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INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING
CONGRES INTERNATIONAL POUR L’HABITATION ET L’URBANISME

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING
OF TOWNS AND COUNTRYSIDE

L’AMENAGEMENT SUR LE PLAN NATIONAL ET
REGIONAL DES VILLES ET DE LA CAMPAGNE

ITALY
NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING OF TOWNS AND COUNTRYSIDE IN ITALY

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In contrast to various other countries, Italy still has an immense task ahead to develop a programme of national planning and the planning of individual regions. While there is yet no specific law on the subject, our legislative and constitutional framework provides ample possibility for regulating communal and regional planning. This paper will, therefore, concentrate its attention on the existing legal and administrative bases for regional planning, which we hope to see flourishing in Italy in the near future.

Our legal and administrative organisation for regional planning is based on the Town Planning Act of 17th August, 1942, the Law of 29th June, 1939, for the Protection of Natural Beauty Spots, and on the Constitution of the Italian Republic.

Under legislation prior to 1942 the idea of regulative planning was applicable only in the case of communes having a population of at least 10,000, or of urban centres of a particular kind, such as health resorts or newly-formed industrial centres. Except in special cases, there was no opportunity of extending the application of regulative plans to minor communes and essentially rural districts, even if these involved town planning problems of importance. There was no legal authority for collaboration between various communes for the study of actual and appropriate plans.

In many fields of local administration it has been common to set up a voluntary organisation known as a syndicate. They have been extensively utilised for such matters as water supply, roads, school buildings, hospitals and land improvement schemes. They have, however, always been bodies created for a special limited purpose.

Rational planning, as conceived on modern technical lines, comprehending at the same time transport problems, as well as those of building and industry, the organisation of collective services, and the protection of natural beauty spots and monuments, has not been possible.

As regards Italian cities of great democratic and industrial development such as Milan, Naples, Genoa and Venice, the lack of appropriate legislation has led to more radical provisions in the administrative sphere. The major centres have gradually absorbed the smaller communes which otherwise might have been free to develop local town planning associations. In this way the communes contiguous to those great cities have been suppressed and incorporated in the chief administrative centre; but such provisions, even if necessary from the point of view of the new administrative unit thus formed, have not contributed to the solution of town planning schemes.

The Act of August, 1942, has now opened up the possibility for more rational and extensive planning. In it, for the first time under Italian law, we have an Act dedicated entirely, and on modern lines, to the aim of
providing directive plans for the regions and communes of Italy. It can be foreseen that if the Act is interpreted and applied with wisdom, it will bring profound innovations in the technical organisation and the collective life of our country.

Under this Act the Minister of Public Works is empowered to supervise the planning and development of town planning studies in national territory. The purpose is to ensure the renovation and extension of building in residential centres, with special consideration for the preservation of historical monuments, to promote decentralisation and to check excessive migration from rural areas to the cities.

The Ministry of Public Works comprises various special technical branches, including as a central advisory body the Supreme Council of Public Works. Subordinate to it in the various regions are the departmental contractors for public works instituted within the local town planning sections and directed by civil engineer officers who have the task of promoting and co-ordinating town planning activities in the communes. It is the duty of these departmental town planning sections to keep the Ministry informed on all works begun or projected that are not in accord with the directive plans or approved building regulations.

The Town Planning Act of 1942 has in view three types of plans: (a) plans of individual communes; (b) joint plans of a number of communes associated through the initiative of one of them, i.e., inter-communal plans; and (c) plans for larger areas, regional plans.

As regards the communes, a definite distinction is made between general directive plans and individual directive plans. The former may be said to embody the town planning problems of a commune and the programme for their solution over an indeterminate period. It is usually prepared by the local administration and the work proceeding from it is assigned to private individuals for execution. The communes thus may implement these general plans bit by bit and in successive stages as local opportunity arises.

For the association of more than one local administration in a joint plan provision is made in the Act under two heads:

(1) for the formation of general inter-communal plans, and
(2) for the study of co-ordinated territorial or regional plans.

(1). The Ministry of Public Works, at the request of a local administration, or on its own account, can decide that a regulative plan should be drawn up for two or more adjoining communes, when it has been recognised that their characteristics make co-ordinated planning advisable.

In that case the Ministry, at the instance of the Supreme Council of Public Works, shall determine to what extent the inter-communal plan shall be studied, which of the communes in question shall more especially be entrusted with drawing it up, and how relative expenses are to be apportioned. The subsequent procedure is the same as the Act prescribes for general regulative plans: the commune that has drawn up the inter-communal plan has to see that it is made public for a period of one month, depositing it with the secretary of each commune concerned. During this period any citizen can inspect it, and for another month after it has been withdrawn from public view it is open to public bodies, relevant institutions, and the syndical organisations of various categories (proprietors,
workmen, industrialists, traders, farmers, etc.) to submit their observations for eventual modification or revision of the plan.

The plan is then submitted to the syndicates of the other communes interested, so that they may confer in regard to its adoption. At the same time the plan is submitted to all the Ministries and central consultative bodies: that is to say, the Ministry of Transport as regards railway plant, the Ministry of Public Instruction for the protection of monuments and natural beauty spots, to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for the industrial zones, etc.

In this connection, in view of the great importance attached to the preservation of artistic surroundings in Italy, the Town Planning Act of 1942 ensures more extensive and direct participation by the Ministry of Public Instruction in directive planning, especially in the preparatory phases, as well as in the practical realisation of the aims prescribed by relevant legal provisions for the preservation of natural beauty spots.

To the Ministry of Industry and Commerce is reserved the power to authorise new industrial plant wherever necessary, both within and outside the scope of the directive plans. On the latter point there are differences of opinion. The unlimited power to direct industry might tend to disregard the technical provisions laid down on the directive plan.

When it has obtained the approval of the various Ministries and the consent of the Supreme Council of Public Works, the inter-communal plan is sanctioned by Decree of the President of the Republic. As in the case of general directive plans, the inter-communal plans are valid for an indeterminate period, and property owners are required to conform to alignment and zoning regulations, both in the matter of new building and the reconstruction of existing edifices.

(2). Territorial or regional plans for co-ordination are promoted by the Ministry of Public Works with consent of the Supreme Council. The purpose is to secure proper integration and co-ordination of town planning activities in specific parts of the national territory.

Territorial plans must lay down the directives to be followed on the following points:

(a) zones to be reserved for special purposes and subject to special legal restrictions and limitations;

(b) localities to be selected as sites for new building centres or for plant of special purpose and importance;

(c) the system of the main lines of communication in existence or projected.

Where not otherwise provided, the Departmental Town Planning Sections and in substance the contractors for the account of the Ministry, will have charge of the collection of data and basic material required for the organisation and study of the territorial plan. They may consult with the public offices and bodies interested, and the syndicates and professional associations. In every case, the plan has to be elaborated in agreement with the Ministry of Public Instruction and the High Commissioner for Hygiene and Public Health. Where relevant the plan is also submitted to the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, the Ministry of National Defence, etc.
A copy of the approved territorial plan must be available for inspection by the public in every commune included in the plan, under the same procedure as prescribed for individual communal plans. The Act does not indicate to what degree this regulation should be enforced, but specifies that the communes included in whole or in part in the scope of a territorial plan must conform to its provisions in their respective communal regulative plans.

Territorial plans are valid for an unspecified period and can be amended by Presidential Decree under the same procedure as outlined for the original plans.

Although the principal agency for matters of town and regional planning is the Ministry of Public Works, under the Law of 29th June, 1939 the Ministry of Public Instruction also has certain responsibilities. It is charged with the preservation of natural beauty spots, and in this connection it may initiate rural territorial plans for extensive suburban and country districts that are of pre-eminent aesthetic and traditional value. This work is the immediate task of the Directors-General of Antiquities and Art. The auxiliary agencies are the Superintendent of Antiquity and Monuments, and in every Province, a Commission appointed for the compilation of catalogues of all beauty spots which should be preserved. A distinction is made between “individual works of beauty” such as monuments, *per se*, towns and gardens or points of special interest from a topographical or geological point of view, and “beauty spots in general,” i.e., settings which present features of rural or architectural beauty of high aesthetic value.

The rural territorial plans have to be laid down by the Ministry of Public Instruction for the major localities comprised in the Catalogue of “General Beauty” and are drawn up by the Superintendents of Monuments in collaboration with the relevant communes. Their purpose is to determine the zone to be preserved, the relationship between the open areas and the building areas in each zone of the locality, the regulations for various types of building, the distribution and different alignments of factories, and finally the selection and distribution of flora.

Prior to approval by a Commission that includes a representative of the Ministry of Public Works, the rural plan must be approved by the Ministry of Public Instruction. It is then published for three months in each case of the communes over which it extends. During that time interested parties can suggest revisions, and if such amendments are accepted by competent technical authorities, opinion will finally be given by the Ministry and Council of State.

If it is thought that the rural plans may interfere with territorial plans, admittedly, it would be more useful to simplify the two procedures and combine the two plans into one. Planning should be based on an integral conception and not on piecemeal action. The desired result should be possible since the competent Ministries are already in collaboration for the drawing up and approval of the two different plans.

Passing on to a rapid examination of administrative practice in the Italian Republic, it may be noted that important innovations to the system
have been added by the new Constitution, proclaimed on 27th December, 1947. New regional agencies have been added to the old administrative bodies of the Provinces and of the communes.

In Italy, the organisation of the country by the Church and the heritage of the earlier principalities, republics and states have had a great influence on social development. None of these regional patterns, however, has ever had legal or administrative significance.

Perhaps because of a reaction against the perils of excessive centralisation, the new Constitution has once more given to the nineteen traditional regions the prestige of autonomous entities with proper powers and functions; amongst these, in accordance with special statutes adopted by constitutional laws, special forms and conditions of autonomy have been granted to Sicily, Sardinia, Trentino, Alto-Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the Valle d’Aosta.

The regions may enact regulations, so long as they do not conflict with the national interest and that of other regions in various matters within the field of local and regional planning. The matters include: town planning in general, public works, transportation, pits and peat bogs, agriculture and forests, tourism and the hotel industry.

It is obvious that through these new administrative ordinances and a wide application of the Town Planning Act there could be a notable development of regional planning in Italy.

Until now, however, there has been a lack of official technical directions on methods to be followed in drawing up regional plans, and also on collecting preparatory data for study. Although there are no officially accepted models to be followed, the notable and continuous development in the technique of directive town-planning schemes already offers experience, which might, by extension, usefully be applied to the study of regional plans.

On the other hand, there does exist official machinery for the preparation of the elements of study for planning, mapping and statistics. Apart from the numerous official statistics of the principal Italian cities in private cartographical establishments, there may be noted the continuous cartographical work being carried out by the Italian Touring Club, and the Military Geographical Institute under the Ministry of Defence. The main centre of Italian statistical research is the Central Institute of Statistics, which forms part of the Ministry of the Interior and periodically contributes to the various national censuses and elaborates their results.

Apart from these Institutions, the National Council of Research is developing important inquiries directly or indirectly of use for urban studies. Most of the relevant Ministries also have their special research departments, as do the various universities and institutes for advanced culture.

In conclusion: neither means nor material are lacking; the effort that now must be made is to co-ordinate and perfect and utilise planning to the utmost. The effort required will have to be considerable, for there is as yet very little in the way of a “town planning consciousness” even among fairly well-educated circles.
An interesting unofficial scheme for regional planning was launched some years ago with the study of a directive plan for the Valle d’Aosta, drawn up by a group of architects under the direction of Ing. Olivetti di Ivrea. Under the auspices of the various Superintendencies of Monuments, there have been or are being prepared territorial landscape plans for each of the most beautiful localities of our Peninsula, such as the coast of Amalfi and Sorrento, the islands of Capri and Ischia, various zones in Sicily, the Monte di Portofino, etc.

At the present time there are three schemes under study, which may perhaps in due course assume the official character of territorial plans. All have been undertaken at the initiative of groups of students and professional workers, but interest has been shown in the matter by the Ministry of Public Works and development encouraged by means of its contractors.

The study that has progressed furthest was initiated about two years ago by the architects Astengo, Bianco, Renacco and Rizzotti of Turin, for the whole Piedmont region. A notable part of their work was presented at the International Town Planning Exhibition held last year at Paris.

Two other groups are engaged in the preliminary survey for regional plans for Lazio and the Campagna, and finally another survey has been in process for about a year in Liguria. The latter differs in character from the others in having been undertaken on the initiative of the Institute of Architecture and Town Planning Technique of the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Genoa, in collaboration with the Superintendence of Monuments of Liguria. Should this scheme mature as desired, it will provide an instance of direct co-operation between an organ of the Ministry of Public Instruction, a Technical School and the Ministry of Public Works. This project is of particular significance because the region under study within its limited area combines tremendous problems of industrial development and construction, serious difficulties in the organisation of communications, important resources for tourist development, and the preservation of nature spots of pre-eminent beauty.

The results of this experiment in regional planning may help to clarify a point on which there is some uncertainty. It is possible we shall find that the region which has been assumed as the unit of planning is, at times, too extensive and heterogeneous in its parts. It might, therefore, prove more expedient to take as the planning base geographical units that are territorially more limited and homogeneous in their physical character and industrial and economic development, such as the Provinces, or the more or less numerous regroupings of communes.

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FRENCH TRANSLATION OF SUMMARY

L'AMENAGEMENT SUR LE PLAN NATIONAL ET REGIONAL DES VILLES ET DE LA CAMPAGNE EN ITALIE

Aucune loi pour l'aménagement sur le plan national a été adoptée jusqu'ici en Italie. La législation envisage seulement l'application de projets de contrôle sur les plans régionaux communaux et inter-communaux.

En tout ce qui concerne l'aménagement urbain, l'autorité compétente
est le Ministre des Travaux Publics. Son travail, dans le domaine national, est accompli par l'intermédiaire des organisations administratives et consultatives appropriées des diverses Directions Générales et le Conseil Suprême des Travaux Publics, ainsi que par les organisations decentralisées, constituées par les directeurs des Travaux Publics et les bureaux municipaux de l'aménagement urbain.

Le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique est responsable de la protection des sites de beauté naturelle et surveille l'aménagement rural du territoire. Les autres Ministères interviennent indirectement dans des affaires qui les concernent, au fur et à mesure de la préparation des plans particuliers de contrôle.

La procédure pour déterminer et assurer la coordination du travail entre les Ministères individuels et les communes est définie par la loi de 1942 sur l'aménagement urbain. Les communes sont tenues de préparer des plans locaux pour le contrôle, tandis que les plans régionaux sont élaborés par le Ministère des Travaux Publics. Jusqu'ici, aucun modèle n'existe pour servir de base pour la préparation de projets officiels d'aménagement, mais des études préliminaires sont en cours pour quatre régions italiennes importantes.

La nouvelle constitution de la République italienne divise les Administrations locales en Régions, Provinces et Communes. Les Regions sont des divisions autonomes qui ont le droit de formuler des lois appropriées concernant l'aménagement urbain, dans des limites fixées par la législation nationale.