

The Residences of the House of Savoy, a Serial Site in the World Heritage List since 1997 in Piedmont

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### The Residences of the Royal House of Savoy, a Serial Site in the World Heritage List since 1997 in Piedmont

This contribution aims to place in the European framework a particular item of the World Heritage List, the serial site of the Royal Residences of the House of Savoy, trying to analyze its history as a planned system and its current situation in relation to the contemporary needs of valorization, focusing on the first results of the process. These residences constitute a heritage that documents most effectively the artistic and architectural culture of Italy of the Baroque period.

When the Italian monarchy was abolished (1946), these palaces underwent a partial process of neglect. Works to remedy the damage began in the 1980s and culminated in the major restoration of Venaria Reale (1998-2007). The current challenge is to valorise this heritage, a cultural asset of utmost priority in the Piedmont Region, notwithstanding the multiplicity of institutions, public bodies and public-private foundations involved, through coordinated management and common policies. To this end, in 2017, the public-private consortium that had been in charge of the Reggia di Venaria Reale was recast as *Consortium of the Royal Residences of the House of Savoy*, with the specific aim of sharing skills, knowledge and policies in a network and achieve a more effective common management, visibility and tourism promotion.

**Keywords:** Turin, Royal Residences of the House of Savoy, Royal Palaces, Museums, Museum Networks.

### Резиденції королівського дому Савойя, об'єкт у Списку Всесвітньої спадщини ЮНЕСКО з 1997 року в П'ємонті

Метою даної статті є дослідити конкретні об'єкти Списку всесвітньої спадщини в Європі, а саме Королівські резиденції Савойського дому, проаналізувати послідовно історію та поточний стан охорони пам'ятки, враховуючи сучасні виклики та валоризацію спадщини, зосереджуючись на її збереженні. Ці резиденції є спадщиною Італії, яка найбільше відображає мистецьку та архітектурну культуру періоду бароко.

6 грудня 1997 р. королівські резиденції Савойського дому були включені до Списку Всесвітньої спадщини на основі критеріїв (i), (ii), (iv), (v). Медіцейські вілли є іншим об'єктом спадщини в Італії, визнані ним через особливий характер будівель, як окремої системи. Резиденції п'ємонтського двору, здебільшого побудовані між 1563 р., коли Турин став столицею Савойської держави, та XVIII ст., а згодом розширені та об'єднані до XX століття. Вони не представляють спадщину, яка найбільш ефективно документує художню та архітектурну культуру періоду бароко. Коли столицю було перенесено до Флоренції у 1865 р. та Риму у 1870 р., а також після скасування монархії (1946 р.), комплекс із 22 будівель, включених до списку Всесвітньої спадщини, було побудовано як резиденції для королівської сім'ї, для їх дозвілля та відпочинку, мисливства в столиці та її околицях. З часом будівлі зазнали часткового процесу руйнування та занедбаності. Роботи з усунення пошкоджень розпочалися у 1980-х рр. і завершилися капітальною реставрацією комплексу Venaria Reale (1998-2007 рр.). Також, з цією метою у 2017 р. державно-приватний консорціум, який відповідав за Reggia di Venaria Reale з 2008 р., був перетворений на Консорціум королівських резиденцій Савойї з конкретною метою обміну навичками, знаннями та політикою в мережі зацікавлених сторін для досягнення більш ефективного спільного управління та просування туризму в регіоні.

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Дане дослідження полягає в тому, щоб оцінити цю спадщину, як культурне надбання, яке має найвищий пріоритет у регіоні П'ємонт та залучає до охорони велику кількість інституцій, державних органів і державно-приватних фондів, шляхом координованого управління та спільної політики.

**Ключові слова:** Турин, королівські резиденції Савойського дому, королівські палаци, музеї, музейні мережі.

### Introduction

This contribution aims to present a UNESCO heritage site of a particular kind, in that it does not consist of a single asset and is comprised instead of a network of properties, interconnected by historical, functional and landscaping links, a system built up over time but conceived as such from the start. This system, recognised by UNESCO for its significance as a whole, engenders requirements for historical research, maintenance, restoration, coordinate valorisation and promotion initiatives that pose a challenge in view of the fragmentation of the assets, once the property of the Savoy Crown and now divided into a number of foundations and different public institutions. Though they are of little consequence compared to the dramatic damage brought about by past and current wars all over the world, management and value enhancement problems are major issues that operators in Turin are confronted with today.

Throughout Europe, the systems of royal residences (inherited by monarchies that have now disappeared and are now public assets in republican states, or still in use as royal seats in monarchies still in existence) pose problems of study, research, management, promotion, restoration and enhancement. This problem is tackled through operational bodies at the level of each individual nation (think of the *Spanish Patrimonio Nacional*<sup>2</sup> which rules all the residences of the Bourbon court, the *Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung*<sup>3</sup> and the *Stiftung Preussische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg*<sup>4</sup> which manage the residences belonging to a time at the Wittelsbachs in Bavaria or at the Hohenzollern in Prussia), but also through international networks, such as the *Association of European Royal Residences* (ARRE), born in 1995 and registered as an association in 2001. The goal of the ARRE is clearly stated: «The Network of European Royal Residences is primarily a tool at the service of European palace-museum staff and experts, enabling them to meet and share their experience in the preservation, management and promotion of the rich cultural heritage in their care. As they come together around various large and small scale joint projects, through technical meetings or the organization of common cultural programs, this network, which is unique in Europe, aims to improve the management and conservation of European Royal Residences that receive more than 37 million visitors every year and promote them across the world»<sup>5</sup>.

How to manage a system of sites of international value, often included in the World Heritage List, is therefore a topic that has been tackled by various nations or regional governments for some time now, on the basis of old bodies or new institutions, with the awareness that a level of a European coordination and reporting is needed. The purpose of this contribution is to frame the Royal Residences of the House of Savoy within the framework of this problem, and in the context of the bodies already existing in other countries, to identify which directions must be taken and which aspects must be developed in order to reach an adequate capacity for the needs posed from a large system. A system which, although unitary in origin and perception, also due to belonging to the World Heritage List, is today fragmented into many different institutions, sometimes in conflict with each other or in any case not fully coordinated. The residences of the system have been the subject of many studies which have highlighted their common history and common matrices (Roggero, Vinardi, Defabiani 1990<sup>6</sup>, Roggero, Vanelli 2009<sup>7</sup>, Roggero, Turetta, Vanelli 2018<sup>8</sup>) and in-depth studies have also been carried

<sup>2</sup> *Patrimonio Nacional*, available at: <https://www.patrimonionacional.es> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>3</sup> *Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung*, available at: <https://www.spsg.de/en/home/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>4</sup> *Preussische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg*, available at: <https://www.spsg.de/en/home/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>5</sup> *The Network of European Royal Residences*, available at: <http://www.europeanroyalresidences.eu> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>6</sup> Roggero C., Vinardi M.G., Defabiani V. (1990), *Ville Sabaude*. Milan: Rusconi.

<sup>7</sup> Roggero C., Vanelli A. (eds.) (2009), *Le residenze sabaude*. Turin: Umberto Allemandi.

<sup>8</sup> Roggero C., Turetta M., Vanelli A. (eds.) (2018), *Le residenze sabaude*. Turin: Umberto Allemandi.

out on the “best practices” followed in individual complexes, such as Venaria Reale (*Reggia di Venaria* 2016) and on aspects of the economic management of the entire system within the region (Caraglio 2005<sup>9</sup>, Bertacchini, Santagata 2012<sup>10</sup>, Saccone 2016<sup>11</sup>), but – as we will see – the network of the Royal Savoy Residences is struggling to take off. In addition to these concrete aspects, there is also a theoretical level, which concerns the social, political and identity value of the heritage and which goes beyond every single European case, in which some scholars, focusing on important topics such as the material or immaterial nature of the heritage and – element in relation with the Piedmontese case – the methods of managing the architectural heritage of noble or court residences: see, for example, the critical contribution by Laurajane Smith *The “manored” past: The banality of grandiloquence*<sup>12</sup>. The debate on the management and enhancement of this legacy from the past is inseparable from the recognition of its meaning and value, both internationally and locally, and this makes the topic particularly sensitive. This contribution, therefore, tries to examine the Piedmontese case in the light of these parameters, to identify the current situation and the unresolved issues, highlighting the first positive outcomes.

### **World Heritage List**

During the course of the twenty-third session of the World Heritage Committee held Naples on 6 December 1997, the complex of the Royal Residences of the Savoy house was inscribed in the World Heritage List: «The Committee decided to inscribe this property on the basis of criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (v), considering that the Residences of the Royal House of Savoy in and around Turin represent a comprehensive overview of European monumental architecture in the 17th and 18th centuries, using style, dimensions, and space to illustrate in an exceptional way the prevailing doctrine of absolute monarchy in material terms»<sup>13</sup>.

The peculiarity of the Turin system becomes apparent when we consider other networks of court residences in Europe: in Italy only the system of the Medicean villas is a UNESCO Serial Site, the Royal Palace of Caserta was included in the list in 1997, but the other Bourbon royal sites, such as the palaces of Capodimonte and Portici, or the complexes of Persano and Carditello, were not. In France, the Palace of Versailles and the Château de Fontainebleau were included in the World Heritage List, but separately, in 1979 and 1981, whereas the entire system of French royal residences was not. UNESCO recognised the special characteristics of stringent unity of the Piedmontese residences, which were built and expanded between the 16th and the 19th centuries, but pursuant to a clear land plan conceived as early as 1563, when Turin became the capital of the Savoy states. The committee clarifies how the criteria were applied to the specific case:

*Criterion (i), to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius:* The Residences of the Royal House of Savoy provide outstanding testimony to the exuberant genius of Baroque and Late Baroque art and architecture, constructed over many decades by outstanding architects, including [...] Guarino Guarini and Filippo Juvarra.

*Criterion (ii), to exhibit an important interchange of human values:* The monumental architecture and town-planning of the Residences of the Royal House of Savoy reflect the interchange of human values across Europe during the “Baroque episode” of the 17th and 18th centuries which led to an immense work of creation and homogenization, ornamentation and improvement.

*Criterion (iv), to be an outstanding example of a type of building:* The Residences of the Royal House of Savoy are an outstanding example of the strategies and styles of the Baroque, a monumental architectural ensemble illustrating the prevailing doctrine of absolute monarchy in material terms.

<sup>9</sup> Caraglio L. (2005), ‘Le residenze sabaude in Piemonte: un’analisi preliminare’, in *Economia della Cultura*, 2, pp. 229-234.

<sup>10</sup> Bertacchini E., Santagata (eds.), *Atmosfera creativa. Un modello di sviluppo sostenibile per il Piemonte fondato su cultura e creatività*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

<sup>11</sup> Saccone D. (2016), ‘Impatti del marchio UNESCO sui siti italiani: le Residenze della Casa Reale dei Savoia’, in Moreschini L., Ramello G.B., Santagata, W. (eds.), *Un marchio per la valorizzazione dei territori di eccellenza: dai siti UNESCO ai luoghi italiani della cultura, dell’arte e del paesaggio*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino.

<sup>12</sup> Smith L. (2006), *Uses of Heritage*. London and New York, Routledge, pp. 115-161.

<sup>13</sup> *WHC Nomination Documentation*, p. 1, available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/823/documents> (accessed 1.12.2022).

*Criterion (v), to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement:* The Residences of the Royal House of Savoy constitute a dynastic heritage that is both complex and unitary being a true symbiosis between culture and nature through its mastery of urban space and its planning of vast tracts of countryside to create a concentric authoritarian organization with Turin at its centre<sup>14</sup>.

Other parameters – in the documentation updated to 2018 – concern the characteristics of integrity, authenticity, protection and management. First and foremost, integrity:

The Residences of the Royal House of Savoy include the most representative buildings constructed and renovated by the Savoy dynasty from the 17th to the 19th century. The buildings reflect the original radial plan from the central node of the “Command Centre” in Turin to the surrounding residences or “Crown of Delights” illustrative of the prevailing doctrine of absolute monarchy. Boundaries and buffer zones have been approved for all components of the property. In 2010 some missing buffer zones were created [...] and others were expanded [...]. The perimeter areas of the buffer zones include parks, gardens and historic town centres, elements that still add to the original value of these Residences today.

Thus, an important aspect is authenticity. The buildings comprising the Residences of the Royal House of Savoy have undergone many restoration procedures. The conservation and restoration work undertaken is based on patient stratigraphic research, archive studies, scientific analysis and the analysis of structures. The work is also designed in some cases to bring to light elements that had been hidden by previous refurbishment and to correct some previous building works. Repair and restoration work on the House of Savoy residences, conducted with the aim of opening them to the public, begun in the 1970s and is still underway<sup>15</sup>.

And, lastly, the strategic issues of protection and management. Each of the component parts the Residences of the Royal House of Savoy is protected by national, regional and local regulations. According to national regulations of the *Codice dei Beni culturali e del Paesaggio* (or the cultural and landscape heritage code) these monuments are subject to specific conservation measures that affect single buildings and, in the case of Stupinigi, Rivoli, Govone, Racconigi, Pollenzo, Venaria, La Mandria and Agliè regional and EU landscape regulations protect the wider area where they are located. Under the national regulations all restoration work is subject to prior approval by the competent Office of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism. On a local level, the Regional Territorial Plan (2009) covering the protection and enhancement of the Residences of the Royal House of Savoy and other urban planning rules identify further conservation regulations for palaces and villas located within their perimeter<sup>16</sup>.

In some other nations, the political changes following the fall of the monarchy, in different historical phases, did not dismantle the institutions that governed these sensitive systems of palaces, gardens, service structures. This is the case of Bavaria, as stated, where the same organisation inherited from the Wittelsbachs continues to this day to manage the residences (Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung), whereas, in Piedmont, the Savoys had already begun to dismantle the system after moving the capital from Turin to Florence and then to Rome.

The complexity of the situation has made it difficult to promote a truly shared policy between all the bodies and institutions concerned, although some progress has been made recently. Before we focus on recent developments, however, we should provide an overview of the system and its various components, through their history and current situation.

### ***The “Crown of Delights”***

The system of residences<sup>17</sup> was conceived when Turin became the permanent seat of the Savoy court in 1563. It was a European phenomenon: capitals were not only provided with grand palaces to house the court and give it appropriate representation and magnificence, but also acquired a system of villas and palaces in the lands all around. As a result of this development, Turin was endowed with a first ducal palace (the so-called Palazzo Vecchio) by duke Emmanuel Philibert, while Palazzo Novo

<sup>14</sup> *Residences of the Royal House of Savoy. Description*, available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/823> (accessed 1.12.2022).

<sup>15</sup> *Residences of the Royal House of Savoy. Description*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem; I percorsi delle residenze sabaude*, available at: <https://residenzerealisabaude.com/le-residenze/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

Grande (now the Royal Palace) began to be built in 1584 by his successor Charles Emmanuel I, and a ducal demesne was established (1564) around the capital city, in which *loisir* and hunting residences would be gradually built. The riverside palaces (Mirafiori, 1583; Regio Parco, 1602, Valentino, 1620), the villas on the hills (Vigna del Cardinal Maurizio, 1615; Vigna di Madama Reale, 1648), the dynastic castles of medieval origin, then progressively transformed (Rivoli, Moncalieri), the hunting lodges (Venaria Reale, 1659; Stupinigi, 1729), the residences of cadet princes (Racconigi, from 1620; Agliè, from 1765; Govone, from 1792) added up to a heritage of palaces, villas, castles, vineyards on which every phase left its mark, restoring and improving rooms, buildings, gardens<sup>18</sup>. Albeit built in stages, the residences making up the system had common characteristics: designed by the court engineers, who were active in both the military and civil fields, the system is the outcome of a shared culture and the work of craftsmen who had been handing down construction techniques and materials know-how for centuries. In times of peace, it was the activity of the prince, keen to flaunt the Magnificence that qualified his rule. As written on the medals coined for the laying of the foundation stone of the Royal Palace of Caserta: *deliciae regis, felicitas populi*. It being a representation of absolute power, the change of status had to be reflected in a new style: when the Duchy became a Kingdom in 1713 (with the annexation of Sicily, later exchanged for Sardinia, and the consequent naming of the state as the Kingdom of Sardinia, while its capital remained in Turin), new architects answered the call of the Savoy kings. It was the golden age of Filippo Juvarra, who had trained in Rome and was famous throughout Europe thanks to his works in Turin, so much so that the King of Spain summoned him to Madrid in 1735 to design the new Royal Palace (which was then built by one of his collaborators due to Juvarra's unexpected death in Madrid, in the winter of 1736). The Savoy sovereigns were very interested in communication and publicising their system of residences at other courts: in a monograph<sup>19</sup> published in 1679, Amedeo di Castellamonte, author of the Venaria Reale hunting complex, presented the site with a descriptive text and dozens of engraved views. It is in this work that the concept of the Crown of Delights was used for the first time to refer to the system of residences forming a ring around the capital. 1682 saw the publication in Amsterdam of the *Theatrum Sabaudiae*, two volumes<sup>20</sup> portraying all the main locations and buildings in the Savoy states: in these 140 engravings, much space is devoted to the capital and the court palaces in the surrounding territory. Around 1670, a series of seven views by Flemish painter John Baptist Abret (today displayed at the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale) illustrated the main residences built at the time, that is to say, the *Crown of Delights*; in the second half of the 18th century, painter Vittorio Amedeo Cignaroli produced a series of forty-four vistas depicting royal residences and localities in Piedmont (today kept at Palazzo Chiabrese in Turin), set in landscapes that reflected the growing interest in free nature that would lead to the redesign of most of Europe's gardens by the end of the century. Special operations included the production of reliefs of the complexes, which were sent to St. Petersburg in 1782, and in 1785 to Naples after the visits of the Counts of the North (Paul and Maria Fiodorowna, heirs to the Russian throne) and Ferdinand IV of Bourbon. Engraved views were also sent of the surrounding territory. Around 1670, a series of seven views by Flemish painter John Baptist Abret (today displayed at the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale) illustrated the main residences built at the time, that is to say, the *Crown of Delights*; in the second half of the 18th century, painter Vittorio Amedeo Cignaroli produced a series of forty-four vistas depicting royal residences and localities in Piedmont (today kept at Palazzo Chiabrese in Turin), set in landscapes that reflected the growing interest in free nature that would lead to the redesign of most of Europe's gardens by the end of the century. Special operations included the production of reliefs of the complexes, which were sent to St. Petersburg in 1782, and in 1785 to Naples after the visits of the Counts of the North (Paul and Maria Fiodorowna, heirs to the Russian throne) and Ferdinand IV of

<sup>18</sup> On the theme of the residences, see: Roggero C., Vinardi M.G., Defabiani V. (1990), *Ville Sabaude*. Milan: Rusconi; Cornaglia, P. (2007), '1563-1798 tre secoli di architettura di corte. La città, gli architetti, la committenza, le residenze, i giardini' in Castelnovo E. (ed.), *La reggia di Venaria e i Savoia. Arte, magnificenza e storia di una corte europea*, catalogue of the exhibition (Venaria Reale 13 October – 31 March 2007). Turin: Umberto Allemandi, pp. 117-184; Cornaglia, P. (2021), 'Eclecticism at the Savoy Court in Turin. Landscape, Architecture and Apartments from Late Neoclassicism to Neo-Baroque (1831-1900)' in *Tagungsband 4. Schweriner Welterbetagung*. Schwerin: Landeshauptstadt Schwerin, pp. 49-76.

<sup>19</sup> Di Castellamonte (1674-1679), A. *La Venaria Reale Palazzo di Piacere e di Caccia*. Turin: Zapata.

<sup>20</sup> *Theatrum Statuum Regiae Celsitudinis Sabaudiae Ducis, Pedemontii Principis, Cypri Regis* (1682). Amsterdam: Blaeau.

Bourbon. Engraved views were also sent of the Hunting Lodge in Stupinigi, regarded as the most perfect, modern and graceful residence in the second half of the 18th century<sup>21</sup>.

A strategic element of this system was – and still is, having been incorporated in the layout of the expanding city – the system of avenues connecting the walled city and the residences in the countryside. The city built in a grid pattern becomes a radial centre from which connecting avenues, usually lined with elms, branch off, leading to Mirafiori, the Queen's Villa, Regio Parco, Valentino, i.e., the structures closest to the city, and to Venaria Reale, Stupinigi (11 km, from 1753), Rivoli (13 km, from 1713). The last complex – according to Benevolo – was one of the largest projects on a territorial scale realised in Baroque Europe: the axis, consisting of a 13 km long tree-lined avenue, continues for a further 6 km in the same direction, and connects the east façade of the Rivoli Castle with the Royal Church of Superga, 19 km away as the crow flies, the antipole of the system conceived by Filippo Juvarra in 1715.



**Photo 1) Turin, Royal Museums, Royal Palace (Ascanio Vitozzi 1584, Maurizio Valperga, 1643, Carlo Morello, 1658), the main façade (Creative Commons 2.0, 2015)<sup>22</sup>**

The most extensive complex of buildings of the Savoy rulers is the one built in the heart of the capital. Even though the “castle” used by the Savoy family already existed, in 1563 Duke Emmanuel Philibert took up residence in the Bishop's Palace and promoted the construction of the so-called Palazzo Vecchio (or Palazzo di San Giovanni), and yet it was his son, duke Charles Emmanuel I to announce a competition in 1584 for a Grand New Palace to rise on the site of the Bishop's Palace.

The so-called “Command Zone”, i.e., the district of the palaces of power, all of them connected by large decorated galleries or in any event by passages, developed around this triple core after 1673. A complex housing stables, riding rings and the Royal Academy was added to the palaces. In 1740 the system acquired the Royal Theatre designed by Benedetto Alfieri (mentioned as a model in the *Ency-*

<sup>21</sup> Cornaglia P. (1994), *Giardini di marmo ritrovati. La geografia del gusto in un secolo di cantiere a Venaria Reale, 1698-1789*. Turin: Lindau., pp. 62-64.

<sup>22</sup> Photo: Filip Malijkovic, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Royal\\_Palace\\_of\\_Turin\\_\(8871215622\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Royal_Palace_of_Turin_(8871215622).jpg).



*clopédie*), the Secretariat Palace (housing the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Foreign and Internal Affairs), the Court Archives, a new large riding hall. In 1718 Filippo Juvarra had created the new façade of the castle (Palazzo Madama) that was the residence of the *Madame Reali* (widowed duchesses who served as regents for their minor children).



**Photo 2) Turin, Palazzo Madama, the main façade designed by Filippo Juvarra in 1718 (Creative Commons 4.0, 2022)<sup>23</sup>**

Nowadays, this system, included in its entirety in the UNESCO serial site – constitutes (for the most part) the autonomous state-run entity of the Royal Museums<sup>24</sup>, which is comprised of the Royal Palace, the Sabauda Gallery (picture gallery), the Royal Armoury, the Royal Library. The Chiablèse Palace (residence of Duke Benedetto Maurizio, favourite cadet son of Charles Emmanuel III) is now home to the Superintendence for the Fine Arts, Archaeology and Landscape, which has moved its offices to the upper floors and opened the prized apartments to visits by the public; the Secretariat Palace now hosts the Prefecture (a local office of the central government); the Royal Theatre<sup>25</sup> belongs to the Municipality; the Court Archives are now part of the State Archives<sup>26</sup>; the Royal Academy was regrettably demolished after it was severely damaged in the war; the stables and the great Cavallerizza, which gives its name to this complex, were subdivided into different public properties and, after years of neglect, were the subject of a major restoration campaign promoted by Compagnia di San Paolo. Palazzo Madama, separated from the complex due to the demolition of the connecting gallery (destroyed during the Napoleonic era) is now owned by the municipality and houses the Civic Museum of Ancient Art<sup>27</sup>.

In the proximity of this area, the collateral branch of the princes of Savoy-Carignano built their complex, consisting of a palace (Palazzo Carignano, Guarino Guarini 1679), a theatre (Benedetto Alfieri 1752) and stables (Filippo Castelli 1789). Now the theatre belongs to the municipality and the stables house the National Library (state-owned). The palace<sup>28</sup> hosts two institutions, one is the

<sup>23</sup> Photo: Lurens, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palazzo\\_Madama,\\_Torino\\_crop.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palazzo_Madama,_Torino_crop.jpg).

<sup>24</sup> *Musei Reali, Torino*, available at: <https://museireali.beniculturali.it/plan-your-visit-royal-museums/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>25</sup> *Teatro Regio, Torino, History*, available at: <https://www.teatroregio.torino.it/en/discover-regio/history> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>26</sup> *Archivio di Stato, Torino, Le sedi*, available at: <https://archiviostatotorino.beniculturali.it/le-sedi/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>27</sup> *Palazzo Madama*, available at: <https://www.palazzomadamatorino.it/en/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>28</sup> *Palazzo Carignano*, available at: <http://polomusealepiemonte.beniculturali.it/index.php/musei-e-luoghi-della-cultura/palazzo-carignano/> (accessed 3.04.2023).



Regional Museums Directorate<sup>29</sup> (a peripheral structure of the national Ministry of Culture that manages some, not all, of the Savoy residences), where the apartment used by Prince Eugene of Savoy (more in Vienna and Budapest than in Turin) is the only one that has retained its original decorations undamaged, can be visited, and is, and the other is Museum of the Risorgimento<sup>30</sup>, which is mainly housed in the 19th-century wing of the palace. Built to house the Italian Parliament (Turin was the capital of Italy from 1861 to 1865), Palazzo Carignano was completed in 1871 when the capital had already been moved to Florence and then to Rome.



*Photo 3) Turin, Queen's Villa (Ascanio Vitozzi, 1615), the garden (Creative Commons 3.0, 2017)<sup>31</sup>*

Among the residences closest to the city are the Queen's Villa, and the Valentino and Moncalieri castles. They represent three different categories in the system, due to their functions, and three complicated situations under the current management set-up. The villa<sup>32</sup> is one of the residences built to enjoy the salubrious climate of the Turin hills and the panorama of the city below. Built by a Roman architect on the model of Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati, it was commissioned by Cardinal Maurizio of Savoy, an expert connoisseur of Roman villas. Even though in the 18th century it was enriched with scenic architectural elements to a design by Filippo Juvarra, the garden has retained its original Italian-style semi-circular layout. After decades of neglect, in 2006, it was painstakingly restored and open to the public. It is now managed by the Regional Museums Directorate.

<sup>29</sup> *Direzione Regionale Musei Piemonte*, available at: <http://polomusealepiemonte.beniculturali.it> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>30</sup> *Museo Nazionale Risorgimento Italiano*, available at: <https://www.museorisorgimentotorino.it/en> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>31</sup> Photo: Uccio "Uccio2" D'Agostino, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Villa\\_della\\_Regina\\_Torino\\_-\\_panoramio\\_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Villa_della_Regina_Torino_-_panoramio_(1).jpg).

<sup>32</sup> *Villa della Regina*, available at: <http://polomusealepiemonte.beniculturali.it/index.php/musei-e-luoghi-della-cultura/villa-della-regina/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

The Valentino Castle<sup>33</sup>, a large complex clearly of French taste built in 1620-48 for Christine of France, sister of Louis XIII and wife of Victor Amadeus II of Savoy, represents the category of residences built along the banks of the city's rivers. It is now owned by the Politecnico di Torino and houses the departments of architecture. Thus, it was the Politecnico that carried out the restoration, under the supervision of the Superintendency, and made arrangements for a partial opening to the public of the apartments, whose 17th-century stucco decoration has been fully preserved. Lastly, the Castle of Moncalieri<sup>34</sup> is one of the medieval castles formerly owned by the Savoy house, transformed into a grand palace with galleries and pavilions in the 17th century. With the acquisition between 1861 and 1870 of all the other residences of Italian courts, the Savoy rulers started a process of divestment that culminated after the First World War. In this context, the castle was given to the army in 1926 and is now home to a battalion of Carabinieri. However, three apartments have been retained, recently restored, and opened to the public again, under the administration of the Regional Museums Directorate.

Widening the perimeter around the capital we encounter the complexes of Rivoli, Stupinigi and Venaria Reale, each with its own peculiarities. The Rivoli Castle, of medieval origin like the Castle of Moncalieri, was transformed into a palace in the 17th century and became an architectural dream of Victor Amadeus II and his architect Filippo Juvarra. In 1715, the great territorial plan referred to earlier was put into effect: the castle was redesigned to be a large out-of-town permanent royal palace, on the model of Versailles, and the most important Roman architecture painters of the time (Locatelli, Pannini, Ricci) were recruited to depict the project in a series of eight enormous canvases, as an everlasting testimony to the sovereign's vision, which unfortunately was not carried to completion. In the 19th century the castle lost its functions, first it was used as barracks, then it became the property of the municipality of Rivoli and was left in a state of progressive deterioration. Only in 1984, thanks to the intervention of the Piedmont Region, it was completely restored and remodelled into a Museum of Contemporary Art<sup>35</sup>, perfectly in line with the possibilities left open by its incompleteness.

The latest addition to the system of residences around Turin was the Stupinigi Hunting Palace<sup>36</sup>, built starting in 1729 to a design by Filippo Juvarra in an area that had been used for ducal hunting pursuits since the 16th century. Initially conceived to serve as a hunting lodge connected to the Hunting Routes system according to a radial plan, over time it was expanded and converted into a residence. Like other castles of the Savoy family, it was decommissioned after the First World War, and in 1926 became the seat of the Furniture Museum. Already part of the estate of the Mauriziano Hospital, due to complex events linked to the Order of Saints Maurice and Lazarus to which the building had been entrusted since its construction, it is currently owned by Fondazione Ordine Mauriziano, which manages it and undertakes restoration works using its own funds and contributions from consortia of banks and companies.

Cadet princes, important figures but not destined to ascend the throne, were always provided with apartments or palaces in the city, and residences in the countryside for *loisir* and hunting. In 1765, Benedetto Maurizio, son of Elisabeth of Lorraine and Charles Emmanuel III, Duke of Chablais and owner of a fine palace in Turin, was given the large castle of Agliè<sup>37</sup>, which was enlarged and equipped with a park designed by French expert Michel Benard. Some cadet princes gave rise to collateral lines of the family, as in the case of the princes of Savoy-Carignano, whose Racconigi castle<sup>38</sup> today constitutes one of the most important elements in the system of Savoy royal residences. A medieval castle was transformed to a design by Guarino Guarini and the design of the new park was entrusted to the great André le Nôtre.

<sup>33</sup> *Valentino Castle*, available at: <https://castellodelvalentino.polito.it/?lang=en> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>34</sup> *Castello di Moncalieri*, available at: <http://polomusealepiemonte.beniculturali.it/index.php/musei-e-luoghi-della-cultura/castello-di-moncalieri/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>35</sup> *Castello di Rivoli*, available at: <https://www.castellodirivoli.org/en> (accessed 3.04.2023); *Rivoli Castle, Contemporary Art Museum*, available at: <https://www.castellodirivoli.org/en> (accessed 1.12.2022).

<sup>36</sup> *Palazzina di Caccia di Stupinigi*, available at: <https://www.ordinemauriziano.it/palazzina-caccia-stupinigi/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>37</sup> *Castello di Agliè*, available at: <http://polomusealepiemonte.beniculturali.it/index.php/musei-e-luoghi-della-cultura/castello-di-aglie/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>38</sup> *Castello di Racconigi*, available at: <http://polomusealepiemonte.beniculturali.it/index.php/musei-e-luoghi-della-cultura/castello-di-racconigi/> (accessed 3.04.2023).





*Photo 4) Agliè (Turin), castle (Amedeo di Castelamonte, 1646, Ignazio Renato di Borgaro, 1765), the garden and the grottoes (photo Paolo Cornaglia, 2016)*

The castles of Agliè and Racconigi are now part of the system managed by the Regional Museums Directorate. The last of the cadets' residences, Govone Castle<sup>39</sup>, auctioned off by the Dukes of Genoa (a branch of the Savoy family) at the end of the 19th century, is now owned by that municipality, which strives to enhance its value notwithstanding the financial difficulties of a small municipality.

A final category of residences is constituted by properties that were part of the strictly private patrimony of the Savoy family. This category includes the Pollenzo and La Mandria castles. The Pollenzo castle<sup>40</sup>, together with the Church of the town, the tower and the building of the Estate Management Agency, is a *troubadour* dream of King Charles Albert, created to a design by Pelagio Palagi starting in 1832. Today, the castle is privately owned, while the Agency building houses the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Wine Bank, a hotel and a restaurant. In 1863, the so-called La Mandria castle, formerly a horse breeding facility in the vicinity of the Venaria Reale Royal Palace, became the private retreat of King Victor Emmanuel II and his bourgeois wife Rosa Vercellana. After nearly a century in private hands, in 1976, the castle, together with the huge estate, was returned to public hands when it was purchased by the Piedmont Region that transformed the area into a large suburban public park<sup>41</sup>.

The Royal Palace of Venaria Reale<sup>42</sup> exemplifies how such courtly residences can fall into neglect and disrepair as a result of political or social changes, but can still return to play a social role as cultural assets. The huge Venaria Reale complex was built in 1659 as a system of town, palace, gardens, park and hunting facilities, and was expanded during the 18th century to a design by, among others, Filippo Juvarra. Abandoned in 1798 with the Napoleonic invasion, the buildings were turned into bar-

<sup>39</sup> *Royal Castle of Govone*, available at: <https://www.castellorealedigovone.it/en/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>40</sup> *Agenzia di Pollenzo*, available at: <https://www.agenziadipollenzo.com/agenzia/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>41</sup> *Parco Naturale La Mandria*, available at: <http://www.parchireali.it/parco.mandria/> (accessed 3.04.2023).

<sup>42</sup> *La Venaria Reale*, available at: <https://lavenaria.it/en> (accessed 3.04.2023).

racks, and the park was destroyed. Completely in ruins after 1945, the complex underwent a major restoration process starting in 1998, and was inaugurated in 2007, thanks to European, national and regional funds amounting to about 300 million euros<sup>43</sup>. The restoration projects were selected through competitions and carried out under the careful supervision of the Superintendency for Architectural Heritage. The works were monitored by a team composed of art historians, historians of architectures, architects, engineers, chemists, etc., who verified every step of the construction process at the site and provided precise historical knowledge of the artefacts.



*Photo 5) Venaria Reale (Turin), Castle. The Orangerie (Filippo Juvarra 1722) during restoration (photo Paolo Cornaglia, 2004)*

The complex, which features highlights of late European Baroque architecture, such as the Great Gallery, the Great Stables, the Orangerie, and the Chapel of St. Hubert, offers not only a monumental visiting tour, but also numerous facilities for different size exhibitions, the headquarters of the Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, and a large park remodelled with the inclusion of contemporary works of art (Garden of Fluid Sculptures by Giuseppe Penone). Established in 2008 as a public-private consortium with the participation of banks, local institutions and the state, before the pandemic it was the fifth most visited museum in Italy.

If Venaria Reale is an example of “good practices”, making proper use of funds for the restoration works, formulating projects by evaluating the artefacts on the basis of precise historical, archival and material investigations, and adopting the innovative consortium formula for management and promotion purposes, there remains the problem of how to coordinate and valorise the system of the Royal Residences of Savoy in the face of the patchwork of properties and management bodies involved. Summarising the complex situation, the picture that emerges is as follows: the Regional Museums Directorate manages the Carignano Palace, the Queen's Villa and – outside Turin – the castles of Agliè, Racconigi and Moncalieri; the Royal Museums of Turin manages the Royal Palace, the Archaeologi-

<sup>43</sup> *La Venaria Reale, History in brief*, available at: <https://lavenaria.it/en/explore/reggia/history-brief> (accessed 3.04.2023).



cal Museum, the Sabauda Gallery, the Royal Armoury and the Royal Library. The remaining buildings form an intricate mosaic: Palazzo Madama belongs to Fondazione Torino Musei (Municipality of Turin), the Royal Theatre to the Municipality of Turin, the Secretariat Palace hosts the Prefecture (a local office of the central government), the Court Archives are now part of the National Archives, Palazzo Chiabrese, the Chiabrese stables and the Cavallerizza complex belong to different state-owned organisations (Cassa Depositi e prestiti) and to the Municipality of Turin, and though they belong to the Municipality the stables are used by the University of Turin as an auditorium, the Valentino Castle belongs to the Politecnico di Torino. Located outside the city are the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale and the La Mandria castle, both of them managed by a special consortium, the Rivoli castle (Contemporary Art Museum) is owned by a specific foundation (established in 1984 and funded by the Piedmont Region, Fondazione CRT, Banca Intesa-San Paolo and others), the Stupinigi hunting palace is part of Fondazione Ordine Mauriziano, the Govone Castle belongs to the city where it rises and is used as city hall, the Pollenzo castle is in private hands, while the Pollenzo Agency, with public and educational functions, has been owned since 1998 by a joint-stock company by the same name, which was responsible for its restoration.

Thus, in a system once firmly in the hands of the Savoy crown, and now mostly publicly owned, but split between different public bodies, only five sites are managed directly by the state through its Regional Directorate of Museums (DRM). If each institution undertakes maintenance and restoration campaigns on the basis of different and parallel programming and fund raising, under the overall control of protection institutions (the Superintendency for the Fine Arts, Archaeology and Landscape), promotion and value enhancement initiatives have shown the need for coordinated efforts, which only through the pooling of resources and common policies can create visibility, attract tourism and become a significant economic factor in the region, on the model of the châteaux of the Loire Valley. To this end, on 19 July 2017, the *Venaria Reale Cultural Enhancement Consortium* was transformed into the *Consortium of Royal Savoy Residences*<sup>44</sup> (member of ARRE) with the task of coordinating enhancement policies and creating a veritable circuit of Savoy residences, led by the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale, by building on the ten years of activity of the previous consortium, also in relation to tourism promotion bodies such as *Visit Piemonte*, an in-house company of the Piedmont Region.

### Conclusions

In this context, albeit amidst considerable difficulties, some things have begun to move and converge, if only in small ways: visits to the Moncalieri castle (although under the DRM) have been organised by the Consortium. In actual fact, the first tangible result was achieved in the area of garden maintenance. So far, only the Royal Palace of Venaria Reale has had a team of gardeners of its own, the other parks have relied on specialised companies that work on contract and have no historical knowledge of the sites. For some time now, the gardeners of Venaria Reale have been exporting their skills by working on the maintenance of gardens of other sites, i.e., the Royal Palace (Royal Museums), the Queen's Villa (DRM), and Stupinigi (Fondazione Ordine Mauriziano). Historic gardens are delicate organisms that cannot receive episodic care and have to be managed over the long term on the basis of a specific sensitivity to the place. A further step forward was taken by the regional government when it entrusted the project for the restoration of the Stupinigi park to those in charge of the Venaria Reale gardens, once again overcoming the fences between the different entities and institutions, in the direction of a veritable system of Savoy royal residences. A further step was to establish a "single ticket" for all the Royal residences of the House of Savoy, regardless of the ownership and management situation.

We can in fact say, agreeing with the director of the Venaria Reale complex, the residence that leads the network of royal sites, that many steps have been taken, especially if we look at the situation up to the 1980s: some residences were in good conditions, but most of it was abandoned, due to a sort of active ostracism towards the tangible signs of a dynasty, the House of Savoy, which had led Italy to war in 1940, had approved the racial laws and had been expelled with the referendum of 1946. A fracture that did not exist in other places (Spain) or had already occurred before (Bavaria, Prussia,

<sup>44</sup> *The Royal Residences of the House of Savoy*, available at: <https://lavenaria.it/en/explore/royal-residences-house-savoy> (accessed 1.12.2022); *Residenze Reali Sabaude*, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/ResidenzeRealiSabaude/> (accessed 1.12.2022).



France...) or did not have the same weight. The progressive awareness of the social and identity value of these assets has unlocked a process of social and ideal re-appropriation, which was followed by political choices, restoration and enhancement interventions. The system of Savoy residences, despite the difficulties, is therefore realigning itself with the other European systems.

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