Chapter 1
Cities and Extension Plans in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies: Borgo Murattiano of Bari (1812–1859)

Giuseppe Carlone
Politecnico di Bari, Italy

ABSTRACT

In Italy in the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie decreed the end of the old model of urban development which had been limited by the rules of military architecture. In the years of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the Bourbons established the Consigli Edilizi. Between 1859 and 1860 Francis II established 19 Consigli Edilizi; 13 were in municipalities of an administrative district. With the decree of foundation of the suburb of Bari, Gioacchino Murat donated the state land to the city and ordered that private persons and holy places were obliged to register for assessment or to sell to the municipality any land lying within the perimeter of the suburb unless they wanted to build on it. The new regime of public ownership of the land ratified by the Murattiano decree was confirmed by the “Statutes for the regular formation of the suburb of Bari” approved on 1st December 1814. The last step for assignment of land takes place before a notary. This is the signing of the assessment contract which involves the mayor, the building commission called Deputazione del borgo and the applicant. This chapter details these steps.
INTRODUCTION

In southern Italy in the course of the 19th century the bourgeoisie decreed the end of the old model of urban development which for centuries had been limited by the rules of military architecture. The urge towards innovation was very strong, especially in relation to new living needs.

If the city was no longer considered a barrack square, its ‘opening up’ was seen as a sign of the new civilization.

Besides, the walled cities had almost wholly lost their original austere aspect. The moat, created as a forward defence, was cultivated by the peasants and the embankment was largely dismantled to make way for new buildings in the lee of the walls. Gates had been opened in the walls to facilitate access to the countryside. In many cases depots, warehouses, cellars, shops and small dwellings had been built.

A final negative aspect concerned the city’s hygienic and sanitary conditions. The dumps for olive presses and tanneries and the ditches for solid and liquid urban waste lay along the walls.

Expansion outside the city walls was not only a response to the needs of an over-dense population packed into mediaeval urban structures in precarious hygienic conditions; it was also a political act, marking the passage to a new era in which progress could be reflected in a new way of experiencing the city.

It resulted in criticism, terse and biting, which sometimes involved the most obsolete aspects of the old settlements, now seen as ‘historic centres’ of larger and more complex territorial and urban entities.

To complete insensitivity regarding the historic-architectonic value of the city walls and gates was added great attention to the physical and planning configuration of the new spaces which were to be built beyond the old defence of the walls.

There are three directions of research that combine to correctly trace the map of the urbanistic transformations in southern Italy during the Reign of the Two Sicilies.

The first concerns the plans of the suburbs, an expression of that culture which engineers and architects – under the direction of the Bridges and Roads Engineering Corps – brought into play to meet the growing need of city expansion. Set in a current of ideas of European dimension they applied theories and cultural models with originality and in accordance with local requirements.

In a general situation of local financial crisis, the costs of implementing the expansion plans represented the most serious problem for all municipalities. The most rational solution in many cases therefore appeared to be that of beginning construction of the suburbs, initially by taking a census of the municipally owned land around the built-up area and along the perimeter of the walls.

There were also other problems regarding the choice of plan, such as the possibility of linking the grid of the suburb with the municipal, regional and state
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