
Mixt agriculture and diffused industrialisation. Aspects of North-Eastern Italy economic development path

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Abstract: The paper discusses relations between early modern rural structures, and industrialisation paths taking a selected territory of the Veneto region as a case study. It questions, in particular, the influence of the system of mixed farming (*coltura promiscua*) performed by independent peasant family (*famiglia appoderata*) on the so-called ‘diffused industrialisation processes’ occurred in Italy from the 1960s onwards. It verifies if mixed farming can explain through its social, economic, and territorial structures the specific modernisation path that stays at the origins of current economic configuration. The article contributes to the analysis of the incidence of rural contexts on local development and, in particular, on the emergence of an industrial structure widely based on little and medium firms. Methodological approach unites critical analysis of selected scientific publications statistical reconstruction of relevant economic trends, and empirical study of a territory at municipality level.

Keywords: mixed agriculture; diffused industrialisation; North-Eastern Italy economic development; industrial districts; Italy.

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1 Introduction

With the exception of alpine areas, and parts of its southern plain, Veneto region shows a territory characterised by a tight union, and juxtaposition of rural and urban spaces, cultivated fields, industrial areas, factories, service facilities. Landscape visually mirrors the effects of the so-called diffused industrialisation, and of its counterpart the diffused urbanisation. Diffused industrialisation emerged in the 1960s as the main trend of regional modernisation, transforming agrarian space into an industrialised one and keeping, at same time, agriculture and manufacturing socially, economically and territorially tightly interconnected. In this context industrial expansion has been based on the performances of medium and small enterprises, often acting as subcontractors of major companies. Family-based pluri-activity combining occupation in factories, and in the fields represents the other peculiarity, and heritage, of the regional way of modernisation. Even in present time entrepreneurs and workers alike are often keeping personal links with their rural past seen as a cultural trait, as much as a hobby. What are the origins of this peculiar territorial and economic configuration? Is there any link between Veneto's rural past and present-day industrial specificities? Can long-term territorial transformations offer new interpretative approaches of current social and productive structures?

Moving from these questions, the present research reconstructs the historical roots of diffused industrialisation. In particular it assumes that existing economic structures are the results of successive waves of industrialisation of a territory dominated by a particular form of land exploitation the so-called mixed farming performed on small, and medium sized independent plots by enlarged rural families, the *famiglia appoderata* (Desplanques, 1958). Namely, this interaction between agriculture and industry built the framework on which emerged present day economy. The mixed farming model; the progressive transition from agriculture to industry in a context of low urbanisation, and of absence of major industrial concentration; the juxtaposition within the same family of diverse tasks (rural, industrial, commercial) leading to pluri-activity schemes; and the appearance, from the 1970s onwards, of myriad of factories dispersed in the territory are tightly linked processes building up the core of current regional economy. Given these premises, our main hypothesis is that territory, identified as a complex set of environmental, social, economic, cultural features, constitutes a lens through which explore, and understand relevant aspects of the world we are living in (Camagni and Capello, 2013; Lacquement and Chevalier, 2016; Berezin et al., 2016c).

2 State-of-the-art and methodology

Literature on North-Eastern Italy economic specificities is vast and comprehensive. Studies on North-Eastern Italy industrialisation paths have stressed the relevance of traditional productive structures on economic development (Bagnasco, 1977, 1988); of their social and cultural specificities (Fua and Zacchia, 1984); of their active participation to the industrialisation processes (Ciccarelli and Fachin, 2017). They also stressed the direct role of peasants who, especially after the Second World War, reacted to wide-spread poverty switching to manufacturing, often using fields and rural infrastructures for hosting new activities, obtaining credit, or simply diversifying the sources of revenues (Scarpa, 1963; Belfanti, 1993; Celetti, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). It has

been stressed that pluri-activity was a widespread form of economic organisation. It integrated revenues, and contributed in maintaining over time connections between industry and agriculture through the juxtaposition of the two activities (Esposti, 2002; Celetti, 2015).

Numerous studies explained regional development building on Veneto's social peculiarities. The importance of the family as base for solidarity and mutual support; diffused sense of entrepreneurship; proximity and interrelationship between economic operators specialised in different, yet contiguous sectors; shared culture, and ideological values have all been considered essential characters of the regional economy. These features are presented among the factors that allowed firms in the past as well as in the present day to reach success in the domestic and international arena, consolidate their position in the world market, increase their resilience, and react effectively to exogenous shocks (Fontana, 2004a, 2004b). They have also been used as explanatory models for depicting the emergence of local industrial districts (Beccattini, 2009; Claver-Cortes et al., 2019; Settembre Blundo, 2019).

Researches have focused on the effects of major economic transformations (ODrucker, 1993). The crisis 1973–1974 has been interpreted as a pushing factor, stressing, in particular, that the restructuring processes of the largest companies through outsourcing opened new possibilities to small and medium subcontractors (Crestanello, 1996; Roverato, 1996, 2004). During the 1980s the opening to foreign concurrence spurred firms to enhance quality, efficiency, and specialisation, often using proximity for building collaborative relations, sharing skills and know how, exchanging specialised workers, and reallocating contracts within local production networks (Belfanti and Maccabelli, 1997). The crisis of 1992, co-determined by the processes of European monetary unification and globalisation emphasised the relevance of international networks for successfully entering global value chains (Corò, 1998; Caroli and Fratocchi, 2000; Corò, 2003, 2004; Barzotto, 2018). From the 1990s industrial district also suffered from the delocalisation of many contractors which at once increased concurrence and stressed the relevance of international relations. These processes did not, as feared, led to far-reaching 'deterritorialization', but, on the contrary, highlighted in the medium term the value of the 'local space' as a source of competitive advantage given by the unique immaterial assets embedded in single areas. Local production acquire by this way new life in the global market (Fortis, 1998; Lees-Maffei and Fallan, 2014; Bettiol, 2015). Besides overall positive interpretations, scholars also discussed the limits of the small factory model (Corò, 2007; Leoncini and Montresor, 2008). Weak financial structures, lack of professional managers in family-based firms, difficulties in moving towards high-technology (Arora et al., 2001), and high-quality niches were seen as intrinsic fragilities (Baldone et al., 2001). The severity of the 2008–2009 crises seemed to confirm these interpretations (Corò and Anastasia, 2009; Sedita et al., 2017). Medium term results, however, were much more articulate. If, in fact, Veneto's industrial structure was hardly hit¹, evidence showed that many firms of all size, including the smallest ones and those operating in traditional sectors, found innovative ways for dealing effectively with falling demand, and renewed concurrence (Rossetti, 2003; Camuffo, 2017). Successful companies were able to develop new products, and innovative commercial strategies, they renovated themselves in terms skills and capabilities, they moved into high quality niches at global level often introducing up to date information technology to overcome at competitive costs space and time boundaries (Celetti, 2019; Corò, 2018), or to exploit

scarce resources, as, for example, energy (Goodman et al., 2016; De Chiara, 2017; Gabaldón-Estevan and Ybarra, 2017; Simeoni et al., 2018). Firms effectively used the fast-growing demand for high quality, semi-luxury, and luxury goods, that, paradoxically enough, emerged as a major trend namely during the crisis, building on their artisanal background (Gillmore, 2007; Bocconcelli et al., 2015; Lombardi, 2016; Sergi, 2019a; Berezin, 2016a; Carli and Morrison, 2018; Turgel and Ulyanova, 2019; Turgel, 2019). Quality, in particular, is ever more interpreted as a juxtaposition of material and immaterial values, like history, culture, landscape, that, in turn are tightly linked with territorially identified productions (Corò and Grandinetti, 2010; Busato and Corò, 2011; Anastasia and Corò, 2011; Volpe et al., 2012; Corò and Gurisatti, 2016; Palazzo, 2017; Altamura and Pisani, 2019; Perrino, 2020; Festa, 2020). Building on consolidated studies about diffused industrialisation and districts' location (Indovina et al., 1990; Piccinato, 1992), scholars stressed the role of territory as a competitive factor (Hartman, 2014; Corò and Dalla Torre, 2015; Yanagisako, 2018; De Ottati, 2018; Dyba, 2020). Generating chains of firms deeply embedded in specific areas, diffused industrialisation (Ferrario, 2019; Brogiolo et al., 2016; Bellicini, 1992) – has then been interpreted as element of competitive advantage offering recognition in the global arena, enhancing, through local networks, resilience, spurring cooperative approaches (Hausmann et al., 2014; Hidalgo, 2015; Corò and Dalla Torre, 2015; Buciuni and Pisano, 2018; Muftiadi, 2018; Burlina, 2020; Festa, 2020). These results are not to be considered simply as an autonomous effect of exogenous trends on former rural spaces, but as the outcome of long-term transformations within a peculiar agrarian context that adapted its core characteristics to changing environment (Corò, 1999; Belussi, 2020). Though convincingly enough explaining the core transformation of the regional economy, scholars only partially considered the influence of pre-existing agrarian structures on the processes having generated diffused industrialisation link between the later and mixed farming, in particular, remains only partially explored. The paper focuses namely on the relations between mixed farming and diffused industrialisation, showing how this particular agricultural approach can be considered a precondition for the spread of little and medium factories in the countryside, as well as for the emerging of the still remarkable vitality of the regional industrial districts.

Methodologically, the article unites, the analysis of scientific literature, of archival documents, of iconographic sources, and of statistical data, with on the field work conducted on the municipality of Carmignano del Brenta, whose history exemplifies the reciprocal links between agriculture and industry. The juxtaposition of these sources gives new insights on broad territorial, economic, and social transformations, as well as on the influence of traditional agrarian practices on modernisation trends.

3 Territory and diffused industrialisation

Diffused industrialisation has developed on territories structured by a particular form of land exploitation that historically characterised most part of the middle and higher Veneto's plain² the so called 'mixed farming', or 'heterogeneous agriculture'. The term indicates agricultural practices centred on the harmonious co-existence of different cultivations within a single production unit, the *podere* managed by enlarged peasant family, the *famiglia appoderata*. Single fields, in particular, were typically organised on cereals bordered by vineyards leaned on fruit trees, or, by the late 19th century, on

mulberries [Ferrario, (2019), p.204]. This option allowed maximising land exploitation, obtaining both cash crops (cereals), and other productions sold in the market as well as used for auto-consumption, like, for example, fruits, wine, hemp or flax. It implied high labour intensity, and tasks' diversification. Ideally, it constituted the base on which the peasant family build its autonomy. It was consistent with a form of agriculture structured on mixed land tenures (peasant worked its own small plots, but also rented land); on contiguous settlements of independent farmers; and on family-based, rather than village-based, rural activity (Ferrario, 2019; Sergi, 2018, 2019b). Already diffused in the Middle-Ages, this approach persisted all though the Early Modern and Modern Time to reach unaltered the 20th century. Even if crisis, and hereditary successions progressively reduced the number, and dimension of independent exploitations, enlarging the class of poor tenants, and consolidating that of major land-owners, mixed farming remained the most diffused option of land exploitation. Farmers tended to maintain their properties however reduced to small portions. Land-lords rented small plots as a way of maximising the rent, which, in turn, opened to farmers the possibility to combine within the same family the exploitation of owned and rented soil (Celetti, 2009a). Behind apparent equilibrium, the above-mentioned approach increased, in the long run, pressure on land – which explains high level of rent – and the general impoverishment of rural families witnessed by the 17th century onwards (Di Tullio, 2020). It was also responsible of the recognised backwardness of regional agriculture, small tenants lacking the material, and cultural means for modernising production processes (Rosina et al., 2000). By the mid 18th century the system reached a first frontier. Positive demographic trend and increasing indebtedness had reduced peasants' revenues, bringing many households on the edge of famine. Namely at that time, however, appeared in the pre-alpine area the first 'mechanised manufactures' localised in the area mainly because of the availability of water energy. Manufacturers offered – complementary revenues to peasant families. The later, though accessing to factory work, did cut their links with the rural milieu, worker's wage complementing, and not substituting, rural produce. On the other hand, local entrepreneurs discovered that the 'worker-peasants' could be hired at lower salaries than their urban counterparts. The 'vital minimum' of the former was in fact set at family level, and budgeted adding a plurality of revenues. Industry and agriculture complemented, and not excluded, each other. Manufacturing shops and mixed farming, balanced, and reinforced each other within a single system of family revenues (Celetti, 2015). During the second half of the 19th century a new wage of industrialisation emerged in Veneto's countryside, territorially extending from the pre-alpine region towards the central plain (Roverato, 1996). Peasants turned ever more frequently to factory work to balance their budgets, reproducing pluri-activity schemes (Celetti, 2008, 2015). Industry changed the landscape, fostering the construction of infrastructures, as roads and railroads. Workers and peasants lived side by side, often within the same household. Habits, know-how, skills, attitudes were by this way disseminated among large layers of the population, which, in turn, contributed in generating entrepreneurial potentials (Celetti, 2009b, 2015; Fontana, 2004a). Institutions backed the industrialisation of the countryside'. The Catholic Church, first of all, was deeply concerned both by emigration, and urbanisation processes, as they potentially diverted people from 'traditional values'. It supported therefore initiatives meant to increase job opportunities at local level. Support was also granted by national authorities fearing workers' concentration, and socialist movements. They eased the realisation of necessary

infrastructures, as communication ones (Fontana, 2004b). The creation of factories in the countryside appeared an advantageous solution for all actors. Rural families found complementary sources of revenue, enhanced their welfare and resilience. Entrepreneurs profited of low salaries as well as of ‘social stability’. Institutions hold back political, and ideological threads. This context gradually generated the environment that, after the Second World War, hosted the process of diffused industrialisation. Mixed farming, with its social, economic and territorial peculiarities, played in it an active role (Graziani, 1998; Rullani and Romano, 1998). Rural estates offered the material context for housing small shops, farms being gradually adapted to manufacturing. It also enhanced credit’s possibilities as mortgage capital. Road and waterways linked production centres to markets, at provincial, regional and national level. Habit to pluri-activity, and familiarity with factory work eased the transition from agriculture to industry. The existence of numerous villages, and little cities created itself a favourable environment, generating immediate demand for basic goods that could be well offered by local artisans. Finally, road, rail- and waterways linked production centres to ever distant markets, at provincial, regional and national level. Once set up, the process alimented itself, up to the moment when, in the 1960s, it definitely transformed the regional economic panorama [Ferrario, (2019), p.204]. The relevance of the rural past and heritage is confirmed by the fact that pluri-activity remained, at least at family level, widely present. When agriculture became marginal as sources of revenue, it nevertheless resisted initially as a cultural factor, then as space of leisure. This persistence even when affluence was secured proves the strong cultural, and social links of a society with its territory, history and tradition. Diffused industrialisation, urbanisation and agriculture shaped each other, giving birth to a peculiar territory, the so called *agropolitana*, where cultivation, industrial plants, and urban areas present a homogeneous continuum (Ferrario et al., 2011).

Mixed agriculture and diffused industrialisation appear therefore two intertwined aspects of Veneto’s modernisation process. This connection emerges particularly clear in the medium part of the Veneto’s plain, covering the central areas of the provinces of Venice, Treviso, Padua, and Vicenza. It confirms the hypothesis that the development of small and medium firms in the countryside is rooted in its historical territorially embedded features.

4 Empirical evidence: Carmignano di Brenta

An example of the links between is mixed agriculture and diffused industrialisation is given by the history of Carmignano di Brenta, a municipality at the North-Eastern frontier of Padua province³. It has been chosen as a case-study because of the representative evidence it gives of the above-mentioned processes.

Mixed agriculture emerged in Carmignano from the late Middle-Ages, as a form of rural modernisation meant to increase land productivity. The model was based on the so called *podere*, an agricultural exploitation conducted directly and independently by enlarged families, the *famiglia appoderata*. Estates could either belong to the rural family, either to major landlords – usually local, and from the 15th century onwards, Venetian aristocrats⁴ – who divided their properties into plots to be rented, rather than manage them as single enterprises.

As a matter of fact, two forms of land exploitation coexisted within the same territory: small and medium estates cultivated within mixed farming system and big

estates directly and unitarily administered by the landlord or its representative. The later form went already by the 17th century, into modernisation processes. They fully exploited the water of nearby Brenta river for enlarging pastures and livestock, or for creating rice fields, enhancing by this way profitability⁵. They rationally organised their workforce. They applied up-to-date agronomic concepts and methods (Celetti, 2012). Alongside, they gradually increased tenures, acquiring lands from peasant burdened by debt, and hereditary successions, setting on a trend that reached its apex in the first decades of the 19th century. By that time, mixed agriculture occupied only 17% of the municipal area, whereas rice fields, pastures, and extensive cereal cultures reached together 51% of the territory⁶. During the same period, Carmignano witnessed widespread development of silkworm breeding, mulberry trees substituting fruit trees in mixed agriculture schemes. As soon as in 1830, 678 mulberry trees were counted within the limits of the municipality⁷, which can be interpreted as a tentative of small and medium farmers to compensate declining revenues through production diversification (Scalco, 1993; Cazzola, 1996)⁸. At the beginning of the Modern Era, local agriculture presented characters slightly atypical in Veneto and in the Padua province, as up-to-date forms of exploitation managed in large farms were more diffused than mixed agriculture [Ferrario, (2019), p.204]. The results were, however, not so consolidated as it might seem, and, already by the mid-19th century, the picture of Carmignano advanced agricultural landscape had changed significantly moving towards more traditional forms of exploitation. The Austrian Census of 1846 shows that mixed agriculture occupied anew around half of the rural territory (600.80 hectares out of 1,238.20), whereas rice fields dropped to 7%, and pastures to 22% (Cfr. Tables 1–3). These transformations mirrored two main processes. On the one hand, larger exploitations often resorted to renting, rather than managing directly the land. They responded by this way to crisis, as that of 1817–1820, and to the political and economic uncertainties of the time, as rent, more than market, secured stable revenues. On the other hand, small and medium farmers closed themselves into mixed agriculture practices, searching the widest possible range of harvests for direct use, and sale. By the late 19th century, however, even this option had reached its limits, as proved by the first significant waves of emigration (Franzina, 2005), the low average consumption of basic goods, as salt and tobacco, or the relatively high diffusion of pellagra registered in 1880 (Celetti, 2008). The social and economic landscape, however, changed once again, a new actor having entered the scene, offering spaces for occupation, and, paradoxically enough, additional perspectives to mixed agriculture. In the 1870s, a preexisting paper mill was enlarged into a modern factory, the *Cartiera di Carmignano*, and it rapidly acquired a central role in the local economy. The firm expanded its workforce from 20 people to 76 in between 1877 and 1890 (Celetti, 2008). The factory also impacted on the local society. A significant share – around 20% – of the 440 families inscribed on the 1891 census counted on an industrial salary that often complemented, and not substituted, agricultural revenues. Structural pluri-activity had become a familiar trait in the municipality. In this context, mixed agriculture was indirectly reinforced. It integrated industrial salaries and rural revenues into a single budget, it allowed self-consumption, it enhanced lower classes' resilience and, with it, social stability.⁹ The 1929 census shows the consolidated presence of small properties cultivated by single, enlarged families who owned (32.08%) or rented (42.58) the land. Of the latter, however, as much as 24 % were also landowners, which reflects the complexity of property distribution, but also the willingness of most small farmers to

increase production, enlarging their plots within the mixed agriculture framework. During the fascist period the area witnessed a modest, though real, increase of industrial activities. Along with the further development of the paper mill, which reached 227 employees in 1927¹⁰, were founded mechanical and food shops, often linked with the agricultural sector, wood, construction and textile firms. They were all of quite small dimensions, the biggest one being a wooden mill occupying five workers (Table 4). The industrial expansion had no real influence on agricultural landscape, as clearly shown by Figure 1, depicting Carmignano's rural territory in the early 1950s. as formed by myriad of small plots, clearly run under mixed agriculture schemes.

That marked, however, a frontier between the old and the new world. Already during the 1950s, in fact, industrialisation emerged as a major trend transforming local economy and society. It appeared in form of two successive waves pushed by exogenous forces, the first one in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the second in the following decades operating, however, within a positive context. In both occasions, the habit to pluri-activity, the availability of infrastructures that could be used as shops (farms) or offered as mortgage to obtain credits (real estates) created the precondition for the creation of new factories. In the 1950s, the immediate needs of the population created a potentially vast market for basic goods. Then, in the 1960s, Carmignano acceded to public aid within the legislation of the so-called 'depressed areas', which subsidized the creation of new industrial plants. In the 1970s and 1980s, then, the 'outsourcing revolution', major firms subcontracting labour intensive phases, contributed in generating a galaxy of little and medium subcontractors. Besides, local industrialisation benefited of 'imitative processes' among people living in close contact at family and village level, alimending 'from within' the creation of firms. In the 1970s, emerged in the municipality industrial clusters, in the paper, textile and mechanical sectors (Sergi and Berezin, 2018; Sergi, 2019b; Sergi et al., 2018). In the mid 1990s, 'diffused industrialisation' reached its maturity, Carmignano counting around 111 shops, with an average of 15 employees per firm (Table 5). Geographically, most factories were dispersed in all the territory of the municipality, as they had been created within rural properties¹¹. This aspect, which represents the most visible trait of 'diffused industrialisation' was only partially mitigated by the creation, in the early 1990s, of the 'industrial zone'.¹¹ During this decade, a few important companies, as the Cartiera di Carmignano, Cartiere Cariolaro, Ondulato Veneto, Cooperativa Edile, O.R.V and others reached international relevance. They also generated, above in the paper, textile, and mechanical sector, clusters of highly specialised subcontractors. Industrial development, on the other hand, did not determined the disappearance of agriculture that, specialising in viable productions, as upper segment cheese and breeding, investing in technology, enhanced quality, and managed to positively adapt to new economic context. This, in turn, gave to local territory the peculiar aspect of a continuous successions of fields, factories, and service infrastructures that constitutes one of the most original character of Central and Northern part of the Veneto plain. Recent evolutions, as that determined by 2008 crises, did not alter the core characters of the territory, inducing mainly a concentration of firms in certain sectors, and increasing the number of medium-sized companies in comparison to small ones (Tables 4–5).

Table 1 Cultivations (in percentage of the total rural land) 1826

<i>Cultivation</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Cultivation</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Cereals	14.07	Pasture and meadows	21.74
Cereal with fruit or vines trees (piantata)	0.56	Pasture with fruit or vines trees	2.26
Rice	33.20	Others	28.17

Source: A.S.V., Catasto Austriaco, Attipreparatori, b. 131, Comuncensuario di Carmignano, Prospetto di classificazione. Appendice da unirsi al prospetto di classificazione del comuncensuario di Carmignano, anno 1826

Table 2 Main cultivations of Padova province (in percentage per agrarian zones) 1846

	<i>Agrarian zones</i>							<i>Total</i>
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>VII</i>	
Cereals	10	16	3	5	9	6	8	8
Cereals with fruit or vines trees	50	61	82	82	76	82	65	74
Meadows	8	16	13	10	7	4	6	11
Pastures	3	1	1	1	2		3	
Wood	24	3		1				3
Other	5	3	1	1	6	8	18	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Celetti (2009b, p.103)

Figure 1 Carmignano – 1954

Source: https://www.igmi.org/geoprodotti#c2=%2Fpunti-geodetici&b_start=0&c4=1299859.77%2C5717768.46%2C1305714.17%2C5726188.93&c4=intersects

Table 3 Cultivations (in percentage of the total rural land) 1846

<i>Cultivation</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Cultivation</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Cereals	15.24	Pasture and meadows	23.00
Cereal with fruit or vines trees (piantata)	48.67	Pasture with fruit or vines trees	0.61
Rice	6.84	Others	5.63

Source: A.S.V., Catasto Austriaco, Attipreparatori, b. 131, Comunecensuario di Carmignano, Prospetto di classificazione. Appendice da unirsi al prospetto di classificazione del comunecensuario di Carmignano, anno 1826

Table 4 Industrial activities (1927)

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Number of firms</i>	<i>Number of workers (including owner)</i>	<i>Average number of worker</i>
Wood	8	16	2
Food	11	23	2.09
Paper	1	227	227
Mechanics	8	14	1.75
Metals	1	5	5
Textiles	3	3	1

Source: ISTAT, Censimento Industriale e commerciale al 15 October 1927, I, Esercizi Industriali e Commerciali nei comuni del Regno, 1928, 401–404

Table 5 Industrial activities (1996–2011)

<i>Sector</i>	<i>1996</i>			<i>2011</i>			<i>Difference</i>	
	<i>N. firms</i>	<i>N. workers</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>N. firms</i>	<i>N. workers</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>N. firms</i>	<i>N. workers</i>
Food	5	25	5.00	2	26	13.00	–3	+1
Textiles	30	651	21.70	23	572	24.86	–7	–79
Leather	2	25	12.50	/	/	/	/	/
Wood and paper	78	552	7.07	14	651	46.50	–64	+99
Chemicals	1	3	3.00	/	/	/	–1	–3
Plastics	3	65	21.66	/	/	/	–3	–65
Minerals	9	98	10.88	/	/	/	–9	–98
Metals	13	41	3.15	6	143	23.83	–7	+102
Mechanics	6	77	12.83	9	154	17.11	+3	+77
Electricals	8	68	8.5	1	15	15	–7	–53
Others	16	100	6.25	9	218	24.22	–7	+118
Total	111	1,705	15.36	64	1,779	27.79	–48	+74

Source: ISTAT, *Padova, Censimento Intermediario dell'Industria e dei Servizi*, 31 December 1996, pp.92–99; Id. 31 December 2011

5 Conclusions

Empirical analysis confirms the relevance of traditional rural structures as mixed farming in moulding modernisation. Territory mirrors in its material configuration these processes and, at the same time, contributes in determining their actual transformations. These assumptions have been analysed with reference of Veneto region, taking a specific area, the municipality of Carmignano di Brenta, as case study providing an example of the above-mentioned interactions. Conclusions confirm our hypothesis, showing how preexisting rural structure sustained diffused industrialisation, and participated in determining current economic and territorial configuration. It has been stressed that the origins of the Veneto's 'diffused industrialisation' lay back into a peculiar form of agricultural exploitation, and tenure organisation based on 'mixed farming'. These centuries old practices created the material and cultural background that made it possible firstly exploit pluri-activity schemes at family level, and then to grasp the opportunities offered by small scale industrialisation. Emerged in the 1950s, the model grew in 1970s and 1980s to reach its maturity in 1990s. Finally, from a methodological point of view, the study highlights the relevance of diachronic analysis of homogenous territories to understand current economic mechanism, and provide guidelines for further, long-term development into ever more complex, and dynamic world markets.

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Notes

- 1 Veneto's industrial system lost 4,000 firms in the year 2008–2009, and 8,000 more in the years 2012–2013 (Corriere della Sera, 14 January 2019).
- 2 See <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/veneto/>.
- 3 <https://idt2.regione.veneto.it/>.
- 4 The families Vanzanati, Thiene, Borelli, Dalla Piazza, Capra, Contarini and others belonging to Venetian and local upper classes still hold at the beginning of the 19th century properties of more than 23 hectares in the municipality (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, from now on ASV, *Catasto Austriaco*, Atti Preparatori, b. 131, Comune censuario di Carmignano, Prospetto di Classificazione, anno 1826).

- 5 At the beginning of the 19th century Carmignano produced mainly cereals of different kinds, rise, wood, wine and hay. Mulberry trees started to replace vines within the *piantata* framework typical of mixed farming. Produce was mostly consumed by the community, and only major estates managed to sell it in the local market or send to Padova, Vicenza or Venice (ASV, *Catasto Autriaco*, Atti Preparatori, b. 131, Comune censuario di Carmignano, *Prodotti Agrari*. anno 1826).
- 6 ASV, *Catasto Austriaco*, Atti preparatory, b. 131, Comune censuario di Carmignano, *Propsetto di classificazione. Appendice da unirsi al prospetto di classificazione del commune censuario di Carmignano*, anno 1826. See for geographical reference <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/veneto/>.
- 7 ASV, *Catasto Austriaco*, Quaderno dei gelsi del commune censuario di Carmignano con Camazzole.
- 8 Austrian cadastre noted that the condition of peasants, both with and without owned land, was extremely poor, due to the low prices of products, and to the excessive value of rent that, in turn, was determined by the demand of land in relation to available offer. Produce was almost totally used to pay the rent and consumed by the rural family, and only marginally sold in the market (ASV, *Catasto Autriaco*, Atti Preparatori, b. 131, Comune censuario di Carmignano, *Agricoltori*, anno 1826).
- 9 Figure 6 represents a clear picture of Carmignano territory when ‘mixed farming’ was still the dominant way of land exploitation to be confronted to Figure 7, where ‘mixed farming’ totally disappeared.
- 10 ISTAT, *Censimento industriale e commerciale al 15 October 1927*, I, *Esercizi industriali e commerciali nei comuni del Regno*, pp.401–404.
- 11 <https://idt2.regione.veneto.it/idt/webgis/viewer?webgisId=90>.