

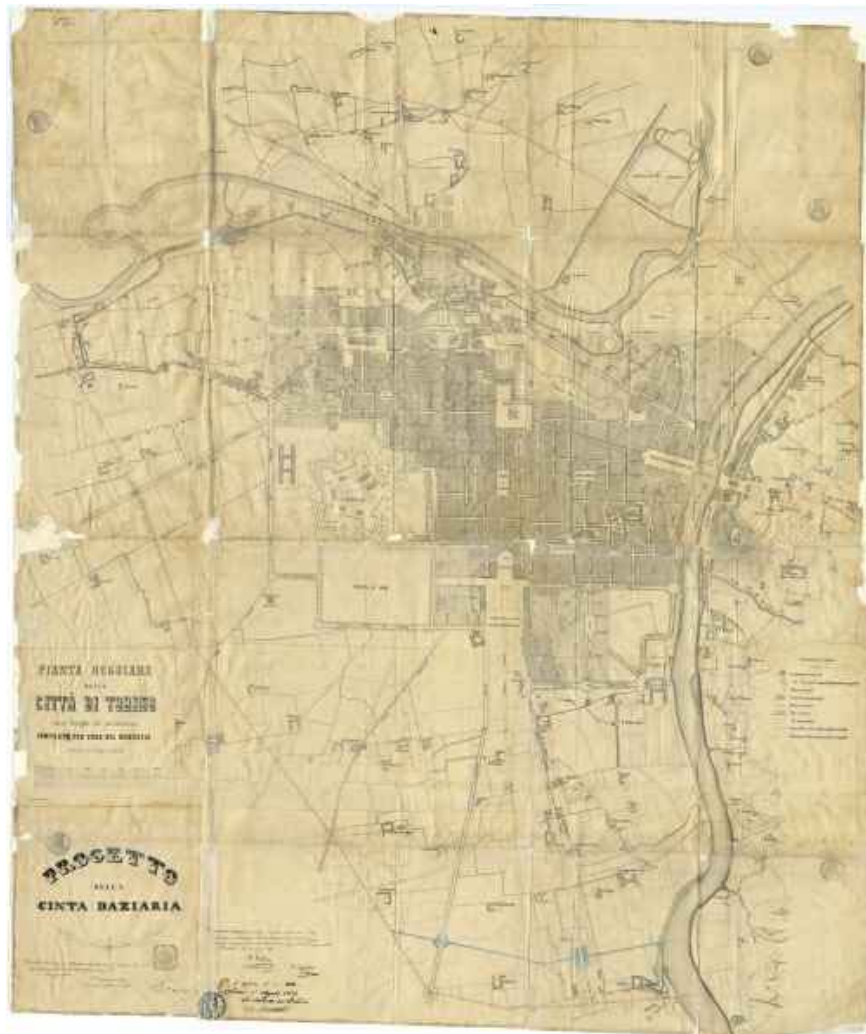
POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 2
Degree in Architecture
Honors theses

Excise duty fences in Turin

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The establishment of the excise duty fence in 1853 was a consequence of the Charter of Carlo Alberto of 1848. This Charter referred to executive laws as for several regulations: the law of October 7th, 1848, concerning Municipal Administrations, made it possible for the town the excise duty collection. That way Turin and the other towns were put on the same footing.



pic. 1: Edoardo PECCO (Head of the *Civico Ufficio d'Arte*), *Pianta Regolare della Città di Torino, suoi Borghi e Adiacenze, compilata per cura del Municipio sulla scala della mappa territoriale, Progetto della Cinta Daziaria*, Turin, August 1st, 1853 (Historical Record Office of the City of Turin, *Royal Decrees, 1849-1863, series 1K, no. 11, f. 106*)

The new excise duty fence had to be suitable for the enlargement of the capital of the Kingdom of Sardinia and, in the meanwhile, wide enough to involve a considerable part of the population, until then duty-free because living in the suburbs of the town, in the new administrative provision.

The orography of the municipal territory and the historical settlement of the town characterized the plan and the development of the fence. The excise duty line followed the streets and was delimited by waterways and town walls.

The part of the wall about 12 Km long on the flat area on the left side of the river Po was decreed on August 1st, 1853 (see pic. 1) as public utility, with the approval of the project signed by Edoardo Pecco, chief engineer of the town. The project presented a wall with a moat and inner streets for the rounds and outer circle line, with a clear military connotation. The construction of the wall was started at once and ended by 1860.



pic. 2: Edoardo PECCO (Head of the *Civico Ufficio d'Arte*), *Piano Generale dell'andamento della Cinta Daziaria di Torino sulla sponda destra del Po secondo il progetto del Sott.° in data 26 Aprile colla modificazione approvata dal Consiglio Delegato in sua seduta 3 Agosto 1853*, Turin, November 13th, 1853, (Historical Record Office of the City of Turin, *Royal Decrees, 1849-1863*, series 1K, no. 11, f. 112)

The part of wall about 4,5 Km long on the hilly area on the right side of the river Po was decreed on November 13th, 1853 (see pic: 2) as public utility, with the approval of the project signed by Edoardo Pecco again. Due to the particular orographic conditions of that part of territory, the Municipal Administration decided to build a wall without moat, which followed the orographic characteristics of the site and joined the walls of the villas nearby. The construction of this part of the wall was started up only in the eighties of XIX century, with principles totally different from the excise duty fence on the left side of the river Po: iron railings with internal and external ring roads.

The entrances to the town, called 'barriers', were located on the intersections between the tollgate line and the suburban and regional connection roads. The 'barriers' were constituted by a free space (variably shaped) suitable to allow the temporary stop of the goods waiting to be paid for. Outside the fence, along the barriers and the main street axis of the town, suburban villages rose and developed.

This fact caused a considerable difference between 'inner' and 'outer' town. In the municipal area of Turin, this difference showed itself at several levels: from the tax system to the regulations of the town-planning scheme. In fact, while strict controls were exercised over area plans for building in the 'inner' towns – town-planning and extension schemes, sanitary, building and decoration regulations –, there was an almost total absence of control systems over the building regulations in the 'outer' towns. Later on, regulations were applied along the street axis leading to the town, together with rules over expropriation for public utilities.

The *Regolamento per l'ornato e la polizia edilizia della Città di Torino* (1862) ruled the town-planning scheme in the polygonal urban area. The area included between the fragmentary line and the excise duty fence was conceived according to the *leitmotiv* of the extension of the city of Turin: the integrated addition principle, always adopting the orthogonal street network, while outside the city limits, small urban centres grew around the fence and the street network was built around the rural infrastructures. Such suburban centres grew without rules.

The *Piano regolatore per prolungamento dei corsi e vie principali fuori la Cinta Daziaria della città di Torino* (1887) was a planning scheme decreed for the areas outside the fence: they were new regulations aiming to control the sub-urban building activity. The plan included several street extensions and the widening of the regulations of 1862 about the main streets axis along and out of the excise duty fence. That prescriptive agreement strictly fixed the building development along the main rural lines of communication leaving the land around without regulations.

The *Piano regolatore per la regione di San Paolo* (1898-1901) was the only planning scheme designed between XIX and XX century to be approved and adopted by the legal authority. The scheme concerned a vast area outside the fence, west of the town, was late in stopping the growing disorder of a difficult urban situation, whose development depended for the most part on the adjacent railway yards, present in the area from the beginning of the eighties of XIX century. The scheme seemed to find an agreement between a past street model (widening of the town historical axis, street parallelisms and so on) and a new model for a town which was no longer a 'central' town but was becoming a 'peripheral' town (wide blocks of houses, radial streets, squares as street junctions, concentric ring roads). The plan suggested wide blocks, whose expanse depended on the industrial location: in case this proposal had not been successful, the blocks would have been divided into lots to create residential neighbourhoods with private roads. The fences were strictly connected to the planned routes of the old roads as town accesses: they played a morphogenetical role in relation to the urban shape outside the fence.

The *Piano Unico Regolatore e d'Ampliamento della Città di Torino* (1906-1908) concerning the whole town, was made feasible on April 5th, 1908, with the special law no. 141. The plan ratified the development criteria and the assembly schemes previously and that were expired or expiring. The plan, late in respecting the building process already carried out in the town, linked up with town-planning schemes of 1887 and 1901. In particular, it borrowed the extension plan outside the fence, regarding the primary accesses to the town, from the plan of 1887, and the extension plan for wide areas from the plan of 1898-1901.

Among the salient points of the town-planning scheme of 1906-1908 we must point out the official record of the villages connected to the 'barriers' of the first fence; the extension, where possible, of the main street axis of the town; a new road network considering the existing rural road network but essentially based on new ring roads, with a planimetric course tuned to the course of the first excise duty fence of 1853 (wide ring roads following the curvilinear course of the fence and connecting the existing rural villages); wide blocks incorporating the existing villages and urban conglomerations (to cut the expropriations which caused demolitions and to house industrial settlements). With the above-mentioned special law, the town got the extension of the excise duty fence, necessary by then to bear the heavy expenses for the infrastructure public works. The territorial limits fixed by the plan corresponded to a hinterland line, that should have become the new excise duty fence and should have been realized since 1909. But every decision was postponed. Not only: it was an unpopular project, thwarted by socialists in the Town Council and by the categories of industrialists and tradespeople, that brought the mayor Secondo Frola and his administrative board to resignations. Nevertheless, the town still presents deep signs of the line projected by the plan of 1906-1908.



pic. 3: *Torino e dintorni*, Torino, Tip. e Lit. Checchini, 1914, in Città di Torino, *Relazione circa l'allargamento della cinta daziaria di Torino*, Torino, Tip. e Lit. Checchini, 1914, first enclosure (Archivio Storico della Città di Torino, *Miscellanea, Lavori Pubblici, Poste, Telegrafi, Telefoni*, no. 582)

The main streets, concentric ring roads in relation to the excise duty fence of 1853 on the municipal territory on the left side of river Po, were built as well during the following decades, because the route at issue was reconfirmed by the subsequent town-planning schemes.

The enlargement of the fence was ratified on June 23rd 1912, with a special law, no. 621. The reasons for such new enlargement were the bad financial conditions of the Municipality and the need to include in the fence the new villages growing outside the fence.

The new route of 1912 (see pic. 3) coincided in part with the municipal boundaries and measured about 34 Km. The fence on the flat area had a carriageable double ring road and was in part a brickwork (about 14 Km) and in part build out of reinforced concrete (about 5 Km). On the hilly territory right of the Po river the new fence was temporary and only where possible. Consequently to the enlargement, the XIX century fence was dismissed. The route of the excise duty infrastructure of 1853 left a deep mark on the urban territory. On the empty place a series of circularly linked main streets were carried out. The fence of 1912 imposed a strong shift of the excise duty fence mark (particularly westwards and southwards); in the meanwhile, the regulations of the plan scheme of 1906-1908 were extended up to the new excise duty limit. To be approved, the fence of 1912 had to include necessarily an area plan for building: as a consequence, in 1913, the municipal administration charged the *Civico Servizio Tecnico* of the Public Works with the study of a coordination and integration plan for the plan of 1906-1908, in relation to the new line of the fence. The excise duty fence of 1912, the *Piano Regolatore e di Ampliamento della parte pianeggiante a sinistra del fiume Po e alla destra dello stesso sino alla nuova cinta daziaria della Città di Torino* (1913-1920), the *Piano Edilizio Regolatore e di Ampliamento di parte della zona di territorio collinare della Città di Torino* (1913-1918), and the following versions and relevant planimetries fixed the elements the town was based on until the *Piano Regolatore Generale Comunale della Città di Torino* of 1959.

The excise duty fence of 1912 was abolished in 1930, as a consequence of the new law, which turned the national territory in a 'closed commune'. As it had happened in the past around the abolished fences, several streets with a ring route, concentric respect to the excise duty fence of 1853, were built on this line, leaving a sign on the urban territory.

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