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Author: Federico Camerin

Affiliations: Universidad UVA de Valladolid – Universidad Politécnica de Madrid,
Departamento de Urbanística y Ordenación Territorial (GIAU+S)

Quartering as an aspect of Italy's post-Unification urban development: the case of Milan's parade ground

This work addresses the relationship between the Italian city-making process following Unification (1861) and the development of military settlements up to the 1920s. The hypothesis presented here is that the building of military settlements and the redevelopment of spaces with new functions, arguably, shaped Italian cities over this period by implementing urban renewal processes and city expansion. Through my analysis, I claim that defence planning had an amenable effect upon the decision-making process of urban planning schemes. In addition, this paper claims that this process has impacted the location of military settlements in ways that boosted the economic and urban images of the city. I do this through a detailed case study of Milan's parade ground. Here, I found that the parade ground dismantling and relocation from the urban centre towards the periphery happened twice, relied on a specific narrative, and was catalyzed by two mega-events. I demonstrate that defence planning plays a secondary role in boosting these operations aimed both at replacing military settlements with newly emerging functions and displacing the unwanted functions in the periphery.

Keywords: city-making process, urban development, military land, mega-events

Introduction

The paper deals with the role played by defence planning in Italy between the Unification (1861) and the beginning of the fascist regime (1923). The period of study refers to the first era of globalization in this country¹ that, firstly, corresponds to a city's modernization in terms of urban renewal and, secondly, to a series of projects of military settlements developed from the Unification and up to the era of Fascism.² Since the mid-1970s, the role played by land economy in the spatial development of Italian cities between the 19th and 20th centuries has represented an important field of investigation for Italy's urban historians. Some researchers dedicated sustained attention to the development of publicly-owned land, including military sites.³ That was a period of major urban expansion beyond the Italian historic cities, as it occurred in the main European cities such as Barcelona, Madrid, and Paris.⁴ The realization of out-of-the-city-centre working-class neighbourhoods and the building/relocation of activities no longer wanted within the city centres, i.e. industries, railways, and military settlements, figured in this trend.

The central argument of this study is the fact that military presence are high-consuming-land activities that since the 19th century have attracted the (profit-driven) interest for site-specific urban planning and developments. As well as industries, railways facilities, hospitals, and markets, these enclosures had been progressively expelled from city centres towards the periphery. The analysis of the military sites making process, which included the phases of construction, dismantling and

¹ James and O'Rourke, "Italy and the first age of globalization".

² Turri, "Criticità e potenzialità".

³ Carozzi and Gambi, *Città e proprietà immobiliare in Italia*; Fara, *La metropoli difesa*; Principe, *La città dei militari*.

⁴ Cerdà, *Teoría General de la Urbanización*; Aibar and Bijker, "Constructing a City"; Bonet Correa, *Plan Castro*; Gaillard, *Paris, La Ville*; Fischler, "Toward a genealogy of planning"

redevelopment, may be useful to understand the progressive creation of new (and higher) values of urban land rent in the place where military land was located, a phenomenon which affected surrounding land too.

Building on these reflections, this paper sets out to explore the remaking of defence-related real estate assets to understand their role in triggering urban transformation that has far broader ramifications than simply accommodating soldiers. This paper reflects on the planning history of a specific military asset, i.e. Milan's parade ground and its relocation over time, to demonstrate the following hypothesis. At that time, although quartering models apparently followed hygiene- and anti-disease-led criteria, defence planning, in the longer term, was but a weak influence upon urban planning decision-making related to the localization of military sites. The two main factors leveraging the parade ground relocalizations over time were the need to improve the prestige of Milan as the economic, industrial, and moral capital, of Italy and the urban development patterns of the city's expansion. Moreover, the inquiry shows to what extent the language was used in official documents and correspondence effectively connected to the parade-ground-related urban transformations and which specific expressions were used in order to support the parade ground relocation.

The paper focuses on the continuous location-relocation of Milan's parade ground during the period covered by this study. The relocation of the first early-19th-century parade ground took place two times following urban planning schemes and created, on each occasion, a catalyst for urban development. This process eventually ended in the building of the Military City around the parade ground during Fascism in the 1930s. Focusing on this study case, I am claiming that the shift and redevelopment of Milan's parade ground exemplify relationships between defence planning and urban

development more widely in Italian cities following Unification and up until the Fascism period.

This paper focuses on a period comprising the post-Unification years until the early 1920s, nonetheless it is worth expanding the temporal boundaries of this analysis for two reasons. Firstly, quartering practices evolved over time according to an international debate amongst military engineers about the criteria of quartering building in accordance with urban planning schemes. This subject was debated from the mid-19th century up to the 1930s and its meaning is wider than a “simple” accommodation of soldiers and military sites are much more than topographical locations where soldiers occupy land. Quartering means the building of “ad hoc” sites intended to create the most favourable environment for troops’ life and training and new equipment and facilities related to military activities (for instance, water supply networks conforming to hygienic standards) that created the base to proceed with the city’s extension.⁵ Secondly, the Napoleonic domination was crucial for the diffusion of parade grounds in many Italian cities. As a matter of fact, the building of the first parade ground in Milan took place within urban transformations resulting from French influence.

Indeed, the dynamic under analysis similarly took place in other large Italian cities, such as Florence, Piacenza, Pisa, Rome, and Turin.⁶ Nevertheless, few analyses have been conducted on this theme in the fields of urban and planning history in Italy. Moreover, barracks were the military settlements that have been the major focus of most of the existing literature,⁷ while other facilities like parade grounds have been less

⁵ Piccardi and Romagnoli, *Campo di Marte*, 27

⁶ See respectively Lombardi, *La direzione di artiglieria*; Dringoli, “La ‘Cittadella’ con la ‘piazza d’Armi’”; Durelli, “Le nuove costruzioni”

⁷ Donesana, “Studi sulle caserme”; Bravi, “Sull’acquartieramento delle truppe”; No Author, “Le caserme militari”; Turri, “Criticità e potenzialità”; Turri and Zamperini, “The military engineers and hygiene”; Turri and Zamperini, “L’igiene delle caserme”; Turri, Zamperini and Cappelletti, “Military contribution to building”

studied.⁸ In order to partially fill these gaps, I based the present study on the following: interpretation of primary and secondary sources obtained from the city's archive "*Archivio Storico Civico di Milano*" and a systematic review of literature on the topic and on the specific case study of Milan's parade ground; consultation of the original manuscripts, planning tools, and graphic documentation of the quartering in Italy after Unification (in Rome's library "*Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma*" for consulting both the Ministry of War's journal "*Rivista di artiglieria e genio*" and national newspapers such as "*L'Illustrazione Italiana*" and "*Il monitore tecnico*"); and field visits to the area in September 2015 and November 2017.

This approach to the study of Milan's parade ground makes three main contributions to understanding its historical importance. Firstly, it shifts attention from the main object of study of urban historians, i.e. the barracks, onto another type of military settlement: the parade ground. Secondly, it establishes parade grounds as enablers of long-term developments that contributed to converting Milan into a modern centre in the first age of globalization. Thirdly, it suggests further avenues of investigation for examining whether defence planning plays an influential role in the city-making process in the same period.

The analysis that follows shows a clear unifying thread regarding Milan's parade ground relocation and urban development between the Italian Unification and 1923 (see Table 1), boosted by two major events and specific urban narratives. Both the 1881 National Exposition and the 1906 World's Fair fostered the temporary reuse of the parade ground. These events and the patterns of Milan's urban expansion acted as triggers of urban development, tendencies sanctioned by the 1889 and 1912 local urban

⁸ DelleMagne, *Les Casernes Françaises*; Trevor, *Military barracks*; Cantera Montenegro, "El cuartel como objeto"

planning bodies. Over time, the parade ground was displaced towards the periphery following urban development criteria of localization to provide and maintain the defence capacity. It is worth remarking that this process significantly contributed to the materialization of new functions in place of the parade ground, such as public equipment (the Sempione Park in 1893) and uses for the space which contributed to Milan becoming the economic capital of Italy (i.e. the Trade Fair in the 1920s).

Section 1 finds the origins of the first parade ground during the early-19th-century French domination. Section 2 regards the first relocation of the military activities aiming to create the Sempione Park in place of the parade ground, while the military were located out of the city centre. Eventually, section 3 analyses the second relocation of the parade ground.

Table 1.

The construction of the first parade ground (1806-1809)

After Napoleon ordered the demolition of the ancient star-shaped walls around Sforza castle in 1800, the area formerly occupied by the walls was the subject of a public debate about whether or not to build a new business district intended as a “civic space” of French domination.⁹ This hugely expensive project (estimated around 6 billion lira) did not take place due to the lack of public and private funds.¹⁰ The military also opposed it because of the requirement to build a parade ground next to the castle, which was to serve as military barracks.

⁹ Antolini, *Descrizione del Foro Bonaparte*; Antolini, *Opera d'architettura*

¹⁰ Torricelli and Rampi, 1990: 872-874; D'Amia, 2021: 164-173

The creation of the parade ground on the ashes of the ancient walls between 1806 and 1809 provided new equipment for both the military and civil society. The idea was to assign the soldiers with some functions to benefit local citizens, such as health care, bread production, and security. In order to achieve these goals, the localization of the parade ground had to be in a strategic place, i.e. the edge of the existing urban centre.¹¹ The provision of a public promenade surrounding the parade ground allowed the development of military and civil society settlements and the expansion of the city.¹² Moreover, the parade ground occasionally held public events (including sports activities), exhibitions, performances, and marches celebrating Napoleon since 1801.¹³ These events fostered an interest in creating new spaces for entertaining purposes on a private expenditure basis: an Arena was built in a green sector of the parade ground.¹⁴

In a nutshell, the first parade ground can be seen as an instance of proper public provision within the historic city borders and which aimed at combine the military presence with civic society's leisure time activities. However, it also sought to open the way for the urbanization beyond the ancient walls (Fig. 1). The local-centred events that took place during that period in the parade ground may be seen as precursors of the national and international exhibitions that propelled the future redevelopments of the military area.

Figure 1.

¹¹ Della Peruta, 1988

¹² Pagano, 2002

¹³ D'Amia, 2021: 173-176

¹⁴ D'Amia, 2021: 177-178

The first relocation of the parade ground (1860s-late 1880s)

The centrally located parade ground and the use of the Sforza castle used as a barracks were questioned after Unification of Italy for two main reasons.¹⁵ On the one hand, in this period, the general trend of urban development patterns pressured a specific reform of the Historic Centres in Italy, specifically in Milan, thus aiming to strengthen their role as a “central place”. Such change imposed the expulsion of unwanted activities that did not fit the logic of the real estate market, for example, military settlements. On the other hand, the military searched for bigger spaces for quartering as urban centres offered few open spaces for creating settlements that were fit for military training purposes.

At that time, Milan was experiencing three significant dynamics. Firstly, a rapid demographic growth that was planned within the frame of an avant-garde General Master Plan following the European experience of that era.¹⁶ Secondly, since the 1881 National Exposition on Italian industry and fine arts held in Porta Venezia’s public gardens and in the parade ground,¹⁷ Milan had strived to become the “moral capital” and the “commercial and financial centre” of the new-born Italian State.¹⁸ Thirdly, after 1861 the city was affected by the capitalist transformation of the urban economy. New financial companies acting as real estate brokers were launched to create new infrastructures (especially railways) and promote speculation on land that was in high demand.¹⁹

The redevelopment and relocation of the parade ground was among the numerous proposals for the cleaning up and renewal objectives that were on Milan’s urban agenda.²⁰

¹⁵ Torricelli and Rampi, “Milano: Castello, quartiere delle milizie”, 875-877

¹⁶ Airoldi, “La Milano dell’ingegner Beruto”; Morandi, “The Milan example”

¹⁷ Municipio di Milano, *Catalogo ufficiale della esposizione*; No Author, *Milano e l’Esposizione italiana*; Fiocca, “Aspetti della contesa”

¹⁸ Decleva, “L’Esposizione del 1881”; Rosa, *Il mito della capitale*; Rumi, Buratti and Cova, *Milano nell’Unità*

¹⁹ Cafaro, “Banche di credito”; Tiepolo, “Promotori e operazioni”

²⁰ Pertot, “Milano e le difese”, 49; Rossari, “Milano che si costruisce”

The ground zero of this operation can, arguably, be understood to have been the 1881 National Exposition. After an initial debate about whether to host the event in Porta Venezia's public gardens or on the parade ground, the gardens were judged to be «the most elegant and cheap location because this area already included three buildings, amidst a succession of leafy groves or flowering meadows».²¹ In spite of this, since the Napoleonic era, the parade ground had been considered as an appropriate location to host public games, horse races, and extraordinary shows due to its large size and the presence of relevant monuments, i.e. the castle, the arena, and the Sempione arc.²² These characteristics encouraged the decision to host part of the 1881 event there. Moreover, the impressive rate of immigration in 1880 rose to 8,305 people and was expected to grow even more, making Milan the most populous Italian city. This dynamic was a cause for new residential development so companies were to set up to build a new urban district in the parade ground.²³

The redevelopment of the parade ground was launched in the same year of the 1881 National Exposition by the real estate company “*Società Fondiaria Milanese*,” a body that was made up of Italian and French and Swiss banks.²⁴ The company submitted to the City Council the project of cleaning up a significant part of the parade ground in two ways. Firstly, by dismantling the military facilities and redeveloping the partially demolished castle into a 3-floor-building new residential area for 20,000 wealthy people. Secondly, the *Società Fondiaria Milanese* acquired some low-cost undeveloped land on the northwest edge of the historic centre on which to build a new, and bigger, parade ground.²⁵

²¹ Municipio di Milano, *Guida del visitatore*, 23-24

²² Municipio di Milano, *Guida del visitatore*, 185-186

²³ Municipio di Milano, *Guida del visitatore*, 18

²⁴ Archinti, 1882: 29

²⁵ Allocchio, 1884: 16-24

The City Council partially approved this project and started negotiations with the Ministry of War and the real estate company that lasted two years. The engineer Clemente Mairani (1838–1905) designed the *Società Fondiaria Milanese*'s proposal, which was published in the journal "*L'Illustrazione Italiana*" in early 1882.²⁶ On this basis, in December 1883, the municipality signed a first agreement with the State and the *Società Fondiaria Milanese* for an exchange of land to relocate the parade ground that was approved on 27 January, 1884.²⁷ Nevertheless, the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments in the Province of Milan, the *Commissione conservatrice dei monumenti della provincia di Milano*²⁸ in Italian – and the Association of Engineers and Architects of Milan, the *Collegio degli Ingegneri e Architetti di Milano* in Italian, were against the proposal. The partial demolition of the castle and the redevelopment of the parade ground were considered a risk of speculation, so the Association promoted a number of alternatives developed by the engineer, Giuseppe Murnigotti (1834–1903).²⁹ He proposed the creation of a public park in place of the parade ground taking advantage of its partial use as a public garden at that time, even though the *Società Fondiaria Milanese* insisted on the need for a new residential neighbourhood. The Association of Engineers and Architects of Milan stated that «The *Società Fondiaria Milanese* claimed that new residential buildings should be placed in empty spaces nearby the urban centre to guarantee the citizens accessibility ... This statement, however, has no meaning today» for two main reasons. Firstly, «the improvements in the infrastructure system, such as the introduction of tramways, bring distances closer»³⁰ and, secondly, a new public park

²⁶ Archinti, "Il nuovo quartiere"; Colla, "Il Castello di Milano"; Colla, *Il Castello di Milano*

²⁷ Allocchio, *La nuova Milano*, 5-32; Municipio di Milano, *Progetto di nuovo quartiere*

²⁸ Beltrami, "L'affare di Piazza d'Armi", Beltrami, "Occupazione della Piazza d'Armi", Beltrami, "A proposito dell'affare"

²⁹ Murnigotti, *Nuovo studio*

³⁰ Paravicini, 1882: 480

responded to the citizens needs. People living in the congested urban centre were actually searching «for hygiene and wealth ... and gardens that purify the atmosphere».³¹ Moreover, the *Società Fondiaria Milanese*'s project was considered inappropriate for the «huge expenditure. Existing military barracks should be demolished, new barracks should be built, and the parade ground should be urbanised. These actions would imply the loss of the existing values ... the presence of the castle will not cause embarrassment to anyone. The castle and the parade ground shape a grand area including surrounding building such as the Arena and the Sempione Arc ... we should thoroughly reflect before implementing the demolition plan so as to avoid worthless regret ... these monuments abovementioned cited would enjoy the creation of a public park and this is why we may sacrifice the parade ground».³² The dispute over this project resulted in the resignation of Mayor Giulio Belinzaghi (1818–1892), a banker involved in the *Società Fondiaria Milanese*, on 18 April, 1884: he was accused of encouraging the private real estate interests.³³ The political arena of Milan pushed for the need for harmonious planning of the parade ground surroundings and the city as a whole,³⁴ so the new Mayor, Gaetano Negri (1838–1902), entrusted to Cesare Beruto (1835–1915), a City Council engineer, the design of a General Master Plan. The approval of the Plan lasted from 1884 to 1889 (fig. 2).³⁵

Figure 2

³¹ Paravicini, “Sul piano regolatore”, 480

³² Paravicini, “Sul piano regolatore”, 481

³³ Municipio di Milano, *Atti del Municipio di Milano*

³⁴ Cesa Bianchi, *La necessità dello studio*

³⁵ Boriani, Rossari and Rozzi, *La Milano del piano Beruto*

The redevelopment of the parade ground resulted in an exchange of land between the City Council and the Ministry of War. In this agreement, the *Società Fondiaria Milanese* played a fundamental role: it owned 143.000 m² of municipal land supposed to build the new quarters, military bakery, district, and warehouse. The major outputs of this agreement (Table 2; Fig. 3) were the realisation in 1893 of a new large urban park named *Parco Sempione*³⁶ in place of the former parade ground as the *Società Fondiaria Milanese* proposal was considered very speculative, and the Sforza castle was converted into a tertiary centre for civil and cultural activities and public offices. Also, in 1887 the new 440.000-m² parade ground was placed on a plot northwest plot of the Sempione railway station, while the 143.000-m² quarter – *Quartiere delle milizie* was built between that same station and the Sempione Park.³⁷

Table 2.

To sum up, this operation opened the doors for the north-western peripheral expansion, even though it avoided the speculation on the former parade ground and the annihilation of the castle.³⁸ As stressed by Luca Beltrami (1853–1935)³⁹ the need to plan the redevelopment of the parade ground forced the City Council to approve the first Milanese General Master Plan «in a context of indifference, weakness in terms of urban heritage protection, and compelling prevalence of material and private interests». While the role played by the Ministry of War was marginal as it searched just for new and bigger spaces for the troops' activities, the *Società Fondiaria Milanese* sought the selling of the military land in the real estate market to make profits.

³⁶ Folli, “Parco Sempione”; Luna, “Il Parco Sempione”

³⁷ Cantalupi, “Il nuovo quartiere”

³⁸ Grottanelli, “Caserme ed apprestamenti”

³⁹ Beltrami, *La Pusterla dei Fabbri*, 10

Figure 3.

The second relocation of the parade ground (1906-1923)

The need for reinforcing Milan's competitiveness and its new city planning tool strongly influenced the second relocation of the parade ground. Two main factors prompted the displacement.

The first factor relied on hosting the 1906 World's Fair. The installations located in the main venue, i.e. the Sempione Park, were leveraged to equip the nearby parade ground and its surroundings with a new sewage system, tree planting, public green, night lighting, and a new tram system (Figs. 4 and 5).⁴⁰ The military enclave accommodated the "Industrial Work Gallery", the "Maritime Transport Pavilion", the "Motor Racing and Cycling Pavilion", cinemas, kiosks, *buvettes*, and restaurants.⁴¹ The Trade Fair's executive committee pinpointed the parade ground as an excellent location not just for the visitors, but also for future new civil uses. An amount of 14,000 lira was paid to the Ministry of War for the temporary conversion of the parade ground.⁴² As stressed by the local press, hosting the Expo gave new cultural and social values to the military land: «A strange anomaly of chance! The evil genius of war paved the way to the new sources of social wealth: on the same field where millions of men had been taught to kill and destroy, the apotheosis of work was to arise, heralding the triumph of universal peace!».⁴³ By boosting its civil use, the replacement of the parade ground with

⁴⁰ Municipio di Milano, *Relazione del Comitato esecutivo sulla scelta*; Municipio di Milano, *Relazione del Comitato esecutivo sulla planimetria*; No Author, "La ferrovia elettrica"

⁴¹ Botti and Ricci, *L'Esposizione Internazionale*

⁴² Manfredini, "Esposizione di Milano 1906"

⁴³ No Author, "La grande Esposizione", 10

new functions successively entered into the local administration agenda in the frame of a new planning instrument.

Figure 4.

Figure 5.

The second factor was the large transformation planned for Milan in its second General Master Plan, the Pavia-and-Masera designed 1909-1912 General building regulation and expansion plan, known in Italian as the *Piano generale regolatore edilizio e di ampliamento* (Fig. 6). This plan boosted the expulsion of the unwanted functions, i.e. hospitals, industries, and military settlements, from the urban centre to strengthen the tertiary character of its centre.⁴⁴ The parade ground was among them and, in the early stage of the planning approval, the area was considered appropriate for new residential development.⁴⁵ The planning tool foresaw its relocation on to peripheral, undeveloped land, and in relation to the new railway tracks and the new system of locating military quarters on the city borders.⁴⁶ Moreover, Milan City Council's decision to decentralize the military quarters resulted from the national and international debate on the need to relocate military presences away from urban centres towards peripheral zones so as to meet the soldiers' training needs.⁴⁷

Figure 6

⁴⁴ Chiodi, "Come viene impostato"; Riboldazzi, *Una città policentrica*

⁴⁵ Città di Milano, 1910a: 12-13

⁴⁶ Città di Milano, 1910b: 3; 10

⁴⁷ Caveglia, 1878; Bruni, 1937; Rigotti, 1938; Melis, 1941; Pagano, 1941a and 1941b

According to the decentralisation policies of unwanted functions, a western out-of-town airfield owned by the Ministry of War was chosen for the new parade ground. Built in 1907 by the Italian “Leonardo da Vinci” company led by the Milanese engineer, Enrico Forlanini (1848–1930), this area belonged to the municipality of Baggio. The parade ground relocation, however, depended on the annexation of Baggio into the territory of Milan: «Due to agreements between the Municipality of Milan and the Municipality of Baggio, the new parade ground of Milan and its surroundings must be aggregated with the Municipality of Milan; the corresponding roads must therefore be included in Milan’s Extension Plan». ⁴⁸ This operation «requires the allotment of the surroundings on which private buildings will soon be developed to bring life to the grand new public service». ⁴⁹

The relocation of the parade ground eventually took place after a decade. The Royal Decree no. 919 of 1 July, 1922 launched the autonomous entity “*Ente Autonomo Fiera Campionaria Internazionale di Milano*” to «implement temporary sample exhibitions, with all the powers inherent and consequent to its purpose. The Board is non-profit-making and carries out activities in the public interest.» ⁵⁰ Afterwards, the City Council purchased the 326,950-m² parade ground in order to build the new Trade Fair. ⁵¹ The building of the new 356,630-m² parade ground occurred eventually after the annexation of the municipality of Baggio to Milan alongside other 10 peripheral municipalities in accordance with the Royal Decree no. 1,912 of 2 September, 1923 ⁵² (Fig. 7). This document justified the annexation of Baggio essentially in order to

⁴⁸ Città di Milano, *Piano generale regolatore*, 16

⁴⁹ Città di Milano, *Piano generale regolatore*, 2

⁵⁰ Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1922

⁵¹ Colombo, Mocarelli and Stanca, 2003: 19

⁵² Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1923

incorporate the airfield as this facility was considered a relevant public service: «...the current municipality of Milan comprises barely 7,600 ha with more than 700,000 inhabitants and this fact causes serious inconveniences for the expansion ... on the outskirts of the city, taking advantage of the favourable living conditions that offered ... the neighbouring communities of Baggio, Affori, Chiaravalle Milanese, ... the progressive city expansion reached these settlements, with some of which it also shares streets, and had to establish in their territory some of its most important plants and public services, such as ... Baggio's airfield». ⁵³

Figure 7.

In the following years, the parade ground's surrounding areas were filled by other military settlements to create the Military City between 1926 and 1934. They were the 130,000-m² military hospital (1926-1931), also called the Loris Annibaldi barracks, the 170,140-m² Principe Eugenio di Savoia Royal Artillery barracks (1929-1931), nowadays known as the Santa Barbara, and the about 100,000-m² Baggio military warehouses (1931-1934). ⁵⁴ (Figs. 8 and 9)

Figures 8 and 9.

Along with the centrally-located Trade Fair and the Military City, large mono-functional settlements grew in the expansion areas around the urban centre during Fascist era and through a polycentric scheme. ⁵⁵ The City of Studies (1921-1927), the

⁵³ Gazzetta Ufficiale, "Relazione e Regio Decreto", 6161–6162

⁵⁴ Poli, "Sette caserme", 13–17

⁵⁵ Franchi and Chiumeo, *Urbanistica a Milano*

città universitaria, and the City of Supplies, the *città annonaria*, were built on the eastern outskirts of Milan; the Military City was placed in the western outskirts (1926-1934); and the Sports City with the Hippodrome (1925) and the San Siro football stadium (1925-1926) were built in the north-western periphery. As a consequence, all these citadels acted successively as urbanizers and were rapidly surrounded by new inhabited areas.⁵⁶

Concluding remarks

To conclude, the themes that make Milan's parade ground case relevant to broader literatures on urban planning, defence planning, and urbanization in the 19th and 20th centuries but also to political-economic history in Italy comprise the following.

Firstly, Milan's capacity to host and organize large-scale initiatives such as a national expo or a world fair was a sign of its special role within Italy's highly differentiated urban network. This capacity was essentially shaped by the entwined decision-making process in the local political arena regarding the patterns of Milan's expansion. Defence planning, however, played a marginal part in this process, being compliant to the City Council and real estate companies, such as the *Società Fondiaria Milanese*. Important factors were also Milan's desire for self-representation and the complex economic management of state- and locally-financed public interventions. As parade ground analysis demonstrates, the way to proceed with quartering and urban renewal in the period of study may be read as a process arguably related to private real estate development (the first relocation) and the competitiveness of the city of Milan (both the first and second relocation). At that time, the city understood the critical role of mega-events as instruments for planning and executing major urban interventions to

⁵⁶ Oliva, *L'urbanistica di Milano*, 7–126

boost its image, economic and political role at national and international level. The parade ground redevelopments were presumably associated with the 1881 National Exposition on the Italian industry and fine arts and 1906 World Fair. Yet despite the partial restoration of military activities in the post-event, the expositions in all likelihood led to profound urban transformations. As recently noted by planning historians,⁵⁷ the wide historiography on exhibitions has been prone to concentrate on the self-representation of contemporary society's expanding culture and power, but exhibitions also have successively shaped urban developments through a propagandistic desire to enhance the city's image. Based on the temporary civil use of the parade ground since the early 19th century, the 1881 and 1906 events boosted the interests of the civil society to turn the military areas into new functions. By doing so, new spaces for national defence were provided in accordance with the Ministry of War. Similar patterns can be found abroad as the redevelopment of military sites leveraged by mega-events happened in the same period in Barcelona. The Ciudadela military site hosted the 1888 World Fair and was successively converted into a new urban park.⁵⁸

Secondly, Milan offers a typical example of processes that were at work in other Italian cities. The practice of military land expulsion from urban centres emerged in the early 1800s in cities like Florence, Milan, and Turin, spread across the country after the Unification of Italy (1861), dealt with the city-making process dynamics, and was subjected to the local City Councils' decisions. As stressed by Italo Insolera (1989: 665-666), the research on the role played by military land in the processes of urban transformation pertains to understandings of the mutations in the Italian cities that were characterized by high consumption rates of military land. This topic was illustrated in a

⁵⁷ Gold and Gold, "Urban segments and event"; Levin, "What Were World's Fairs for?"

⁵⁸ Espuche et al., "Modernization and urban beautification"

bunch of case studies at the 1988 conference “The Army and cities from Unification to the 1930s”, – *Esercito e città dall’Unità agli anni Trenta* in Italian⁵⁹ – and the 2007 conference “Defended, built, and administered. The city and the military in the contemporary period,” *Difese, costruite, amministrate. La città e i militari in età contemporanea*⁶⁰. Despite this, Italian planning and urban historians still fail to either provide a complete overview or a causal explanation that enables the envisioning of and identification of similarities and differences across Italian cities. In this context, although this study focuses on the post-1861 period, the very idea that Italy’s Unification should be considered as a starting point for this story is open to debate. Some of the processes discussed in this paper may have different chronological boundaries in other Italian cities, as previously pointed out in the 2018 special issue “Military spaces and city planning. The example of Northwest Italy (1815-1918)” of the Italian journal *Storia dell’urbanistica*.⁶¹ Studies on Florence, Turin, and the capital cities of the Veneto Region, for instance, while confirming the idea that military-owned land played a crucial role in urban expansion, have also argued that the origins of such a process are to be found in the early 19th century. Subsequent political events such as the country’s unification may have had ultimately little impact on it.⁶²

Future research may focus on deepening the relationships between military land, urban planning, and urban development in the period of study even though military land only took up a small proportion of a given city’s area and was probably less extensive than, say, railway facilities and much less extensive than factories. Why this is important is because military land comprise various kinds of assets, not just barracks or

⁵⁹ Antonelli and Grispo, *Esercito e città*

⁶⁰ Savorra and Zucconi, *Spazi e cultura militare*

⁶¹ Devoti, *Gli spazi dei militari*

⁶² Bianco and Frisa, “Il demanio comunale”; Mamoli, “Da aree strategiche”; Mancuso, “Strutture difensive e impianto”; Piccardi and Romagnoli, *Campo di Marte*; Cattaneo, “Campi di marte”

parade grounds. Military airfields, arsenals, training fields, and warehouses, may be equally relevant objects to study in relation to planning history.⁶³ The process of making different sorts of military assets together may be key to reading urban transformation in terms of Italian politics and in terms of the power balance between the State, the Ministry of War, and civil society. More work is thus needed to qualify the role of military infrastructure in influencing the city-making process involving all kinds of sites. This type of analysis can be the base to understand current dynamics. Today, several large urban renewal projects are taking place on the ground of the real estate exploitation of military settlements, such as the parade ground,⁶⁴ Mameli barracks,⁶⁵ and Montello barracks.⁶⁶ These sites are currently considered the perfect base from which to start the implementation of new urban development strategies in collaboration with real estate private developers. In contrast to the past, private developers are even becoming the owners of the areas to redevelop, as demonstrated by the activities of the real estate investment funds “Invimit” and “Cassa Depositi e Prestiti FIV”.⁶⁷

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⁶³ Comitato delle armi di artiglieria e genio, *Relazioni intorno ai principali lavori*

⁶⁴ Pugliese, *Progetti per la Piazza d’Armi*

⁶⁵ Montedoro, *Open Mameli*

⁶⁶ Campbell, *City Transformation: Caserma Montello*

⁶⁷ Camerin and Gastaldi, “Italian military real estate”

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Notes on contributors

Federico Camerin is currently a post-doc researcher in the Spanish “Margarita Salas” programme at the Universidad UVA de Valladolid and Universidad UPM de Madrid (Spain).

ORCID

Federico Camerin <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8659-3761>

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