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RECOMMENDATIONS

BOOKLET / DESIGN STUDIOS
BARI / SAN PAOLO

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Booklet / Design studios

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1. Context analysis

Bari, the capital of Puglia, had 316,212 inhabitants as of January 1, 2024, covering a land area of 116.17 square kilometers (Figure 1). Since 2014, it has served as the capital of a metropolitan city encompassing 41 municipalities, with a total population of 1,221,782. Administratively, the city is divided into five municipalities: Municipality I includes Murat, San Nicola, Libertà, Madonnella, Japigia, and the former coastal district of Torre a Mare; Municipality II comprises Poggiofranco, Picone, Carrassi, San Pasquale, and Mungivacca; Municipality III covers San Paolo, Stanic, Marconi, San Girolamo, Fesca, and Villaggio del Lavoratore; Municipality IV includes the inland districts of Carbonara, Ceglie, and Loseto; Municipality V consists of the northern coastal districts of Palese and Santo Spirito, along with the settlements of Catino and San Pio (Figure 2).

Bari defies simple categorization. It can no longer be defined solely as a commercial city, as it had been historically described. It has never been an industrial city, despite the Bari-Modugno ASI industrial area being one of the largest in southern Italy. Nor can it be classified as a university city, given the declining ability of its universities to attract students. It is a significant healthcare hub, yet many residents seek treatment in central and northern Italy. While tourism has grown considerably in recent years, the main tourist attractions of Puglia remain elsewhere.



Figura 1: Vista aerea della città di Bari. Fonte: Google Earth

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1. Context analysis

For a long time, the city benefited from public investments in services due to its role as the regional capital. However, since the 1970s, its dominance in this sector has been challenged by the expansion of services in other urban centers across central Puglia. This lack of a clear socio-economic identity has acted as a buffer against recurring crises in commerce, services, and industrial production. Only the construction sector has maintained a continuous influence on Bari's economy and urban development (Barbanente & Tedesco, 2022). Over the past 30 years, Bari has undergone profound demographic, economic, social, and urban transformations, akin to other major Italian and European cities. The population remains relatively stable, largely due to immigration, but its demographic profile has changed. The aging index rose from 92% in 2002 to 192.8% in 2024 (+100.8%), surpassing the national increase from 131.7% in 2002 to 199.8% in 2024 (+68.1%). The number

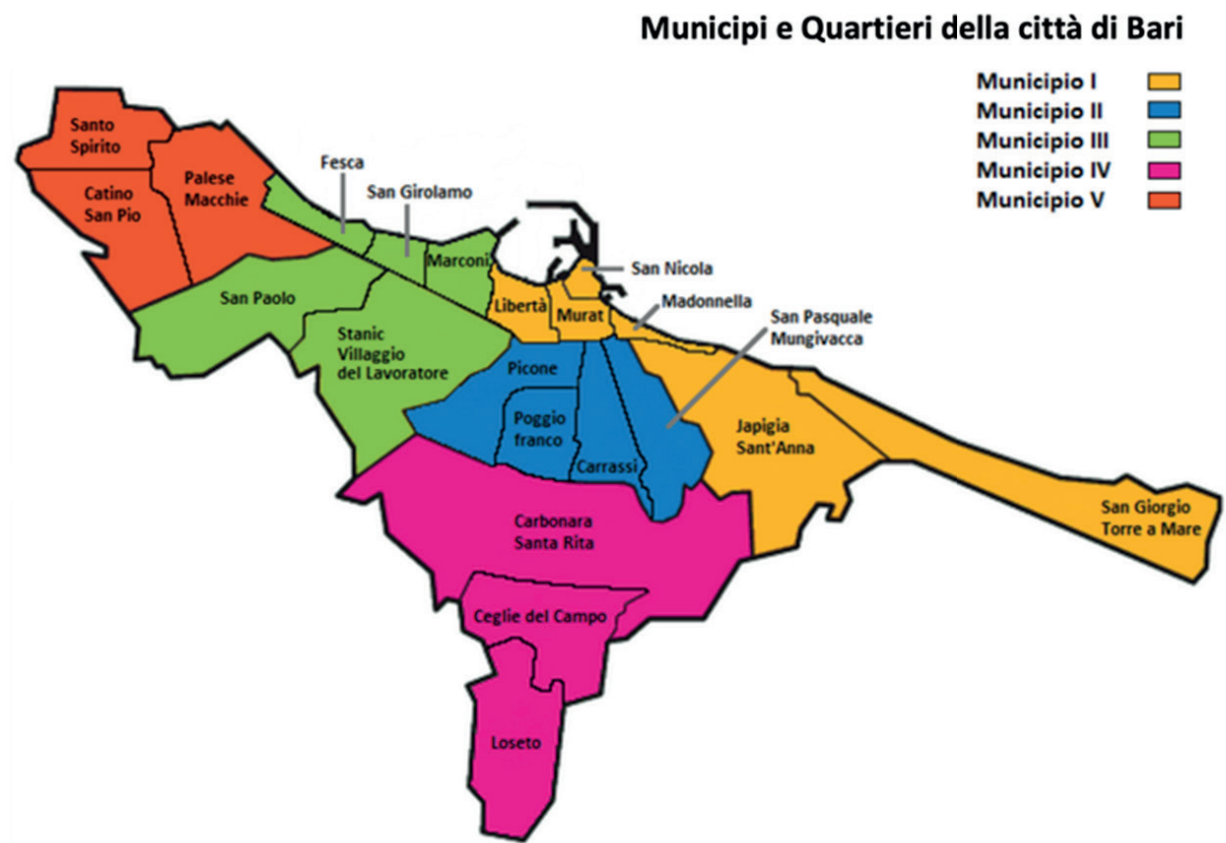


Figura 2: Suddivisione amministrativa della città di Bari. Fonte: Comune di Bari

1. Context analysis

of residents over 65 has grown significantly (from 201,848 in 2019 to 487,611 in 2024), and the average age increased from 41.9 years in 2002 to 46.6 years in 2024 (Castagnaro & Meli, 2022). Family dynamics are also evolving, with a rise in single-person households and a decrease in average household size (Istat, 2022). Although the number of young people is declining demographically, their presence remains high due to university enrollment, with students accounting for approximately 18% of the city's population. Immigration has steadily increased, particularly among unaccompanied minors, making Bari a key destination for young migrants.

Economically, Bari is increasingly oriented towards the tertiary sector, with commerce, tourism, advanced services, and construction being the dominant industries. Employment remains a critical social issue, but there has been some recovery. Bari has the highest employment rate among southern Italian cities (42.9%, compared to the national rate of 46.8%) (Istat, 2023). Urban transformations over the last two decades have significantly altered Bari's central area, while the suburbs have evolved, at least in terms of social composition. The city center has undergone gentrification and, more recently, a tourism-driven transformation. While some traditional residents remain, an influx of professionals has contributed to its emergence as a key tourist hub. In other districts, gentrification and tourism-related changes have been slower, influenced by an urban policy that oscillates between laissez-faire approaches and real estate-driven planning, aimed at fostering economic benefits through construction investments.

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1. Context analysis

Urban transformations over the last two decades have significantly altered Bari's central area, while the suburbs have evolved, at least in terms of social composition. The city center has undergone gentrification and, more recently, a tourism-driven transformation. While some traditional residents remain, an influx of professionals has contributed to its emergence as a key tourist hub. In other districts, gentrification and tourism-related changes have been slower, influenced by an urban policy that oscillates between laissez-faire approaches and real estate-driven planning, aimed at fostering economic benefits through construction investments.

Demographic and social changes have diversified housing demand, with an increase in single-person households and alternative living arrangements. However, traditional housing needs persist, primarily among large immigrant families. Despite the presence of vacant homes, housing shortages remain a critical issue. In 2022, Bari had 141,183 resident families but only 135,814 occupied homes, leaving 6,000 families without a permanent residence while 27,440 properties remained vacant (Istat, 2022). Many of these families are immigrants (9,003 with at least one foreign member; 7,492 composed entirely of foreign members). Eviction rates are alarmingly high, with 3,630 eviction requests in 2022 and 2,871 in 2023, most of them in Bari (Ministry of the Interior, 2023).

1. Context analysis

Housing challenges extend beyond family accommodations. Bari's student population, including those enrolled in universities and art, music, and dance institutions (AFAM), faces a severe housing shortage. The 53,696 students, of whom 22,000 reside outside the Bari province, struggle with high costs and limited availability. The price of double rooms has increased by 9% annually, while single-room prices have risen by 11%, with a staggering 207% annual increase in demand for single rooms (Ministry of University and Research, 2023; Union of University Students, 2023).

Simultaneously, economic and urban transformations have made housing increasingly unaffordable. The long-term rental market has declined (from 1,650 fully rented homes in 2018 to 625 in 2023), while short-term rentals have slightly increased (from 1,471 in 2018 to 1,912 in 2023) (Italian Revenue Agency, 2023). Housing prices continue to rise (from €1,918/m² in November 2023 to €2,033/m² in October 2024), as does the number of properties used for tourism or short-term rentals (3,159 certified structures) (Idealista, 2024). Housing affordability in Bari is critically low (15.9%), having declined by 3.2% from 2023 to 2022 (Italian Revenue Agency, 2023).

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2. The site: San Paolo

The San Paolo neighborhood in Bari is a typical suburban area of a Southern Italian city. Originally a public housing complex (CEP), it was one of many that emerged in the early 1960s on the outskirts of various Italian cities. The location chosen for the neighborhood was intended to be within a reasonable distance from the city center, to facilitate urban expansion, and to be affordable.

In reality, the area was approximately 7-8 km from the outermost ring of the urban fabric at the time. It had long been designated as non-buildable land, offered no room for expansion—blocked on one side by the industrial zone and the railway, and on the other by the airport area—and, ultimately, was purchased at a price deemed exorbitant by experts for those years.

Thus, San Paolo was established on the extreme north-western edge of the city. It is, in fact, a neighborhood born from the popular urban vision of that era. As seen in a map from the Calza Bini - Piacentini Plan, part of the 1950s Municipal Regulatory Plan (Figure 3), the original concept was to create a residential settlement near the industrial centers of the nearby industrial zone, which would eventually expand across the territories of Bari and the neighboring municipality of Modugno.

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2. The site: San Paolo

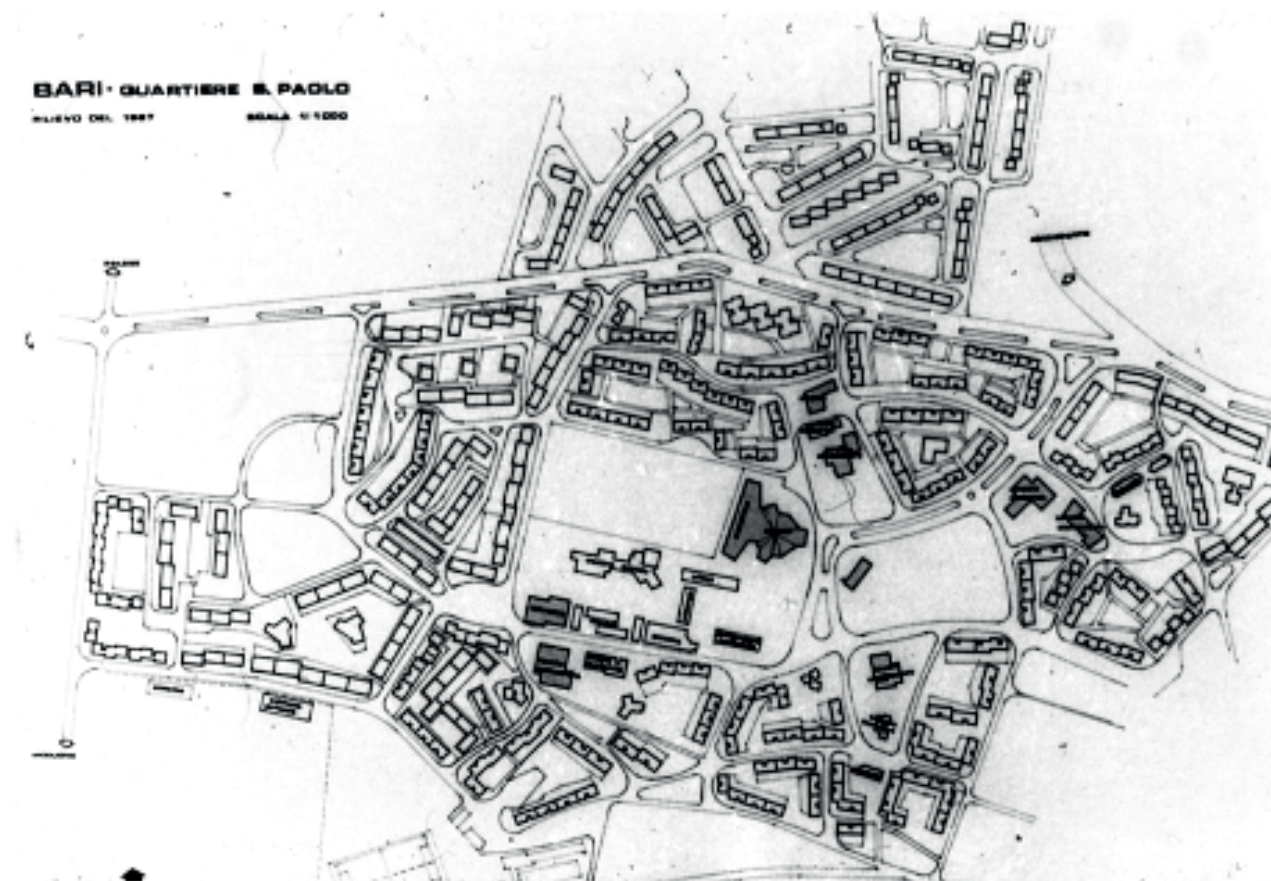
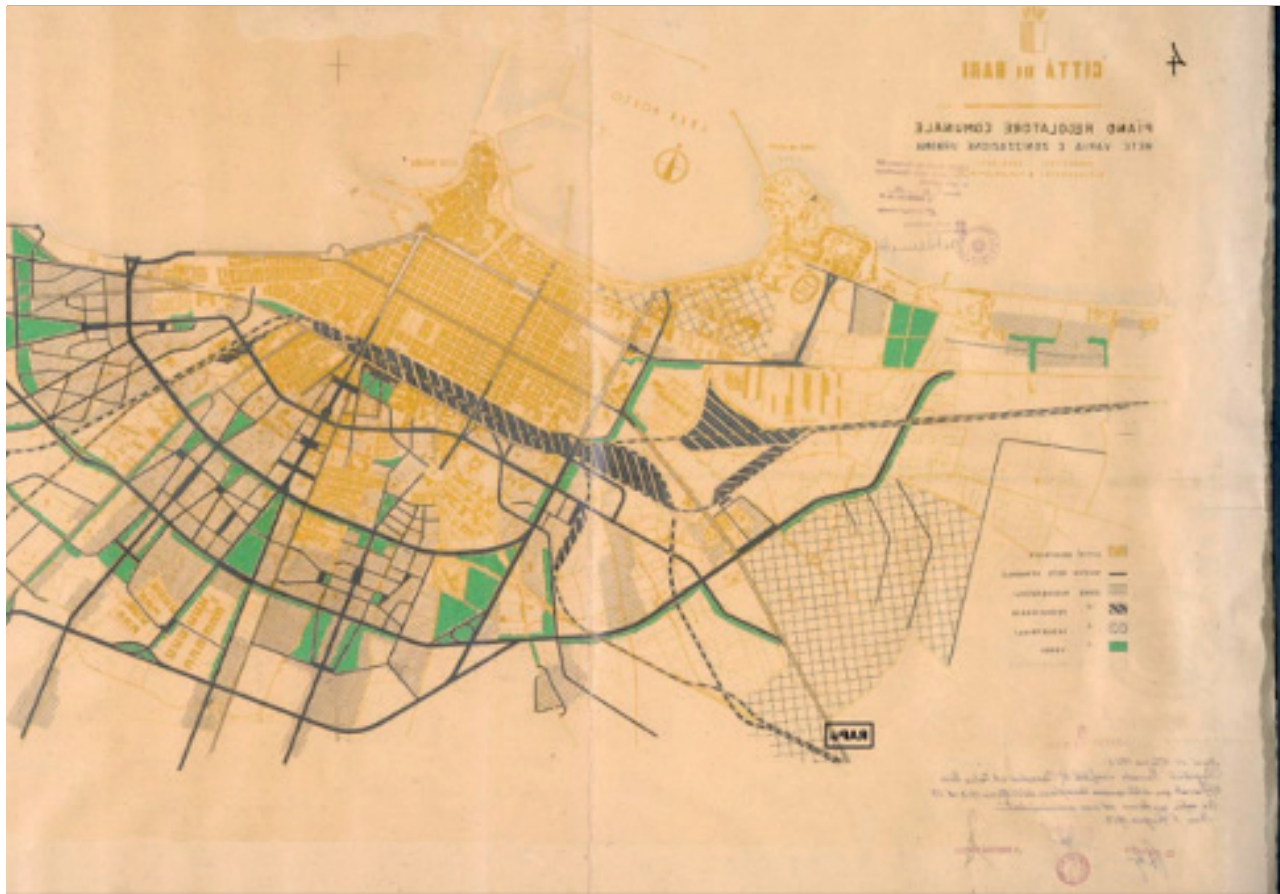


Figura 3: Piano Calza Bini - Piacentini, 1952

Figura 4: Quartiere C.E.P. - L. Carbonara (coordinatore), V. Chiaia, V. Cirielli, M. Lopopolo, A. Petrignani, L. Sandri - 1957.

2. The site: San Paolo

In those years, however, Bari's urban situation was in a very critical phase (Borri et al., 1980). A serious housing crisis had been pressing the city since the 1950s, and the city was on the brink of explosion. Inevitably, its urban fabric began to expand, increasingly encroaching upon rural areas (Figure 4). As a result, the original vision of an almost Fordist neighborhood model faded into the background. Gradually, the neighborhood transformed, becoming, for a long period, a place that never reached full capacity, serving as a refuge for the most vulnerable families from the city's poorest areas. These families were typically very poor and large, in need of housing after being displaced or living in substandard conditions since the Second World War. Many had lost their homes or were living in unhealthy and dilapidated structures, including crumbling buildings, hovels, shantytowns, and slums scattered throughout the city's old, impoverished, and already infamous neighborhoods. These were areas already stigmatized and notorious for high levels of poverty, decay, hardship, and marginalization, as well as for the widespread presence of crime, including prostitution, smuggling, the black market, and more.

The first families to move into the neighborhood, between the early and mid-1960s, came mainly from areas such as the Casbah or "Socia" complex (Figure 5), a vast building home to around 300 families not far from the city center; the "Torre Tresca Refugee Village" (Figure 6), a prison camp with approximately 3,000 residents that, after the armistice, became an occasional refuge for former internees, refugees of various nationalities, and many displaced and homeless families; and from other impoverished areas and dilapidated buildings in neighborhoods such as Madonnella, Libertà, Fesca, Carrassi, San Pasquale, and Murat, as well as the historic center of the city. These first families primarily settled in A Compartment (1958), which was created under the Fanfani Law and the double seven-year INA-CASA plan.

2. The site: San Paolo

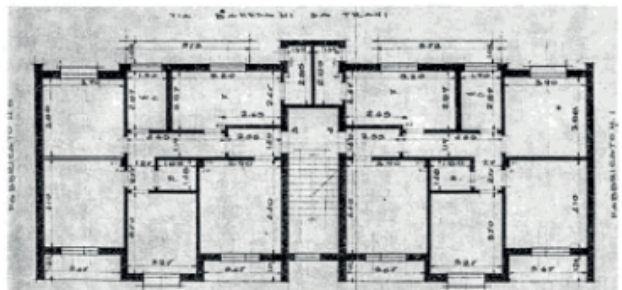


Figura 5: “Casbah” (o “Socia”), in P.za Sant’Antonio, a Bari.

Figura 6: Il campo di Torre tresca”, Bari, 1950

Figura 7: Il C.E.P. tra i primi insediamenti.

2. The site: San Paolo

On the other hand, the historic center was already becoming an attractive area for investment and business. The Municipality declared that many buildings were at risk of collapse and ordered their evacuation, reassuring residents that public housing, either built or under construction in San Paolo, was available. Under Law 1844, about 461 homes were allocated to families relocated from the buildings in the historic center marked for redevelopment. From the second half of the 1960s until the end of the decade, a large exodus of families from the historic center to the San Paolo neighborhood began. They primarily settled in B Compartment (1963), which emerged following the enactment of Law 167/1962 as part of a Zone Plan for Economic and Popular Housing (PEEP). These evacuation policies, carried out throughout the 1960s and 1970s, led many poor, large families—seeking the dream of a home—to move to the new neighborhood (Figure 7). They arrived in waves (Figure 10)—with some being officially assigned council housing, others illegally occupying vacant units, and many more living in basements, waiting for a ‘free’ apartment to become available.

The number of council houses was still limited, and the surrounding area was an immense, barren, and desolate space, devoid of infrastructure, with only strips of land marking the perimeter of buildings under construction. There were no roads, no gas, no water supply, and no electricity—let alone public lighting. After sunset, the area was consumed by total darkness.

2. The site: San Paolo

During these years, some blocks were assigned to families of medium socio-economic status, such as employees, railway workers, and members of the Armed Forces, in a first, unsuccessful attempt to create a housing mix (which would be repeated in subsequent efforts). Many of these families eventually left. While the master plan “Quaroni” of 1976 outlined further plans for the transformation of the vast area where the neighborhood had emerged (Figure 8), throughout the following two decades—from the early 1970s to the late 1980s—many other families, in search of affordable or low-cost housing, continued to move here from other neighborhoods of the city. They primarily settled in C Compartment (1963), which also arose after the enactment of Law 167/1962 as part of the Zonal Plan for Economic and Popular Housing (PEEP) (Figure 10).

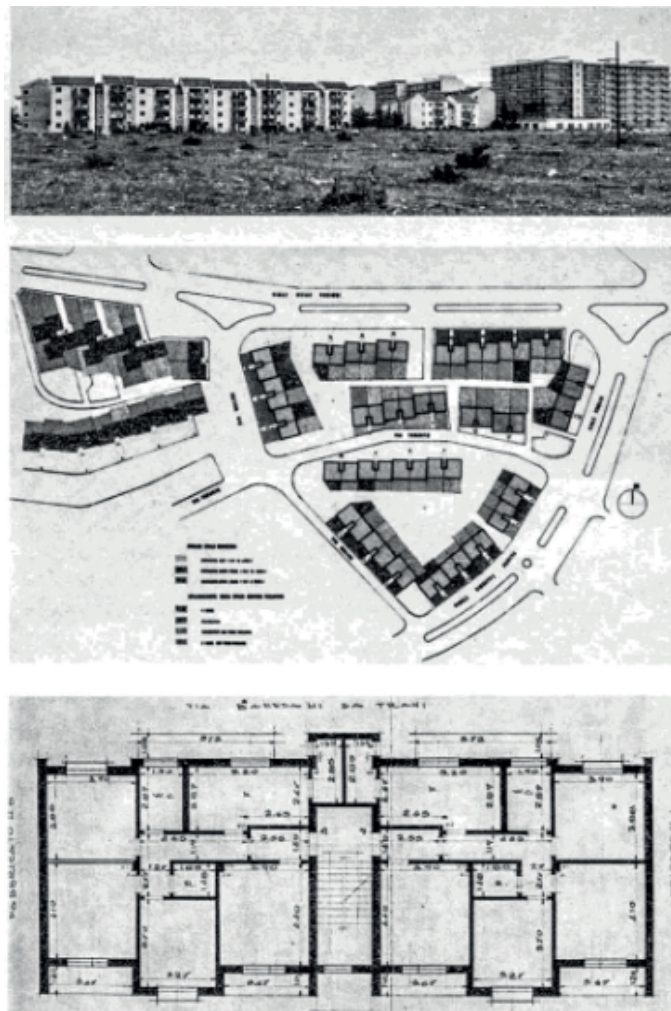


Figura 7: Il C.E.P. tra i primi insediamenti.

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2. The site: San Paolo

By the end of the 1980s, the neighborhood had become a space with an extremely high concentration of poverty, hardship, and marginalization, leading to a widespread presence of deviance and crime. It became a sort of “social bomb,” with its pressing emergencies and requests for help, giving the strong impression that it could explode at any moment. As is often the case in societies undergoing rapid changes, even in the “new” neighborhood that was gradually taking shape, there seemed to be an overriding sense of anomie affecting its residents. It was a neighborhood on the margins, whose history had been profoundly shaped from the outset by a long and inevitable process of territorial stigmatization, which deeply impacted the lives of its inhabitants (Figure 9).

Outside its borders, the acronym CEP was no longer associated with “Coordination for Popular Housing” but had instead come to mean “Centre for Dangerous Elements.” So much so that by the late 1960s, a delegation of residents approached the mayor with a request to change the name of the neighborhood from CEP to “San Paolo,” since the construction of the first parish in the area, the San Paolo Parish, was nearing completion.

The neighborhood lacked basic services. A possible map drawn from the memories of the first residents reveals that, in the early years, certain services began to take shape: a state school that operated with shifts throughout the day, a pharmacy that, in the absence of other establishments, also served as a social meeting point, a small post office, a small shop selling basic goods, and some makeshift stalls set up by street vendors who arrived with their carts to sell anything from fish and meat to fruit and vegetables.

In the second half of the 1960s, as previously mentioned, the first church, the Parish of San Paolo, was built, and Aldo Moro laid the first stone for the construction of the Consortium Hospital, which, in reality, only began operating many years later.

2. The site: San Paolo

The neighborhood was a no-man's land. There was no real control—only a small police station, which proved insufficient in addressing the widespread deviance and crime in the area.

For a long time, San Paolo was a ghetto, and its inhabitants were seen as “undifferentiated components of the masses” (Whyte, 1964:10) and “wasted lives” (Bauman, 2004).

The policies aimed at combating deviance and organized crime were, for a long time, almost exclusively focused on repression rather than fostering the cultural and social rebirth of the neighborhood. In short, from its inception and construction, San Paolo has been— and in some ways still is—a reflection of a “self-fulfilling prophecy” (Merton, 1948; 1949).

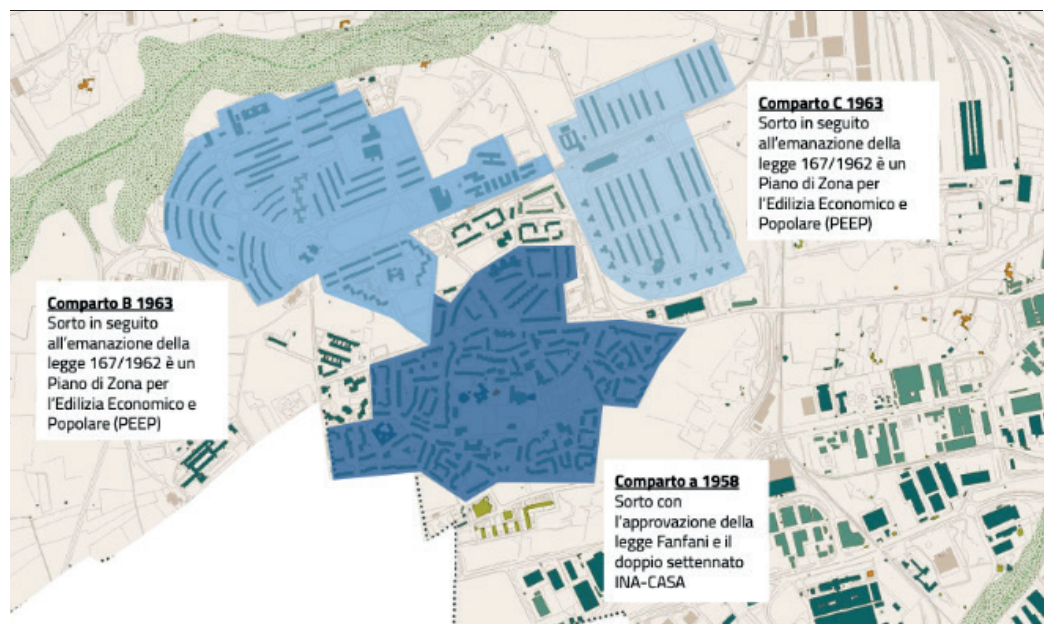


Figura 10: Cronologia dell'insediamento

Figura 9: Il C.E.P. di Bari tra la fine dei sessanta e l'inizio dei settanta.

3. Tools and resources

Over the years, the neighborhood has been progressively equipped with an increasing number of services. As detailed below, these have primarily focused on transforming the physical space of the area. For instance, some of the most significant infrastructure and urban interventions include: the opening of San Paolo Hospital in 1997, with a capacity of 217 beds; the construction of a metropolitan rail-tram line in 2008, which connects the neighborhood to the city center in just 12 minutes; the construction of residential and tertiary-sector buildings, along with related neighborhood services (planned as part of the PRIU San Paolo-Lama Balice project); and the concession for the design, construction, and management of a senior care center, a civic and tertiary center, including roads, parking, green spaces, and cycle-pedestrian facilities in the urban area of the neighborhood, within the target area (planned by the POR Puglia 2000-2006 Measure 5.1 - Ellisse San Paolo). Thanks to a regional supplementary agreement signed on October 8, 2007 (Art. 4), the first Territorial Multifunctional Centre of the local health authority was established in Europa square in 2010.

More recently, other interventions have focused on: the layout of key mobility and public-use functions; the completion of the subway with the addition of another stop; the elimination of through traffic by rerouting it to perimeter roads; connecting major subway stops with neighborhood-level roads; moderating traffic and introducing a cycle mobility network; completing urban edges and developing an urban green belt; enhancing key public spaces with significant ecological value; regenerating neglected green spaces in states of underuse or abandonment, especially those close to residential areas; improving the urban ecological network with parkways and new green facilities; reconnecting the urban ecological network with the natural landscape and surrounding countryside; and strengthening both the network of local civic facilities (e.g., primary and secondary schools and churches) and proximity services (e.g., sports facilities, markets,

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3. Tools and resources

municipal offices, and welfare services). These efforts culminated in the final layout of ecological systems, mobility networks, and local service infrastructure (Figures 11-24).

On the other hand, within the framework of the “Open Suburbs” program, the Metropolitan City of Bari has initiated a process of co-planning and co-design with the 41 municipalities in its area. The guiding theme of this initiative is the qualification and/or reconversion of open public spaces to support the socio-economic and relational aspects of citizenship.

3. Tools and resources



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Figura 11: assetto della mobilità principale e delle funzioni ad uso pubblico.

Figura 12: Completamento della metropolitana con la fermata "Regioni".

Figura 13: Eliminazione del traffico di attraversamento con la mobilità a percorrenza perimetrale

Figura 14: Connessione delle principali fermate della metro con la viabilità di rango di quartiere.

Figura 15: Moderazione del traffico e l'introduzione della rete di mobilità ciclabile.

Figura 16: Completamento dei margini urbani e lo sviluppo della cintura verde urbana.

Figura 17: Valorizzazione dei principali spazi pubblici a forte valenza ecologica.

Figura 18: Rigenerazione degli spazi verdi negletti in stato di sottoutilizzo o abbandono.

3. Tools and resources



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Figura 19: Rigenerazione degli spazi verdi di prossimità alle residenze

Figura 20: Miglioramento della rete ecologica urbana con park-ways e nuove dotazioni di verde urbano.

Figura 21: Riconnessione della rete ecologica urbana con la rete naturalistica e la campagna periurbana.

Figura 22: Potenziamento della rete dei presidi civici di prossimità Scuole di 1° e 2° grado e sagrati.

Figura 23: Potenziamento della rete dei servizi di prossimità sport, mercati, sede municipale, welfare.

Figura 24: Assetto finale dei sistemi ecologico, della mobilità e della rete dei servizi e dotazioni di prossimità.

3. Tools and resources

Through the 2016 call for implementing projects in the suburbs (“Bando Periferie”), which provides for a series of interventions on public space, the neighborhood was able to receive €7,200,000 in funding for the implementation of the Suburbs Plan. This project aimed at minimum intervention units and started a participatory process involving the regional agency for housing, the Urban Planning Department of the Municipality of Bari, and the residents. This collaboration led to the creation of a participatory planning process for the redevelopment of several public spaces in the neighborhood (Figure 25).

The macro-objectives of the project are as follows:

- Qualification of street space as public space
- Creation of new pedestrian areas in zones currently designated for mobility
- Urban greening and enhancement of the urban ecological components
- Improvement of areas in front of civic outposts that hold social relevance for the neighborhood
- Equipping existing relational spaces and green and pedestrian areas
- Development of public spaces within courtyards of building complexes
- Reactivation of the zero level of the neighborhood and spaces at the base of the buildings
- Moderation of crossing traffic through speed reduction
- Securing spaces for soft mobility and integrating the cycle-pedestrian mobility network
- Connecting the subway stops to the neighborhood’s main routes (for examples, see Figures 26-28).

3. Tools and resources

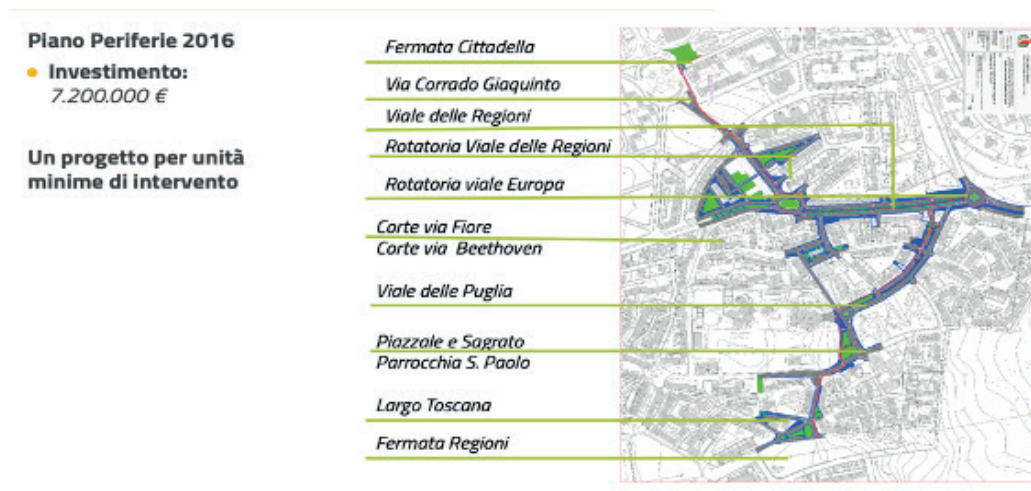


Figura 25: Bando Periferie: Gli interventi sullo spazio pubblico

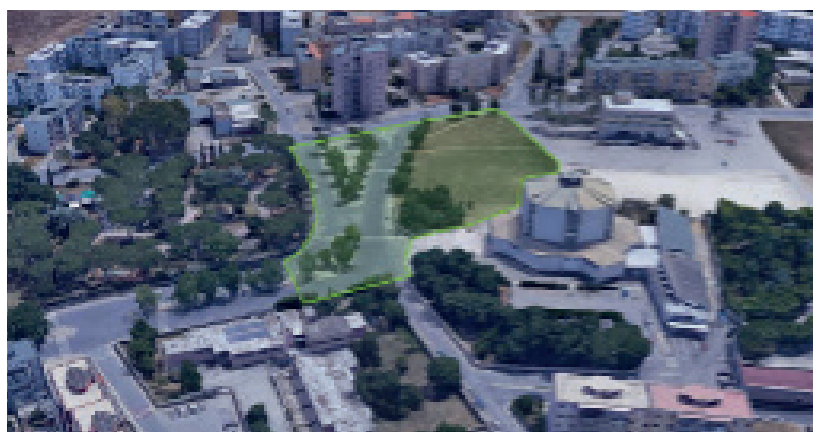


Figura 26: Piazzale e sagrato della Parrocchia San Paolo.

Figura 27: Rotatoria di ingresso al quartiere in V.le Europa.

Figura 28: Largo Toscana.

3. Tools and resources

It is also worth highlighting some key interventions aimed at enhancing the main public spaces with strong ecological value, such as the Giovanni Paolo II Park, where the following improvements have been made:

- A new lighting system featuring 75 light fixtures with differentiated power outputs
- A video surveillance system
- Access management devices
- Enhancement of existing green relational spaces (Figure 29)

Additionally, as part of the city's broader initiative to create a network of playgrounds, a soccer field was established in San Paolo, complete with lighting, spectator seating, and new greenery in the surrounding areas. This playground is located on Viale delle Regioni, near the pilots that support the block of public housing that is the subject of this study.

Another recent intervention focused on improving local green spaces resulted in the creation of the Garden of Vincenzo Ricchioni Road (in C Compartment).

Through €2,000,000 in funding from the Puglia Region, aimed at strengthening the network of local civic institutions (e.g., primary and secondary schools, and churchyards), a community library was established within the "Lombardi" primary school (Figure 30).

This library is one of 11 distributed libraries created in various neighborhoods throughout the city.

A collaboration between the Municipality of Bari and the G124 team, coordinated by the Ar.Co.D. Department and funded by Renzo Piano, led to the creation of "Corte Don Bosco," a new meeting space spanning over 4,000 square meters, where residents can rediscover a sense of belonging to the neighborhood.

Finally, in terms of major infrastructure works, the neighborhood benefited from the construction of a sewer network, funded with €5 million, and a roundabout on Via Caposcardicchio near the pilots relevant to this study, with €3 million in funding (Figure 31).

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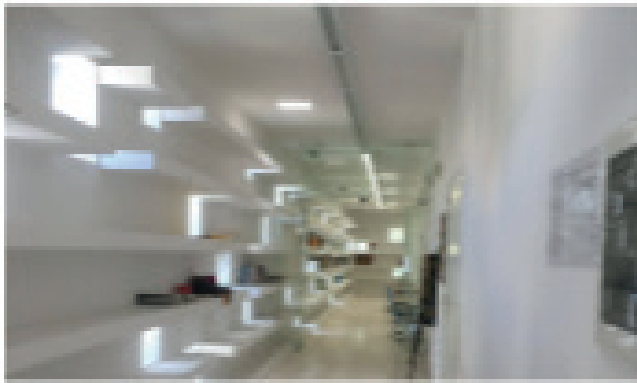
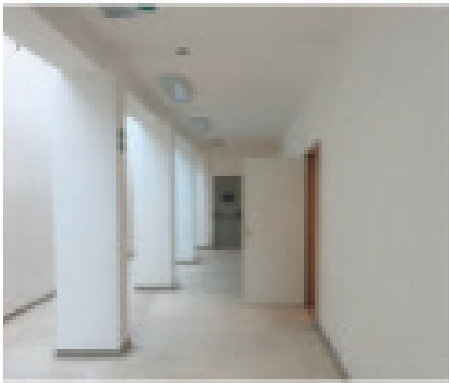
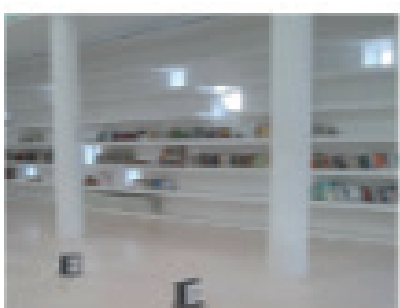
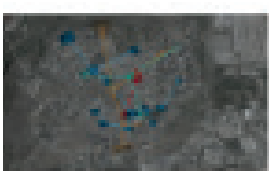


Figura 29: Parco Giovanni Paolo II
Figura 30: Community Library Lombardi.

4. Social dynamics and challenges

Over time, the social fabric of the neighborhood has undergone significant changes. The memory of the area retains traces of numerous bottom-up actions that brought to light a wealth of local knowledge. From the early years of the neighborhood until the 1990s, these actions often took the form of protests and collective mobilization, as residents gradually claimed their rights and demanded better living conditions. These included securing council houses, pushing for schools, pharmacies, churches, markets, post offices, improved public transportation, and the eventual construction of the hospital. More recently, residents have actively pursued the improvement of neglected green spaces, advocating for their cleaning and maintenance. However, many of these bottom-up actions, driven by unmet needs, often had limited impact. Most were informal protests or poorly organized mobilizations, which did not foster a lasting sense of active civic or political participation.

From the late 1980s onward, the neighborhood has witnessed a surge in top-down interventions. In line with many Italian suburbs, San Paolo has not experienced the neglect it once did. Over the years, the neighborhood has been the subject of numerous projects, ranging from the establishment of educational communities, day centers, mental health centers, social cooperatives, and foundations, to neighborhood contracts and the PON-Metro initiative. These efforts have led to the creation of what are now known as “project factories”—an often fragmented but extensive proliferation of projects in the neighborhood.

This means that numerous stakeholders—ranging from local authorities to community organizations—have been involved in shaping the neighborhood’s development. Whether through top-down or bottom-up approaches, these efforts have led to the creation of valuable experiences, practices, and services that have improved the quality of life for residents and fostered some level of vitality within the neighborhood.

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4. Social dynamics and challenges

While San Paolo has undergone significant transformation, especially when compared to its first 40 years (1961-2001), the degree of success remains insufficient. Key issues such as isolation, unemployment, poverty, deviance, crime, and low educational attainment persist. Despite efforts to create a more mixed housing structure, the impact has been limited. Many residents still perceive the neighborhood as being “outside” the city, disconnected from the urban center.

This sense of detachment is reflected in socio-economic indicators: as of 2011 (Table 1), the proportion of young people in the neighborhood with a university education (13.70%) is much lower than the city-wide average (27.70%). Furthermore, the unemployment rate among young people in San Paolo (96.80%) is more than double that of young people across the city (46.50%).

The causes behind these persistent issues are varied and can often be attributed to several factors, such as insufficient public investment, poor resource management, and the involvement of local actors with inadequate intervention methods or approaches. Another major issue is the ineffective functioning of institutions, particularly the lack of coordination between entities such as the municipality, schools, the ASL (local health authority), and the third sector. There is also a broader challenge in terms of communication, networking, and the ability to grow, consolidate, and stabilize the many bottom-up initiatives and practices emerging from both community members and organizations in the neighborhood. These initiatives, while valuable, have often struggled to realize their full potential due to a lack of support and recognition, which in turn limits their ability to contribute to meaningful change. This issue is multifaceted, and future research should explore these dynamics further, considering both the constraints and opportunities for creating lasting impact in the area.

4. Social dynamics and challenges

In contrast, a recent initiative launched in 2019 and continued into 2023, led by Municipio 3 (which includes San Paolo), and strongly supported by various departments from the University and Polytechnic of Bari, stands out as a hopeful example of progress. Following an extensive participatory process involving various stakeholders—comprising discussions, meetings, and formal agreements—this initiative culminated in March 2023 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. This agreement, involving the Municipality of Bari, Municipio 3, and five university departments (Political Sciences, DICATECh, Ar.Co.D., DIRIUM, and For.Psi.Com.), aims to establish a university hub in the neighborhood. The goal is to generate innovative knowledge and projects that will directly address the needs of the community and improve the quality of life for its residents. While this initiative represents a significant step forward in urban and social policy, it is still in its early stages and has yet to be fully implemented.

5. Riferimenti

UAH! collects references, projects, readings, exhibitions in order to frame the broad background of the research topic. The resources are listed in the 'atlas' and 'references' sections on the website uah.polimi.it.

Below is a selection of additional and specific references on the context of Bari, considered relevant for approaching the topic.

 Click on the title to access the pdf (if available)

> READINGS AND RESEARCHES

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ATLAS

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RECOMMENDATIONS

BOOKLET / DESIGN STUDIOS
BARI / EX OSPEDALE BONOMO

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Booklet / Design studios

1. Context analysis

***2. The project site:
ex ospedale Bonomo***

3. Tools and Resources

4. Fieldwork

5. References



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Italiadomani
FONDO NAZIONALE
DI RIPARAZIONE E RESILIENZA



POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863
DIPARTIMENTO
DI ARCHITETTURA
E STUDI URBANI



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI TRIESTE



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI BARI
ALDO MORO



Politecnico
di Bari

1. Context analysis

Bari, the capital of Puglia, has 316,212 inhabitants as of January 1, 2024, and covers a land area of 116.17 square kilometers (Figure 1). Since 2014, it has been the capital of a metropolitan city that includes 41 municipalities with a population of 1,221,782 inhabitants.

Administratively, the city is divided into five municipalities: Municipality I includes the districts of Murat, San Nicola, Libertà, Madonnella, Japigia, and the former coastal district of Torre a Mare; Municipality II includes the districts of Poggiofranco, Picone, Carrassi, San Pasquale, and Mungivacca; Municipality III includes the districts of San Paolo, Stanic, Marconi, San Girolamo, Fesca, and Villaggio del Lavoratore; Municipality IV includes the former inland districts of Carbonara, Ceglie, and Loseto; Municipality V includes the former coastal districts located north of Palese and Santo Spirito, along with the settlements of Catino and San Pio (Figure 2).

Bari is a city that defies simple definitions. It can no longer be solely identified as a mercantile city, as it had long been described. It has never been an industrial city, although the Bari-Modugno ASI industrial area is one of the largest in southern Italy. It cannot even be defined as a university city, especially given the declining ability of its universities to attract students. It is an important healthcare hub, but for many conditions, patients prefer treatments at centers of excellence in central and northern Italy.



Image 1: Aerial view of the city of Bari. Source: Google Earth

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1. Context analysis

Recently, there has been a significant increase in tourism, but the main tourist attractions in Puglia are elsewhere.

For a long time, the city benefited from public investments in services linked to its role as the regional capital. However, since the 1970s, its primacy in this sector has been challenged by the growing offer in the robust network of urban centers in central Puglia and the entire region. This lack of clear defining features in the socio-economic profile of the city has served as a buffer against recurring crises, especially since the 1980s, in sectors of the industrial production system, commerce, and services. Only construction seems to have continuously played a significant role in the sectoral composition of Bari's economy, and also in influencing the governance and development of contemporary urban areas (Barbanente & Tedesco, 2022). Over the past thirty years, the city has undergone profound transformations in its

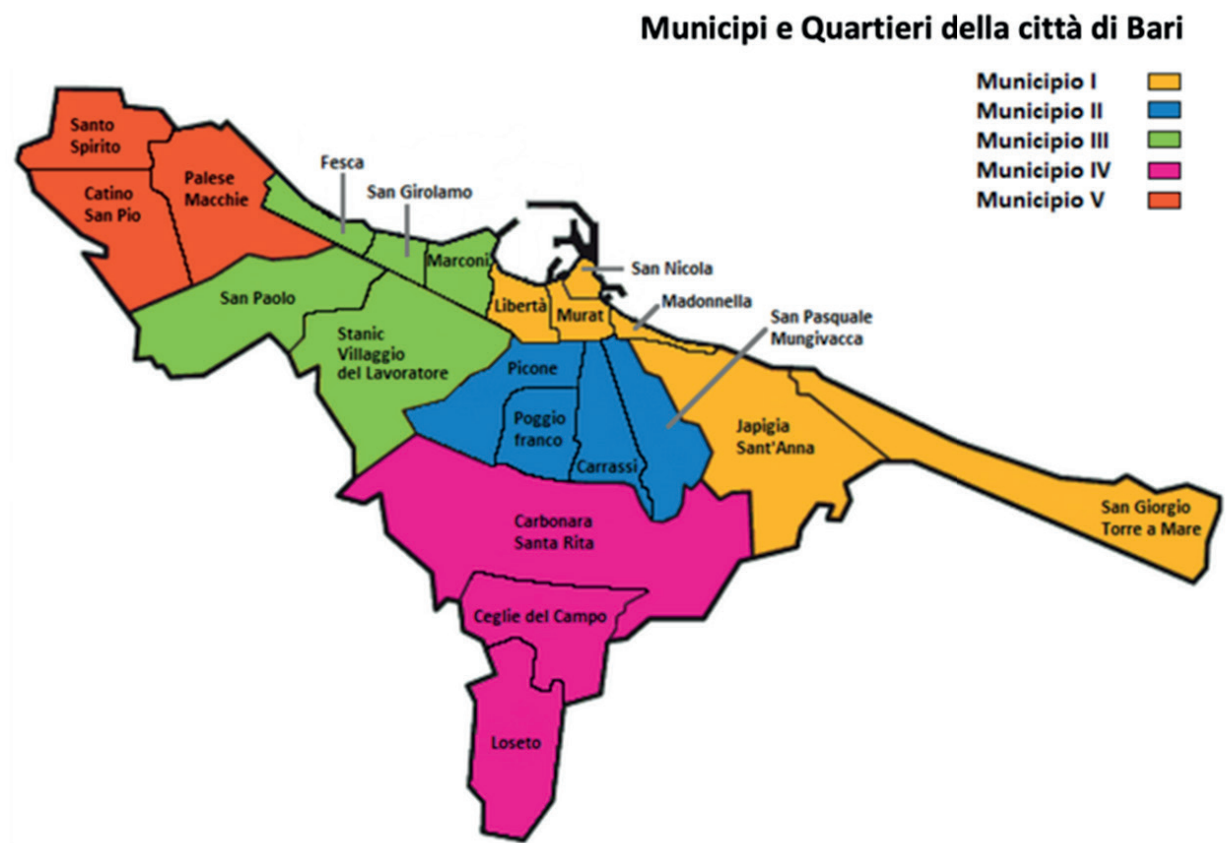


Image 2: Administrative division of the city of Bari. Source: Municipality of Bari

1. Context analysis

demographic, economic, social, and urban aspects, similar to other large Italian and European cities. The population is relatively stable, also due to immigration, but its profile has changed. The old-age index has risen from 92% in 2002 to 192,8% in 2024 (+100,8%), surpassing the national value: from 131,7% in 2002 to 199,8% in 2024 (+68,1%). The population structure reflects an increase in residents over 65 years old (from 201.848 in 2019 to 487.611 in 2024) and the average age of the population rises from 41.9 years in 2002 to 46.6 years in 2024 (Castagnaro&Meli 2022). Family dynamics are also evolving slowly: single-person households are on the rise, while the average household size is decreasing (Istat, 2022). Although the young population is significantly decreasing from a strictly demographic perspective, their presence in the city remains high due to the universities. Students enrolled in various universities in Bari account for about 18% of the total population. The presence of immigrants, while not comparable to other urban centers, has steadily grown, creating a stable presence within the urban fabric. This presence is notably youthful, as Bari is one of the main destinations for unaccompanied minors.

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1. Context analysis

Urbanistically, in the last twenty years, the city has undergone profound changes in its central area. The suburbs have remained, but not unchanged, at least in terms of social composition. The central area has undergone a process of gentrification and, in recent years, tourism-driven transformation. There remain segments of traditional residents, but part of the professional bourgeoisie has moved in, and the area has become one of the main tourist attractions. In other districts, gentrification and tourism-driven changes have developed more slowly, aided by an urban policy of alternating laissez-faire, deregulation, and “growth-dependent planning,” which sees real estate development as a tool to produce collective benefits, with an orientation to support and promote investments in the construction sector.

On the one hand, demographic changes and social behavior shifts have diversified housing demand, with an increase in one-person households and non-traditional living arrangements, without eliminating the traditional demand, where larger households are now mostly immigrant families. A significant finding for our analysis is the unmet housing demand from these families, alongside vacant homes. In 2022, there were 141,183 resident families in the city, compared to 135,814 occupied homes. However, there are around 6,000 families without their own home and 27,440 vacant properties (Istat, 2022). Of these families, 9,003 have at least one foreign member, and 7,492 consist entirely of foreign members. This is in addition to an extremely high number of eviction requests (3,630 in 2022; 2,871 in 2023) and evictions carried out (551 in 2022 and 391 in 2023) in the provincial context, the majority of which are in Bari (Ministry of the Interior, 2023). is very low (15.9%) and has decreased by 3.2% over

1. Context analysis

Alongside family housing demand, there is also the demand from students enrolled in Bari's universities and higher education in the fields of art, music, and dance institutions (AFAM) (53,696, of whom 22,000 live outside the Bari province), which reveals a disproportion between demand and supply of available accommodations and an extremely high increase in costs in the private market. The annual price change for double rooms is 9%, while for single rooms it is 11%, with a 207% annual increase in demand for single rooms (Ministry of University and Research, 2023; Union of University Students, 2023).

On the other hand, economic and urban transformations have made housing increasingly inaccessible, both in terms of property availability and cost, whether for rent or purchase. The long-term rental market has been declining (from 1,650 fully rented homes with registered contracts in 2018 to 625 in 2023), while the short-term rental market has seen slight growth (from 1,471 rented housing portions with registered contracts in 2018 to 1,912 in 2023) (Italian Revenue Agency, 2023). Meanwhile, housing prices have been constantly increasing (from €1,918/m² in November 2023 to €2,033/m² in October 2024), along with properties used for tourism and/or short-term rentals (a total of 3,159 certified structures) (Idealista, 2024). The accessibility percentage of homes in Bari is very low (15.9%) and has decreased by 3.2% over the past twelve months, from 2023 to 2022 (Italian Revenue Agency, 2023).

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2. The project site: ex ospedale Bonomo

Superficie dell'area oggetto di intervento:
32.688 mq

Superficie lorda edifici oggetto di intervento:
19.184 mq

Dati Catastali:
Foglio 48 p.lla 303

Dati della parte monumentale del compendio
(padiglioni da 1 a 5) oggetto del Protocollo
d'Intesa tra Agenzia del Demanio, Regione
Puglia e ADISU

Clicca qui per scaricare i materiali rilevanti:

Cartografia scala urbana

Cartografia scala architettonica

PRG

Fotografie

Materiali analisi urbana

Materiali ulteriori



Localizzazione dell'ex ospedale Bonomo su aerofotogrammetrico (fonte: SIT Puglia)

2. The project site: ex ospedale Bonomo

The former Lorenzo Bonomo Military Hospital is located in Bari, in the Carrassi district, a semi-peripheral residential area near the ring road, where 1970s and 1980s buildings coexist with newer constructions. The complex spans approximately 71,545 square meters, with around 57,810 square meters of open space, situated between the provincial road Bari-Carbonara and the local road Vaccarella. Designed in a rationalist architectural style, characterized by a balance of simplicity and understated monumentality, it was conceived by the Civil Engineering Department (with a 1933 project signed by engineer Ettore Bianco) and the Ministry of War (1935-36 project). Inaugurated in 1939, it was later expanded with the addition of several specialized clinics.

The site comprises a chapel and 19 pavilions with flat roofs, mostly detached and arranged along an orthogonal road network that defines large green spaces. Pavilions 1 to 4 are interconnected by a central axis and extend from the Administration Building (Pavilion 1). With its symmetrical façade and two semi-cylindrical glass structures that break the monotony of the tightly aligned windows, this building serves as the most iconic element of the complex.

The chapel (Pavilion 5) is also of particular interest, featuring a slender bell tower, a single-order quadrangular façade clad in Carrara marble, and a minimalist interior with an elongated single-arched window set among frescoes by Prayer. Its flat roof offers a modern reinterpretation of the traditional coffered ceiling.

Together, Pavilions 1 to 5 form the complex's monumental core.

2. The project site: ex ospedale Bonomo



Aerial view.

Image 3: Historical image of Pavilion 1.

2. The project site: ex ospedale Bonomo

In 2008, due to cuts in military healthcare, the hospital was closed and has since remained abandoned. The entire complex was placed under protection by the Superintendence with a Conservation Decree issued on December 20, 2003.

Recently, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the State Property Agency, the Puglia Region, and the Regional Agency for the Right to University Education (ADISU) to redevelop the monumental section of the complex. The goal is to create new student housing and university facilities to address the housing shortage for out-of-town students.

Specifically, the project includes:

1. The repurposing of Pavilion 2 and parts of Pavilions 1 and 3 to create university residences (housing for approximately 400 students, visiting professors, and PhD researchers) and shared facilities, such as a cafeteria, study rooms, a library, and areas dedicated to sports, leisure, relaxation, culture, and entertainment.
2. The repurposing of Pavilion 1 and parts of Pavilions 3, 4, and 5 for use as offices and archives.
3. The redevelopment of the outdoor areas with the creation of a fully equipped park.

However, the project proposed by the State Property Agency, which designates almost the entire complex for student housing, does not fully address the city's broader and more diverse needs. This approach risks creating a mono-functional enclave. Moreover, the project can only be partially implemented due to insufficient funds currently available.

As a result, alternative and more flexible repurposing solutions could still be explored, particularly for Pavilions 4, 5, and the southern section of Pavilion 3, which are excluded from the first phase of redevelopment. These spaces could be adapted to meet a wider range of needs—not only for students but also for young professionals, couples, and international residents—ensuring greater integration of the new facilities within the surrounding urban fabric.

2. The project site:
ex ospedale Bonomo

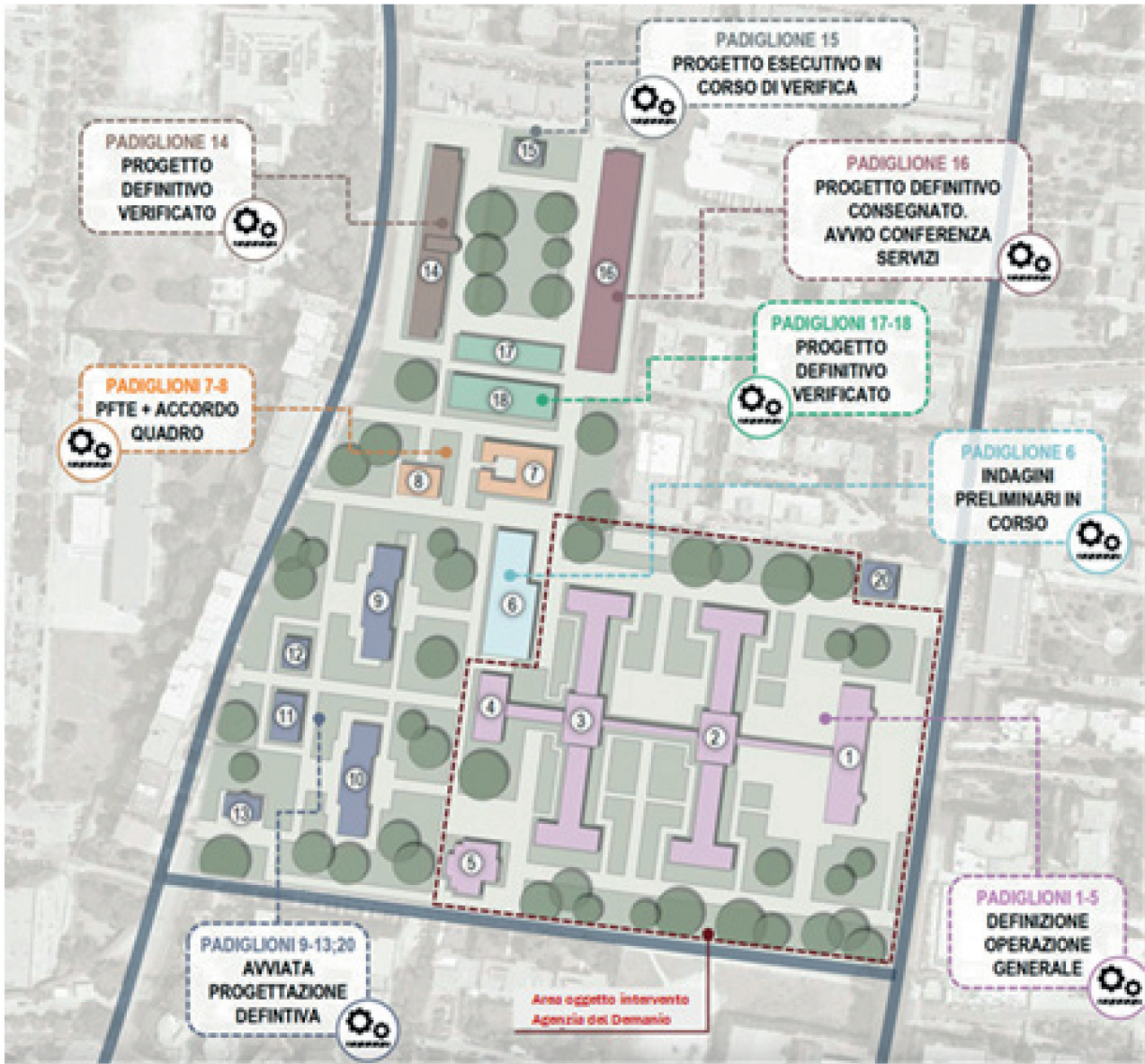


Image 4: Overview of the properties and interventions in the macro-compedium of the former Bonomo hospital (source: State Property Agency, Recovery project of part of the former Bonomo hospital, 2024)

Pictures 5-6: Interiors and articulation of the monumental body

**2. The project site:
ex ospedale Bonomo**



Pictures 7-8-9-10: actual pictures of Pavilion

2. The project site:
ex ospedale Bonomo

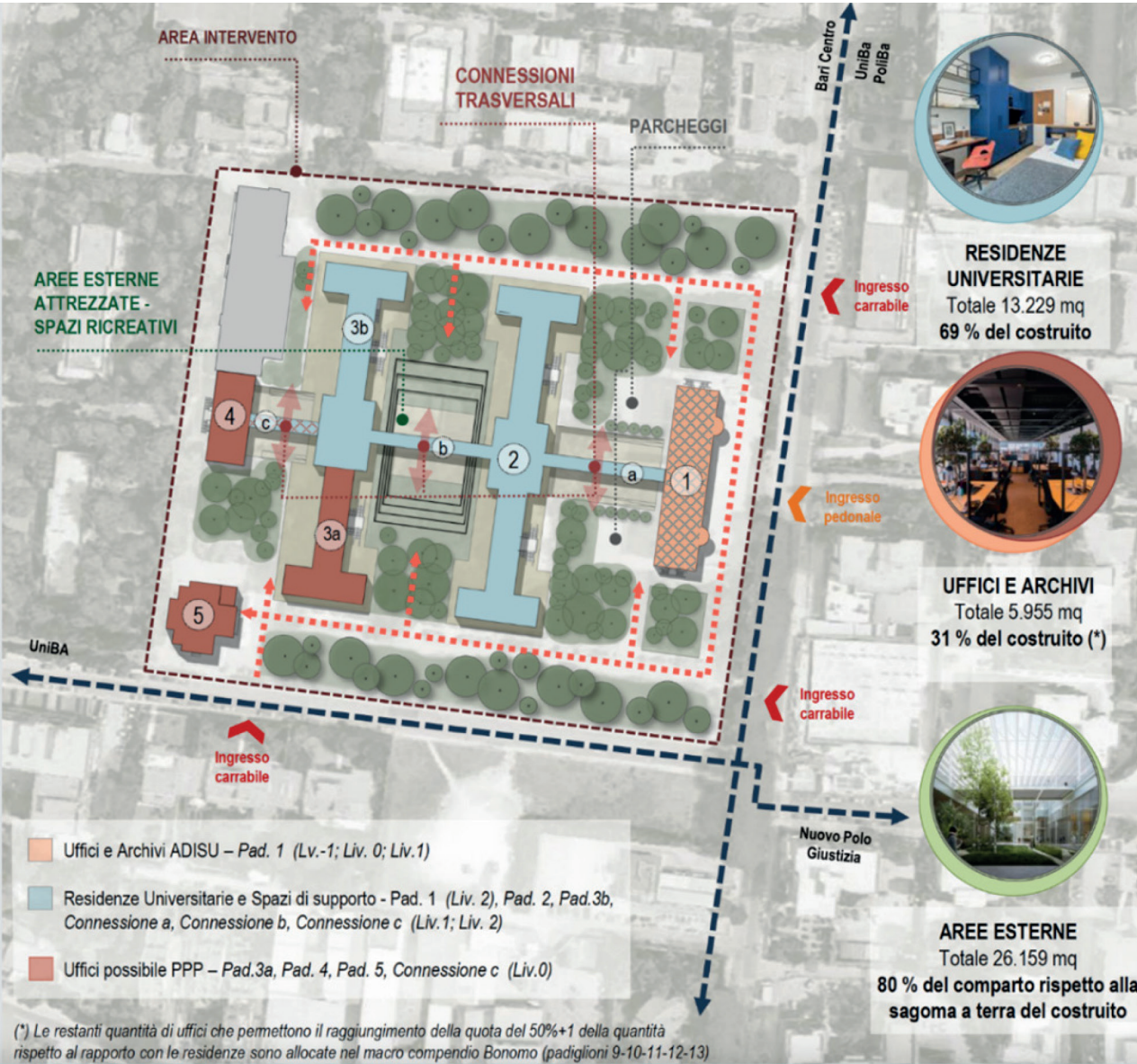


Image 11: Masterplan of the project prepared by the State Property Agency within the scope of the Memorandum of Understanding
Pictures 12-13-14: Chapel

3. Tools and Resources

Housing Policy Tools

The regulatory and financial tools available to develop a housing policy aimed at addressing emerging social needs do exist. However, they have not been activated or have been applied by the Municipality of Bari in a fragmented and sporadic manner.

Reference is made to Law 22/2014, through which the Puglia Region reorganized administrative functions in the field of public and social housing and reformed regional entities operating in the sector. The law stipulates that the Region must plan public and social housing interventions through multi-year Housing Plans approved by the Regional Council, while municipalities must approve local Housing Plans with the same objectives, promoting broad social participation. Neither the Region nor the Municipality of Bari has approved the tools provided by the law. The last municipal Housing Plan, dating back to 2009, includes a range of different interventions—new constructions and redevelopment—primarily subsidized housing, but also assisted and regulated housing. Some of these interventions are still incomplete, while others have not even started. Nevertheless, the 2009 Housing Plan has provided at least some response to the city’s severe housing emergency.

Regional Law 22/2014 also established Rental Agencies to facilitate the matching of housing demand and supply while containing rental prices, assigning municipalities the responsibility of establishing and managing them. The National Operational Program for Metropolitan Cities (PON Metro 2014-2020) and the Complementary Program (POC Metro 2014-2020), as part of integrated actions against housing poverty, allocated resources to support Social Housing Agencies. The Municipality of Bari used these resources to launch the Social Housing Agency under the Property Division and to provide financial aid to promote housing inclusion. The continuity of municipal action in this area has been ensured by the allocation of 5 million euros under the Operational Plan of the PON Metro Plus and Medium-Sized Cities South 2021-2027.

Recently, with Municipal Council Resolution No. 635 of October 29, 2024, a Memorandum of Understanding

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3. Tools and Resources

was approved between the Municipality of Bari and the Central Regional Agency for Housing, titled the “Pact for Fair and Sustainable Housing” (Municipality of Bari, 2024). The Pact identifies four strategic lines, encompassing ongoing or planned interventions totaling over 250 million euros:

1. **Housing First: Strengthening Housing Agency services**, providing housing vouchers, rental incentives, experimental co-housing projects to ensure the right to housing for the most vulnerable groups, and launching new initiatives to support young couples.
2. **Objective 10,000: Redevelopment of existing public housing stock**, completion of ongoing projects (Mungivacca, S. Anna, and S. Girolamo), urban regeneration programs to enhance housing quality (National Innovative Program for Quality of Housing (PINQUA) in the S. Rita and S. Pio neighborhoods with a total investment of approximately 35 million euros), energy efficiency improvements (13 buildings benefiting from 26 million euros under the National Plan for Complementary Investments to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and the Puglia Region’s Sustainable and Solidarity Housing Program - PASS), and removal of architectural barriers.
3. **New Models for Fair and Sustainable Housing:** Implementation of experimental actions to define standards, procedures, methods, and innovative models for improving urban planning, benefiting the drafting process of the new General Urban Plan.
4. **Housing Observatory:** A systematic and continuous analysis of housing demand and supply dynamics to produce more effective interventions while ensuring stakeholder engagement and participation.

The Pact also includes the establishment of a working group to promote a participatory process for drafting and implementing the “Housing Plan,” involving institutions, associations, labor and employer representatives, and active citizens.

3. Tools and Resources

Urban Planning Tools

Regarding urban planning, although the Municipality of Bari has been working on drafting a new General Urban Plan (PUG) for some time and approved the Preliminary Planning Document in 2010, the currently in-force urban planning tool remains the general PRG variant approved in 1976.

Far from being a useful tool to address housing issues, today the PRG itself represents a problem. Conceived in the late 1960s and based on the idea of a “city-region”—a city leading regional development due to its capital status—it is a plan geared towards urban expansion, designed for a population of 628,577 inhabitants, with 205,945 allocated in residential expansion zones with a mixed residential and commercial-office function. Today, the plan has been implemented for just over half of the expected buildable volumes (approximately 20.5 million cubic meters for residential use and 7.5 million cubic meters for commercial-office use). Meanwhile, the “extraordinary and urgent measures” resulting from the 2009 State-Regions Agreement, extended for about 12 years, have led to 1,756,500 cubic meters, almost entirely (1,630,000 cubic meters) consisting of demolition and reconstruction projects (Municipality of Bari, 2020). These projects have increased more than tenfold from 2016 to 2019, accounting for over 80% of approved building volumes, following a legislative change in November 2015 allowing residential developments regardless of previous land use designation (Municipality of Bari, 2018, p. 12). Overall, it can be said that “on one hand, the city is transforming independently of [the PRG in force], while on the other, it exhibits the scars of unfulfilled promises of modernization, efficiency, and quality, particularly related to the grand infrastructure projects that were supposed to materialize its leading role” (Calace, 2021). Thus, the PRG represents a critical issue

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3. Tools and Resources

that must be addressed to meet the growing demand for affordable housing, especially in the rental sector. While the 1976 PRG poses challenges, it also offers opportunities through its generous allocation of land designated for regional or urban-scale public service facilities, many of which contain decommissioned state-owned properties.

3. Tools and Resources

Intervention Area

The project area falls within one of the zones designated for regional or urban-scale public service facilities, still regulated by Article 32 of the Implementation Technical Standards (NTA). Specifically, the former Bonomo Military Hospital complex was classified under the PRG as territorial zone A_P8, “Areas for Regional or Urban Public Service Facilities – Military Facilities” (Article 32, letter i of the NTA), as shown in the following figures.

According to the PRG’s NTA, A_P8 zones permit facilities for activities under military jurisdiction, subject to the following conditions:

- Minimum operational unit: 20,000 square meters or the entire lot if smaller;
- Maximum coverage ratio: 50% of the area;
- Minimum parking area: 40% of the total area;
- Minimum green space: 10% of the area;
- Maximum building height: 30 meters;
- Minimum distance between buildings and property boundaries: half the sum of adjacent building heights;
- Minimum setback from roads: 30 meters.

This designation still applies to the pavilions covered by the Memorandum of Understanding between the State Property Agency, the Puglia Region, and the Regional Agency for the Right to University Education (ADISU) for redeveloping the monumental section of the complex into student housing and services. As of late November 2024, the Municipality of Bari had not yet received any request for approval of the necessary urban planning variant to align the new use with the PRG’s NTA.

However, a simplified procedure is applicable under DPR 383/1994 or Article 14 of DPR 380 concerning special permits for public interest buildings.

3. Tools and Resources

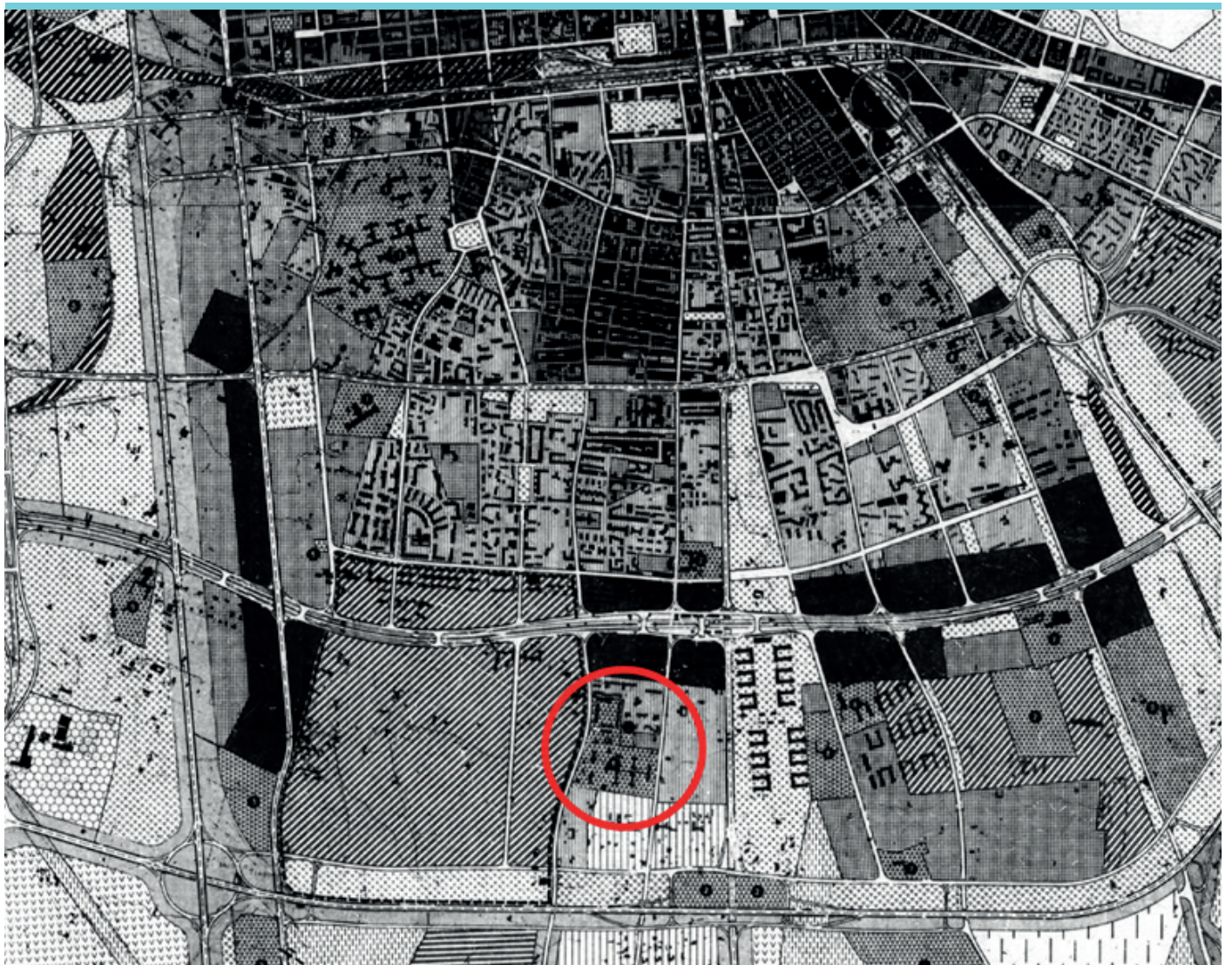
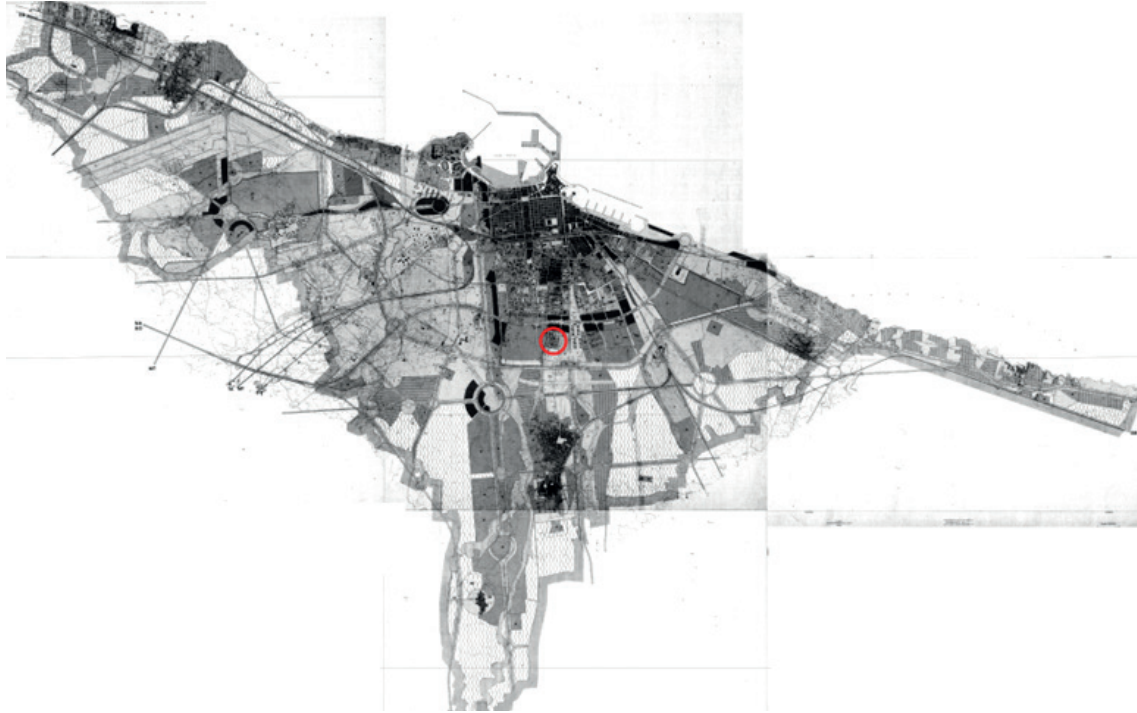


Image15: PRG 1976. Zoning Map with indication of the intervention area.

Image 16: PRG 1976 - Zoning Plan with indication of the intervention area.

3. Tools and Resources

Urban planning variants were approved, following a request made in 2020 by the Agency of the State Property for restoration, regulatory adjustments, and functional recovery interventions only for certain buildings and their related uncovered common areas: Pavilion 14, to be allocated to the State Territorial Accounting Office (RTS), the Interdistrict Office for External Penal Execution (UIEPE); Pavilion 15, to be allocated for Healthcare Assistance for Navigating Personnel (SANS); Pavilions 17 and 18, A and B, to be allocated for archives/technical rooms of the Public Prosecutor's Office. In 2023, an urban planning variant was approved for the functional redevelopment of Pavilions 7 and 8, along with the related external areas, to be allocated for offices of the design structure of the Agency of the State Property. In both cases, the areas were changed from the category foreseen by article 32, letter i) of the PRG's NTA (General Regulatory Plan) to the one indicated in letter h) of the same article (the parts of the property affected by the variants are highlighted in Image 10, taken from the Webgis of the Metropolitan Area of Bari).

It is worth noting that both variants were approved with authorization subject to conditions granted under Article 21 of Legislative Decree No. 42/2004 by the Superintendence of Archaeology, Fine Arts, and Landscape for the Metropolitan City of Bari.

4. Fieldwork

The housing situation in Bari is characterized by a stratified and differentiated demand. Stratified in terms of economic hardship, differentiated in generational and citizenship terms.

There remains a deficit in the availability of housing for people in severe economic distress, which falls within the demand for Public Residential Housing (ERP). The ERP housing stock is outdated, and its resident population is increasingly elderly, often living alone in large apartments, on upper floors, and in buildings without elevators. On the other hand, the demand from foreign families is growing, as they gain access to Public Housing rankings with increased years of residence due to their primary conditions of disadvantage (poverty and large family size).

Bari is an important hub for managing new migrant arrivals, particularly unaccompanied minors, who are placed in social and labor inclusion projects and housed in reception facilities. However, they must leave these facilities at 18-20 years old, often finding themselves without housing despite sometimes having jobs.

This contributes to the growing demand from a population segment that does not meet Public Housing parameters but is unable to access private housing.

This includes other family units, single individuals, and non-resident university students. Changes in the real estate market, such as rising rental prices and the transformation of housing into tourist or temporary accommodations, combined with evictions, exacerbate the situation for those who fall outside both the ERP system and student housing.

From a generational perspective, behaviors vary significantly. Older generations adhere to traditional family and housing models, whereas younger groups are more inclined toward alternative housing solutions like cohousing.

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4. Fieldwork

Public Housing requires significant investment to refurbish currently uninhabitable or severely outdated housing and to construct new homes. Social housing has failed to meet population needs. Student housing is significantly underdeveloped relative to the needs of non-resident students. Furthermore, initiatives targeting the immigrant population have yielded insufficient results.

A survey of public buildings in the city indicates that there are no available properties to address these housing needs.

The stakeholders involved and active in the Bari area regarding the topics addressed are numerous but poorly connected to each other and not accustomed to collaborating in an integrated manner, adopting intersectoral and interdisciplinary approaches. Through research, these actors are engaged in a participatory process aimed at fostering mutual knowledge in terms of ongoing initiatives, projects, and policies to address the housing emergency; developing a shared language and vision; and identifying common needs around which collaborative action strategies can be devised.

4. Fieldwork

Network of Stakeholders

Promoter: Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche,
Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro
Dipartimento DICATECh, Politecnico di Bari

Public Entities:
Agenzia del Demanio Puglia Basilicata
ARCA Puglia Centrale
Comune di Bari
Regione Puglia

Unions:
ANIA Inquilini
APPC Bari
Assocasa
SAI/CISAL
SICET
SUNIA
UNIAT
UNIONCASA
UPPI

Private Entities:
Confabitare
Confedilizia
FEDERCASA
FENITCONFIAL
Studio di progettazione Laura Rubino

Third Sector Organizations:
ACTIONAID
CAPS
CARITAS Bari Bitonto
Gruppo Lavoro Rifugiati
Movimento di lotta per la casa
SPAZIO 13
Sportello parrocchia Don Angelo Cassano
UDU LINK

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4. Fieldwork

Stakeholder Perspectives

The perspectives of stakeholders involved in two focus groups so far converge around the following themes:

Meanings of Housing.

Public sector actors emphasize the need to guarantee not only housing as physical accommodation but also services that ensure a quality living environment. In terms of administration and management, particularly within Public Housing, there is a lack of properties, maintenance resources, and solutions to issues related to assignments and illegal occupations. Third Sector Entities (ETS) highlight the need to design solutions (especially for cohousing) based on beneficiaries' real needs, ensuring their perspectives are considered. Both sides support shared governance approaches to better match housing supply with demand and prevent resource waste.

Participation.

Stakeholders recognize the need for ongoing participatory engagement on housing issues to respond to changing needs. It is essential to involve affected individuals, even those in marginalized conditions. Participatory processes must account for power asymmetries, ensuring participation as a right within an intersectional framework and acknowledging unequal access to decision-making spaces.

Mediation and Guidance.

From unions to broader stakeholders, there is a clear need for mediation between different interests—such as landlords and tenants—to prevent conflicts from becoming irreparable. Additionally, clear guidance is necessary to ensure beneficiaries are well-informed and aware of their rights. The lack of a single contact point at the Revenue Agency complicates lease contract drafting, causing procedural delays and difficulties for both tenants and landlords.

4. Fieldwork

Support Services.

Integrated support services are crucial for social services, Third Sector Organizations, and volunteer organizations assisting those in precarious or emergency housing situations. Support includes financial aid to provide guarantees to landlords and enhance tenant autonomy, as well as networking, guidance, and advocacy. This approach must consider the intersectionality of housing needs and provide diverse responses to different vulnerabilities.

Monitoring and Data Collection.

All stakeholders agree on the need for a shared, updated, and accessible information system to monitor housing conditions, such as unused and available properties. A common knowledge base is essential to identify inclusion and exclusion factors within the housing system and the broader urban and social context.

Sustainability.

One critical issue in housing policies and projects is the constraints imposed by funding conditions, which often lead to inadequate or short-sighted solutions with direct negative impacts on affected individuals. Public authorities must ensure the sustainability of policies and projects by grounding them in local knowledge and recognizing the intersectionality of housing issues. Furthermore, all stakeholders must work towards a shared language to facilitate effective communication and collaboration.

The common need identified by stakeholders involved in the fieldwork is greater opportunities for dialogue and collaborative work. Establishing permanent discussion tables is proposed, focusing on three levels:

1. Regulatory frameworks
2. Social and urban planning
3. Research and data analysis


5. References


UAH! collects references, projects, readings, exhibitions in order to frame the broad background of the research topic. The resources are listed in the 'atlas' and 'references' sections on the website uah.polimi.it.


Below is a selection of additional and specific references on the context of Bari, considered relevant for approaching the topic.


 Click on the title to access the pdf (if available)


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