

CITIES CAUGHT IN THE NET: THE EMERGENCE OF URBAN PLOTS IN SABAUDIAN CADASTRAL MAPPING (18TH-19TH CENTURIES)

Paola Pressenda, Maria Luisa Sturani

Cadastral mapping in the past has been thoroughly studied from different perspectives. History of Cartography analysed technical and representational features of the maps and investigated the evolution of land surveying and the history of its practitioners. Institutional History shed light on the cadastre as a tool for fiscal reform introduced by several European monarchies between the 18th and 19th centuries and supported by the Physiocrats' ideals. Economic and Social History rather used it as a source for the reconstruction of the structures of landed property and land use in the past. All this research mainly focused on the role played by cadastral maps for imposing State control over landed property in the countryside and used it as a source for the study of the rural landscape.



◆ Cadastre of Mortara, 1760
Archivio di Stato di Torino, Sezioni Riunite, Catasti, Catasto sabaudo, Allegato C, Mortara (f. 3, f.6)



◆ Cadastre of Caselle, 1748
Archivio di Stato di Torino, Sezioni Riunite, Catasti, Catasto sabaudo, Allegato C

However, a growing interest of the State for increasing tax revenue – finally resulting in an extraordinary taxation on urban buildings in 1793 – raised the question for local authorities of how to survey and evaluate them. This prompted the extension of cadastral mapping to urban areas, with the gradual emergence of more detailed representations of urban plots, according to three modes:

- 1◆ a summary representation of the urban street system, illustrating in detail only orchard and garden plots (taxed);
- 2◆ a more detailed geometrical representation of urban plots, similar to that reserved to rural areas;
- 3◆ a double representation of the urban areas, with the mere street system inside the general map and a detail of the town with plots in a larger scale in the margin of the map.

After these first experiments carried out through the 18th century, it was only in the 19th century, with the accomplishment of the Napoleonic cadastre on the territories previously ruled by the Kings of Savoy, that the cities were systematically taxed and caught in the net of the cadastral grid (◆).



◆ Napoleonic cadastre of Torino, 1805
Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, Catasto napoleonico, sezione 71

◆ Catasto Gatti of Torino, 1820
(city block Monviso)
Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, Catasto Gatti, Album isole, Monviso 29



◆ Cadastre of Costigliole Saluzzo, 1750
Archivio di Stato di Torino, Sezioni Riunite, Catasti, Catasto sabaudo, Allegato A

In this context, the cadastre carried out by the Kingdom of Sardinia in the 18th century represents an important reference point and has been the object of much research: it is in fact one of the first modern geometrical cadastres accomplished at an Italian and European level and it has been followed for the same area by subsequent ones during the 19th century (Napoleonic cadastre; *Catasto Rabbini* in 1850), offering a unique opportunity for the study of rural landscape dynamics. Here our attention is focused on a specific and less studied feature of this cadastre, i.e. the changing ways by which urban spaces are represented on its maps.

Due to the particular organization of the Sabaudian taxation system in the early modern period, which functioned differently in the different territories subject to the crown and allowed the individual communities to decide how to distribute the fiscal burden among their members, very often urban plots and buildings were exempted from taxes. Therefore, in 18th century cadastral maps the detailed geometric representation of urban plots could be lacking.



◆ Cadastre of Cherasco, 1794
Archivio di Stato di Torino, Sezioni Riunite, Catasti, Catasto sabaudo, Allegato C



◆ Cadastre of San Damiano d'Asti, 1786
Archivio di Stato di Torino, Sezioni Riunite Catasti, Catasto sabaudo, Allegato C