

Zeitschrift: Pamphlet
Herausgeber: Professur für Landschaftsarchitektur, Christophe Girot, ETH Zürich
Band: - (2009)
Heft: 12

Artikel: Santa Gilla : a new landscape for the metropolitan lagoon of Cagliari
Autor: Girot, Christophe / Duner, Isabelle / Kapellos, Alexandre / Rossano, Frédéric
Kapitel: History of the site
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-965621>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 22.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

HISTORY OF THE SITE

The Lagoon The City of Cagliari The Land Use of Santa Gilla



September 2008

Prof. Christophe Girot, Isabelle Duner,
Alexandre Kapellos, Frédéric Rossano.

14 students:

Bianca Brici, Adrian Chan, Zichao Chen,
Jung Min Choi, Giuseppe Gaudente, Anne Femmer,
Kirstyn Lindsay, Olivia Martin, Marc Pancera,
Jasna Struckelj, Thomas Summermatter,
Hong Guan Tan, Ren Tian, James Yeo.

This first chapter talks about the preliminary investigations during the preparation workshop. A lecture was held to inform the students from the ETH about the geography, history, culture, geology and vegetation of Sardinia. Then we shifted our focus to Cagliari, the capital of the island. We examined the development of the city's urban growth, the history of the Santa Gilla lagoon as well as the development of infrastructure on Santa Gilla.

THE LAGOON



A current view of the vast waterscape at the lagoon of Santa Gilla

The lagoon at the bay of Santa Gilla is formed by the mixing of river water, which flows from the Mannu River, the longest river in Sardinia, towards the sea, and the sea water which enters the lagoon from the Gulf of Cagliari. There are a number of small islands in the lagoon and the larger island of Sa Illetta.

As we can see on the map from 1890, there is much less land in proportion to the size of the lagoon. Moving forward in history we can also see that the size of the lagoon has decreased with the success of the salt industry. The steadily expanding salt industry began to divide up the lagoon area. This division was further emphasized by the expansion

of Sa Illetta Island to create the Porto Canale. As a result, the lagoon contained fresh water only from the river mouth to the sea along the coast of Cagliari until 1986 when, due to pollution from agriculture, the river water was channeled directly to the sea, avoiding contact with the lagoon completely. Today, the lagoon of Cagliari no longer functions as a lagoon with a mix of fresh and salt water, but is indeed only made up of salt water.

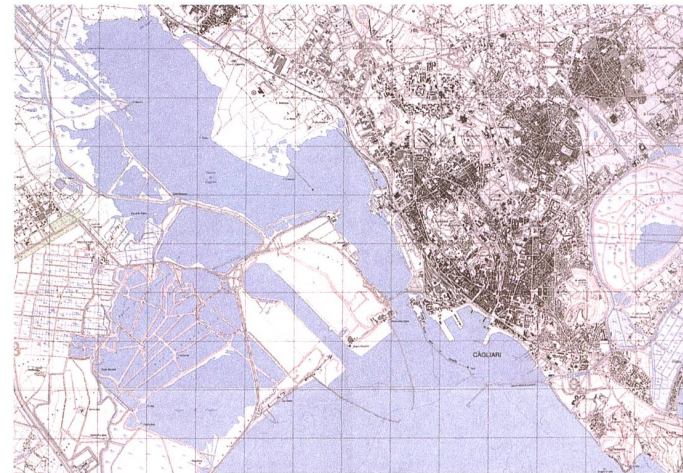


1890

The group of small islands and the main road linking them, connecting Cagliari to Capoterra with the lagoon on one side and the Gulf of Cagliari on the other



1960
Land is reclaimed from the lagoon for the production of salt.



1986
River water is channeled directly out to sea and the island of Sa Illetta is expanded through landfill to create the Porto Canale, further decreasing the surface area of the lagoon.



Current view of Cagliari looking towards the Molentargius nature reserve

THE CITY OF CAGLIARI

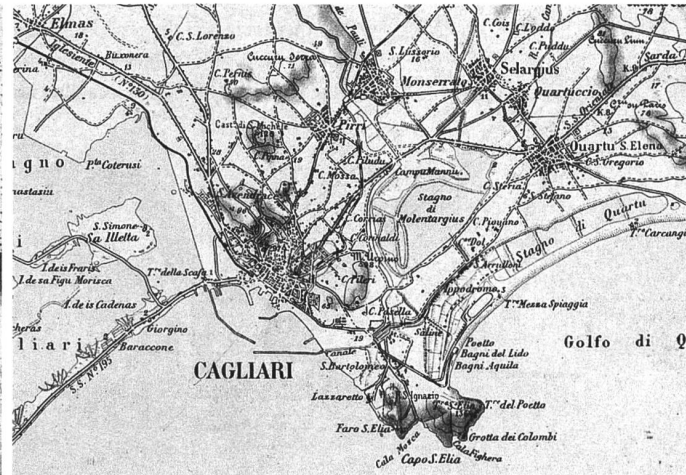
Cagliari is a fortified city on a hilltop with lookout towers that once guarded its historic harbor. Due to its central location in the Mediterranean, Cagliari was often under attack from other nations which meant that the city did not expand and remained contained within the fortified walls, including public administrative buildings. The city only expanded as infrastructure was introduced and smaller villages in the hinterland were established. Over time the smaller villages expanded and merged together in an unplanned fashion towards the city of Cagliari. A main road built along the shore line of the lagoon has hindered the development of the city towards the lagoon itself. Cagliari's ambivalent stance towards the bay of Santa Gilla has been compounded by

the airport built in the hinterland at the shore. The expansion of the salt industry in the lagoon and the expansion of the port at the Porto Canale has left this side of Cagliari most unattractive to develop, resulting in a vast wasteland, which actually has substantial potential. A small fishing village and monastery, created on the island of the Porto Canale, did not lead to further development, even though they were situated on the coast with a beach.



1792

The fortified city of Cagliari is located on a hilltop. Small villages develop along the infrastructure intersections in the hinterland.



1931

Cagliari grows on the shore side towards its harbor. The small villages in the hinterland begin to expand.



2008

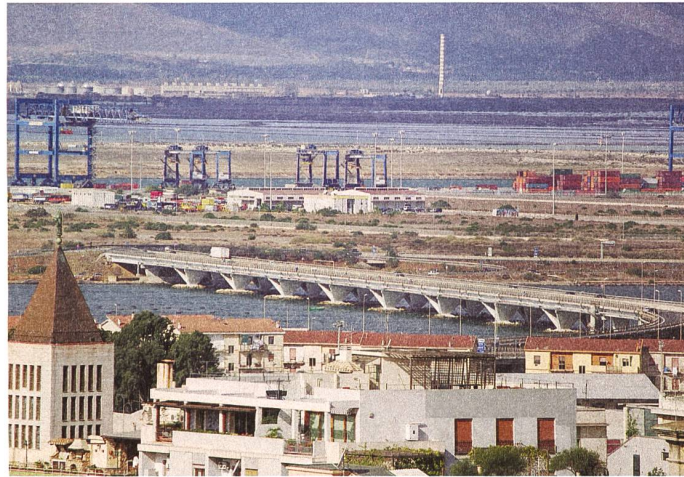
Cagliari and the villages have merged.

THE LAND USE OF SANTA GILLA



1859

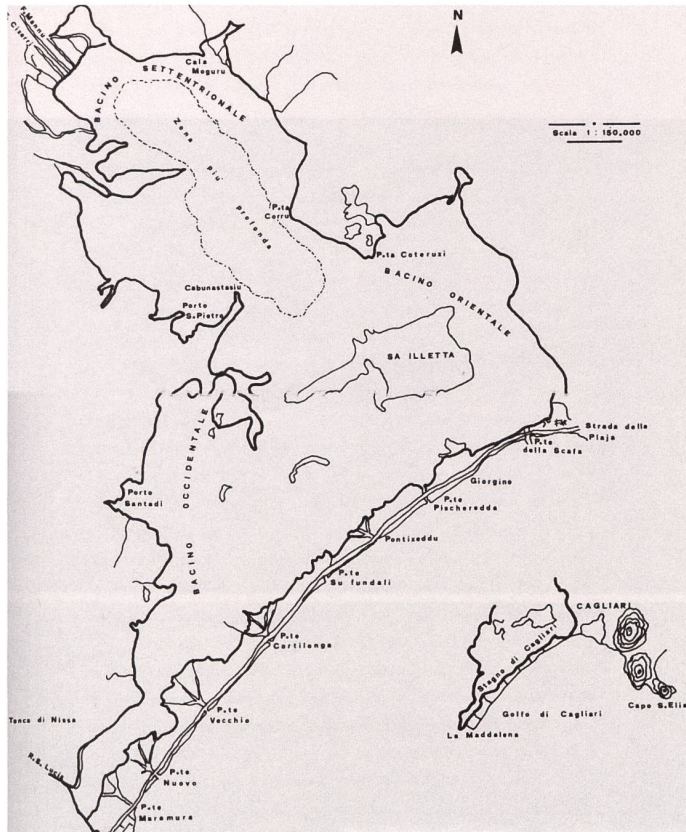
Lithograph of Cagliari and the salt industry



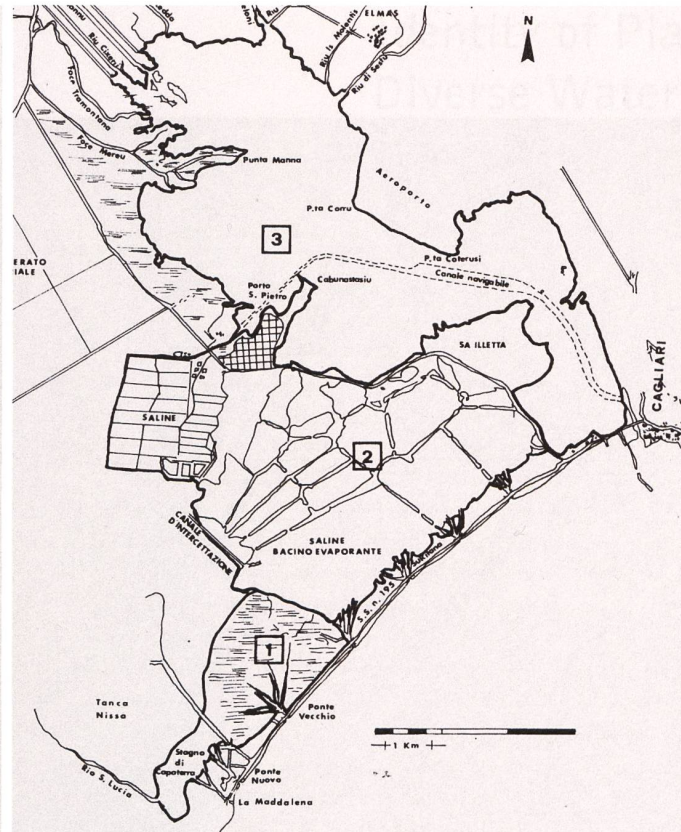
A current view towards the bay of Santa Gilla shows a landscape dominated by infrastructure and industry.

The land-water relationship around Santa Gilla bay was originally dominated by water, the main industry being fishing with minor agricultural land use. This changed dramatically with the establishment of the salt industry, whose expansion supplanted agriculture in the area, reclaiming land from the sea. The expansion towards the island of Sa Illetta, which created the Porto Canale, introduced another form of industry to the area and the success of the salt industry and surrounding infrastructure also led to the development of other heavy industries on land. The development of the airport and the NATO base further increased the predominantly industrial use of the land, all of which had a substantial impact on the landscape, the city of Cagliari and its inhabitants.

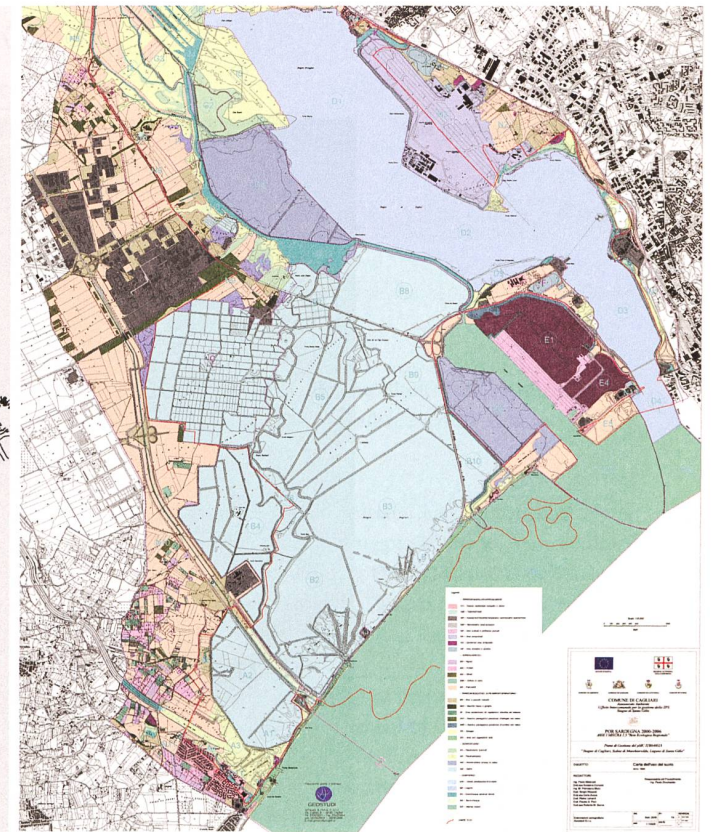
The bay of Santa Gilla appears to have been developed without much planning and consideration of its context, but rather with economic priorities in mind and without thinking about long-term problems that may arise from the total upheaval of the long-standing land-water equilibrium.



1910
The main industry in the lagoon in 1910 was fishing and the exchange of water between the river estuary and sea was controlled.



1958
The lagoon was reclaimed for the salt industry, which has now become the region's main industry.



2009
The construction of the industrial port, the NATO base and the airport separated Cagliari from the lagoon. The salt industry has expanded, dividing up the lagoon even further.

CNC model of the existing site

