

# **Messina - port city**

How Messina has developed since 1908's earthquake and the influence of changes in city and port governance.

History Thesis

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# 1. Introduction

From January 2022 to March 2022, a public debate on the development of the “Bocchetta-Annunziata” part of Messina’s waterfront was conducted. In concordance with the Port Master Plan (“Piano Regolatore Portuale, PRP”) of 2010 with the most recent updates of 2018, the Port System Authority of the Strait (Autorità di Sistema Portuale dello Stretto, AdSP dello Stretto), initiated the realization of the public debate. The PRP reserved the „Bocchetta-Annunziata” waterfront for recreational spaces dedicated to the leisure of the citizens of Messina (Coordinatore del confronto pubblico, n.d.). The public debate results are supposed to be an input for the competition for the development of said part of the waterfront.

Given this event, a look into Messina’s port city, in general, is at hand. The public debate displays the attribution of value to the relation between city and port. However, the city and the port underlay different Master Plans and two different authorities, the municipality of Messina and the Port System Authority of the Strait. Historically, the involved authorities have changed, and the city and port planning strategies with them.

In December 1908, one of Europe’s most violent earthquakes ever recorded and the associated tsunami destroyed the city of Messina (Barreca et al., 2018, p.1). It marks a moment of tabula rasa, where the whole city and the port had to be rethought. Therefore, it marks the beginning of the city’s development as we can observe and live it today.

This thesis aims to investigate the development of the relation between port and city in the specific example of Messina. More precisely, this thesis will investigate the influence of governance development on Messina as a port city. The main research question raised at the beginning of the thesis and answerWed throughout is,

How did changes in Messina’s city and port governance influence the development of the port city since 1908?

## Outline

This Chapter, Chapter 1: Introduction, sets the framework of the thesis. It is not only setting the stage for the topic but also introduces the research questions, the outline of the thesis and the methodology used to answer the raised questions. Further, it displays a literature overview and explains the research gap this thesis is looking to fill.

**Chapter 2: Messina, a port city, answers the questions** “What does the port city Messina look like? And how did it develop into today’s appearance?”.

First, Subchapter 2.1 explains the urban qualities of the city, from geographical setting to its historical development. Second, in Subchapter 2.2, the port of Messina is analyzed through an investigation of the different stakeholders and their geographical allocation on the waterfront. Both subchapters link the development of the port city to changes in governance that occurred during the 20th and early 21st century.

**Chapter 3: Masterplans answers the question**, “How are the Port Master Plan (PRP) and City Master Plan (PRG) related? Which influence does governance have on each Master Plan and their relation?”

Subchapter 3.1 looks at the current PRP, highlighting topics relevant to the city. The changes in governance induced by law 169/16 and the related guidelines for Port Master Plans will be explained and discussed, allowing for an understanding of the development of the port. Subchapter 3.2 reverses the approach by looking into the current City Master Plan, highlighting relevant topics regarding the port. Finally, subchapter 3.3 reflects the relation between the PRP and the PRG and their goals.

**Chapter 4: Conclusion** summarizes the findings of the previous chapters. It takes into account the question raised in Chapter 1 and topics discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. It concludes how changes in governance influenced the development of the port city, Messina, since 1908. Further, it gives an outlook for the future of Messina’s port city, focusing on the current efforts made in planning the port city.

## **Methodology & literature review**

To answer the research question raised in this thesis, primary and secondary sources will be used. On the one hand, the historical understanding of the port city Messina is achieved through careful analysis and review of literature on the history of Messina, focusing on publications on the development after the earthquake and tsunami of 1908. On the other hand, current and former administrative documents (laws, guidelines, etc.) regarding the governance of the port and the city are analyzed and interpreted to draw up the current situation of governance and its influence on the development of the port city. Further, planning documents such as the reports on the Port Master Plan (PRP) and the public debate mentioned at the beginning of the chapter are consulted to understand the current aims of planning and the opportunities for the future development of the port city.

Much research has been conducted on the city of Messina. Especially the development of the city after the earthquake of 1908 has been researched extensively. The development of Messina after 1908 is an exciting topic for researchers as the redevelopment of a city of this magnitude after such a devastating event, creating a redevelopment from zero, opens a variety of interesting questions.

Mainly after law 84 of 1994, research on the waterfront of Messina was conducted. Mainly, the question of the waterfront's use and the port's economic value has been discussed.

This thesis aims at closing the research gap on the relationship between the city and the port. The influence of the port on the city and vice versa is being discussed from the perspective of governance. Hence, adding valuable research to the understanding of the port city of Messina.

## 2. Messina – a port city

This chapter will answer the questions “What does the port city Messina look like? And how did it develop into today’s appearance?”. The chapter will describe how the port city of Messina is built and how the port city has developed into its contemporary shape. First, the urban setting and the city’s historical development will be discussed, and later the port. In both cases, the relevant changes in governance will be highlighted.

### 2.1 Messina – city

Situated at the Strait between Sicily and mainland Italy, the city and the port of Messina have been part of Mediterranean history since ancient times. The city has been an essential gateway for Sicily towards the rest of the Mediterranean since the first Greek settlements around 740 BC (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.12), and the port has been a „meeting point for ships sailing between East and West Mediterranean“ (Bottari, 2010, p.628) forever.



Figure 1:  
Messina geographical setting

However, the natural circumstances are not the most advantageous for the development of a city, as can be seen in Figure 1. Towards the Sicilian hinterland, the coastal plain is cut off by the Peloritani mountains, which form a natural barrier to the rest of the island. Further, the flatland is fragmented by numerous streams, making the space's efficient use more difficult. Nevertheless, the natural shelter and size of the "porto falcato" (Sickel port) supported the development of the city (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.20).

## **Piano Borzi**

The city as we know it today is based on Luigi Borzi's master plan of 1911. After the destruction of most parts of Messina's built environment during the earthquake and tidal wave of 1908, the city was rebuilt in the same place, aiming to keep the city's original layout (Pratelli et al., 2020, p.202). Borzi's master plan carefully tried to preserve the surviving structures and the possibility to rebuild important monuments (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.20). Based on a new building code implemented by the royal decrees of April 1909 (Mercadante, 2009, p.79), Borzi's plan proposed a grid layout. The building code demanded an earthquake resilient development and construction of the city (Mercadante, 2009, p.79). The most important rules of the building code included a) 14m wide streets (to protect buildings falling into each other), b) maximum 10m high buildings (to prevent strong oscillation - later increased to 12m), c) a construction with concrete frames and brick fillings (to guarantee structural integrity during eventual earthquakes), and d) a buffer zone towards the sea of 70-100m (in sight of other tidal waves) (Borzi, 1919, p.1). The Royal decrees and funding for the city's reconstruction were dictated and offered by the centralized national government in Rome.

Borzi's master plan kept the city centre in the same place. However, it extended the city's boundaries, surpassing the natural limits of the streams Bocceta (to the North) and Portalegni (to the South). The streams Camaro in the South and Annunziata in the North set the new boundaries. Only in the late 20th century, the city outgrew these limits (Pratelli et al., 2020, p.203).

## Palazzata

Despite Borzi's efforts to preserve and rebuild relevant monuments of the city, one of the most important icons of Messina was not part of the master plan. Unfortunately, the building code of 1909 prohibited the construction of structures in proximity to the shore. Therefore, the monumental „Palazzata“, with high architectonic and symbolic value, was not allowed to be rebuilt, as it extended over 1.4km along the coastline inside the 70-100m buffer zone.

As Borzi describes at a Conference on the “New Curtain of the Port” (Nuova Cortina del Porto) in 1919, “La Città di Messina fu sempre divisa dal Porto mediante una Cortina” (“The city of Messina has always been divided from the port with a Curtain” (Borzi, 1919, p.1). The monumental building was first built in 1622 after the decision of viceroy Emanuele Filiberto to tear down the wall protecting the city from the sea and was later rebuilt after the destruction during the violent earthquake of 1783 (Borzi, 1919, p.3).

Ten years after the earthquake of 1908, with a change in the municipal government, the construction of a new “Cortina” was decided (Borzi, 1919, p.2), and Borzi himself proposed a new design for a continuous building (with gates to the city) for commercial use (Borzi, 1919, p.3). Unfortunately, because of World War I, the efforts for a new „Palazzata” were stopped. Later, during fascism, a set of buildings was built on the old footprint of the “Palazzata”. However, these did not match the symbolic or architectural value of the „Cortina del Porto” as instead of constructing one continuous curtain, multiple independent buildings were built.



Figure 2:  
Palazzata before 1908



## **Unione Edilizia Messinese**

After the first financial support given to the city by the central government in Rome, the destroyed municipalities of the Region (including Messina) were urged to prepare master plans for the reconstruction allowing for later support with the expenses of said reconstruction (Boldrini, 1924, p.551). Although the local economy regained upside quickly after the disaster of 1908 (Boldrini, 1924, p.552), many citizens of Messina were living in temporary housing (“Baracche”) on the outskirts of the city (prominently in the South close to the area of Tremestieri) (Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, 1910, p.919).

A first step to speed up the reconstruction process was taken on a national level. As the areas that had to be reconstructed were divided between many private owners and the government could not release funds big enough to appropriate and redevelop the properties in the city, access to loans was facilitated. Later the right to give out these facilitated loans was extended to the cooperative of the Unione Edilizia Messinese (Mercadante, 2009, p.81).

The local elite, the administration of the local government, and construction entrepreneurs from Rome agreed on terms to establish the Unione Edilizia Messinese in 1917 as a public consortium. From the aspect of governance, the Unione Edilizia Messinese is interesting, as it acts as a public entity with the delegated task of rebuilding the city from the national government (Mercadante, 2009, p. 129) but it is a cooperation of private people.

After World War I, the Unione Edilizia positions itself as an „intermediate institution between government and citizens“ (Mercadante, 2009, p.130). It is neither a private construction company nor a governmental institution. The Unione Edilizia Messinese operates in the interest of the part owners of the cooperation and the interest of the broad public under social democratic principles (Mercadante, 2009, p.130).

Under the guidance of the Unione Edilizia, significant parts of the city are rebuilt, including a significant amount of housing. However, due to rising private, capitalistic influence on the Unione Edilizia, significant speculation aiming at a profit was conducted (Mercadante, 2009, p.133).

The Unione Edilizia Messinese was torn apart and closed for good when the fascists gained power in Italy (Mercadante, 2009, p.146).

## Fascism

During the time of fascism in Italy, governance was characterized by a central approach influencing the nation's entirety. For the built environment, this meant the aim at the unification of the country's architectural style and an inclusion of private development into the national planning strategy. The administration of the building practice was delegated to the provinces, allowing for centralized control over the entities (Mercadante, 2009, p. 147). Additionally, the State took back the control over financing construction projects, previously given to the Unione Edilizia (Mercadante, 2009, p.148).

Further, the fascist regime focused on the development of public projects (Mercadante, 2009, p. 148), such as the rail and maritime station of Messina (Figure 3) and the fair of Messina (Figure 4), in the specific contest. Further, a significant public project that must be mentioned is the refurbishment of



Figure 3:  
Messina Centrale



Figure 4:  
Fiera di Messina

the port (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.18), which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Next to the construction of public buildings, the fascist regime took on the challenge of housing in Messina, which had not wholly been solved by the governance of the Unione Edilizia Messinese. The realized housing projects did not reach the goal of mixing social classes, but they led to the construction of two major social housing projects in the boroughs of Gazzi and Giostra. (Mercadante, 2009, p.149) Ultimately, these projects helped dismantle further parts of the temporary „baracche” still housing people left homeless after the earthquake in 1908.

To improve the housing situation, the national government decided to lift or loosen the strict building code imposed after the earthquake and supported by Borzi's master plan (Mercadante, 2009, p.176), leading to a higher density in the city. In general, on national level the National Institute for Urbanism (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica) was created “towards a better organization of our cities” (“verso una organizzazione migliore delle nostre città” (Astolfi, 1934, p. 11). Contradictory, even though the development of Italian cities is discussed on the national stage, the new building code for Messina does not specify general regulations on the typologies, construction methods, height, or width of buildings (Mercadante, 2009, p.176). The dimensions of housing projects will be “set, case by case” (“fissate caso per caso”, Vitelli, 1934, p.5).

## **Post-World War II**

Even before the city's reconstruction was completed, a new calamity challenged the city. During World War II, significant parts of the city were once again destroyed. At this moment, Borzi's master plan was still the official master plan for the city. It was not fit for the challenges of the 2nd post-war. The economic boom opened the space for building speculation all over the territory, as no construction zones were defined. During this time, the fragmented property dynamics so specific for Messina (as seen during the Unione Edilizia Messinese) were lifted and unified. Therefore, the social character of housing in Messina was lost and facilitated even

more speculation (Bonanno, 2018, p.19).

## **Piano Tekne**

After more than 60 years of Borzi's master plan influencing the city's development, in 1978, a new master plan („Tekne”) was ratified (Città di Messina, 2017, p.2). The Tekne master plan effectively stopped the building speculation, as it designed areas where development was allowed and where not (Bonanno, 2018, p.20). Further, this master plan understood the city as a more regional topic. The goal was to allow the city of Messina to become the center of a metropolitan area of the Strait. A vital component of this idea was the construction of the „Ponte dello Stretto“ (bridge of the Strait) which connected Sicily and mainland Italy with a bridge starting just North of Messina's city center. A second solely commercial port was proposed in the South of the city (Caminiti, 2013, p.227). A proposition still being worked on today.

## **Piano Urbani**

In 1990 a further revised version of the PRG was developed by Urbani. This version was not limited to a mere division of the city into areas for specific use. It aimed at the creation of “micro autonomous systems which, however, contribute[d] to a more general idea of the city” (“micro sistemi autonomi che però concorrono ad un'idea di città più generale.” Caminiti, 2013, p.230).

While the municipality approved this version, it was never approved by the Department of Land and Environment of the Sicilian Region (Assessorato del Territorio e Ambiente della Regione Siciliana). Due to the long bureaucratic ways between the municipality and Region, the city plan was never really implemented, and the Piano Tekne remained in force. However, in 1995 the municipality created a new entity to finally develop a new city masterplan (Caminiti, 2013, p.230) to update the city's development to contemporary issues. This process has been ongoing since, and finally, in 2010, a finished new PRG was ratified.

The content of this master plan and its influence on the port will be discussed in Chapter 3.

## 2.2 Messina – port

The natural sickle shape of Messina's port is ideal for creating landings, as the shape creates quiet water where boats and ships are protected from the turbulent sea of the Strait. The sickle – “falce” in Italian, gives the name to the oldest part of the port. Today, the port extends beyond the „Zona Falcata” to the North and South, occupying most waterfront parts. This subchapter highlights the different uses and the stakeholder involved. Figure 5 displays all the different parts graphically.



Figure 5:  
port of Messina

### Military Zone (1)

The outer part of the “falce” is occupied by the military, more precisely the “Marina Militare”. This area is not accessible to the public as it is a gated campus. However, it would have a high value for the citizens as it has excellent views of the Strait and Messina's waterfront. It accommodates the lighthouse of the city (Forte S. Salvatore) with high symbolic value (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.25).

This area has been attributed to the military during World War I (EAMP,

March 2022) and has not been accessible since.

The central part of the „falce” was allocated to the municipality of Messina at the same time (EAMP, March 2022).

**Industrial Zone (2)** The area adjacent to the military zone is being used as a shipyard for two private companies. Further to the South, on the area where in the 17th century a citadel was built, now the “Molo Norimberga” can be found. A ferry dock for connections to cities of mainland Italy, e.g., Salerno, which is connected to Messina through the „Autostrade del Mare” (highway of the sea).

This area is fragmented into multiple parts, used by different stakeholders, e.g., the Police, the University, private disposal companies, and ferry companies. Only small fragments of the citadel can still be recognized; the city has announced efforts to enhance the area to display better the cultural value of the citadel (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.33).

**Railway (3)** The railway is allocated on the hinge between the “Falce” and the waterfront. This area is operated by the National Railway. It mainly houses the station (both railway and maritime) and railway infrastructure, including a big track field, which cuts off the city from the shoreline. Between the tracks and the coastline more dumps, the municipal incinerator, and a nomad camp can be found (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.37).

While the Military zone has been maintained on a high level, the industrial zone and the railway zone have been in constant decline and have become „forgotten land”.

**Docks (4)** Moving North from the rail station, right in front of the historic city center of Messina, docks for private ferries and cruise ships are allocated. Until 2016 the operation of traffic and dock management was outsourced to private companies, while the planning and operation of the territory and the port infrastructures stayed in public governance. This has changed with decree no.169/ 2016, giving the management back into the public hand through the Port System Authority (Atto del Governo 303, 2015). The role of the Port System Authority of the Strait (AdSP dello Stretto) and the new governance’s



influence will be discussed later in Chapter 3.

- Promenade (5)** Continuing further North, the promenade of the city can be found. This recreational area has high value as the main recreational area on Messina's waterfront. Next to the promenade, it also provides a tourist port for boating.
- Fair (6)** The next segment of the enfilade is the fair. As mentioned before (Chapter 2.1), the fair was built during the fascist regime in 1938. Today it is a gated area only accessible in certain moments. The rationalist buildings of the 1930s have not been appropriately maintained and are now in a run-down state. The site was bought by the municipality in 2012 after the autonomous entity of the fair went into bankruptcy (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.46).
- Caronte Terminal (7)** The docks for the strait ferries are allocated before reaching the non-swimmable beach of Rada San Francesco and the municipal parc Sabin on the most Northern part of Messina's waterfront. These formerly privately managed docks can be considered Messina's principal center of port activities (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.46). Here the ferries to mainland Italy depart multiple times per hour. The car traffic from the Sicilian hinterland concentrates as the connection to the highway system is direct through Viale Giostra. The city's traffic is characterized by the high traffic volume on Via Bocchetta and Viale Europa between these docks and the highway system.
- Tremestieri (8)** As mentioned earlier, to the South of the "falce" the railroad cuts off the city from the shore, and a no-man's land extends along the waterfront. At the southern edge of the city, the area Tremestieri is allocated. Other cruise docks and a direct connection to the highway have been constructed here. This part is well connected to the sea traffic of the Mediterranean and the road traffic to the Sicilian hinterland. However, there is little to no connection to the city (Autorità Portuale di Messina, 2007, p.52).
- History of governance** As shown, the port of Messina is used by a wide variety of players and stakeholders. The governance of the port was newly restructured in 2016 when the port of Messina was integrated into the Port System Authority of

the Strait (AdSP dello Stretto). Before being part of the AdSP dello Stretto, Messina was governed by an autonomous port authority operating the port of Messina and the port of Milazzo. The structure of port authorities was introduced by law n.84/1994, where on a national level, Italy decided that ports were no longer based on entirely public entities. While the planning and operation of the territory and the port infrastructures stayed in public governance, the operation of traffic and dock management was outsourced to private companies. (Atto del Governo 303, 2015).

Up to the implementation of the Port Authority, the port of Messina was operated by the Ente Autonomo Portuale di Messina (EAMP). This entity was created in 1953 by the regional government of Sicily. The goal of this body was to institute a frank point on the “falce”. The national government had decided the implementation of the frank point in 1951. However, due to Sicily’s definition as “Regione autonoma” in 1946, a dispute between the Region and the State developed regarding the frank point. Ultimately, the Regione Sicilia won the dispute, leading to the formation of the EAPM (EAPM, March 2022).

From the start, this ambitious plan was complicated. After the earthquake of 1908, a massive dispute on the governance of the port began between different administrations and entities. The dispute was settled in 1918 by dividing the „Zona Falcata“ between the municipality of Messina, the Ferrovie dello Stato (state railways), the port operations, the Demanio Marittimo (maritime state property), and the military. However, these bodies, except the municipality, never agreed to hand over parts of their areas to the EAPM, effectively allowing the opportunity to create a frank point (EAPM, March 2022).

#### **AdSP dello Stretto**

As mentioned above, since 2016, the port has been operated by the Port System Authority of the Strait (AdSP dello Stretto). The port of Messina is part of the Port System of the Strait, which includes the ports of Gioia Tauro, Crotone, Corigliano Calabro, Taureana di Palmi, Villa San Giovanni, Messina, Milazzo, Tremestieri, Vibo Valentia, and Reggio Calabria (Atto del



Governo 303, 2015). The Port System Authority was created in 2016 within decree no. 169/16 by the Italian Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport. By centralizing the influence of governance of the port system authorities and reducing administrative and bureaucratic efforts (Decreto Legislativo, 4 agosto 2016, n.169), the national government aims at improving the ports ,and their connection to regional transport systems with national relevance as their growth has been stagnating in comparison to other European ports (Atto del Governo 303, 2015).

The current masterpl an of 2010 was updated in 2018 with the influence of the AdSP dello Stretto. The topics and aims of the current master plan and its influence on the port city will be discussed in the following chapter.

### 3. Master plans

In this chapter, the questions “How are the Port Master Plan (PRP) and City Master Plan (PRG) related? Which influence does governance have on each Master Plan and the relation between them?” **will be answered. The City Master Plan (Piano Regolatore Generale, PRG) and the Port Master Plan (Piano Regolatore Portuale, PRP) will be discussed. First, the PRP will be discussed, reflecting on the influence of the change in governance induced by law 169/16 and the applying guidelines for PRPs. Later the current PRG and its relevant approaches regarding the port will be investigated.**

#### 3.1 Piano Regolatore Portuale

As mentioned earlier, the latest updates to the PRP have been ratified in 2018. However, the current master plan was developed in 2010 by the port authority of Messina, which no longer exists.

In 2016, port authorities were restructured on a national level, and new Port System Authorities were created. Italy's ports were stagnating in development, while other Mediterranean ports have been growing steadily due to increased trade through the Suez Canal (Pavia, 2016). The poor development of Italian ports at that time could be found in the poor connections to the Italian hinterland and slow bureaucratic structures (DeMartino, 2021). Accordingly, one of the goals of decree 169/16 is to better connect ports and the hinterland, creating regional platforms and developing port system in a regional rather than in a local context (Decreto Legislativo, 4 agosto 2016, n.169). Further, the role of Italy and its ports in the European context is a key aspect of the decree passed in 2016. Italy can be understood as a “regional hub” (“hub Regionale“ MIT, 2017, p.26). As Italy must conform to Macro Regional Strategies of the European Union (MIT, 2017, p.26), the centralization of the influence on port system authorities is understandable.

The new tool developed to achieve the national influence on port systems is the “Piano Regolatore di Sistema Portuale” (MIT, 2017, p.8), which is

developed based on guidelines released on a national scale. Even though, the formulation describing the “Piano Regolatore di Sistema Portuale” (PRdSP) is the same describing the PRP in the old law of 1984 (MIT, 2017, p.15) “the object of planning and the normative context in which it is placed completely changed” (“completamente mutato è l’oggetto della pianificazione e il contesto normativo nel quale esso è collocato” MIT, 2017, p.15). Further, the guidelines for PRdSP (MIT, 2017) state that existing PRPs should remain valid if they are coherent with the goals of the national government and support the goals of international, European, and networks integration (MIT, 2017, p.19). In the case of Messina, the old PRP has been integrated by the AdSP dello Stretto.

Over 60 years after the last PRP in 2010, the current PRP has been approved (PRG, 2010, p.14). The main issues targeted to be solved are the unsustainable development of traffic in the city triggered by the ferry traffic to Messina, the degradation of the „zona falcata“, the abandonment of the fair, and ultimately the relation between the city and the sea (PRP, 2010, p.13). Further, the PRP aims at making the port of Messina future proof for the increase of cruise and good traffic, including the distribution of port duties to the different ports of Messina, Milazzo and Tremestieri. A topic still regarded in the PRP is the “Ponte dello Stretto”. The PRP itself acknowledges the outmoded topic by calling the idea of realization of the bridge as “not really up to date” („non proprio up to date“ PRP, 2010, p.14). However, all interventions of the PRP are supposed not to interfere with the possible future construction of the bridge (PRP, 2010, p. 14).

To tackle the topics of traffic, degradation of the „zona falcata“, the development of the fair, and the relation between the city and sea, the waterfront and port of Messina have been divided into four environments (PRP, 2010, p.25):

- a. Operative port of Messina (POM)
- b. Operative port of Tremestieri (POT)

- c. City-port interaction “Waterfront” (WAT)
- d. City-port interaction “La Flacata” (FAL)



Figure 6:  
four environments of PRP

These environments are further subdivided into areas with specific correlated functions.

The environment POM will house docks for cruise ships, „express“ ferries, maritime rail traffic, cargo port, shipbuilding, and docks for institutional ships. This area will not undergo significant changes but is looking to be renewed, anticipating a rise in tourist traffic to the port of Messina (PRP, 2010, p.29). With the construction of a second dock at the port of Tremestieri the environment POT is being developed to welcome the ferry traffic of the Strait. Having already a direct connection to the highway, it is expected to bring the long-awaited alleviation of traffic in the city center. Further, the PRP gives a vague statement on a possible future allocation of the rail docks in the port of Tremestieri. However, it keeps areas also unchanged for the eventual development of the “Ponte dello Stretto” (PRP, 2010, p.30). The waterfront, divided further into three parts (WAT1: Annunziata-Giostra,

WAT2: fair campus, WAT3: fair-falce), is dedicated to the city. Functioning as a recreational and cultural space, the WAT is reserved for activities such as boating, culture, recreation, and public green (PRP, 2010, p.32). Lastly, the environment FAL is imagined as a “tourist-hotel hub” (“polo turistico-alberghiero” PRP, 2010, p.34). Further, an archeological space to capture the citadel’s value and a connection between the Falce and the city are foreseen. This connection is imagined as an underground connection underneath the rail tracks (PRP, 2010, p.34).

### **3.2 Piano Regolatore Generale**

Analyzing and discussing the entirety of the PRG would go beyond the scope of this thesis and chapter. Therefore, the focus is set on parts of the PRG related to the topic of the port and waterfront. However, a short overview of the general goals of the PRG will be given.

The new directives of the City Master Plan (Piano Regolatore Generale, PRG) were approved by the city council in 2012. The directives are rather broad, but they set the framework within which the PRG has been conceived and ultimately set the basis for the guidelines of the PRG. The directives can be organized into five different thematic clusters:

**1) Ecological sustainability** (dir I: uno strumento per promuovere lo sviluppo sostenibile della città’, dir. V: tutela del paesaggio e delle risorse naturali, dir. XV: risparmio energetico e bioarchitettura)

**2) Economic development** (dir II: indicare credibili prospettive di sviluppo economico, dir III: messina città’ del turismo e della cultura)

**3) WUrban development** (dir IV: obiettivi e strategie per l’assetto del territorio, dir: IX: riappropriarsi della città negata, dir VII: I villaggi collinari: una risorsa per lo sviluppo, dir X: risanamento e valorizzazione della periferia degradata, dir XIV: necessita’ assoluta dell’ introduzione della perequazione urbanistica e della compensazione urbanistica, dir XVII: qualità urbana, decoro e spazi pubblici. , dir XVIII: attraversamento stabile

e l'area metropolitana dello stretto)

**4) Urban infrastructure** (dir VI: accessibilità centro urbano/parcheggi, dir VIII: difesa dal rischio sismico ed idrogeologico, dir XI: il mare e le spiagge, dir XII: qualità urbana e servizi pubblici, dir XIII: il piano dei servizi, XVI: un grande progetto per il verde urbano)

**5) Procedures** (dir XIX: uno strumento aperto e flessibile, dir XX favorire la partecipazione dei cittadini, delle imprese e la concertazione istituzionale)

The most relevant directives for the port and the waterfront are dir IX: riappropriarsi della città negata (reclaiming the denied city) and dir XI: il mare e le spiagge (the sea and the beaches). The denied city in dir XI mainly refers to the port areas discussed in previous chapters: The „zona falcata“, the railway parc, the military zone, and the industrial zone (PRG, 2018, p.6). Dir XI focuses on the also previously discussed areas between the “zona falcata” and the “Parco Sabin” (PRG, 2018, p.7).

## **Traffic network**

The PRG aims to bring Messina back to a leading role in the image of the Mediterranean (PRG, 2018, p. 42). To achieve this goal, the PRG is looking to develop the Messina of the future based on the duality of a fast and slow city („città a due velocità”, PRG, 2018, p. 42). A city with a vital exchange of people, goods and information is a fast city in this duality, the city with a “controlled pace” (“velocità controllate” PRG, 2018, p.42) focusing on its landscape, history, and adjacent environments are the slow city.

This concept is closely linked to the port. An evolution should represent the duality of fast and slow to a dual-port (PRG, 2018, p.43). The historic port („zona falcata”) is meant to be developed into the slow port. On the one hand, serving as a gateway to the city for tourists (arriving by cruise) and on the other as a recreational and cultural space for the citizens. The fast port is meant to be allocated in Tremestieri, where already first docks for ferries and a direct connection to the highway system have been built (RPG, 2018, p.43). By reallocating the ferry traffic from Rada San Francesco to Tremestieri a radical reduction of traffic (and therefore CO2-emissions)

in the city center can be expected. While the local ferry traffic shifting from Rada San Francesco to Tremestieri is beneficial for the traffic leading to the Sicilian hinterland, and no setbacks should be expected, the removal of the ferry docks close to the city center could hurt the local traffic between Messina and Calabria. To prevent this scenario, the connection between the city center and Tremestieri must be improved. Development of a road and rail connection on the former track field of the railway is planned. Next to solving the problem of centrality, the development of the connection between Tremestieri and the center aims at improving the connection of public transport (PRG, 2018, p.209).

Related to this problem of centrality vs slow city is the railway and maritime station development. The rail traffic at the hinge of the „zona falcata“ does pollute the city with dirt and noise pollution. However, it generates a valuable centrality right at the gateway to the city. The PRG does not state how this paradox could be solved but solely acknowledges its existence (“un ripensamento sostanziale delle modalità di trasporto ferroviario“ PRG, 2018, p.43). The only statement close to a solution is mentioning the Ponte dello Stretto. However, this project is not being consciously regarded in the PRG. As the financing structures are no longer guaranteed and the project has fallen into oblivion, it is only mentioned that all interventions needed for the potential construction of the bridge will be taken (PRG, 2018, p.87).

#### **Piano Regolatore Portuale (PRP)**

The PRG states that the PRP had to be developed in agreement with the municipalities locally responsible. Further, it is highlighted that the PRP must be agreed upon by the Region (PRG, 2018, p.82).

The parts of the PRP highlighted are the problems identified by the municipality. Namely these are, the “improper use of the zona falcata” (“l’uso improprio della [...] “zona Falcata””, PRG, 2018, p.83), the “allocation of the ferry terminals [...] in the most central Rada di San Francesco” (“la collocazione del terminale dei traghetti [...] nella centralissima rada di San Francesco” PRG, 2018, p.83), and the “pavilions of the fair of Messina” (“I padiglioni della Fiera di Messina” PRG, 2018, p.83). Further,

the development of the highway connection Tremestieri is displayed as proof of an engagement by the municipality. Together with future efforts to solve said problems, the main goal regarding the port is stated: „[...] to redefine a balanced system of relationships between the Port and the City, [...] reinterpreting the priorities and functions of the one [port] and giving back to the other [city] the right to overlook the sea.” (“[...] ridefinire un equilibrato sistema di rapporti fra Porto e Città, [...] reinterpretando priorità e funzioni dell’uno che restituendo all’altra il diritto ad affacciarsi sul mare.” PRG, 2018, p.84).

### **3.3 Master plan(s) for the port city**

After having looked at both the PRG and the PRP, a reflection on the two and their relationship is appropriate.

While it is a good starting point that both masterplans aim at similar goals like the connection of city and sea, the reduction of traffic in the city, and the redevelopment of the “zona falcata”, a clear roadmap to the future port city is not recognizable.

Firstly, the reallocation of the ferry port from San Francesco to Tremestieri is valuable for the relief of the city. However, the problem of high traffic is only being reallocated to the South of the city. Further, the connection between the city and Tremestieri is not emphasized enough. Consequently, the ideas for the future of ferry traffic are set and valuable, but a coordinated path to the future is not developed yet.

Secondly, the fair’s redevelopment is a valuable asset fortunately recognized by both the municipality and the AdSP. Including the fair into a broader context of a recreational waterfront between the stream Annunziata and the cruise docks, seems reasonable. However, the question raised is how the governance will be organized after no more port activities are allocated at San Francesco. Will the AdSP take a backseat role? This challenge of future responsibility for former port spaces turned into city spaces is omnipresent. Especially for the „zona falcata“ this becomes a considerable topic insight



of the PRP's planned tourism and hotel hub. No mention of a similar view can be found in the PRG. Further, the question must be raised why the urban waterfront should still be interrupted by the cruise docks. The AdSP has economic interests in tourism, but on an urban level, it does not appear sensible to interrupt the urban waterfront and later develop a tourism hub with urban character.

This problem is emphasized by the connection between „zona falcata“ and the urban waterfront. An underground connection between those parts does not seem attractive to anyone. The only advantage recognizable is the preservation of the current rail infrastructure. Both the PRG and the PRP acknowledge the problems created by the current layout and organization, but no suggestions for a solution are made. Only the PRP vaguely states an opportunity to change the organization of the railway. However, the PRP does this together with the topic of the „Ponte dello Stretto“. This is a topic both masterplans approach very inconsistently. The bridge appears to be a relic of the past. No radical position is taken on the topic, ultimately leading to no real solutions on the other topics.

Lastly, no position is taken towards the spaces owned by the military. These spaces are under national control and therefore underlay more complex governance. However, from an urbanistic point of view, the outer part of the „falce“ should be integrated into the master plans and should be returned to the city and its citizens.

## 4. Conclusion

The final chapter of this thesis summarizes the finding of the previous chapters and gives an outlook for Messina as a port city in the future.

After setting the topic and research question, the city and an overview of its history were first given. Starting from the devastating earthquake of 1908 and the resulting destruction of the city, the development of Messina in the 20th century was displayed. Luigi Borzi's master plan and the beginning of the rebuild were defined as the first step taken after the disaster. Further, the impact of the Unione Edilizia was discussed, before looking into the role of fascism on the city and its urban development. The impact of the partial destruction by WWII and the hence triggered building speculation, and subsequently, the urban sprawl of Messina was distinguished as the beginning of the difficult process of city planning in Messina since the 1960s. The master plans Tekne and Urbani represented approaches made to give Messina a prosperous future.

Following, the port, its stakeholders, and its appearance were depicted extensively. The geographical setting, the history of the port governance, and the challenges faced set the ground for the discussion on the current PRP.

To reflect on the PRP, first, a contemporary look into the governance and the changes triggered by law 169/19 had to be displayed. By analyzing the tool of the PRdSP the current PRP of Messina was discussed.

After analyzing the PRP, it was appropriate to do a similar analysis for the PRG. Ultimately, leading to comparing PRP and PRG and a to better understand the opportunities and challenges of the port city's future.

Throughout the thesis, the connections between history, governance, and planning of port and city were made. The changing levels of governance between national government, Region, municipality, and port entity set a problematic framework for the development of the port city. Shared, overlapping, and unprecise definitions of responsibilities have led to the

port city's fragmented development.

The city how it is built and governed today has both a fragmented port and an undefined city. However, more concerning is that the city, the port, and the waterfront are entirely divided. The city has lost any connection to the waterfront and is therefore enclosed between the mountains and the sea. It is sprawling and harming the environment towards the mountains, and towards the sea, it has lost the value a shoreline brings.

Fortunately, all involved parties (municipality, AdSP, Region, etc.) have recognized this unfortunate development and are willing to find solutions for the future. However, overlapping, overlapping, and undefined interests are not emblematic of the uncoordinated governance in Messina. Additionally, institutional inertia of national entities, e.g., the military and, more relevantly, the railway, hinder the port city's radical and visionary development. Even worse, the „Ponte dello Stretto“ relic is present in both the municipality and the AdSP. If no definitive and radical decision on the topic can be agreed on, no adequate and sustainable solution can be achieved.

Fortunately, the participatory efforts of the municipality and the AdSP are a sign of a profound reflection on the future of Messina, ultimately giving the reason for hope to bring back together the city and the port.

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## 6. List of Figures

Figure 1: produced by autor for this thesis.

Figure 2: <https://www.messinatoday.it/eventi/palazzata-memoria-da-ritrovare-convegno-museo-novecento.html> (April, 2022).

Figure 3: [http://www.artefascista.it/messina\\_\\_fascismo\\_\\_archi.htm](http://www.artefascista.it/messina__fascismo__archi.htm) (April, 2022)

Figure 4: <https://www.letteraemme.it/ascesa-e-caduta-della-fiera-di-messina-dagli-anni-doro-alle-pentole-antiaderenti/> (April, 2022).

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