as a leader in the Mediterranean region and improve its connection with the rest of the world.

Italy is invited to take advantage of its geographical position as regards of the international shipping, improving rail connections and the relations between ports and hinterland, analysing in detail the specific characteristics of the individual Italian ports in order to implement integration with the European corridors, promoting sustainable transport systems and removing “bottlenecks” in the system, localized especially in the regions of Southern Italy (Campania, Sicily, Calabria, Puglia and Basilicata).

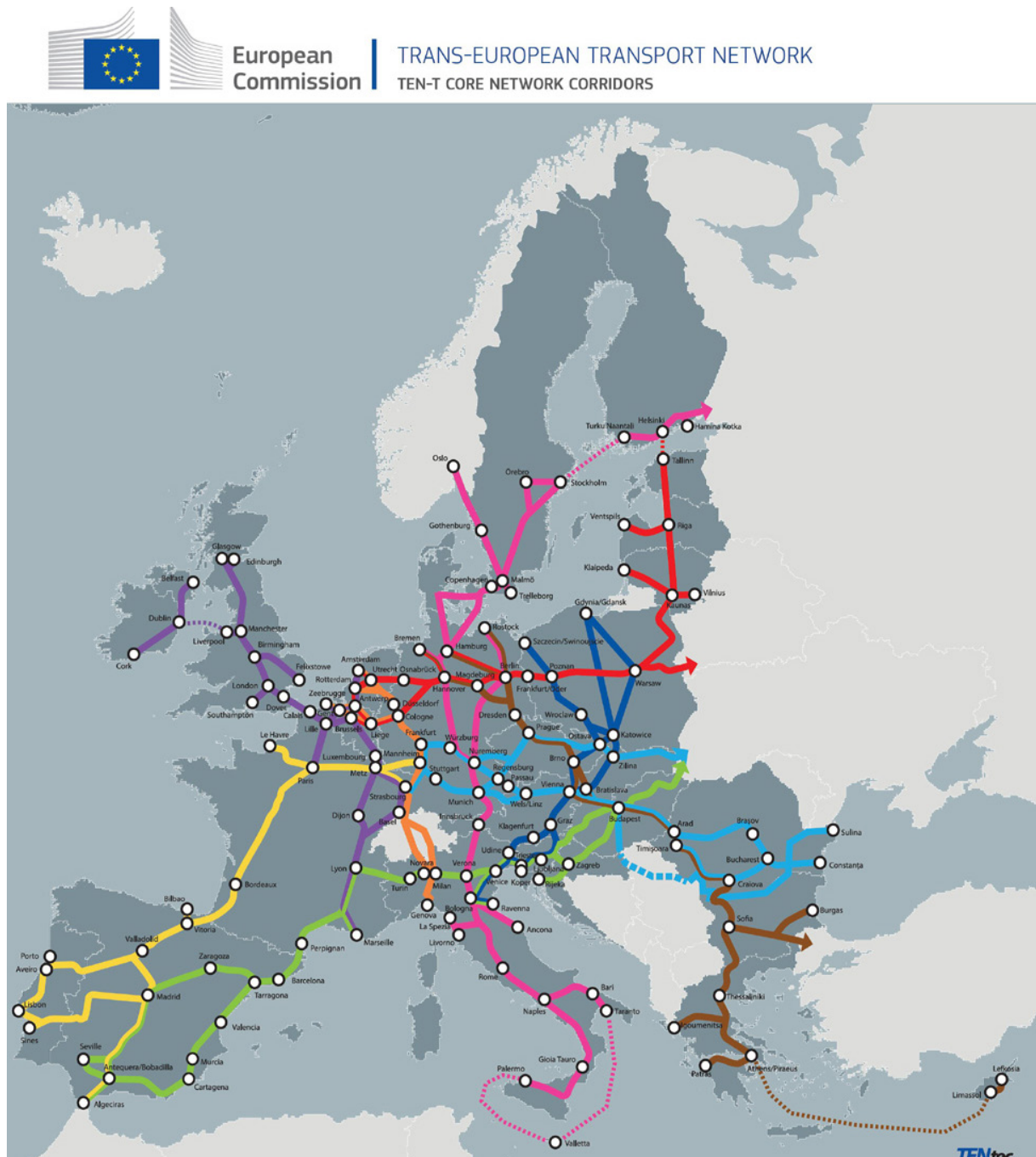


FIGURE 3 TEN-T Core Network / Core Network Corridors.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT: THE NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PORTS AND LOGISTICS (PSNPL)¹⁶

Italy is a nation with numerous ports, surrounded by water, all competing with each other; it is a nation that has a long seafaring history, that characterizes the different ports and their diverging roles. The Italian port system shows some strong specificities, and it has been in special need of a regulatory re-organisation in order to improve the competitiveness of national ports structure compared to other Mediterranean and Nord European ports. The Italian State defines seaports as public property. They belong to the State and they are inalienable. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport (MIT) is the executive structure of the Italian State in charge of different tasks including: planning, financing, construction and management of infrastructure networks of national interest; activities related to transport, traffic and logistics on the territory including navigation, safety and maritime transport. The MIT is responsible for the planning, financing and development of the port, supervision and control over the port authorities. Thus, the State, as “owner” takes care of the ports, in general of their administration, through the Port Authorities, special non-economic public entities¹⁷. In addition, the MIT is responsible for the assets and port services and work in ports. The Ministry also issues the general discipline of the ports and land use plans¹⁸.

In 1994 a State law was enacted which modified the organization of the port sector. With this law, port authorities were called to make a port masterplan (PRP). The old port plan became a planning tool. Ten years later, Guidelines for the formulation of port masterplan were issued. This is another important step, as the PRP became a strategic tool because the guidelines gave suggestions to the port authorities and generally to all other institutional entities involved in the preparation of port plans.

In 2014 the MIT, in order to improve the Italian ports system and create a real network between the different ports, has introduced an important reform of the national ports system. The article 29 of the Law 164 of 2014, that converted the Law Decree n. 133 of 2014 “Sblocca Italia” had provided the adoption of the National Strategic Plan for Ports and Logistics (PSNPL), with the aim, on one hand, to optimize the connections between the ports and between the ports and the surrounding and national territory, and on the other, to improve the port governance system. The plan moves from the analysis of some weaknesses in the Italian port system. In Italy there are many ports along a coastal area of about 7800 km. This makes the situation rather complex and fragmented. The Italian ports are collocated almost all near the historic centres of the cities. This condition makes difficult to move the container port for obvious reasons of lack of space. As result, huge waterfronts are used for port activities without any integration with the city. In addition, Italy bases planning and management of the ports still on an old law, the law 84/1994, “Reform of the port legislation”. On one hand, this law represented an important turning point in the transition from one type of “public service port” to the current “landlord port”; on the other hand, it presents, today, obvious limitations and it is not able to read the complexities of the contemporary port structure, as well as the actors involved in the system, that are increasingly changed. The strategic plan proposes, through a logic of system and nodes, concrete actions for the implementation of the network and a governance model that can centrally control and simplify the procedures. A very important point of the plan is the willingness to go beyond the “port individualism” proposing port systems and reducing to 15 the strategic core network nodes (Fig.3). The plan identifies 10 strategic objectives and 10 actions, including simplification and streamlining of procedures, strengthen the infrastructure system of ports and their links with the hinterland, promote research and technological innovation in the Italian ports, adapt and improve the governance of the Ports. These actions have to be implemented with subsequent acts and laws. The improvement of port and logistics system is identified as a central issue in order to reviving the role of the national territory and in particular of Southern Italy in the International context¹⁹.

Le Autorità di Sistema Portuale

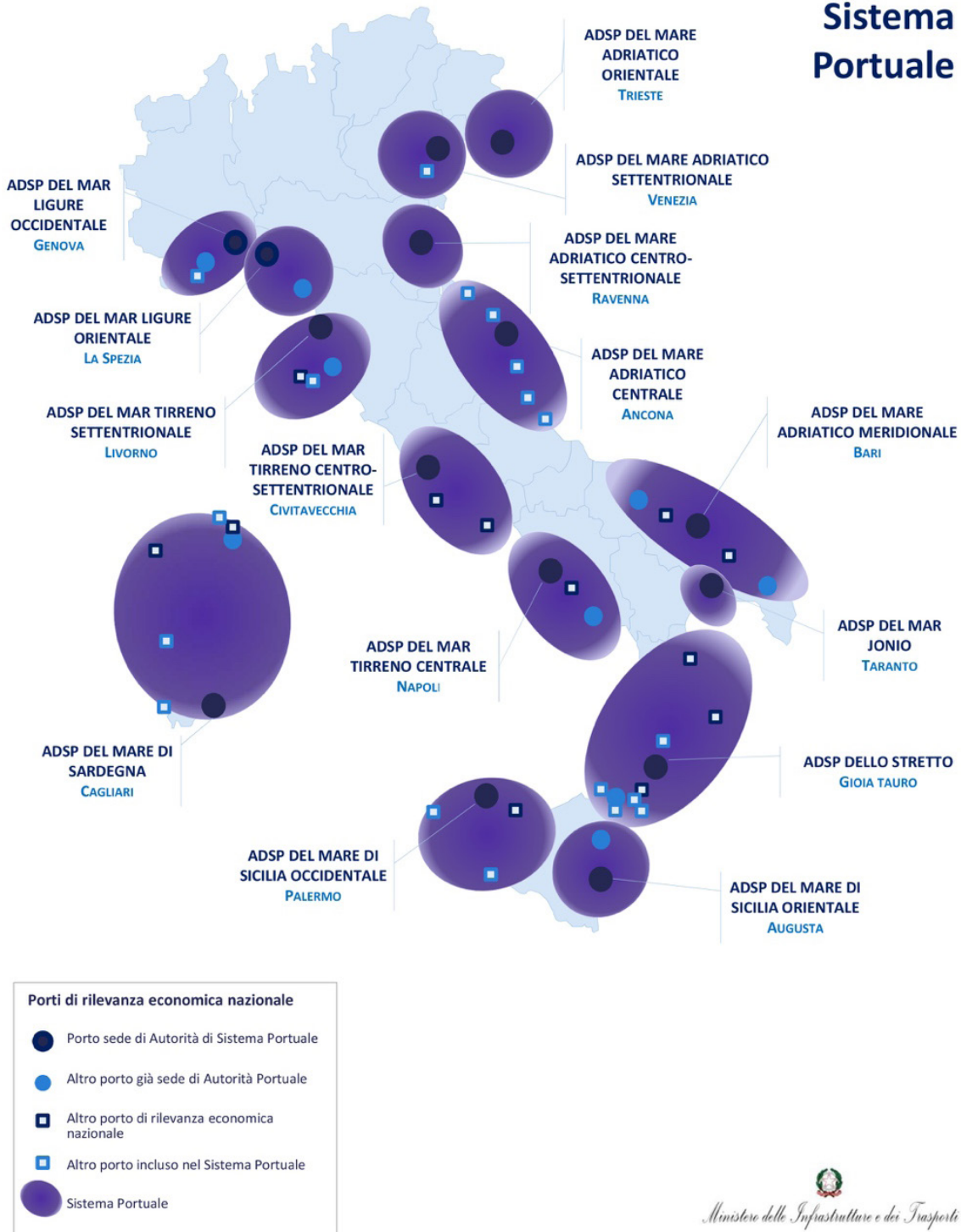


FIGURE 4 Italian Port Authority Systems.

Naples, along with Genoa, La Spezia, Livorno, Civitavecchia, Cagliari, Palermo, Augusta, Gioia Tauro, Taranto, Bari, Ancona, Ravenna, Venice and Trieste, is one of the ports that the European Union defines as strategic for the Global network²⁰ (Fig.4).

In conclusion, the law 84/94 and guidelines of 2004, transformed the old port plans into strategic and structural tools. In particular, the guidelines stressed the importance of a careful analysis of the different structural and functional parts of the port, and their relationships with the urban dynamics. Their focus was on the fact that the port does not host only specialized flows, rather wider metropolitan flows not necessarily related to the port. Indeed, between the city and the port, especially in the older port city areas, there are marginal areas more compatible with urban dynamics. However, the planning approach still continues to consider the port in a very sectorial way, without any consideration about its urban, metropolitan, regional and national role²¹.

The PSNPL, considering the profound change taking place in port areas, which see more and more ports as hubs into the transport chain (compared to the past when ports have been seen as “emporio”), is the new starting point for a complete rethinking of transport chain in the global network.

THE CITY OF NAPLES

The city of Naples is proposed as a case-study through which highlighting critical aspects and potentialities in order to redefine a new centrality in the Euro-Mediterranean context. In Naples urban and port flows come together in the 5 kilometres of coastline, from the historic port to the east of the city.

Therefore, the port, with its longitudinal flows represents a barrier against the crossing flows that lead from the city to the sea²².

The cultural and spatial separation of the city from the port is due to different factors. The division of responsibilities and competences for planning between national and local administration is one of them. In Italy, the Royal Decree of April 2, 1885, established that, for the ports that are classified of national and strategic importance, the port plans could be drawn up by the Ministry of Public Works. This is an important date, because, since then, the urban plan of the city did no longer contain the port area. This separation immediately put into crisis the cultural and planning model of the port city as a whole²³. In addition, in 1918, the Port Authority of Naples was established, a public body under the control of the Ministry of Public Works. This was another important step that led to the progressive spatial, functional and administrative separation. The General Regulatory Plan, PRG of 1939 just identified the port area as industrial area. This plan, even if in force, does not have an effective role in determining planning policies. As a result, the city began to rebuild itself according to disconnected parts without clear relations. A new PRG, adopted in 1972 (Fig.5), identified the port area as “F” (port area), divided into sub-zones F/1 (the strictly port area) and F/2 (areas related to port activities). Before the 1994, the discipline that regulated these areas was delegated to the “Special Plan of the Port.

Today the new PRG of Naples of 2004 (Fig. 6), remains still too generic about the port. The PRG defines and separates the “historic harbour” from the “harbour recently formed”, but the destiny of these areas is sent back to the port plan tools (Fig.7).

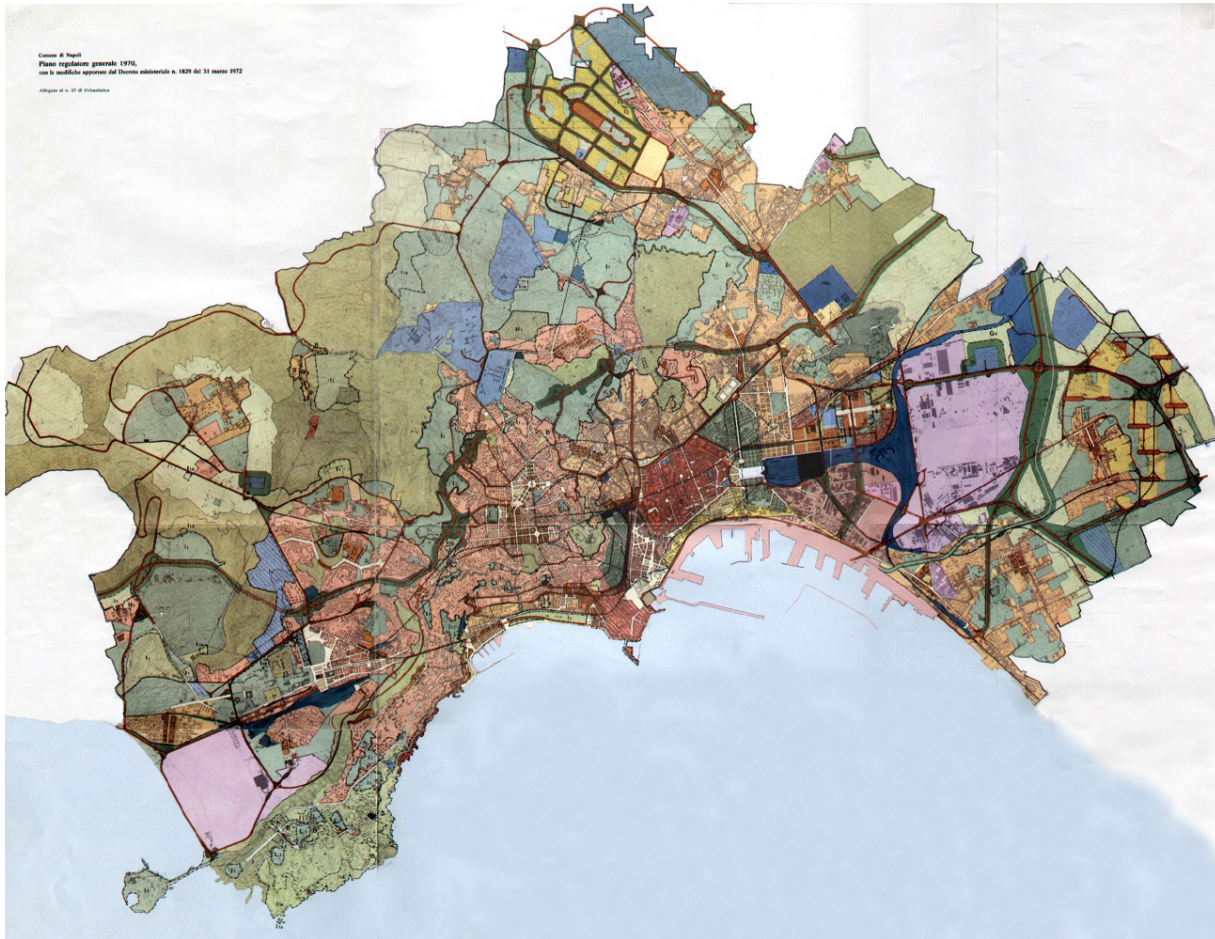


FIGURE 5 PRG Naples 1972.

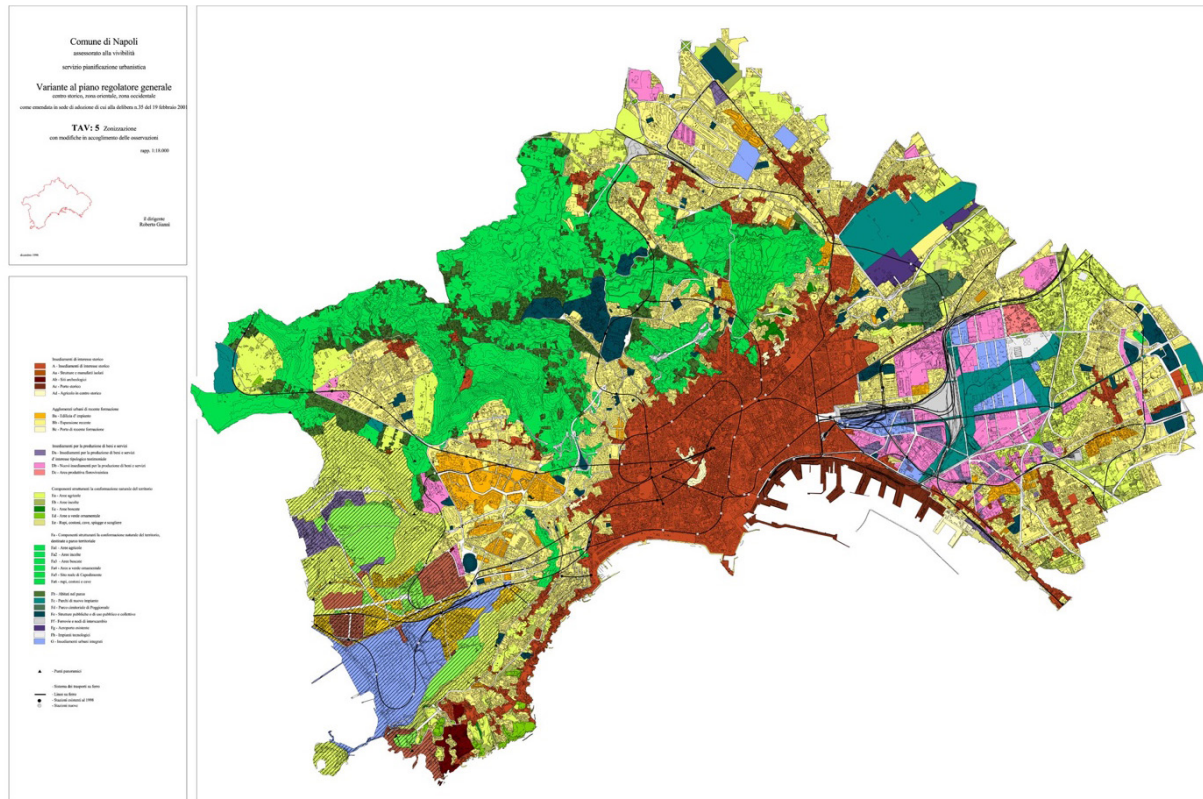


FIGURE 6 PRG Naples 2004.



FIGURE 7 Port plan with zoning of port activities.

V.03 P.212 Paolo De Martino

LAND IN LIMBO: UNDERSTANDING PLANNING AGENCIES AND SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE INTERFACE OF THE PORT AND CITY OF NAPLES
WASTELAND TERRITORIES IN TRANSITION TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE CROSS-BORDER METROPOLITAN CORE

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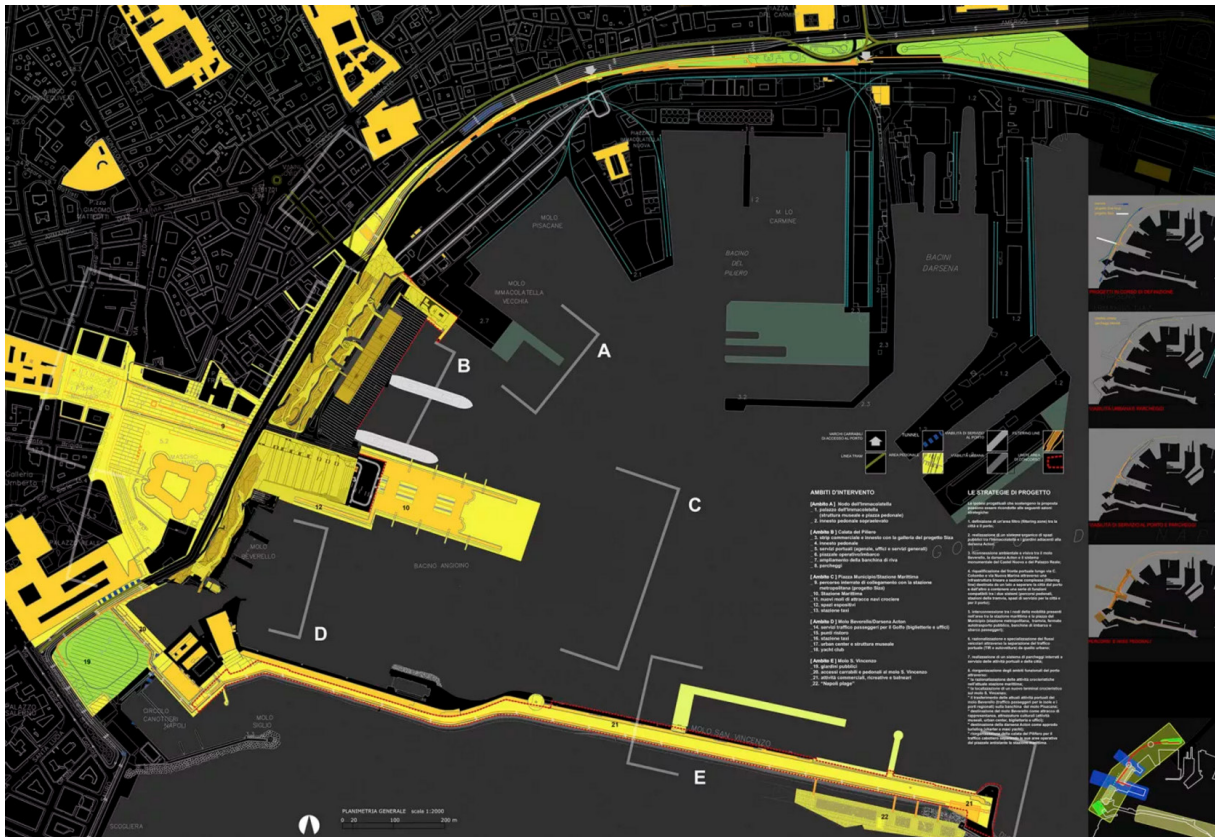


FIGURE 8 Naples: Monumental harbour redevelopment.

CITY, PORT AND METROPOLITAN AREA: AN EFFORT TO COOPERATE FOR A COMPLEX TRANSFORMATION

With regard to the provincial and regional context, it must be said that the jurisdiction of the port of Naples, today extends over than 20 km, from Pozzuoli to the port of Castellammare di Stabia. The Region and the Metropolitan City of Naples (which in 2014 replaced the old institution Province of Naples) represent an intermediate level of planning. Nowadays, the Region, through the Regional Territorial Plan (PTR) of 2008, and the Metropolitan City of Naples through the Territorial Coordination Plan (PTC) of 2015, give strategic orientations in terms of regional and provincial planning. In Naples, the specific relationship between city and port has built over the years through mutual adaptations, of the port to the city and the city to its port. Port authority and municipality tried to work on the concept of multi-functionality of the port that not always generated peaceful relations, and also it contributed in defining an unclear vocation of the port.

In 2005, Municipality, Port Authority and Region have tried working together, proposing a new image of the port through an architectural design competition for the waterfront redevelopment of the historic port. The winner was the Arch. Michel Euvé and his design team. This competition was managed by the Public Company “Nausicaa”, between Port Authority, Municipality, Region and Province, created with the aim of managing complex transformations such as a port, proposes to work on an idea of a complex and malleable space in which to keep together temporary and specialized flows, to create a dynamic and contemporary place (Fig.8). Today the project is struggling to start for different reasons related to the feasibility of implementation. In conclusion, regional and provincial plans, projects and integrated programs, in the last twenty years in Naples stressed the need for an integration between the different planning tools²⁴.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the centuries, the urban structure of Naples has adapted to the port activities. However, the flexibility of the port to the new global requirements have a spatial dimension that transforms parts of the city at different speeds²⁵. As a result, select areas are into a limbo. The guidelines of 2004 laid the foundation for an important reflection on the issues of compatibility between port and urban functions. Every part of the port has specific relationships with the city and its urban activities. There are port areas that require autonomy and are incompatible with the urban life, others that can restore a physical, functional and cultural relationship with the city. Who are the actors involved in the port city dynamics and how do they see the relationship between city and port?

The case of Naples shows that a sectorial way in planning is not enough. This departmentalized analysis has led to the creation of independent thought processes and actor networks, each with their own path dependencies.

The history of the port and cities of Naples shows how the diverging interests of both the city government, Port Authority and the Regional and National government have led to the emergence of two independent spaces (port and city) governed by separate sets of institutions, tools, methods, laws, ideas, and even different time frames.

The planning tools are configured too rigid and not in line with the flexibility and dynamism of the changes that nowadays are taking place. On one hand, there is the rigidity of the plans and the bureaucratic slowness; on the other hand, the dynamism and complexity of the actors involved, who have different views and interests about the question of coexistence of the port with the city.

Using the theory of path dependency, this paper has explored how the main institutions in Naples planned for port and city, understanding how planning tools still too oriented on a “zooming approach”, and a reform still too oriented on the logistic aspects of the port, can provide the elements to improve the compatibility and connections between spaces and actors involved. To do so, looking at space through the actors is a way to understand lock-in situations and break from path dependencies promoting co-operations and new synergies between different actors and levels of planning. Only in this way, municipality and port authority, can create a different relation and “draw a picture” of the port-city which is shared one more time by both.

Notes on contributor

Paolo De Martino is doing a joint PhD in Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Technology of Delft (The Netherlands) and at the University of Naples Federico II (Italy), working on a thesis entitled: “Port-city development. An interdisciplinary analysis for port city in transition. Naples as case study”. He is presenting and discussing his research at various National and International Conferences, such as at the Conference SIU 2016 – Italian Society of Urban Planners.

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