

POVERTY IN ITALY'S INLAND AREAS¹

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1. National Strategy of Inland Areas

The National Strategy of Inland Areas (SNAI) finds its regulatory reference in the 2014 National Reform Program (PNR) and is defined in the 2014-2020 Partnership Agreement². It's an important example of a policy aimed at improving the living conditions of the population residing in areas at risk of marginalization.

It was established with the declared intention of identifying homogeneous clusters of municipalities based on accessibility to the main basic services.

Then, the municipalities Polo and Inter-municipal Polo have been identified which at the same time have access to access to the three main services: transport, health facilities and schools. Depending on the distance from these municipalities, the Belt, Intermediate, Peripheral and Ultra-peripheral municipalities have been identified.

In particular, at national level according to SNAI 2014, there are 339 municipalities and inter-municipal centers in which over 24 million inhabitants reside and occupies a territorial area of 38,000 sq km.

The municipalities Pole and intermunicipal Pole, together with the Belt municipalities, represent the macro-class of municipalities defined as Centers. The three remaining classes, on the other hand, identify the Inland Areas.

The latter, and in particular the peripheral and outermost municipalities, constitute for the territory those areas most at risk of marginalization, social and economic.

Above all, the incidence of peripheral and outermost municipalities and the incidence of residents residing there can be considered as indicators of the marginality of a territory and the support policies are mainly intended for these municipalities.

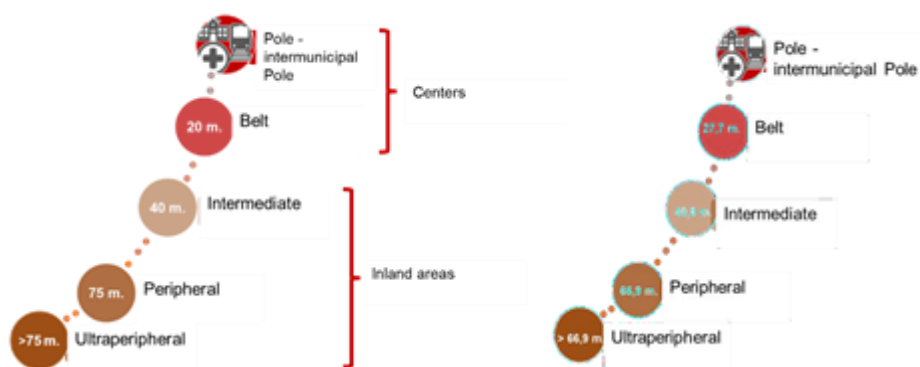
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² Dipartimento per le politiche di Sviluppo (2013). Strategia nazionale per le Aree interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance– Doc. tecnico collegato alla bozza di Accordo di Partenariato trasmessa alla CE il 9 dicembre 2013.

In 2014, the peripheral and outermost municipalities represented 22% of the total municipalities, 7% of the Italian population resided there and covered 9% of the national territory.

In 2022, a new mapping of the municipalities was created by the Department for Cohesion Policies and Istat³, reshaping the definition of essential services to identify the intermunicipal poles and poles, and reviewing the minimum distance from the poles, functional to the classification of common in other clusters (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Spatial distribution municipalities - SNAI Classification 2014 and 2021.



With the new classification⁴, the number of pole or inter-municipal pole municipalities is 29% less, also excluding some provincial capitals that in the first definition had been included in this class, and the resident population of almost 10% less (Table 1).

On the other hand, the peripheral and ultra-peripheral municipalities, to which historically the greatest financial resources to support the territory are destined, are 8% more and in them 9% of the Italian population resides (Figure 2).

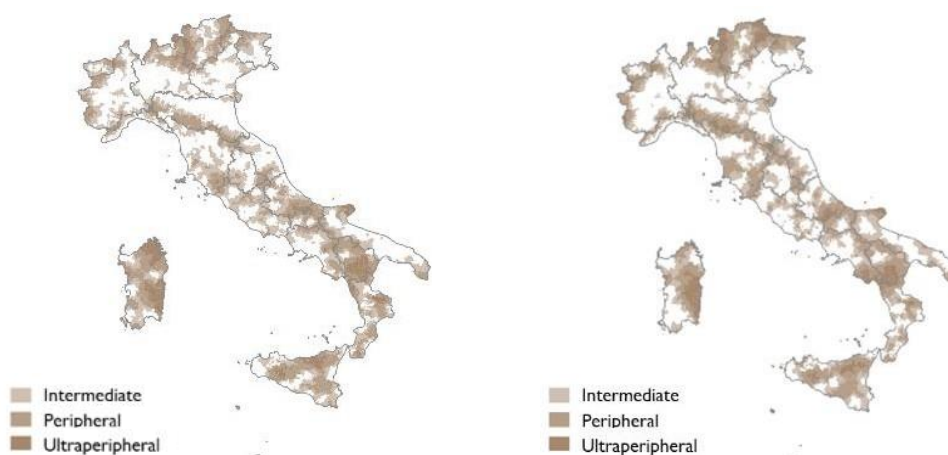
³ Dipartimento per le politiche di coesione. 2022. Aggiornamento 2020 della mappa delle aree interne. Nota tecnica NUVAP.

⁴ Dipartimento per le politiche di coesione. 2022. Criteri per la Selezione delle Aree Interne da sostenere nel ciclo 2021-2027.

Table 1 – Spazial distribution municipalities - SNAI Classification 2014 and 2021.

SNAI Classification	Municipalities		Population	
	2014	2021	2014	2021
A – Pole	217	182	21.271.729	20.470.301
B - Intermunicipal Pole	122	59	2.992.749	1.576.586
C – Belt	3.509	3.828	22.248.629	23.756.465
D – Intermediate	2.288	1.928	8.495.430	8.059.454
E – Peripheral	1.475	1.524	3.585.164	4.653.355
F – Ultraperipheral	292	382	642.512	720.052
Total	7.903	7.903	59.236.213	59.236.213

The South sees an average increase in the number of municipalities at greater risk of territorial marginalization although, without prejudice to the variability at the territorial level, the regions with a greater increase of municipalities in this macro class are the Autonomous Province of Trento, Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna.

Figure 2 – Intermediate, peripheral and ultraperipheral municipalities - SNAI Classification 2014 and 2021.

Surely, residing in an area far from services leads to social and economic marginality that well explains the demographic decline of these areas over the last 70 years. Between 1951 and 2019, the population of the Centers grew on an annual average by 5.1% in Italy and by 4.8% in the South.

The Inland Areas of the South have lost 1.2 million residents (-2.5% on annual average; Italy -1.6%) and one municipality out of three has systematically lost population since 1951.

2. Definition of poverty indicators

The official estimates of poverty mostly use the results of sample surveys, with the consequent limits of significance of the data when the level of detail, thematic or territorial, becomes very fine. For example, the official statistics produced by Istat stop at the regional detail as regards the incidence of relative poverty and the risk of poverty and the level of distribution for the estimates of absolute poverty. At the local level, therefore, there is an information gap that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to define territorial policies and evaluate their effects, and it is therefore necessary to try to take the path of using administrative sources for statistical purposes.

This work aims to extend to all Italian municipalities the study already conducted on the estimation of the incidence of poverty using the Integrated Archive of Economic and Demographic Microdata (ARCHIMEDE) project, made available by Istat. The Archimede Project uses integrated administrative sources with the aim of producing collections of elementary data useful for territorial and sectoral planning and for the evaluation of public policies also at regional and local level.

The traditional methodology to estimate absolute poverty, developed in 2005 and officially used⁵, is a measure based on the monetary evaluation of a basket of goods and services considered essential to avoid serious forms of social exclusion. Starting from the hypothesis that primary needs and the goods and services that meet them are homogeneous throughout the country, account has been taken of the fact that costs vary in different parts of the country. The risk of poverty provides an assessment of the inequality in the distribution of equivalent disposable income and identifies poor households among those that are at a disadvantage compared to others. In fact, a family with a risk of poverty is defined as a family of two members with equivalent disposable income lower than or equal to the 60% of the median equivalent disposable income.

⁵ ISTAT.

3. Main results

The more complex concept of social and economic marginality is associated with territorial marginality. The main indicators of absolute poverty and risk of poverty for the clusters of municipalities classified according to the National Strategy of Inland Areas 2021 are presented below.

In Italy, in 2017, there were almost 5 million families in absolute poverty, 18.9% of total families and almost 11 million individuals.

Just over 2 million families reside in municipalities classified as Poles or inter-municipal Poles, equal to about 20% of the families residing there. In the peripheral and outermost municipalities, over one in five families live in conditions of absolute poverty. The municipalities of the Belt have the lowest incidence of families in absolute poverty. The analysis of the risk of poverty-only is particularly interesting. Moving from a town in the center to towns in inland areas significantly increases the risk of both family and individual poverty.

Just over 6 families out of 100 are at risk of poverty in the poles and over 14% in the peripheral and outermost municipalities.

The distribution of non-poor households by cluster of municipalities is evidently clearer. Over 73% are non-poor families in the Pole municipalities while about 64% are non-poor families in the outermost municipalities (Table 2).

These results are the result of a great variability at the territorial level; indeed, in the Poles it is possible to speak of variability even within the city.

Table 2 – *Incidence of families in absolute municipal poverty, at risk of poverty and not-poor - SNAI classification 2021 - Year 2017.*

SNAI Classification	Absolute poverty	At-risk-of-poverty-only	Non-poor families
A – Pole	20,8	6,2	73,1
B – Intermunicipal Pole	19,3	9,6	71,1
C – Belt	16,2	8,6	75,3
D – Intermediate	19,7	11,9	68,4
E – Peripheral	21,4	14,3	64,2
F – Ultraperipheral	21,3	14,4	64,3
Total	18,9	8,7	72,4

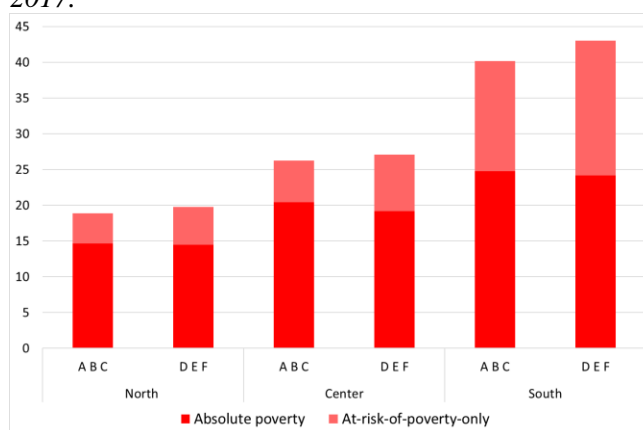
By extending the analysis by division and aggregating the municipalities into only two macro-classes, Centers consisting only of Inter-municipal Poles and Poles and Inland Areas and Belts, it is noted how the incidence of families in absolute

poverty is always higher in the centers while the risk of poverty is significantly higher in Inland Areas and Belts.

In the South, over 13% of families are at risk of poverty in the pole or inter-municipal pole municipalities compared to 18% of the remaining municipalities.

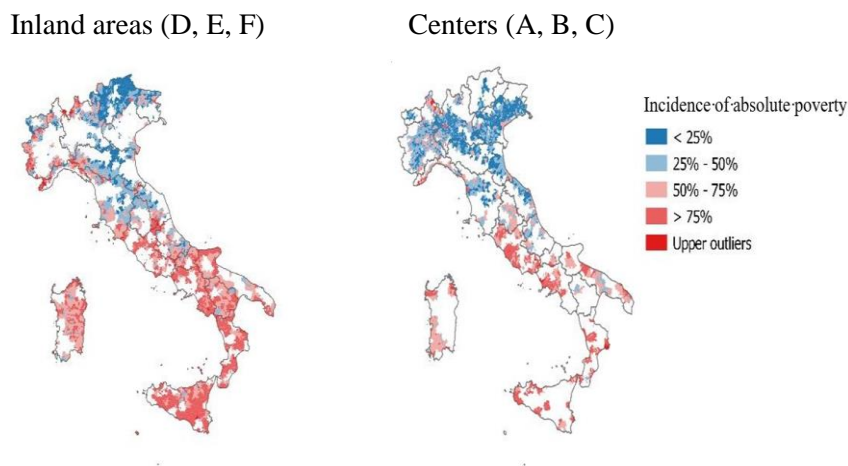
The municipalities of the South confirm the higher incidence of poverty and at risk of poverty only, which is even more significant for the municipalities in the Belt or Inland Areas (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Families in absolute poverty and at risk of poverty only by breakdown. Year 2017.



If we compare the incidence of absolute poverty in inland areas and in centers, it is observed that in the inland areas families in medium-high absolute poverty classes (in red and dark red) prevail, especially in the South.

In the Centers there is a high level of absolute poverty, especially those with a high degree of urbanization and in the Center and South (Lazio, Campania, Puglia, Calabria, Sicily) (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Incidence of absolute municipal poverty in inland areas - Year 2017.

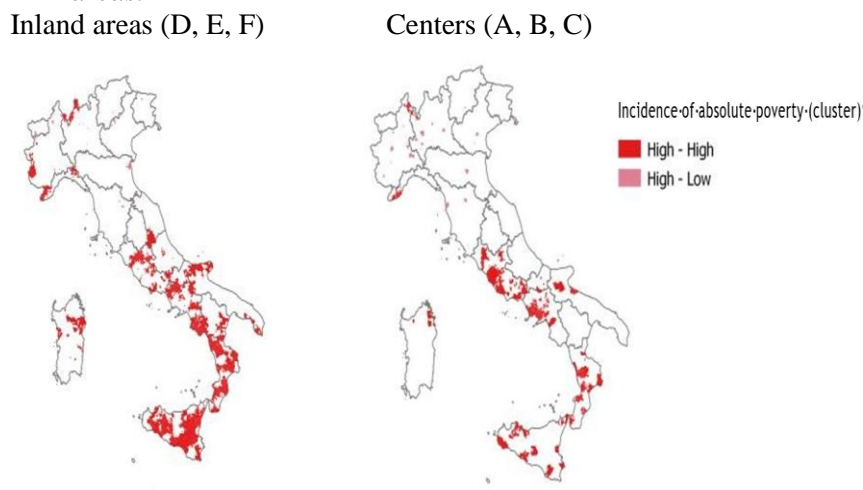
To analyze the presence of any spatial associations and identify the "critical areas" of poverty in Italy, the techniques of Spatial Analysis were used. In particular, the Local Indicator of Spatial Association (LISA) proposed by Anselin (LISA) was used which allows to evaluate the similarity between each observation and the elements surrounding it.

These associations can be of the High-High type (high values observed in a territorial unit and high values also in its surroundings) or Low-Low (low values observed in a territorial unit and low values also in one's own neighborhood) in the case of positive autocorrelation. Conversely, the associations will be of the High-Low or Low-High type in case of negative autocorrelation.

To facilitate the reading, only the significant associations of the municipalities of the last quartile have been reported in the cartogram, colored with a more intense shade when the association is of the High-High type, i.e. neighboring municipalities all with a high level of the indicator, and with a more tenuous tone in the case of High-Low association, i.e. a municipality with a high level of the indicator and neighboring municipalities with a low level of the indicator.

The cartogram also confirms the presence of areas of high incidence of the phenomenon distributed among Campania, Calabria and Sicily also for the absolute poverty of the Inland areas (Figure 5).

Figure 5 – Incidence of absolute municipal poverty in inland areas. The "critical" areas.



4. Conclusions

The integration and use for statistical purposes of administrative sources allows the analysis of particularly fine estimation domains and the analysis on a municipal basis allows highlighting the strong territorial variability.

In terms of absolute poverty North-South dualism is confirmed: 1) with reference to households, the South recorded a significant increase from 2016 to 2017 (from 8.5% to 10.3%) confirming itself as the most disadvantaged area of Italy; 2) the incidence of absolute poverty also grows for individuals (from 7.9% in 2016 to 8.4% in 2017), reaching in the South the highest value (11.4%) among the divisions⁶.

Absolute poverty is not unique to the Inland Areas, but it is particularly present in highly urbanized centers and the risk of poverty-only increases moving toward the Inland Areas.

Beyond the results presented, this work intends to represent a first verification of the possibility of using the databases of the ArchIMEDe project for a territorial analysis of the phenomenon of poverty. The results summarized here highlight the informative potential of the ArchIMEDe datasets. In fact, the analysis of poverty conducted on survey data and administrative sources, suitably integrated, has made it possible to deepen the level of territorial detail of the analysis, producing municipal analyzes of the incidence of the phenomenon under investigation.

⁶ ISTAT. LE STATISTICHE DELL'ISTAT SULLA POVERTÀ - Statistica report - Anni 2016-2017-2018-2019.

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SUMMARY

The official estimates of poverty among Italian families mostly use the results of sample surveys, so they do not go beyond the regional detail as regards the incidence of relative poverty and the risk of poverty-only and stop at the level of breakdown by estimates relating to absolute poverty. A significant part of the inland areas has gradually undergone a process of marginalization marked by depopulation since the Second World War, an aging population, a decrease in the qualitative and quantitative level of essential services, a weakening of the training offer and degradation of the natural and cultural heritage, also favoring hydro-geological instability.

This study aims to estimate the incidence of poverty in inland areas using a statistical source, the Integrated Archive of Economic and Demographic Microdata (ARCHIMEDE) project, made available by Istat. This study shows that the integration and use of administrative sources for statistical purposes allows the analysis of particularly fine estimation domains and the analysis on a municipal basis allows, in fact, to highlight the strong territorial variability.

In terms of absolute poverty and risk of poverty-only, the North-South dualism is confirmed. Absolute poverty is not an exclusive feature of Inland Areas, but it is particularly present in highly urbanized Centers and the risk of poverty-only increases moving towards Inland Areas.

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