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Chapter 2

Seats of Power and Marketplaces in Italian Medieval Cities

Rosa Smurra

Filippo Carli's 1934 examination of the role of markets in Italian cities in the early Middle Ages¹ is still important, although some of his claims, such as the idea that bishops were responsible for the redevelopment and organisation of urban markets abandoned in the post-Roman period, have been called into question. In fact, Gino Luzzatto pointed out as early as 1935 that urban markets had not disappeared completely, and that they pre-dated the appointment of bishops to whom the sovereigns granted the right to collect market revenues.²

This article deals with the marketplaces where traders and craftsmen carried out their regular business throughout the year under the local authorities' control. It examines the topographical relationship between the seats of power (ecclesiastical and/or secular) and the location of the main urban markets. To this end, various types of marketplaces across the Italian peninsula and Sicily will be examined, considering the political and customary differences in the period from the tenth to the fourteenth century.

Markets in Northern and Central Italy

The tenth century was a period of rapid development and economic recovery for urban settlements and trade. In this period, bishops generally embodied public authority, having been granted temporal powers by kings and emperors.³ The public powers granted to bishops included the control of markets, often situated close to the seat of episcopal authority, along with the right to collect indirect taxes.⁴ The charters sovereigns issued in the ninth and tenth centuries granting rights over markets to bishops or other beneficiaries do not usually specify the places where the markets were to be held.⁵ However, for Milan, we do have some information. The Ottonian rulers granted possessions and privileges (rights to hold markets, coin money, and collect tolls) to the

¹ Carli 1934.

² Luzzatto 1935.

³ Fumagalli 1979; Racine 2018.

⁴ For example, King Berengario (887–927) granted the Church of Treviso two parts of the *teloneum* and the market of Treviso (Schiaparelli 1903: 149). For the markets granted to the bishops in the Po Valley Italy, Racine 2018: 86–87.

⁵ Bocchi 1973: 167.

Church. Bishops were not the only ones with rights over markets. In some cases, the Ottonian rulers granted these rights to religious houses.⁶ With a 952 charter, Otto I (936–973) donated to the Milanese monastery of St Ambrose a plot of land on which the monastery owned shops, specifying that this was the place *ubi publicum mercatum extat*.⁷ Several hypotheses have been put forward regarding the location of this market. According to present-day interpretations, the market area was within the *atrium* (four-sided portico) of the Saint Ambrose monastery.⁸ At the time of its foundation, the monastery was located outside the Roman city walls, but within the more extensive twelfth-century fortifications (*Cerchia dei Navigli*). Thanks to the rights granted by Otto, the monastery eventually owned five areas: a hall (possibly a covered market)⁹ along with the site on which it was located, the shops that were already in place, and the stalls on the site in front. The entire surface area amounted to 24 *tavole*, corresponding to 654.5 square metres. The division into small plots of equal size and the presence of a covered building show how, in the mid tenth century, this market, certainly not the only one of its kind, was neatly divided into plots for the *stationes*, market stalls owned by merchants and used for trade.

Other market areas in Milan (*Map 1*) were managed by the bishop and canons of the cathedrals that assumed particular importance during the tenth and eleventh centuries, periods characterised by commercial revival, demographic growth, the rural population's migration to the cities, and the development of crafts. From the twelfth century and beyond, a period which coincided with the communal phase, two Milanese sites were used for daily markets, both owned by the canons of the cathedrals.¹⁰ The first, located in front of the early Christian “summer” cathedral of Santa Tecla, was used for the sale of small fish. In the second, between the apse of Santa Tecla and the “winter” cathedral of Santa Maria, fruit and vegetables were sold.¹¹ The streets around the cathedrals, under buildings' arcades – which Bonvesin da la Riva, a late thirteenth-century grammar teacher and a tertiary of the Humiliati Order, calls *coperti* – feature specialised

⁶ For market concessions in Northern Early Medieval Italy, see: Rapone 2011.

⁷ Sickel 1879. Regarding the relationship between the Church and kingdoms of Europe, see: Reuter 1982.

⁸ Bocchi 1973: 161; D'Acunto 2012: 31.

⁹ Carli 1934: 261–265.

¹⁰ Goodson 2021: 131–132, 139.

¹¹ The titles of the cathedrals as ‘summer’ (*aestiva*) and ‘winter’ (*iemalis*) are related to the celebrations carried out mostly in spring and summer in Santa Tecla, whereas in Santa Maria they were mainly carried out in autumn and winter.

markets, such as a clothing market. The author also points out that bi-weekly local markets are held in various parts of the city.¹²

An issue to consider concerning the evolution of open-air markets in Italian communal towns is the topographical relationship between marketplaces and public buildings, such as town halls. With the strengthening of communal regimes, the governance of urban markets was coming under the regulation of civic authorities, while the topography of the markets and their relationship with the communal palaces, at that time under construction, took forms that are worth analysing.

Although we cannot speak of models for the marketplaces,¹³ we can note certain traditions, such as holding the main market in the Roman *fora* and the subsequent erection of communal buildings on the same sites. Developments of this kind are characteristic of numerous towns and cities. Not only does this indicate the continuity – not necessarily unbroken over the centuries – of medieval markets on the site of the ancient *forum*, but it also shows how markets influenced the communal governments' decision to build the seats of public power in or near the marketplace. This proximity enabled control over the trade taking place there, assuring vendors and buyers that transactions were properly conducted and monitoring the revenue from the duties collected. In addition to town halls, other institutions and bodies were also established near the markets: buildings were erected to provide foreign exchange services and to enable merchants to carry on their trade.

There are cases of this kind in cities such as Verona, where the public buildings were built in the square that was the site of the ancient *forum*. A similar situation can be seen in Padua where the imposing *Palazzo della Ragione* (1218) and the surrounding municipal buildings were erected in the former market area, resulting in a new layout of the market squares (*Map 2*). The interest of the Commune in the revenue from the shops located in the *Palazzo della Ragione*, as well as in other public spaces is shown by a 1258 Statute containing the civic authority's resolution to draw up a register listing the shops and the rents to be paid to the Commune. The communal authorities, that had an interest in leasing premises and spaces in good condition, carried out building work to make them fit for the purpose. This was the case with the refurbishment of the butchers' hall. In 1273, the *Consiglio Maggiore* approved a resolution that 12 per cent of the costs incurred for work

¹² Bonvesin da la Riva: 82–84; Spinelli 1988; Salvatori 1994.

¹³ Romano 2015: 43–70.

carried out in the hall leased to the butchers should be borne by the butchers themselves.¹⁴ The portico on the ground floor housed numerous traders: in the 1273 Statutes of Padua mentioned above, the shops leased to furriers were recorded with their premises carefully identified. Further sources provide information related to other trades. A valuable source for the markets of Padua is the *Visio Egidii regis Patavie* by Giovanni da Nono.¹⁵ Written between 1314 and 1318, it provides an accurate and comprehensive description of two markets in Padua (the present-day *Piazza delle Erbe* and *Piazza dei Frutti*), situated north and south of the *Palazzo della Ragione*: the sides of the building were characterised by flights of steps and a long row of arcades and windows with numerous shops. The *Visio Egidii* lists the various goods available to consumers. Apart from fruit and vegetables, other foodstuffs included meat, which was slaughtered and sold in the butchers' shops to the south-west of the square, while game, poultry, fish, wine, and sausages were sold in the surrounding buildings or on the stalls in the two squares. High-quality clothing and footwear, including silk, knitwear, and leather goods, were sold in the shops located in the buildings surrounding the square, whereas more valuable items of clothing, such as furs and furs scrapers, were available in the shops under the portico of the Palace. Goldsmiths and money-changers had their stalls on the steps against the north wall. The open spaces were used for the sale of ironmongery, mats, ropes, and wooden hoops, while a space was set aside for card players. The *Fondaco delle biade* (Granary), one of the buildings belonging to the complex of communal palaces, housed the city's grain supply.

The layout of the merchandise might appear haphazard and confusing, but it responded to a rationale related to rental costs. As mentioned above with reference to the butchers, renting shops and stalls in the squares could be very expensive. The guilds that managed dealings between their members and the Commune did not have the same economic resources. Consequently, the apparent disorder could be explained by this factor.

It is not clear whether the ancient *forum* of Treviso continued to be the marketplace in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. In the area of the cathedral, situated on the perimeter of the Roman town, the bishops exercised the public functions granted to them by the Carolingian and later sovereigns. It is likely that there as well some market trading took place. With the emergence of the Commune in the twelfth century, council meetings were probably held next to the baptistery,

¹⁴ Gloria 1873: 343–344; Bocchi 2013:171–172.

¹⁵ Fabris 1934–1939; Fabris 1977; Romano 2015: 80–83.

whereas the cathedral square served for the purposes of public assembly, and possibly as a marketplace (*Map 3*). A turning point occurred at the beginning of the thirteenth century, when it was decided to build the communal palaces in the area of the ancient *forum*, located at the city's main crossroads (*carrubio*). In this situation, the Roman *forum*, where some market trading was presumably still happening, was ideal for the construction of communal palaces. This complex of buildings thus had an L-shaped plan, overlooking the present-day *Piazza dei Signori*. In the arcaded areas of the palaces and under the flights of steps leading to the upper rooms, the Commune rented spaces (*staciones*) for commercial activities.¹⁶ The peculiar configuration of these buildings shaped the locations for different activities: to the north, towards the church of San Vito, there was the daily fish market, not far away, the butchers' shops, and to the east, the fruit and vegetable market.

Also in Brescia, in the Middle Ages the area of the Roman *forum*, albeit reduced in size, served as a daily market (known as the *mercatum de foro*). In 1146-1148 a new marketplace (*mercatum brolii*) is recorded in front of the cathedrals, an area where in the late twelfth century the complex of the *Broletto* (communal palaces) took shape (*Map 4*). From 1173-1174, however, the commune of Brescia built a large New Market (the *Forum Fortunatum*), replacing the *mercato de foro* and the *mercatum brolii* that was no longer sufficient. The New Market was laid out in the eastern sector that had suffered a decline in late antiquity. Around this large space dedicated to the daily and weekly market, building plots were marked out for new inhabitants.¹⁷ To the west of the Roman town, outside Porta Milanese, another market area was laid out, mainly occupied by butchers' stalls.¹⁸

As in the case of other cities, medieval Pavia retained the spaces of the ancient *forum*. The Roman urban layout, still discernible in the current street plan, was characterised by the ancient *forum* at the centre, crossed by the *cardo maximus* (the present-day Strada Nuova) and the *decumanus maximus* (Corso Cavour). At the time when Pavia served as a royal seat, during the Gothic, Lombard, Carolingian, and Italic kingdoms, the market continued to be held on the site of the former Roman *forum* (the present-day *Piazza della Vittoria*) which, however, underwent some

¹⁶ This arrangement, which was intended to augment ordinary revenues of the commune through the leasing of some of its premises for commercial and professional activities, was widespread in other cities; for the Bolognese case, see: Smurra 2011.

¹⁷ Cervigni 2007: 155.

¹⁸ Andenna 1993.

alterations, having been partly encroached upon by private properties reducing the total area (Map 5). In the early Middle Ages, the forum was divided into two parts. The one south of the *decumanus* was known as the *forum clausum*, while the part to the north was the *forum apertum*¹⁹. These names indicate that the market area had been partly delimited by buildings intended for specialised functions, such as the butchers' premises. Sales counters and shops existed in the *forum clausum* at the beginning of the tenth century; one of these shops owned by the abbot of Nonantola (Modena) was granted in emphyteusis (on leasehold) to merchants; other shops were owned by ecclesiastical bodies and individuals.²⁰

The Goth ruler Theodoric (474–526) built the royal palace within the city walls albeit away from the *forum*, in the city's north-eastern sector, which remained the kings' seat until 1024.²¹ Its status as a royal seat of power was instrumental in making Pavia a centre of international trade. This development was favoured by the city's strategic position along river communication routes, on the Ticino, not far from its confluence with the Po, and as a result, the connection to the Adriatic. Guilds or associations of merchants and other occupations, overseen by royal officials, are recorded under the name *Ministeria* in the *Honorantie civitatis Paviae* of the eleventh century at the time of Holy Roman Emperor Henry II (1014–1024), though they can be traced back to the ninth century.²²

With the emergence of the Commune, the civic authorities built public seats close to centres crucial to the economic and religious life. In the twelfth century, the public palace known as the *Broletto* was built on the southern side of the market behind the double cathedral of Santo Stefano and Santa Maria del Popolo. During the thirteenth century, the town hall was extended with the construction of the *Palacium novum* and the *Palazzo del Podestà*, housing stalls for the sale of cereals. In the middle of the thirteenth century, with the establishment of the Popular Commune, a further building, known as the *Palazzo del Popolo* (also known as the *Palazzo della Mercanzia*), was erected in the area of the parish of Santa Maria Perone (the present-day Piazza del Lino) on the perimeter of the *forum*.²³

¹⁹ Hudson 1987: 287–288.

²⁰ Settia 1987: 121, 137.

²¹ Hudson 1987: 242.

²² *Instituta regalia*.

²³ Bertoni 2013: 37–38.

The appearance of the Pavia marketplace and the surrounding area is described in great detail by the priest Opicino de Canistris (1296–1350/1352)²⁴ in the *Liber de laudibus civitatis Ticinensis*.²⁵ Opicino took a keen interest in the city's commercial activities. In front of the cathedrals and civic tower, in a square known at the time as *Platea Atrii*, fruit and vegetables, wine, poultry, cheese, bread, fresh and preserved meat and fish, crockery of all kinds, ropes, woollen cloths and furs, bags and other leather goods were sold. The description continues enumerating the various goods to be bought in the vicinity, such as candles, oil for seasoning food, and oil for lamps for churches as well as for homes. There were a number of money-changers, as well as a variety of other goods. New shoes and second-hand clothes were sold in the *Piazza di San Savino* (the present-day *Piazza Cavagneria*) south of the cathedral. In the square of *Santa Maria di Perone* (the present-day *Piazza del Lino*), in addition to linen, you could buy the materials for textile manufacturing, while fustian, a much more valuable item, was to be found under the portico of the *Palazzo del Popolo*; in the *Brollo grande*, there was a cattle and horse market; while in the courtyard of the communal buildings, fodder and legumes were available. In this courtyard, justice was administered on sites specially designated for the purpose.

Completed in 1330, Opicino's account gives us a description of the entire city, providing, as far as the market is concerned, an overview of commercial activities, in the phase of development immediately preceding the economic crisis culminating in the mid-century pandemic (Black Death). In the age of the communes, Pavia, a capital city of Lombardy for many centuries, was able to use the resources of the past and bring together the market, the cathedrals, and the public buildings.

In Florence, the Roman *forum* (the present-day *Piazza della Repubblica*) was the site of the main urban market over eighteen centuries, until the city, which in 1865 became the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, transferred it in order to reconfigure the piazza with buildings and architecture more fitting to the city's new role as capital. Throughout the Middle Ages and later, paleo-Christian churches, tower-houses, and guild halls were erected around the square, but no civic buildings, such as the town hall, were built there ([Map 6](#)).

²⁴ Becker 1975.

²⁵ See: Anonymous Ticinensis. The anonymous author has been identified as Opicino de Canistris; Opicino de Canistris.

At the beginning of the eleventh century, a second weekly market, the *mercatum de porta Sanctae Mariae* (also known as the *Mercato Nuovo*), was laid out to the south,²⁶ close to an area where later cloth-merchants, wool manufacturers, and money-changers erected their meeting halls. The fish market, which in the fourteenth century was transferred from the *Mercato Vecchio* to the *Mercato Nuovo*, was subsequently moved to the area adjacent to the *Ponte Vecchio*.²⁷

An interesting description of the centuries-old market in the Roman *forum* is provided by Antonio Pucci (fl. 1330s–end 1380s),²⁸ a Florentine man of letters who also held public office as guardian of the deeds of the *Tribunale della Mercanzia*, a powerful institution representing mercantile interests in the city.²⁹ Pucci dedicated an extensive survey to Florence's *Mercato Vecchio*³⁰ dealing both with the traders and their goods. His introductory verses offer a comparison with the market squares of other cities, in particular the *Campo* (the present-day *Piazza del Campo*) in Siena, which he describes as a basin that was very cold in winter and very hot in summer. According to Pucci, no marketplace could be more beautiful than Florence's *Mercato Vecchio*, pointing out the presence of four churches on the four corners, and two streets cutting across it. The poet praised the agents of that thriving commerce: physicians able to cure all ills, apothecaries, cloth merchants, grocers, innkeepers, craftsmen selling baskets; then bakers, well cleaners, gardeners, shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, and coopers. At the centre of the market square was the meat market, offering quality meat, but there were also numerous gamblers (*gran baratteria*) and dice-makers, money-changers, and money-lenders. The goods sold in the stalls were varied and abundant: game, poultry, and cheese for making cakes, and fruit and vegetables. Pucci went on to describe the farmers who came to the market with their pulses, milk, eggs, and fresh fruit of a higher quality than what the shops sold.³¹ Amidst such variety, there was no shortage of wastrels, barterers, harlots, and brawlers among the players, resulting in stabbings that disfigured the beautiful marketplace.

In addition to the *Mercato Vecchio* and *Mercato Nuovo*, there were other important marketplaces in Florence, such as that of *Orsanmichele*. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the Commune approved a resolution to build a central grain market a short distance from the

²⁶ Davidsohn 1956: 1248; Francovich et. al.: 2011: 21, 44.

²⁷ Battilotti et. al. 2011.

²⁸ Bettarini Bruni 2016.

²⁹ Robins 2000: 33

³⁰ Pucci 1969.

³¹ Cherubini 1988; Pinto 2009.

Mercato Vecchio in *Via dei Calzaiuoli*, where by the end of the century, it was decided to build a loggia on the site of the former oratory of San Michele in Orto that the loggia was named after (Orsanmichele). The *Loggia Orsanmichele*, which was repeatedly ravaged by fire and finally rebuilt in the mid-fourteenth century, combined the grain market with a church, as a religious cult sprang up around a “miraculous” image of the Virgin and Child depicted on a pilaster in the marketplace.³² The loggia also housed the confraternity of *Orsanmichele*, the *laudesi*, a company devoted to the Virgin Mary.³³ The activities and trades carried out in *Orsanmichele* are described in the account of the grain merchant Domenico Lenzi, who also reported on the grain market, as well as a number of famines between 1320 and 1335. The valuable work by Lenzi, known as the *Libro del Biadaio*, records the fluctuations in grain prices, (monthly, weekly, or daily), the various types of products that changed hands, as well as the actors involved in the day-to-day operation of the market.³⁴

In Siena, the marketplaces had different forms, depending on the development period of the city and its orographic configuration. It is only in the twelfth century that we see the emergence of an area specifically dedicated to the market. In fact, for the two small nuclei that characterise the city (*Castelvecchio* and the cathedral complex) in the pre-communal period, the surviving sources do not mention the presence of a market (Map 7). Despite the lack of sources, it may be assumed that there was some kind of a market for the sale of foodstuffs in place. It may have been located in the space in front of the cathedral (Santa Maria), as in many other towns.³⁵ Demographic growth from the eleventh century onwards led to the formation of suburbs, particularly along the *Via Francigena*, which were incorporated into successive city walls up to the 1320s.

The suburb along the *Via Francigena* had a focal point in the church of San Paolo, where we know of a meeting of the *curia consulum* in 1156.³⁶ In the same area, a few years later there is evidence of a market: a deed of purchase of land by the consuls of the Commune in 1169 mentions a market near the church of San Paolo (*campo Sancti Pauli et mercato*) within its boundaries. This is the place that would later (1194) be known as the *Campus fori* (present-day *Piazza del Campo*), an uneven and often flooded sloping site, which required substantial land reclamation and

³² Holmes 2011.

³³ Ito 2014: 479–489.

³⁴ A transcription of Domenico Lenzi’s text is by Giuliano Pinto: Lenzi 1978.

³⁵ Bocchi 1973: 163; Tuliani 1998: 62.

³⁶ Redon 1999: 66.

hydraulic works in the first half of the Duecento.³⁷ In the next century during the Guelph regime (known as the *Nove*), the site of the *Campus fori* dealing with the above-mentioned water management issues was rearranged in order to allow the construction of the *Palazzo Pubblico* (Town Hall). In the late Middle Ages, both daily and weekly markets took place in the *Piazza del Campo*. In particular, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the *Nove* decided to reorganise the trading areas along with a new distribution of stalls and traders for the Saturday market. On the feast of the Assumption of Mary, the patron saint of the city, there was also a week-long fair, that merchants with valuable goods from distant lands would visit.³⁸ The *Campus fori* was also the site of the guildhalls of the trades that in the central Middle Ages played a prominent political role in the city government. Whereas many goods found a stable location, livestock were first moved (1317–1346) from the *Campus Fori* to *Fontebranda*, and afterwards to the New Market (1346–1376) located south of the *Piazza del Campo*.³⁹

Markets in Southern Italy

It is well known that the cities and towns of the South did not enjoy forms of political autonomy comparable to those of communal Italy.⁴⁰ They were part of a kingdom in which the monarch dictated the provisions related to the governance of individual cities, supported by a highly articulated administrative apparatus. Marketplaces usually took the form of streets – referred to as *plateae* – where traders displayed their goods in shops at street level. Market rights were exercised by public authorities, such as the sovereign or those to whom he granted these rights, including ecclesiastical bodies and local lords. This right was known as *plateaticum*.⁴¹ Palermo provides a good example of this arrangement.

The ancient city of Palermo, of Phoenician-Punic origin, was built on an oblong stronghold, raised above the surrounding plain, bordered by the port to the north and the course of the Kemonia (to the east) and Papireto (to the west) Rivers ([Map 8](#)). With the Greek-Gothic War (535–553), Sicily with Syracuse as its administrative capital, served as a *theme* (district) within the Byzantine

³⁷ Tuliani 1998: 65.

³⁸ Tuliani 2007.

³⁹ Balestracci 1981: 152.

⁴⁰ Abulafia 1977.

⁴¹ Martin 2005; Oldfield 2009: 259. The Normans carried over the use of the *plateaticum* from the previous Lombard administration.

Empire. After a five-month siege, in 831 Palermo was occupied by the Aghlabid army.⁴² Thanks to its geographical position, allowing a greater chance of conquest towards the Tyrrhenian, Palermo became the capital of the Muslim emirate, initially dependent on the African caliphate, but autonomous from the tenth century. This situation persisted until the Norman conquest of 1072. The settlement occupied by the Muslims (Aghlabids followed by Fatimids) consisted of a walled urban structure (later known as the Al-Qasr, then the Cassaro) dating back to the Punic-Roman period.⁴³ The Aghlabids made the Al-Qasr their economic and religious centre, erecting the main mosque on the site of the early Christian cathedral, as evidenced by Ibn Hawqal, the tenth-century merchant-geographer from Baghdad, who provided a survey of the mercantile world of the entire Islamic Mediterranean: North Africa, Spain, and Sicily.⁴⁴ The Islamic seat of government, with the Arsenal and military infrastructures, was established in 937-938 near the port, practically another fortified new town, known as al-Khālīṣa (Kalsa).⁴⁵

According to written sources, in the al-Khālīṣa there were no trading spaces,⁴⁶ but this was not the case for the Al-Qasr, the main street of which (al-Simat) is described by Ibn Hawqal as ‘all paved with stone from end to end with various types of merchandise.’⁴⁷ His narrative proceeds with the description of markets outside the walled area, specifying their location, goods and foodstuffs. This was the newly established urban area, due to the expansion of the first period of Islamic government.⁴⁸ The medieval markets were held in districts where famous daily markets survive to this day: *Caput Seralcadi*, *Suk-el'-Balharà-Contrada Ballaro*, *Contrada Bocharrie*, and *Contrada de Lactarinis* (the present-day Il Capo, Ballarò, La Vucciria, and Lattarini).⁴⁹ However, they did not consist of spaces dedicated to hawkers, as they were rather the extension of shops onto the street.

The topography of Palermo’s markets was not substantially altered by the Norman conquest (1072), followed by the creation of a prosperous kingdom (1130) that lasted until the end of the twelfth century. An interesting description of Norman Palermo is provided by al-Idrisi, an

⁴² Theotokis 2020: 24.

⁴³ Pezzina 2013: 196.

⁴⁴ Amari 1880: I, 11.

⁴⁵ Ardizzone et. al.: 229–257.

⁴⁶ Although no commercial spaces are recorded in al-Khālīṣa, the presence of warehouses can be assumed, cf. Nef 2013: 53.

⁴⁷ Amari 1880: I, 21.

⁴⁸ Johns 2004: 413, 425–426, 436.

⁴⁹ D’Angelo 2002: 38, 39, 42.

illustrious Muslim intellectual, summoned to the Norman court of Sicily by King Roger II (1105/1130–1154), on account of his fame as a geographer and cartographer. Al-Idrisi describes a city in which the Muslim quarters outside the *Al-Qasr* were no longer separated from the old city but were completely integrated. The *Khalisa*, the symbol of the Aghlabid government, no longer existed in the same form. Centuries later, not far from that area, the Catalans, the Genoese, Pisans, and Amalfitans built their warehouses and traded in grain.

The Normans transferred their seat of power from the opposite side of the *Khalisa* to *Al-Halka* (*Galka*), not far from the cathedral that had taken the place of the mosque *jāmi*. The *Al-Halka* does not appear to have included marketplaces, though there was no lack of symbolic elements, churches, and palaces.⁵⁰ The new rulers built the palace known as the Palace of the Normans for the Norman kings on this site, currently the seat of the regional government of Sicily. Al-Idrisi offered praise but not much detail about how the markets were organised: ‘[*Al-Qasr*] is full of *fonduks*, houses, bathrooms, shops, markets, and defended by walls, ditches and shelters... It encompasses three districts, of which the middle one is studded with towering palaces and excellent hostels, mosques, *fonduks*, baths and shops of great merchants.’⁵¹ In Norman times, each district probably had its own market, similar in structure to those that dated back to the Islamic era. Mention should be made of a letter apparently dated 1190, attributed to a certain Hugo Falcandus and addressed to a treasurer of the Church of Palermo, that mentions a *forum Sarracenorum*.⁵² Its exact location and function are debated: the *forum* that Falcandus refers to has been interpreted as a marketplace⁵³ but also as a square with religious functions.⁵⁴

From the capital of Sicily, let us now turn our attention to Naples. The urban structure and plan of Greek and Roman *Neapolis* has preserved elements that can still be identified, such as the street grid (*Map 9*). The ancient city about 20 metres above sea level was protected by walls, many traces of which have been found. The coastline has changed over the centuries, advancing progressively and thus creating an increasingly large space at the foot of the ancient city subjected to the alternating phenomena of marine ingression and regression.⁵⁵ In the Middle Ages, the area

⁵⁰ Pezzina 2013: 209.

⁵¹ Idrisi states that in the *Al-Qasr* ‘sorge la moschea *ġāmi*’ che fu un tempo chiesa cristiana e in oggi è ritornata [al culto] al quale dedicaronla gli antichi’, cf. Amari 1880: 60–62.

⁵² Falcando 1897: 181.

⁵³ Corrao 1995: 360; Andenna 1997: 291.

⁵⁴ De Simone 2000: 88.

⁵⁵ Giampaola 2004.

of the main market continued to be that of the Roman *forum*, where archaeological excavations carried out beneath the present-day basilica of San Lorenzo Maggiore (Piazza S. Gaetano) have highlighted large commercial spaces. As we shall see, at the end of the thirteenth century, when the Angevin monarchy gave a decisive turn to the mercantile infrastructure of the city, the San Lorenzo market was still thriving: shops had been set up almost everywhere, including under the public portico in Piazza San Lorenzo. Trade was carried on in shops in the public streets of the district known as the *Mercatum*. The stalls for displaying goods encroached on the street space, so much so that King Charles II (1285–1309) tried unsuccessfully to remove them for reasons of decorum.⁵⁶ Spaces in the proximity of the walls (Market of Porta Nolana), squares, and streets (San Gregorio Armeno) were, and still are, market areas.

As noted, a significant phase in the urban transformation was the Angevin period, when in 1268 King Charles I of Anjou (1266–1285) defeated the Swabian King Conrad the Younger (1254–1268); took him prisoner, and had him beheaded in the field called Moricino, a large clearing located south-east of the walls, not far from the coast. The site had been attested since the eleventh century as the property of the Dukes of Naples, who later granted part of it to two monasteries. From the thirteenth century onwards, merchants settled there with their stalls and shops.⁵⁷

Although the capital of the kingdom was Palermo, the Angevins chose Naples as their residence from the beginning. In 1282, as a result of the war of Vespers and the acquisition of Sicily by the kings of Aragon, Naples became the capital of the new kingdom. Beginning with Charles I, the Angevin kings transformed the appearance of the city, especially in the area to the south, between the walls and the coast, in the strip of land that the sea regressions had gradually created and where earlier in the Norman-Swabian era, churches, hospitals, and residential areas had been erected.⁵⁸ The Angevin dynasty chose this area to erect the main buildings and structures enhancing the image of the new rulers. They included the mighty *Castel Nuovo* (later also known as the *Maschio Angioino*) at the port facilities, a military structure, but also a splendid home for the ruling family. To the east of *Castel Nuovo*, south of the city walls, palaces were built for the families linked to the Angevin monarchy, the loggias of foreign merchants (Genoese, Pisani, and

⁵⁶ Castellano 2018: 46–47.

⁵⁷ Gaglione 2008: 40; Castellano 2018: 47.

⁵⁸ Colletta 2006: 108.

Amalfitani) and the market of Moricino, not yet completely freed from the stagnant waters, but already characterised by market trading. Trade at Moricino during the Angevin rule is witnessed as early as 1270 in a concession by Charles I to the hospital of the confraternity of Saint Eligius, concerning an area for the construction of the church and hospital.⁵⁹ The ground donated (*plateam curie nostri*) bordered on the site where the weekly market was held ‘*iuxta locum ubi Forum Magnum Neapolitanum singulis hebdomadis celebratur.*’

In 1302, King Charles II developed the Neapolitan mercantile system with the establishment of the wholesale market in the Moricino area. His charter of August 4 contains the concession of a *locus* from the state property to the citizens and the city of Naples: ‘*locus est vocatus vulgo Muricinum... comuni vocabulo rerum venalium bis in hebdomada qualibet celebratur.*’⁶⁰ The Angevin market of Moricino appears as a market held twice a week, where the city’s retailers purchased their supplies. Mostly a food market, on its edges public buildings were erected, such as the Customs House for the grain trade, the *Panecteria*, and the slaughterhouse.⁶¹

The specific site of the fish trade was located in an area west of Moricino from Norman times. In the Angevin period, the duty on fish was generally calculated on the quantity of fish caught, but by ancient custom the fishermen of the fleet paid a monthly charge, regardless of the amount of fish caught.⁶² Fishermen could only sell and consumers could only buy retail fish products at the *Petra piscium*,⁶³ which in Angevin times was the most important square used as a public fish market, with a portico and a fountain, near the *Loggia dei Genovesi*.⁶⁴

Conclusions

The cases selected in this paper mostly reveal relations between the marketplaces and the seat of power becoming increasingly tangible in the communal age. In this survey, there are exceptions, such as Florence, where the main marketplace is not characterised by a topographical link to the *Palazzo Vecchio* (town hall) or to the *Duomo* (cathedral). The significant economic development of the twelfth century and the demographic growth of the Italian communes put the large markets,

⁵⁹ Vitolo 2003; Bruzelius 2004; D’Auria – De Feo 2017.

⁶⁰ Colletta 2006: 222–223; Gaglione 2008: 46.

⁶¹ Colletta 2006: 174.

⁶² Castellano 2018: 45.

⁶³ Feniello 1991.

⁶⁴ Colletta 2006: 117.

often on the site of the ancient Roman *fora*, at the centre of the city economy, giving rise to the construction of the communal palaces and other buildings related to economic activities, such as the *Domus Mercatorum* or the loggias of the money-changers, to control the activities that took place there, and for their proximity to traders in individual economic sectors.

The importance of marketplaces was at the heart of royal concessions, as we have seen for Angevin Naples, and was also central to the works praising the cities, such as the Arabic sources describing Islamic and then Norman Palermo where marketplaces were away from the seat of power. Marketplaces also feature extensively in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century accounts of self-governed cities in Northern and Central Italy. Many of the authors were merchants themselves or at least well aware of the complexity of the management of urban markets. They described not just the layout of marketplaces, but also the flourishing of the various trades. They did not fail to notice the gamblers and prostitutes either who frequented the market; after all, gambling and *meretricium* provided incomes for the municipal finances, such as the duty on card game (*gabella ludi*).

In brief, medieval urban markets were complex institutions that facilitated trade, exchange, and the circulation of information, ideas, and technologies. They were assisted by complex organisations of structures, spaces and rules, of which many traces survive to our day. They made a significant contribution to the shaping of towns and cities as seats of power and authority.

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1 St. Ambrose market; **2** St. Tecla Cathedral market; **3** St. Mary Cathedral.

Map 2. Medieval civic centre of Padova (Map prepared by the author)

A 12th-13th-century city walls; **B** Cathedral; **C** Palazzo della Ragione; **D** Communal palaces.

1 Piazza delle Erbe market; **2** Piazza della Frutta market.

Map 3. Medieval civic centre of Treviso (Map prepared by the author)

A Medieval city walls; **B** Cathedral; **C** Communal Palaces; **D** Sile River.

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A 12th-century city walls; **B** 13th-century city walls; **C** Cathedrals; **D** Broletto complex (communal palaces).

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A Roman city walls; **B** Early middle ages city walls; **C** 12th-century city walls; **D** Cathedrals; **E** Royal Palace; **F** *Viridarium* (pleasure garden); **G** Communal palaces: Broletto, *Palacium Novum*, Palazzo del Podestà; **H** Civic Tower; **I** Mint; **L** Palazzo del Popolo (or della Mercanzia).
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1a-1b *Simāt/platea* or *ruġa* or *via marmoreal*; **2** *Caput Seralcadi/Il Capo*; **3** *Contrada Ballaro/Ballarò*; **4** *Contrada Bocharrie/Vucciria*; **5** *Contrada de Lactarinis/Lattarini*; **6** *Forum Sarracenorum* (?).

Map 9. Medieval civic centre of Naples (Map prepared by the author on ESRI basemap)

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1 Ancient-medieval market; **2** Porta Nolana; **3** St Gregorio Armeno; **4** *Petra Piscium*; **5** Moricino.

