

NAPLES 1540: THE DON PEDRO DE TOLEDO'S STRADA REALE. HISTORICAL URBAN ANALYSIS AND DIGITAL CARTOGRAPHY

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Abstract: *The Strada Reale, later Strada Toledo, was carried out in the mid 16th century and it was the main axis of the urban expansion wanted by the Spanish viceroy Don Pedro de Toledo. The plan, based on the new settlement of Quartieri Spagnoli and on the construction of wider urban walls, was aimed at the strategic-military redesign of the city, incorporating for the first time the hills of San Martino and Pizzofalcone with the defensive poles of Castel Sant'Elmo and Castel dell'Ovo. Far from being a master plan and, therefore, from addressing the actual urban problems, this expansion favored, until the early 18th century, an uncontrolled land exploitation by the noble and ecclesiastical classes, in the face of an enormous growth of extramural villages. The Strada Reale hosted along its façades some sumptuous palaces of the Spanish and Neapolitan nobility, connecting them to the management and representative pole which developed around the viceroy palace.*

Based on the recent studies of CIRICE aimed at the construction of an interactive digital map of Naples during the modern age, the paper proposes a new reading of this important street and of its context with the use of digital cartography applied to the historical and iconographic sources.

Keywords: *Viceregal Naples; Strada Toledo; Urban history; Historical digital cartography.*

Resumo: *A Strada Reale, posteriormente Strada Toledo, foi realizada em meados do século XVI e foi o principal eixo da expansão urbana pretendida pelo vice-rei espanhol D. Pedro de Toledo. O plano, baseado na nova povoação do Quartieri Spagnoli e na construção de muralhas urbanas mais amplas, visava o redesenho estratégico-militar da cidade, incorporando, pela primeira vez, as colinas de San Martino e Pizzofalcone, com os pólos defensivos de Castel Sant'Elmo e Castel dell'Ovo. Longe de ser um plano diretor e, portanto, de abordar os atuais problemas urbanos, esta obra teria favorecido, até o início do século XVIII, uma exploração descontrolada das terras pelas classes nobres e eclesiásticas, em face de um enorme crescimento de aldeias extramuros. A Strada Reale teria acolhido ao longo das suas fachadas alguns suntuosos palácios da nobreza espanhola e napolitana, e ligava-os ao pólo administrativo e representativo que se desenvolvia em torno do palácio do vice-rei.*

Com base nos estudos recentes do CIRICE voltados para a construção de um mapa digital interativo de Nápoles na modernidade, o artigo propõe uma nova leitura desta rua e de seu contexto com o uso da cartografia digital aplicada a fontes históricas e iconográficas.

Palavras-chave: *Viceregal Nápoles; Strada Toledo; História urbana; Cartografia digital histórica.*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper, leaving from the studies that CIRICE is carrying on the historical Neapolitan iconography and cartography for over twenty years, describes one of the most significant urban operations in modern Europe and certainly the most important for the urban development of the city of Naples between the 16th and 18th centuries. We are dealing with the plan executed by the will of Don Pedro de Toledo, viceroy of Naples from 1532 to 1553, that had the supporting elements in the Strada Reale, later Strada Toledo, and in the Quartieri Spagnoli. We'll refer on these subjects to our project *Naples Digital Archive*, that has just aimed at the construction of a «viceregal map» of Naples.

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE *STRADA REALE* TOLD BY MEANS OF THE HISTORICAL URBAN ICONOGRAPHY

In the *Tavola Strozzi* (ab. 1472, attr. F. Rosselli)¹ Naples still appears with the structure obtained during the Aragonese kingdom, with Castel Nuovo just rebuilt to replace the Angevin castle; then we see the Molo Grande, the urban nucleus surrounded by hills, the most important Angevin churches in evidence and the city walls along the coast with the gates of access to the city.

At the beginning of the Spanish rule in the Southern Italy, the plan by Don Pedro Álvarez de Toledo y Zúñiga, viceroy of Naples from 1532 to 1553, was started in 1540 with evident strategic and military purposes, as well as to control the Neapolitan population and nobility². So the urban expansion during the 16th century was not aimed at solving the social and urban problems that had long troubled the Neapolitans, nor it was therefore the implementation of a master plan for the city, but it was based on building a new circle of city walls to constitute a real citadel for the Spanish, including the military poles of Castel Sant'Elmo and Castel dell'Ovo, the new Viceregal Palace and a settlement to be used for the Spanish troops. Consequently, on the one hand an attempt was made to attract as much as possible to the capital the nobility from the territories of the Kingdom, even with tax concessions; on the other hand, it was forbidden, with a series of legislative provisions, to build in the extramural areas and in the villages. But, due to the enormous demographic increase, the consequence was, within one century, the total derogation from these prohibitions, with the growth of an «other city» outside the city walls.

In the view by Carlo Theti of 1560³ the work undertaken in 1540 to open the Strada Reale, then titled Strada Toledo from the viceroy's name, still appears in progress, with the first row of lots along the street. The new city walls are also represented: at

¹ DE SETA, BUCCARO, eds., 2006: 113.

² BUCCARO, 2016: 707-732.

³ DE SETA, BUCCARO, eds., 2006: 120.



Fig. 1
LAFRÉRY, Antoine, DU PÉRAC, Étienne, *View of the City of Naples*, 1566. Naples: San Martino National Museum
Source: DE SETA, 1997

that time, they were being carried on the western side, up to incorporate the hills of San Martino and Pizzofalcone with Castel dell'Ovo.

So, in the following view by Antoine Lafréry and Étienne Du Pérac (1566) (Fig. 1)⁴ the great street is just completed with its north-south route of more than one kilometer from the Porta Reale to the Viceregal Palace, designed by Ferdinando Manlio and Giovanni Battista Benincasa, together with the military grid of Quartieri Spagnoli and the new city walls reaching Castel Sant'Elmo, redesigned by the engineer Pedro Luis Escrivá. We also note the extramural settlements, consisting of the villages Loreto, Sant'Antonio Abate, Vergini-Sanità, Spirito Santo, Chiaia⁵. Here the Strada Reale is represented in its entirety as the backbone of the expansion wanted by Don Pedro and as the support of the Quartieri fabric, a new rectangular-shaped settlement of harmonious dimensions conceived as a residential and military *barrio cuartiel*, according to the widespread schemes by means of the Renaissance treatises, with the typical design of the Hispano-American colonization⁶.

⁴ DE SETA, BUCCARO, eds., 2006: 121.

⁵ BUCCARO, ed., 1991.

⁶ BUCCARO, 2016: 721; COLLETTA, 1985: 23-26.

In the Lafréry-Du Pérac's view the ancient *decumanus inferior*, now at the centre of the urban expansion and named because of this Spaccanapoli, has just been extended straight up to the slopes of the hill of San Martino, while the new axis via Monteoliveto-via Medina connects Porta Reale to Castel Nuovo and to the Port. We also note the viceregal citadel with the Palace, its square and gardens, and the adjoining strategic pole of Castel Nuovo surrounded by new mighty bastions designed by Antonio Marchesi da Settignano on a project by Francesco di Giorgio Martini at the beginning of the 16th century; these walls are accurately represented by Francisco de Hollanda in a beautiful view (1540 ca.)⁷. From the Don Pedro's Palace, the Strada di Chiaia goes west, joining the city with the ancient road to Rome.

The Dutch artist Jan van Stinemolen (1582)⁸ made a large view of the viceregal city from the Camaldoli hill, after the completion of the city walls, that are represented in the foreground. Highlights are Castel Sant'Elmo, the Strada Toledo and the Largo Mercatello, with the ancient city, the Gulf with Castel dell'Ovo, Pizzofalcone and the Vesuvian and Sorrento coasts; but this landscape is very much deformed to be contained in the field of view.

As we can see in some archival drawings, during the 16th century the Spanish also thought about building a fortified citadel between Castel Sant'Elmo and Castel dell'Ovo: since they conceived this walled nucleus as a defensive pole against the possible riots of the Neapolitans, they did not aim the guns of Sant'Elmo outwards, but towards the city. Around the middle of this century there were numerous cases of new streets opened in the historical fabrics of European cities, with an important urban role, just like the neapolitan Strada Toledo. In Italy we have above all the cases of Genoa and Palermo.

The Strada Nuova of Genoa⁹, now Via Garibaldi, was opened in 1550 and it was the axis of a new residential settlement for the Genoese aristocratic families who abandoned the medieval neighborhoods. They occupied this previously infamous area and their new buildings on both fronts of the street reveal a homogeneous architectural language in the Mannerist style, opening inside with some beautiful gardens. But, unlike the neapolitan road, the Strada Nuova had in fact no connection with the rest of the urban fabric.

The transformation of the ancient central street in Palermo, named the Cassaro¹⁰, was commissioned by the viceroy García de Toledo since 1567 and it was realized by gutting that axis from the Royal Palace to the sea, thus opening the Strada Nuova (today Via Vittorio Emanuele). So also along the «new» Cassaro, during the second

⁷ DE SETA, 1997: 84; BUCCARO, 2020: 70-74.

⁸ DE SETA, BUCCARO, eds., 2006: 125-126.

⁹ CARACENI, 1992.

¹⁰ CHIRCO, DI LIBERTO, 2017.

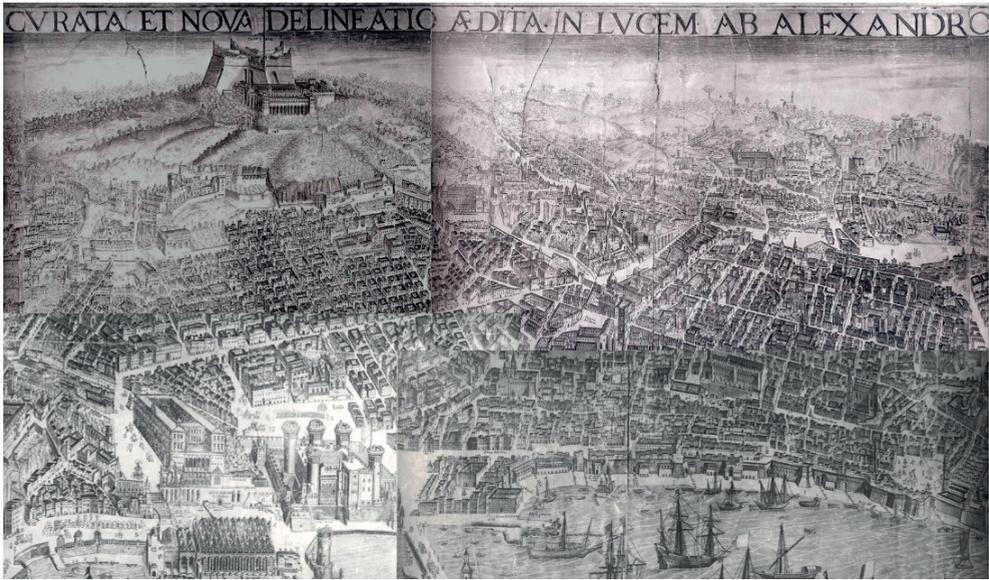


Fig. 2. BARATTA, Alessandro, *View of the City of Naples*, 1629. Naples: Banca Intesa
Source: DE SETA, 1997

half of the 16th century, many sumptuous noble buildings were built; since 1577 the street was intersected by Via Maqueda and at the beginning of the 17th century the famous Quattro Canti circus was built at the half of the route, in baroque forms on the model of Piazza Quattro Fontane in Rome.

The view by Alessandro Baratta (1629) (Fig. 2)¹¹ represents the viceregal Naples by now densely built up. The villages have expanded to form the *extra moenia* «other city», a symptom of an explosive demographic situation. Despite the «pragmatic sanctions» which prohibited any construction outside the city walls for strategic reasons and for population control, the territories outside the walled city were subject to extensive subdivisions by nobles and convents, who were the major owners of these lands, in order to create the maximum land rent. So, in the absence of a government plan, the *extra moenia* city was designed by private individuals in a completely «abusive» way, while also in the ancient city the convents were occupying every available space with the expansion of their buildings in accordance with the Counter-Reformation rules.

In the Baratta's view Strada Reale results by now complete in its long path from north to south, starting from the new Royal Palace, built in the early 17th century on a project by Domenico Fontana, including the renovation of the Strada di Chiaia in connection with the western area of the city. The grid of Quartieri Spagnoli appears extended on all sides beyond the original nucleus, which only reached up to the sixth

¹¹ DE SETA, BUCCARO, eds., 2006: 132-133.

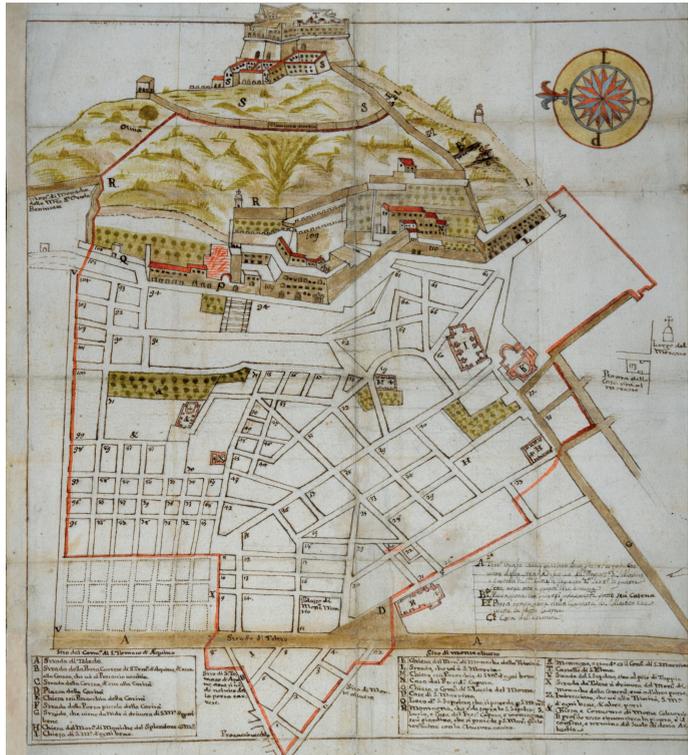


Fig. 3
 Partial «pre-cadastral» map
 of the Spanish Quarters, mid
 XVII century. State Archive of
 Naples, *Corporazioni Religiose*
Suppresse: 2222, 30
 Source: COLLETTA, 1985

parallel to Strada Toledo. The role of Castel Sant'Elmo is also evident, in line with the extension of the decumanus of Spaccanapoli; so too the importance of Castel Nuovo and of the Port enhanced with the new arsenal.

FROM THE «PRE-CADASTRAL» MAPS TO THE 19TH CENTURY ICONOGRAPHY

The areas occupied by the viceregal expansion with the Strada Toledo and the Spanish Quarters, largely owned by the noble class and by the monastic orders, had been acquired by the Spanish Crown for the execution of the military plan. But, in addition to those occupied by the new street and by the Quartieri, many others are parceled out by the owners in the following decades in order to obtain the maximum land rent.

In many 17th century maps the development of the Quartieri is represented from the original nucleus to the north up to the limit of the city walls, on some territories of noble and monastic property. These *Platee* detected by the monastic orders — generally called «pre-cadastral maps» and preserved in the State Archives of Naples (Figs. 3 and 4)¹² — show the new blocks of subdivisions designed in extension of the

¹² COLLETTA, 1985; BUCCARO, 2017: 147-150.

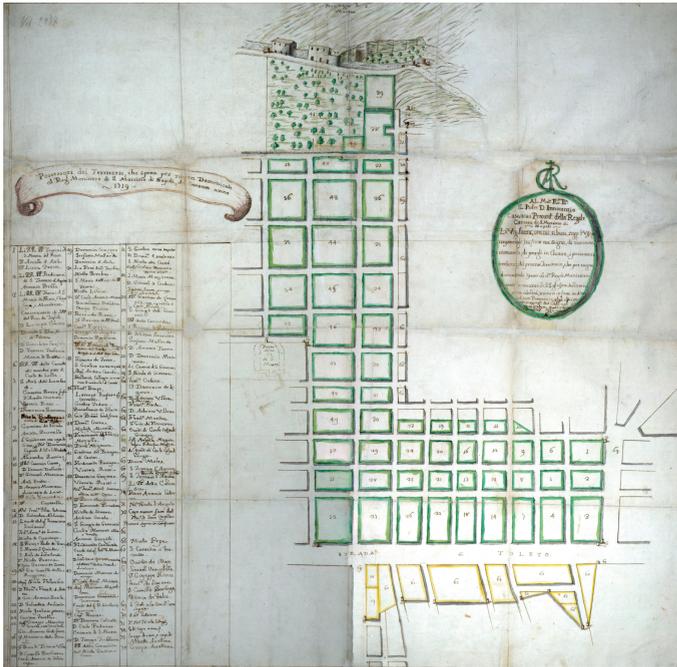


Fig. 4
 Partial «pre-cadastral» map of the Spanish Quarters at the end of the XVII century. State Archive of Naples, *Corporazioni Religiose Sopresse*: 2057, 57
 Source: COLLETTA, 1985

early grid; but the Quartieri appear by now as a closed settlement without any square neither any upstream connecting road. In these maps we can also note how the lots facing the Strada Toledo were given a depth double of the rows behind them, being intended for building the most representative palaces for Spanish and Neapolitan nobility, while in the rest of the grid we find the use of a standardized typology for the housing units in the lots. Up to the end of the 18th century these noble palaces risen with their rich facades, ranging from the late Renaissance and Mannerism to the Baroque and the Neoclassicism.

During all the Spanish vice reign (1503-1707) and the Austrian one (1707-1734) many important views represented the street and its area, before the development of the scientific urban cartography around the half of 18th century favored the spread of «official» maps of the city.

A painting by Micco Spadaro¹³ shows the Largo Mercatello outside the Aragonese and viceregal city walls, during the plague of 1656, with Port'Alba, the city wall, San Sebastiano's church, San Michele's church and Porta Reale with the Charles V's insignia, marking the northern entrance to the Strada Toledo.

¹³ DE SETA, 1997: 158.



Fig. 5. CARAFA DUCA DI NOJA, Giovanni. *Map of the City of Naples*, 1750-75. Naples: San Martino National Museum. Detail with the Strada Toledo and the Spanish Quarters
Source: DE SETA, 1997

At the beginning of the 18th century another famous Dutch artist, Gaspar Van Wittel, dedicates to the viceregal capital some paintings¹⁴ in which he definitely leaves the tradition of the «whole city portrait» to inaugurate the partial foreshortened view. In the first one he represents the Largo di Palazzo with the new Royal Palace by Fontana, the convents of San Luigi and Santo Spirito, San Ferdinando's square with the southern entrance to the Strada Toledo and on the bottom the hill of San Martino with Castel Sant'Elmo. In another painting Van Wittel depicts the promontory of Pizzofalcone with the city walls around it and Castel dell'Ovo, and the hill of San Martino with Castel Sant'Elmo in the background. In the last view he represents the

¹⁴ DE SETA, 1997: 192-194.



Fig. 6
GIGANTE, Gaetano. *Via Toledo dalla piazza dello Spirito Santo e Palazzo Doria d'Angri*, 1837.
Naples: San Martino National Museum
Source: BUCCARO, RASCAGLIA, eds., 2020

western area of the city with the village of Chiaia and the hill of San Martino with Castel Sant'Elmo in strategic position, also indicating all churches and palaces built in this *extra moenia* area during the Spanish vice reign age.

Around the half 18th century the viceregal city is depicted with an increasingly realistic accent by some important artists, such as the Modenese Antonio Joli: in one of his paintings¹⁵ we see the Strada del Molo standing out with Castel Nuovo and its 16th century fortifications on the left, and in the background, in the Castle square, the facade of San Giacomo degli Spagnoli's church — in which Don Pedro is buried — overlooking to ships bound for Spain.

In the map by Giovanni Carafa, Duke of Noja (1750-75) (Fig. 5)¹⁶, that was the first scientific cartography of Naples, the Strada Toledo is represented with its long north-south route from Porta Reale to the Royal Palace with the Quartieri on the west side. The other long sign of Spaccanapoli is also recognizable, extended straightly almost to Castel Sant'Elmo.

At the end of the 18th century the Strada Toledo still preserved its role of the most important street in the city, animated by a large crowd of wayfarers, merchants, nobles, travelers. Though a century later, after the Unity, the street results unchanged in the map by Federico Schiavoni (1872-80)¹⁷, its feature (Fig. 6) had been retrained during the last years of the Bourbon reign (1848-58): indeed Ferdinand II had ordered a great redevelopment and embellishment program, by rebuilding the water and sewage infrastructures, installing the gas lighting, normalizing the windows and the commercial insignia and transferring edible shops elsewhere.

¹⁵ DE SETA, 1997: 232-233.

¹⁶ DE SETA, BUCCARO, eds., 2006: 150-152.

¹⁷ DE SETA, BUCCARO, eds., 2006: 167.

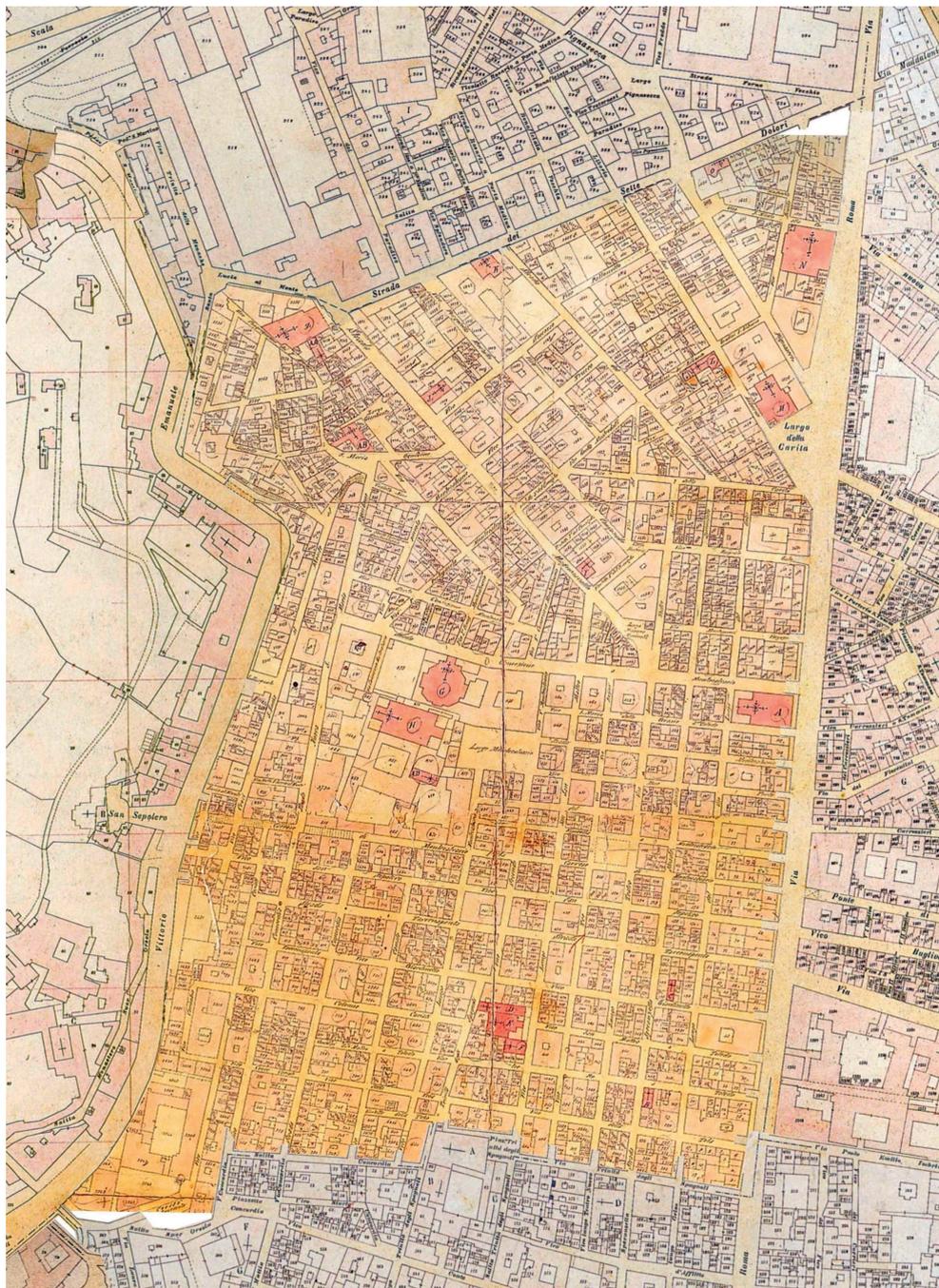


Fig. 7. Naples Cadastral map, 1895-1905. Naples: Territory Agency. Detail with the Spanish Quarters
Source: ALISIO, BUCCARO, 1999

In the first cadastral map of Naples (1895-1905) (Fig. 7)¹⁸ the grid of the Spanish Quarters appears substantially unchanged: we can distinguish with evidence the aggregation types of the housing units within the lots and along the row of double blocks facing the Strada Toledo; so, we understand better the great importance of preserving this historical settlement, dating back to the Spanish colonization.

The Strada Toledo was shot by many photographers in the late 19th century, appearing always animated by shops and by a teeming traffic. It was also considered an ideal subject by the Lumière brothers, inventors of the cinema in 1894, who chose Naples among the Italian cities: the ancient capital of Southern Italy still represented the place of beauty and of myth, exalted over the centuries by landscape painters, travelers and now also by photographers and filmmakers. Some interesting short movies made by the Lumière date back to 1898, showing some important parts of the city center and of its main street.

THE CIRICE CENTER AND THE IDEA OF A DIGITAL MAP OF VICEREGAL NAPLES

The paper we have proposed with reference to the Strada Toledo is part of a larger research carried out by the CIRICE Center of the University of Naples Federico II: this institution, founded in 1998, the only one existing in Europe in this sector, studies the urban iconography and the historical cartography by means of a critical and comparative analysis of the sources, with particular attention to landscape painting, maps, travel memories, photography and artistic and documentary cinematography.

Urban iconography is an integral part of the urban and landscape history, and it is instrumental to a lot of disciplines. Over the last fifty years this subject has experienced ever-increasing development and importance, but above all it has represented one of the most innovative and original approaches in scientific research. CIRICE is by now a scientific pole of reference for European urban iconography and cartography: in the last decade the Center has integrated its traditional methodologies for urban historical analysis with the means of digital cartography, inserting itself with new research perspectives into the new challenges of «visual history», of «public history» and of «digital art and humanities».

The research project *Naples Digital Archive. Moving Through Time and Space*¹⁹, that we have realized with the Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institut für Kunstgeschichte (2018-2020), has been dedicated to the thematic elaboration of the Neapolitan historical iconography in the modern and contemporary age, aimed at drawing up a complex digital map organized on temporal layers corresponding to the

¹⁸ ALISIO, BUCCARO, 1999.

¹⁹ BUCCARO, 2018. For the website see: CIRICE, 2021; Bibliotheca Hertziana – Istituto Max Planck, [2018-2020].

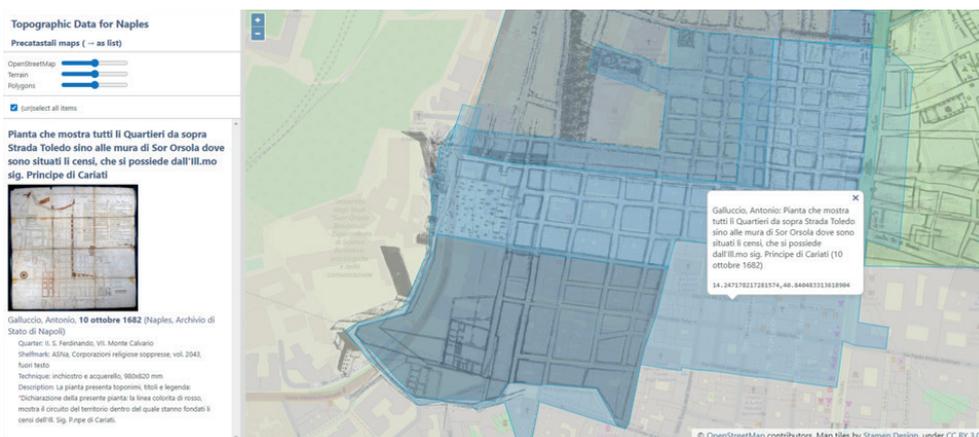


Fig. 8. «Viceregal map». Detail with the Spanish Quarters
 Source: Naples Digital Archive. [Consul. 30 Nov. 2023]. Available at <<https://www.iconografiacittaeuropea.unina.it/cms/naples-digital-archive>>

main stages of urban cartography. Particularly, it has been carried out the construction of a «viceregal map», that is a relief of the urban fabric between the second half of the 16th century and the first of the 18th century (Fig. 8). For this purpose, the greatest possible number of iconographic and documentary available sources have been drawn, especially the above mentioned «pre-cadastral» maps, that have been transferred, after taking some precise topographical points in GIS, on digital and composed bases in order to form a relief of the viceregal city that can be processed and implemented with graphic, textual and hypertextual data. So, on the CIRICE website we can follow the main steps that illustrate our work for the construction of the digital map and of the database of *Naples Digital Archive*. We can go on «Archival maps» to find the «viceregal map» with the «pre-cadastral» maps composing it. We can call every one of them, with their sheets, legends, and bibliography. Then we find the layers with the 18th and 19th centuries cartography, that we can overlap on the actual map of the city, zooming on the interesting parts (Figs. 9 and 10). We also find in the site the general database of the most important architectures in the historical city with their bibliography, the links to other sources databases and their descriptions in the best-known historical guides.

Recently we have completed the new project *Forma Urbis Neapolis*²⁰, that has gone on the Naples iconography database by making a new layer dedicated to the Ancient City. In this case, starting from all available archaeological data, suitably geo-referenced and integrated with all documentary and iconographic sources, it has been possible to make an updated historical map of *Neapolis*, also useful to investigate on the geometric design of its Greek foundation plan.

²⁰ BUCCARO, TAURO, 2021; BUCCARO, MELE, TAURO, 2023.

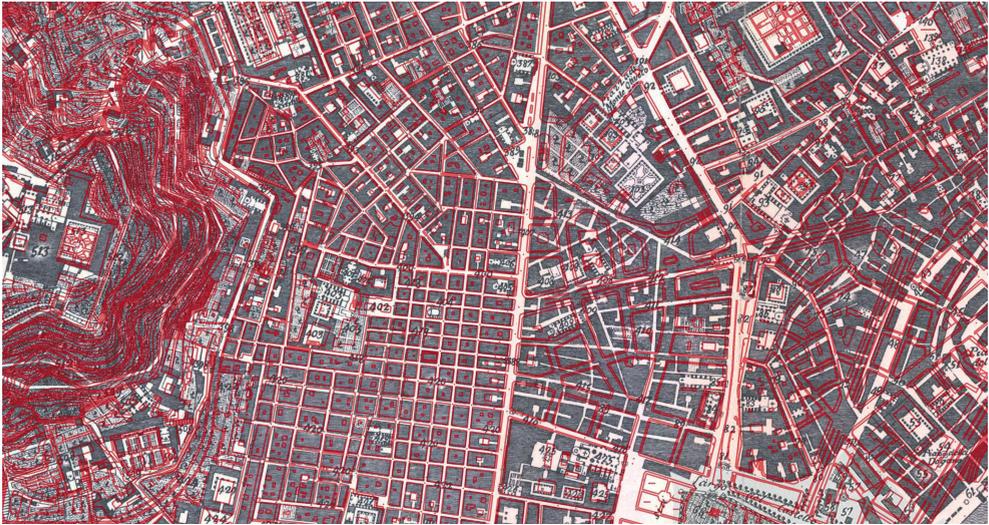


Fig. 9. Overlap of the duke of Noja's map on the DWG current city map (red lines). Detail with the Spanish Quarters
Source: Naples Digital Archive. [Consul. 30 Nov. 2023]. Available at <<https://www.iconografacittaeuropea.unina.it/cms/naples-digital-archive>>

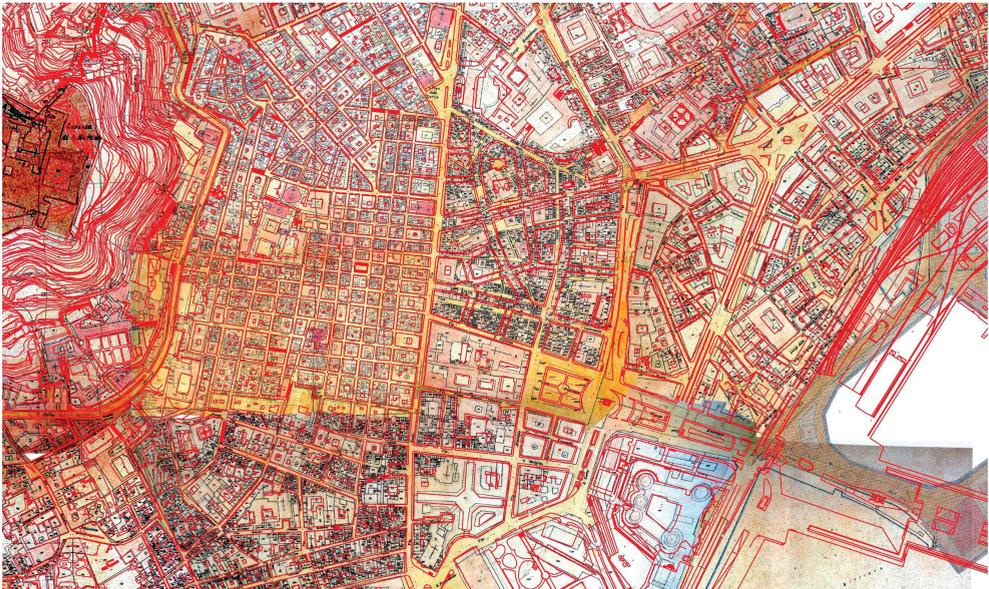


Fig. 10. Overlap of the Naples Cadastral map (1895-1905) on the DWG current city map (red lines). Detail with the Spanish Quarters
Source: Naples Digital Archive. [Consul. 30 Nov. 2023]. Available at <<https://www.iconografacittaeuropea.unina.it/cms/naples-digital-archive>>

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