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## Fascist Urban Planning: Social Tensions and Political Stereotypes in the Eternal City

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**John Cabot University**

Department of Political Science and International Affairs

Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs

Minor in Art History

Fascist Urban Planning: Social Tensions and Political Stereotypes in the  
'Eternal City'

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## Abstract

This thesis has the aim of understand how the fascist urban plan, which reshaped Rome under Mussolini, prevented classes to integrate, and instead intensified a political tension between low-working class people and the upper-middle class. This led to social tensions and contrasts due to the malcontent and resentments of the lower classes living in inhuman conditions. Nowadays, the different neighborhoods in Rome are stereotyped as left wing or right wing oriented, due to the fact that popular quarters are usually from the left, and the quarters for the capitalistic-bourgeoisie society is from right. But here in Rome Fascism urban changes, and the conditions in which people lived, added something more to the general political tension.

The first chapter analyzes the historical background of Rome since it began the new Italian Capital. The advent of fascism and Mussolini's dreams of grandeur that led him to start projects for urban and architectural development in Rome, recalling the capital's glorious past.

The second chapter focuses on the conditions of the peripheries and the *borgate*, populated by the low class, living in terrible conditions.

The third chapter comprehends two cases study on Garbatella and Roma Nord, to analyze the conditions of the working class and the upper class.

## Dedication

To those who have always been with me, through distance and time, and to the unknown future: my parents, Vegamba Seerungen, and Pradit Kumar Narain, and the future me.

*"I hope that the days come easy and the moments pass slow,  
And each road leads you where you want to go,  
And if you're faced with a choice, and you have to choose,  
I hope you choose the one that means the most to you  
[...]"*

*I hope you never look back, but you never forget,  
All the ones who love you, in the place you left,  
I hope you always forgive, and you never regret,  
And you help somebody every chance you get,"*

## Acknowledgments

This thesis would have been impossible without the help and encouragement of some people in my life.

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Thanks to my parents, who have always believed in me and forgave all my mistakes, and sacrificed their being together for me. Thank you for encouraging me and always giving me another chance. You are my most precious treasure.

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Thanks to the Library staff: Livia, Eleonora, Stefano, Enrico and Elisabetta for the support and help. You transformed the working space into home.

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## Introduction

Walking around Rome we realize how different and full of history this city is. Tourists hardly ever explore areas different from the historic center. But living here is different: you are constantly in contact with local people and it is not difficult to perceive their love for their city, a sort of patriotism to be proud of. Exploring the different neighborhoods, one will notice how the areas change in architectural style, urban design, and people. Talking to anyone in Garbatella, for example, it is normal to hear derogatory comments on those living in Parioli, classified as fascist or right wing oriented. It is also common to ask someone about San Lorenzo and hearing that the neighborhood is left wing oriented. When I moved to Rome three years ago, I was fascinated by the different architecture style that changes zone to zone, indicating that Rome is a dynamic city; but then I started realizing how these buildings change in function of a political events' impact on the city or neighborhood, and this impact is clear and visible in how the city develops. But Rome thought me that also the opposite can happen: what if urban changes in a city contribute to influence the political and social life in a city?

Let's put urban design and planning as the *cause* that led to a social consequence and political *effect*: my research aims to demonstrate that the changes of fascist urban planning caused an intensification of polarized political identities in the Capital, that can be felt even nowadays among the different roman neighborhood. Indeed, based on the

function a neighborhood had when created, and the concentration of people in there, the areas tend -and still are- to be stereotyped as a left or right wing oriented quarter. I want to analyze the cause that intensified this tension, and I conducted my research examining the living conditions of people from different social classes and living in different areas of Rome.

In my first chapter I go through an historical overview from the Italian Unification to fascist reforms in Rome. Rome, as the new Capital of Italy, was different from the other Western European Capitals: it was less populated than cities like London or Paris, it did not perceive the new modern tendencies, and its ancient history together with the influence of the Church, seemed to have prevented Rome from evolution. Mussolini wanted to restore the ancient roman grandeur, recalling the glory of the great emperors. To improve the city conditions, inspired by Paris urban plan, with the Master Plan of 1931 the urban plan of Rome was changed, leading to consequences like *sventramenti* and the need to displace the people somewhere in or out of the city. I used history sources to better investigate this part

In the second chapter I focus on the history and development of the periphery of Rome, trying to better depict the conditions of people living there. Due to class separation, only lower classes were displaced in the peripheries. I focus my attention on two case studies, Primavalle and San Basilio, to better understand the differences between the neighborhoods, and how people reacted to the poor conditions they found themselves into. I used urban plans to better show where the people were displaced and how the city changed. I want to prove that the malcontent that grew among the residents

and the difficulties they faced, slowly brought them to mature a riotous left wing attitudes.

With the third chapter I explore the case of Garbatella to better understand the situation of those who were displaced inside the city and how their actions reflected their malcontent. The residents of the neighborhood went through difficult situations dealing with the overcrowding generated by those who lost their houses because of the *sventramenti*, of the resentment for being treated differently from the upper class. It is especially in these neighborhoods near the historical center that political tensions were intensified. On the other side, the other case study analyzes the upper class area, especially Parioli, Pinciano and Trieste. I have to clarify that due to the fact that there is almost no material on these neighborhoods, and very few sources on my topic in general, the case study is not detailed. I wanted to use it to show, on the contrary of those in the periphery or in popular quarters, how the upper class lived, and all those who adhered to fascism, in this area that is typically referred to as right wing oriented.

With this research I want to demonstrate how the changes in urban plan still affect Rome, more in a stereotypical way: it went to social resentments and disorders, to an intensification of political tensions, and nowadays to politically stereotyped neighborhoods. Unfortunately, due to lack of time as I started and completed this project in only three months, the content may result not really well analyzed.

# Chapter 1 – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## **PART 1: Rome from 1860 to 1929**

### *Introduction*

The period between the 1870 when Rome became the capital of Italy and Mussolini's assumption of power in 1922 was one of enormous change for the city's urban plan. Here I will review this period of change, noting especially how people were relocated, the role of the Church in urban planning, the international influences on urban design and the condition of people in the city center and in the periphery.

Italy was not homogeneous and economically divided between an industrializing North, and largely agrarian South; Rome did not modernize as soon as the other European capitals and it did not take part to the first invigorating decade characterizing Italian national unity (Kirk, 2005); therefore, it took time to absorb those new artistic, philosophical, political and social movements that already had a very strong impact on the other Western European cities. Several cultural, artistic and architectural influences from Europe, especially from Paris, Vienna and London, greatly encouraged the rapid evolution and transformation of Rome into the new capital of Italy. (Kostof, 1973, p.12).

These influences considerably helped both the creation of a new urban plan and of typical neighborhoods that changed in terms of architectural style and decoration. Rome was chosen as the new capital for its historical past, great empire and strategic

geographical position; therefore, the city had to look majestic<sup>1</sup>. Its greatness could be seen and perceived through its new monumental buildings, which recalled the glorious ancient past in a new architectural key<sup>2</sup>: this is also referred to the modernist movements<sup>3</sup> which aimed to reconcile the principles underlying architectural design with rapid technological advancement and the evolution of society (Kirk, 2005).

### *Low-key industrialization*

In December 1870, Rome experienced its last flood of the Tiber River, rising 17 meters high and devastating the center of the city. Infrastructure to prevent further flooding became a priority of the new civic government. On January, 1 1871 a special study-commission was appointed in order to find a solution to this issue; in four years it did not produce any results until, among the many projects examined, the Commission decided to implement the strategy proposed by engineer Raffaele Canevari, that had been already successfully adopted by several river cities, such as Paris: building high walls which functioned as embankments, and which could prevent the river from flooding the town. The Tiber walls improved the city both technically and somehow also esthetically if we consider the different perspectives and views that can be enjoyed from the several bridges connecting the two riverbanks, although it has to be considered also the fact that hundreds of houses were demolished to construct the Lungotevere avenues; floating mills

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<sup>1</sup> Although, ancient Rome still served as the absolute model for modern capital cities (such as Washington D.C. and monuments in Paris like the *Arc de Triomphe*), while its contemporary appearance was distant from the imagined reconstruction of the ancient city.

<sup>2</sup> In this period architectural design stuck to the strict academic interpretation of classicism, with a strong interest in trying to combine different regional Italian traditions in order to demonstrate a sort of organic unity in Italy as a nation.

<sup>3</sup> Modernism in architecture will be introduced after Mussolini will take power.

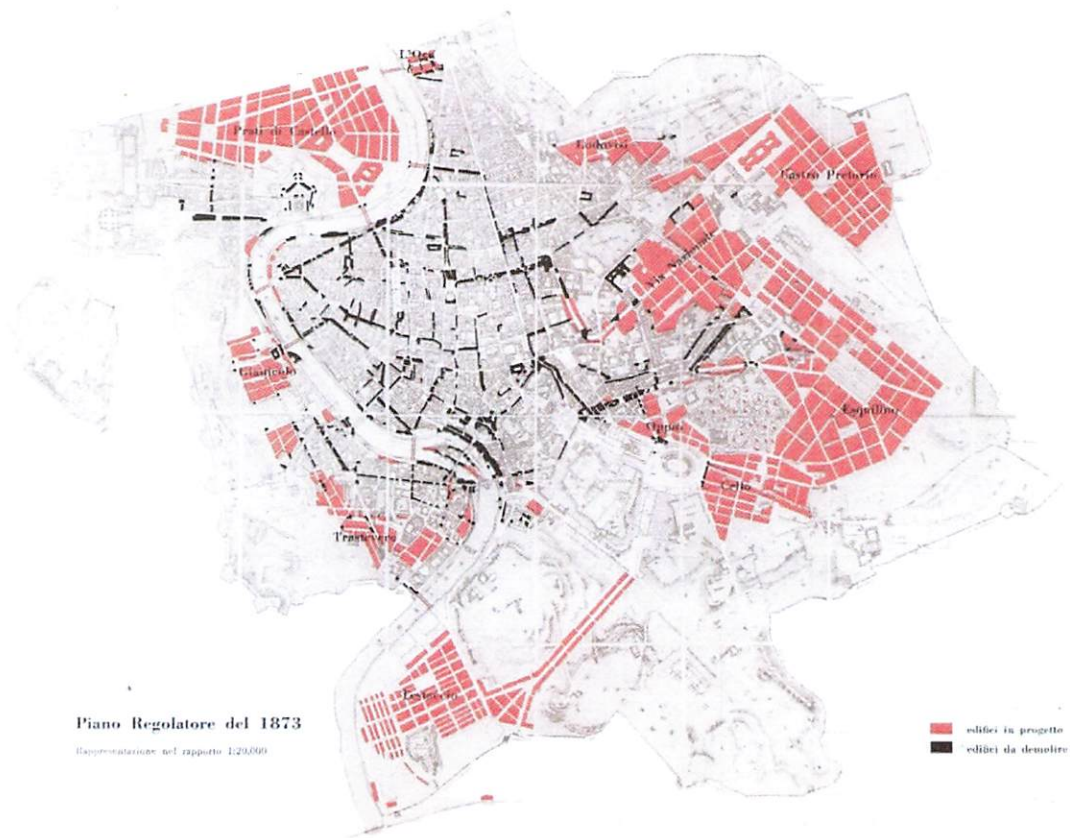
were removed, and fishermen no longer had the same access to the river, which created a considerable economic and sociological change to the city. Moreover, this also decisively contributed to the measures taken to reclaim areas like Testaccio and San Paolo, which became fundamental for the industrial development of the city (Lunadei, 1992).

Testaccio was the only area of Rome reserved for light industry. Papal Rome prior to 1870 had no industry to speak of, except the tobacco manufactory at Trastevere. The railroad system initiated in the 1850s was rudimental and barely reached Frascati.

Testaccio is the last *rione* of Rome, established in 1921, but also the first working-class district of the capital, planned in 1873. In fact, while all other districts have a purely bourgeois vocation, Testaccio is the first working-class neighborhood planned in Rome, the first *Siedlung Roman ante litteram*<sup>4</sup>. Born from the need to accommodate workers from the slaughterhouse and from the Ostiense's industrial center (Duranti & Puccini, 2009). The first Master Plan of Rome, in 1873 (Figure 1), illustrates the plan for the industrial expansion of the city in the area of Ostiense, ideal because of the flat terrain and the presence of various connection facilities – such as the river with the Ripa porta t Ripa Grande and the preexisting Via Ostiense (Lunadei, 1992).

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<sup>4</sup> Latinism: “ahead of its time”.



**Figure 1 Viviani, A., Master Plan 1873**

Antonio Viviani's plan also shows the extension of the railroad to the neighborhood. The quarter thus assumed an exclusively industrial character. As a result the working class who took residence in the houses constructed near the spaces of employment was isolated from the rest of the population. In the early 1900s, low-income housing in Italy productively expressed the social program inherent in European modernism (Kirk, 2005). In the building market the demand for housing for lower classes was met by workers' cooperatives at first. In Rome, according to the earliest city plans Testaccio was designated as an industrial area, hence its first residential blocks lacked of consideration for hygienic standards.

### *Modernization and “Romanità”*

The capital was on its path for modernization and internationalization: progress could be seen already under the popular mayor Ernesto Nathan with the plan developed by Edmondo Sanjust de Teulada and ratified in 1909, extended the city far beyond its ancient walls (Kirk, 2005). Beyond the walls, Sanjust planned a ring road encircling the city, he integrated green areas with Rome’s urban expansion, and designated areas for major public building complexes.

When designing public housing for these new neighborhoods, the appearance of the residences was an important factor, as they would represent the government’s beneficence as they attempted also to provide a link to Rome’s past and perhaps to the traditional homes in which displaced Romans were used to living. As Quintino Sella proclaimed:

*Everything we know, everything we think, everything we feel in terms of patriotism, we owe it to ancient Rome: [...] We are Italian because of Rome's virtue, because if it was not for the sacred name of Rome, for the many misfortunes, for the many hostilities that Rome had, Italy would have been broken, Italy would have been wiped out; it was Rome that kept Italy alive<sup>5</sup>.*

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<sup>5</sup> Gentile, 2007, p.39

The Institute for Public Housings disposed the construction of buildings constructed with low cost materials; those buildings lacked of architectural refined details. The style produced in the working-class neighborhood of Garbatella, for example, transformed the low-cost materials utilized into ornamental design elements, recalling the local traditions. Therefore, the style represents the Roman identity, not considered in an imperial key, or recalling Rome's ancient grandeur, but recalling the ancient practice of roman artisans who inhabited this specific neighborhood<sup>6</sup>.

During the 1920s, Mussolini was moved by the *Italianism*, according to which Italy had to take a leading role in contemporary life and become the new center of modern civilization. For some people this would have been possible only by getting rid of the heritage of the Roman world, the *Romanità*; for others, it was exactly this -interpreted as Rome's heritage and its renovation- the main force that would have allowed the city to evolve, and pushed Italy to take over the leadership of civilization in the twentieth century. In 1921, the so interpreted concept of *Romanità* -which reconnected the new Italy to ancient Rome- became the main symbolic aspect of fascism, and was adopted to define fascist politics, organization and lifestyle. The *Romanità*, so interpreted by Mussolini, is characterized by three elements: *universality through time* -proper essence of the romanità-, the *Romanità of the Catholicism*- since Christianity was a universal religion-, and the *vitality of the race*. The new Fascist Romanità became the model for building the new fascist *Italianità*.

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<sup>6</sup> More details about ICP and the Garbatella neighborhood will be found in chapter 3.

### *Power of the State over the Church*

Rome was entering a new phase, the one that Giuseppe Mazzini would refer to as “the Third Rome” which was different from the “First Rome” of the ancient emperors, and the “Second Rome” of the Popes. Up to 1870, the Eternal City mostly symbolized papal authority and was ruled by it. The new Italian State had to prove its authority over the Church in terms of secular governance and an urban game of chess started between the two institutions. An example of the tension between Church and State can be seen in the urban planning of Prati di Castello, a residential area to the north and west of St. Peter’s. The layout of streets were designed in such a way that none of the new streets had the dome of St. Peter's Basilica as its background. Moreover, the names of the streets in the new district, or *quartiere*, were chosen among the historical figures of Republican and Imperial Rome and among the heroes of the *Risorgimento* to whom the main square was dedicated.

In the old city center, new avenues and new squares had been opened, and new buildings of monumental proportions had been built, with the aim of providing a considerable solemnity to the "Third Rome", such as the Palazzo di Giustizia (or Supreme Court): designed by Guglielmo Calderini, the Palazzo di Giustizia often referred to as the “Palazzaccio” in a very derogatory sense because it is heavy, massive, imposing, over ornate. The construction of the Palazzo di Giustizia belongs to a larger urban renovation of Rome made by the Italian Government under the ruling *Sinistra Party*, which aimed to transform the “Capital of Catholicism” into the “Secular Capital of a united Italy”. For the Sinistra it was important to diminish the importance and the great

role that the Vatican had played: this purpose could be achieved either by removing signs of the former Church control, or by surpassing Church monuments and buildings in scale and prominence. The building became the symbol of the new State, in contrast with the building next to it on the left - Castel Sant'Angelo- symbol of the great papal power. The tension between the papacy and the Italian State, which ended with the Lateran Pacts of 1929, was reflected in Rome's buildings, in their style and position in the city which were not decided by chance: therefore, it is not a coincidence that Castel Sant'Angelo- symbol of papal authority- and the Palazzo di Giustizia - State authority – are placed next to each other along the Tiber River. The primary purpose of the building was to enhance the authority and legitimacy of the government by creating a powerful new state image, one that identified the nascent Italian nation with the imperial and secular traditions of ancient Rome (Williams, 1996).

The rivalry between the state power and the papal authority greatly influenced the development of the city and its style. A site for the Supreme Court, so close to the Vatican, was ideal to counterbalance the spiritual symbolism of St. Peter's Basilica and the Papal power of Castel Sant'Angelo (Williams, 1996). The decades that followed the end of the papal theocracy were characterized by changes and modernizations that changed both the urban structure, and the social and demographic order of the capital, in particular for the significant increase of the population that had almost tripled between 1870 and 1921. Nevertheless, it still resulted less populated and inferior compared to major European capitals: in fact, Rome was a city of services and consumption, not really a productive town, that lacked of preparation toward industrialization, and with persistent characters of a big rural burg (Gentile & Dingee, 2009).

### *Rome and the Vatican: Lateran Pacts*

Rome, capital of the Italian state, is the only city in the world that contains another State within it, among its streets and its neighborhoods, of another independent state: the state of Vatican City, capital of Catholicism (Insolera, 2011, p. 36). No agreements concerning the Vatican's rights could be negotiated, because it refused to recognize the Kingdom of Italy; reconciliation would come only in 1929, with Mussolini, under the Lateran Pact. The reconciliation of Church and State resulted in a slow and difficult process.

With the Lateran Pacts, Mussolini emphasized the regime's diplomatic union with the Church. The symbol and example of this union is *Via della Conciliazione*, or "Street of the Reconciliation", which connects St. Peter's to the city. The urban situation of the district changed forever in 1936: during that year the demolition project of the *spina* – an alignment of buildings in the Borgo, right in front of St. Peter's, located in the two parallel streets of the Borgo, respectively *Borgo Nuovo* and *Borgo Vecchio* – was approved by Mussolini and Pope Pius XI. This was a great event since no one, in the history of the Popes, had ever allowed it, even after several different requests through years. An agreement between the two was possible to reach thanks to the new climate of cooperation between the State and the Church that followed the signing of the Lateran Pacts ("The Reconciliation") in 1929. The *Spina* ceased to exist and Castel Sant' Angelo was finally visible from St. Peter's Basilica. The *Via della Conciliazione* represents the most complete example of the strategies used by the regime to "reshape the urban experience of Fascist Rome" (Kirk, 2006, p. 756).

## **PART 2: The Goals of Fascism and Their Expression in Urban Planning**

### ***Introduction***

Mussolini has left a mark on the Italian soil that will last through centuries. Monuments, buildings, streets and squares of old and new cities reflect the model of a new imperial civilization that claimed to be universal, recalling the ancient Roman civilization. In reality, the Fascists who on October 28, 1922 were going to march on the capital had a strong feeling of disdain for Rome, for the city and its inhabitants. But also Fascists were not so appreciated by the people: in popular neighborhoods such as San Lorenzo, the hostility was very strong (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997).

Fascism had difficulty to take root in the capital; and in the eyes of young Italian fascists who wanted a large and modern Italy; Rome seemed a more a provincial town, lazy, inert, and cowardly (Gentile, 2007, p.11). The decades that followed the end of the papal theocracy were characterized by changes and modernizations that altered both the urban structure, and the social and demographic order of the capital, in particular for the significant increase of the population that had almost tripled between 1870 and 1921.

### ***Rome as Capital City***

Despite the dramatic changes made to the city between the 1870s and 1910s, Rome was still laden with the symbols of the Church and appeared untouched by modernity. The main economic interests coming from the dominant land-owning aristocracy that saw the chance to make enormous profit by taking over control of the city's government,

excluded from the very beginning any possibility of a developed urban plan along the lines of the major European cities, that could anticipate the city's needs and functions.

The first extensive plan for the general rationalization of the city is due to Benito Mussolini and to his 1931 Master Plan. During the commission meeting to draw the new Master Plan of Fascist Rome, it was decided to consider the capital in three categories of environment: (1) *Roma monumentale* (Monumental Rome), divided in *Roma antica* (Ancient Rome) and *Roma cristiana-rinascimentale* (Christian-Renaissance Rome); (2) *Roma moderna* (Modern Rome), from 1870 to the regime; (3) *Roma modernissima* or *Fascista* (Fascist Rome) (Kostof, 1973, p. 21). The monument isolation had to be realized in the first area, a process that had already begun in the mid-1920s. Planning policy under the regime was composed of three main elements: the first provided a clearance scheme for the historic center and the reorganization of its monumental sites. The second element consisted in a special building policy for state employees, matched and distinguished by hierarchical differences: therefore, the upper level class was concentrated in the districts of Prati, Trieste and Parioli; midlevel managers in the districts of Verbano and Janiculum and junior civil servants in Monte Verde Vecchio and Nuovo; while railway employees, tram and bus drivers were concentrated in San Lorenzo, Santa Croce, Porta Maggiore, and Testaccio. The third element of Mussolini's policy was the preservation of the historic center for monuments and government buildings that led to the consequent *sventramenti*, an event that, nowadays, could be seen as an indiscriminate mass deportation in the peripheral part of Rome, and creation of *borgate*; a term used only in the Italian capital and which cannot be translated, but is linked to the word "burg" - a neighborhood that does not have the sufficient organization to be called "quartier";

mostly outskirts of the city in the surrounding countryside where they transferred lower-class residents (Delle Donne, 1992).

Mussolini's regime aimed at an expansionism of Italy, to reshape the Italian lifestyle in terms of way of living, attitudes, habits, and character. Mussolini's image reshaped not only the aspect of the city, but also its politics and social living. An expansion policy was the first goal he wanted to achieve for Rome and Italy: the physical size of the other European capitals was several times that of Rome. The official plan, made by engineer Alessandro Viviani in 1870, had to be modified: Rome had to be expanded taking advantage of the rural areas in the periphery surrounding the city center. Rome also needed to increase the size of the population and to begin an *internationalization* of the capital city, expanding towards the rest of Europe. The issue to consider is that Rome - compared with the post-war chronicles of other European capitals such as London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Budapest- appeared as the most turbulent capital, the most socially instable and with the most troubled public order.

In the postwar years Rome became the headquarters of the national, bourgeois and proletarian underworld. In a city that housed dozens of embassies, that was known for being seat of the universal Catholic church, and being the pilgrimage destination for believers from all over the world, the services had to work perfectly, the lifestyle had to be active and powerful, and public order had not to be disturbed ever. Instead, there was a completely opposite condition. This justifies Mussolini's initial aversion to Rome before fascism.

### *The Isolation of Rome's Monuments*

The lively clubs, cafes, magazines and avant-garde theaters that arose before and especially after the war were not enough to redeem Rome's image of an eternal city asleep in its old glory. Rome was neither intellectual nor moral capital of the country, but it exerted a strong influence on national life. There were not many fascists enthralled by the charm of the monumental ruins of Rome, but they were still ruins to be proud of: the remains of a glorious past that made even more humiliating the confrontation with the current Rome. In fact, the center of the capital, except for few new roads, mainly remained like it was before the reunification of Rome to unified Italy: a cluster of neighborhoods that had untidily accumulated over the centuries over the foundations of ancient Rome.

A network of streets and alleys extended throughout the center of the capital, around small and big squares: narrow, dark, damp, filthy, flanking masses of modest homes. In the streets and squares of the city center old women used to sit and work, the craftsmen had an extension of their shops, street vendors used to expose their goods while the children were running around (Gentile, 2007, p.16). Mussolini shaped the capital of Italy, he dominated fascist regime's symbolic world and through his charismatic power he led the Italian nation; this also explain why very often books refer to him as a "savior": "the myth of Mussolini dominated the fascist regime's symbolic world and shaped its cosmogony. The Duce was the savior of the Italian nation" (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, p. 89).

The Duce dreamed of an empire and during the fascist period the regime re-evoked the Roman past artistically, historically and psychologically. Fascism was seen as the container of a universal mission, the carrier of a tradition that exalted Italy's universal values (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997). The fascist movement stressed the importance and the urge to reach higher ends and to re-actualize the grandeur of the imperial past. Mussolini found a model of action in the glorious past of the capital, which led to fascism's ideals of renewal. Hence, the nostalgia of Rome's glorious past constituted the foundations for

explains why during the 1920s, views of modern Rome alternated with scenes of Roman legionnaires, portraits of Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus, and the scene of the she-wolf nursing Romulus and Remus. Since the so-called *Third Rome* wanted to preserve and exalt the sake of historic imagery (Kostof, 1973), the Fascist regime wanted to take care of issues such as traffic, hygiene, and mere decorum of the capital's urban planning, and aimed at restoring the emperors' greatness and power to value the representational grandeur of the city. On December 31, 1925, during his speech for the mandate of Rome's first *governatore* (appointed mayor), Mussolini set the priorities for the new urban planning and declared:

“Rome must appear marvelous to all the peoples of the world; vast orderly, powerful, as it was in the time of the first empire of Augustus. You will continue to free the trunk of the great oak tree of everything that still obstructs it. You will open up space around the Theatre of Marcellus, the Capitoline, and the Pantheon. Everything that has grown around them during the centuries of decadence must disappear [...] You will also free the majestic temples of Christian Rome from the parasitic and profane constructions. The millennial monuments of our history must loom in the required isolation. Thus the

third Rome will spread over the hills, along the banks of the sacred river, to the beaches of the Tyrrhenian” (Kirk, 2006, p. 763).

The main strategies of Mussolini for his urban planning consisted in an isolation project of significant monuments - those worthy of preservation in his opinion –, and eliminating the ‘insignificant’ buildings from the Middle Ages. Moreover, the vistas through the city had to be structured in a way to accentuate the historical background relating to the fascist political aspirations. This monumental isolation was a way to set free the ancient greatness of Rome from the dormant past, so that this past would revive with Fascism giving new glory to the empire.

### *Foreign policy impact*

In 1932 Benito Mussolini stated: “ I consider myself without false modesty the spiritual father of the Master Plan of Rome”; he considered himself to be the supreme planner of *la grande Roma* (Painter, 2005, p. 26). These clearance projects he started were called *sventramenti*, literally *disemboweling*. This word can be re-conducted to the French *eventrement*<sup>7</sup>, used by Georges-Eugène Haussmann at first, and later in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This process of “urban surgery” originated in Paris under Emperor Napoleon III, who commissioned Baron von Haussmann for a complete renovation of the city: Haussmann’s Paris is characterized by wide and straight tree-lined avenues, the monumental vista, continuous uniform facades along those avenues, and the spatially dissolute *piazzas*. This massive restructuring of the city sought to solve problems of

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<sup>7</sup> French for *disemboweling* or *sventramenti* in Italian.

health and traffic, using physical design as a remedy for administrative, economic and social inconveniences.

The fascist regime was inspired by Haussmann project and following his plan it created a new set of the city. As a consequence, the historic center faced a change in time of traffic; as Mussolini would say, monuments were not “necessarily isolated”, and because of this project already existent streets were widened and straightened. In addition, entire blocks of buildings had to be demolished, and consequently the residents from those demolished areas needed to be relocated somewhere in the city. A sprawl plan was elaborated to allow a re-organization of these people: on this purpose, the plan provided to insert new neighborhoods right at the borderline of the pre-existing city, along the consular highways (Kostof, 1973).

Under the fascist regime, the city needed to reflect the progress of the nation. In 1932, celebrating the tenth anniversary of fascism being in power, the regime wanted to show how Fascist finished works, or those in progress, ‘consecrated’ the progress of the nation. The regime wanted to exalt the *Romanità* of the city "reconstructed" by Julius Caesar and now by another "Roman duce" (Nicoloso, 2008). Rationalization, modernism, speed, will power, machines, industries development, coherence, order, autarchy, revival of Classicism: these were all the characteristics of the regime, what Mussolini wanted to reach and the main elements purposed by Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto (Etlin, 1991). Mussolini was able to reshape Italy and Italians introducing these key points: art, architecture and the rationalist movement that was quickly spreading better reflect these new important values.

## *The Social Consequences of Fascist Urban Planning*

One of the first consequences of Fascist urban planning was the internal displacement of people in Rome after the *sventramenti* in the city's historic center. Traditionally, different social classes had previously collaborated and lived side-by-side: the upper class relied on the middle class jobs, and they also relied on low class services; everyone needed lawyers, or doctors, and they – in turn- also needed smiths, ironworkers, bakers etc. Being mixed in one area facilitated daily living. With the *sventramenti* followed by the displacement, people were relocated according to their class, and as a consequence, the low classes were moved to the most isolated areas, the so-called *borgate*: peripheral rural satellite areas around Rome, far from the city center (Painter 2005); the working-class was placed in areas such as Testaccio, San Paolo (as poles of industrialization) and Garbatella, creating an overcrowding effect, especially in the last area.

Mussolini believed in the potential of traditional agriculture, and by sending the lower classes in the *borgate*, he intended to intensify the agricultural production in the Roman *campagna* (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997). The result was not as expected. The *borgate* became more like slums, with very poor conditions, no commodities and functional systems such as electricity, water, markets, and pharmacies. Moreover, transportation barely reached these areas: as a result, considering that the city center was very difficult to reach, the people displaced there turned to live in isolation, as if they were not from Rome at all. A general malcontent and discomfort feeling was growing among the people. Overcrowded houses constituted a problem that plagued Rome since its

proclamation as capital of Italy (Caracciolo, 1969). When allocating housing to displaced families, uncomfortable situations like cohabitation wanted to be avoid, as these conditions were considered inappropriate for a matter of hygiene and of "public morality" (Insolera, 2011, p.143).

Morality matters, however, clashed with both the actual availability of accommodation - inadequate to meet with the growing housing needs - and with the rigidity of the criteria established to obtain a housing allocation. The application of these requirements made it impossible for some needy families to access housing. For those who could not qualify for housing aid, they had the option to choose solutions as temporary shelters and suburban hotels designed as temporary solutions but that would persist longer into the cityscape, even after the war. The geographical locations matched Mussolini's planning policy and division: "Economic Housings" (*case economiche*) – whose size varied between 4 and 7 rooms- were located, for example, in Montesacro, or Casilina; "Public Housing" (*case popolari*), were between 2 and 5 rooms, in areas such as Ostiense and Testaccio, Garbatella, Portuense, Montesacro, San Saba. The "Public Houses" (*Case Popolari*) were very different – both for quality and provision of services- from the so-called "official borgate" as San Basilio, Gordiani or Primavalle (Grifone & Rendina, 1991).

### ***Final Considerations***

The inhabitants of the disemboweled areas were transported into the *borgate* and there they found themselves in front of the "*case rapidissime*" ("fast-homes"), built with

tools provided by the Institute for Public Housing (ICP), or in front of houses with non-resistant masonry. The living and working conditions, the social and economic status of those people did not find chances to develop and improve as planned by the Duce. Workers were transported out of their city and their source of income; they inevitably suffered from a lack of costumers and job resources, which were easily re-allocable in the city center (Insolera, 2011, p.144).

The results were not as expected: as a consequence of the in-city displacement, neighborhoods like Garbatella and San Lorenzo ended up being overcrowded and lacking effective hygienic systems; and the life in the borgate was harder than in the old neighborhoods in the center: those who had kept their job, for example, as laundress, tram driver, garbage man or janitor, had to cover almost ten miles to get to work (Giacomini & Hinrichsen, 1981). The social conditions in which the borgate were born were very poor and worsened the living conditions of the citizens who moved there. In addition to the reasons for public health and improved circulation, alongside the political will to establish the superiority of the secular state, there is no doubt that the works (with all the distortions and consequences that came after) were originated from the need of Rome to become a modern European capital, the center of a state willing to have an impact on the international scene.

## Chapter 2 - THE BORGATE

*"Rome has always been a city of great contradictions -baroque surprise and downright decadence, green and concrete, antiquity and modernity, strictly controlled zones and areas where anything goes".*

(Giacomini & Hinrichsen, 1981, p. 79)

### *The Creation of the Borgate*

The building system of Rome suffered from external pressures regarding the displacement of the low-class citizens from the historic center, followed by an endogenous pressure due to the arrival of rural Italians from the countryside. During the fascist period, the government tried to find a solution to the overcrowding in the historical center by creating new buildings on the fringes of Rome.

The government, pushed by a growing pressure, proposed a solution: creating the *borgate* and the *case rapidissime* (fast houses). Between 1924 and 1937 the "Governatorato" of the capital planned and launched the project of the "Borgate ufficiali" (official borgate) in Rome. All the people displaced from the central areas of Rome, following the sventramenti of the historical center and the demolition of their housing,

were moved in these peripheral areas: Primavalle, Val Melaina, Tufello, San Basilio, Pietralata, Tiburtino III, Prenestina, Quarticciolo, Gordiani, Tor Marancia, Trullo, Acilia. The basic ideas for low-income housing followed two fundamental principles: the first was to avoid settlements generally considered lower-class within the walls of Rome; and the second was to ensure that the lower classes would not get too close to each other in order to prevent the birth of political groups and aggregation based on belonging to certain classes. It can be said that the establishment of the borgate caused an acceleration of the tendency to class segregation.

The Master Plan of 1931 marked the limits of urban growth; all the 12 fascist borgate ignored the Master Plan, leading private developers to do the same. In planning the borgate, the government intended to place them far away from the historical center, isolating them and essentially creating ghettos, which would be easy to monitor. Architects and designers, then, resolved the technical aspects of the neighborhoods' designs, without ever considering the kind of living conditions they would entail. Consequently, the urban fabric that connected the residences of Roman citizens to labor and worship was destroyed by the *borgate*. In fact, the small traders or artisans located in the villages now found themselves kilometers away from transportation to reach the city center. Even women who worked as servants for upper-class families found themselves in a difficult situation when it came to travel from their places to work because the buses were distant and hard to reach, not punctual and unreliable (Trabalzi, 1989, p.40).

The trip to go to work became long and tiring, leading to early layoffs and tensions that often turned into violence. These manifestations of violence increased the belief that these areas had to be monitored: therefore it is not surprising that these

peripheral areas, such as Primavalle for example, were placed near military and police barracks. These were the predominant features that characterized the *borgate*, subsequently denounced by intellectuals like Pier Paolo Pasolini, who lost his life in New Ostia, a similar borgata.

### ***Environmental and Social Problems***

The periurban areas were plagued by the problem of the borgate, a serious environmental problem concerning these illegal settlements "spreading like weeds in a garden, especially during the past 30 years" (Giacomini & Hinrichsen, 1981, p. 80). Most of these areas could even qualify as slums as they suffered from a serious lack of services: no drains, no drinking water, electricity or gas; the roads were unpaved and they inevitably turned into quagmires of mud during wintertime. The hygienic system was debatable too: ditches sometimes became open latrines filled with human excrements, contributing to concentrate a higher incidence of typhus and infectious hepatitis in this area rather than the rest of Rome (Fusco, 2013, p. 48). The serious fact was that officially the reality of the villages was ignored by the administration. However, not all the borgate were in such conditions; there were also many clusters of middle class houses and wealthy estates (Ferrarotti, 1970).

In a certain way the fascist government planted the seed for illegal settlements to emerge more: indeed, after WWII more people were leaving central Rome and moving to the periphery; as a consequence, they started building their own houses around these first buildings. Nowadays, "an estimated 700.000 people now live in illegal housing settlements. The houses were built without paper authorization on former agricultural

land (or forest) and lie outside Rome's jurisdiction" (Giacomini & Hinrichsen, 1981, p. 81); during the 1950s, middle class and wealthy residents were provided with working services: they had their own electricity generators, water wells and some of them even bulldozed their own roads. The borgate would soon be provided with water, city electricity, sanitation, city roads and transportations to the city center.

The first step, then, consisted in putting the borgate under Rome's administration. The periphery and the borgate were established on a completely different reality from that of the center, but that reality appeared socially homogeneous. This part was considered the '*cintura rossa*' (red belt) of Rome, which was mainly composed of laborers, construction workers and immigrants who lived in the fascist '*casette minime*' (literally: minimum small houses), but who voted the left party. The '*cintura rossa*' had a history, a struggle, an antagonistic political role: it was not the society that can be fairly defined as "the rotten zone of the capitalist-bourgeois society" (Fusco, 2013, p. 10).

### ***Expansion and Urban Renewal***

According to the circuit partition of the district municipality of Rome, since 1924 the city is divided into four large concentric zones: the *central zone*; the *surrounding area of the neighborhoods* outside the walls, originated from new settlements created after 1870; the area of the *suburbs*; the area of the *Agro Romano* (Ferrarotti, 1970).

The urban expansion of Rome found its main actor in the phenomenon of immigration. The infrastructure and building development in Rome in time has always been a consequence of migration, similarly to other cities that from villages turned into modern industrial cities. But unlike big cities such as London and Paris, which have

benefited from their development, Rome has grown in population and lived longer than any other Italian city, sharing the drawbacks of other major European cities but not the benefits they gained. During post-war, all those living in the shacks were treated as if they were unauthorized and did not even have the right to receive the citizenship. Men and women invisible to the government and to the society of the center of the capital inhabit these areas. Unfortunately, their living conditions are not only influenced by the reality in which they find themselves, but also by the prejudice of the others. Generally, the others say that these "are all thieves and prostitutes; they have money; they don't care about the house, they are so used to the dirt that they are fine where they are, and they will always go on like this" (Ferrarotti, 1970, p. 41).

As mentioned above, the borgate and shacks, never received an official recognition by the Capitoline administrations, and consequently they never made a census of the inhabitants of the suburbs, which really certified the social expanse of the borgate. Despite the lack of the official statistics, studies testify the compelling problems of the borgate, such as the spontaneous development and illegal settlements in peripheral areas, lack of cultural services, of social structures, of educational facilities, of an efficient network of street and a lack of drinkable water.

The recovery plan of the periphery in order to finally make the inhabitants official members of the urban and social fabric of the capital ideally represents the reunification of the official city with the actual city. The leftwing, therefore, represents the institutional vehicle in which decades of conflict of marginal Roman populations merged, without which probably we would have written another story (Fusco, 2013, p. 56).

## *The Struggle for Housing*

After the Second World War, the PCI organized the movement of Consulte Popolari per la Casa (Popular Associations for Consultation on Housing) to finally obtain basic and necessary services such as electricity, sewage, transport and schools. Their main objective was the recovery of the *borgate* and the integration of the neglected peripheral neighborhoods (Mudu, 2014, p. 71).

The impact of the fascist *Law No. 1902/1939* constituted a burden on the already devastated situation of the suburbs: it was a law against urbanism, trying to stop the flow of migrants to the capital. This way the law blocked the possibility for people to aspire to a higher income and better living conditions, especially for farmers living in the suburbs, and for those living in the city but who were unable to obtain residency. The worse thing is that this fascist law was abrogated only in 1962 after hard struggles. The abolition of this notorious law against urbanization, for which an unemployed worker could not reside in a city other than his place of origin, is one of the most important achievements of the popular movements in Rome. No political force from the right or left wing ever proposed initiatives regarding this issue, and the pressure for the abolition of this law came, instead, from small movements belonging to the popular associations. The fight for the right to residence victoriously ended on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961: the decree of the end of the law against urbanization, sanctioned in the chamber of deputies, reinforced confidence in the popular movements and increased the influence in the decisions of the left democratic alliance; they were aware of their rights and they also gave to immigrant workers more awareness of their rights. From that moment the movement of the popular associations

began to believe in the real possibility of being able to change the social and political life of the city (Fusco, 2013, p. 57).

## **CASE STUDY 1**

In order to show the living conditions of people displaced in the *borgate* after the *sventramenti*, I will examine two historical borgate from their birth, original plans, how they were supposed to develop and how they actually did; how they are nowadays, people's living conditions in the past and how those have changed in the present.

### ***Primavalle: an Introduction***

Almost all *borgate* are similar in a certain sense, but the case of Primavalle is particular in many aspects. As well as the other *borgate*, this was located far from the center of Rome -precisely 9 km from the historical center- but unlike other *borgate* this one was not included in the Master Plan of 1931 and as a result for 25 years it was treated as if it did not exist, ignoring people's need of services such as schools and public transportation. The area chosen to place this borgata was an 37 hectares upland in the northwest part of the city: a rural area where, in 1930, they built few shacks and a dormitory, right in the middle of open fields (Figure 2). The first inhabitants of Primavalle came from two areas in the historic center: the Borgo adjacent to St. Peter's, a medieval neighborhood almost entirely demolished to allow the creation of via della Conciliazione between Castel Sant'Angelo and St. Peter's Square; and from the working class neighborhood of San Lorenzo, near the Basilica di S. Lorenzo fuori le mura.

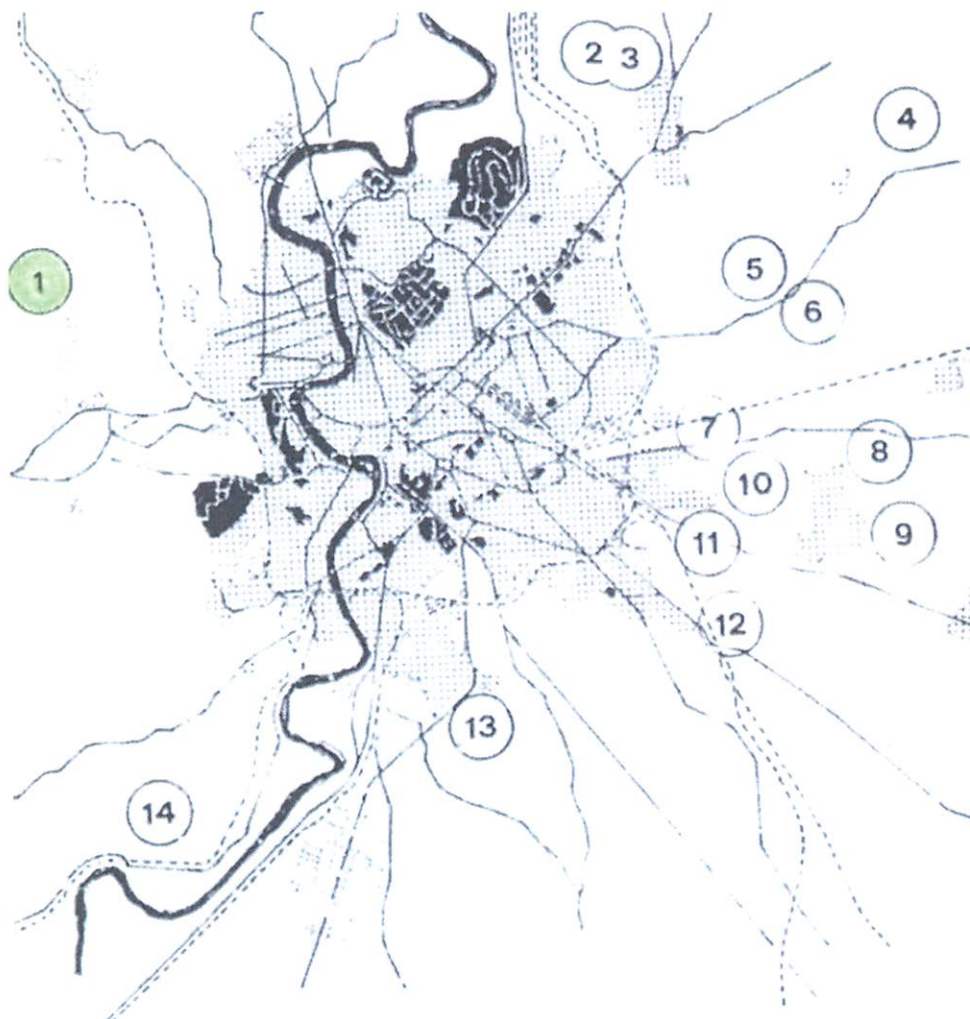


Figure 2 Localization of official *borgate* in Rome between 1928 and 1940.

To be noted is the distance of the *borgate* from the historical city. (1. Primavalle; 2. Tufello; 3. Val Melaina; 4. San Basilio; 5. Pietralata; 6. Tiburtino III; 7. Prenestina; 8. Centocelle; 9. Alessandrina; 10. Giordiani; 11. Tor Pignattara; 12. Quadraro; 13. Tor Marancio; 14. Trullo).

Source: Sica (1984).

The 1937 project of the architect Giorgio Guidi provided for the creation of an urban center that would include housing for 7000-8000 inhabitants. Some of the apartments (single apartments, two-story blocks) were arranged along a central SE / NW axis, and others were parallel to this axis. The plan provided strategic exposure of the buildings to the natural light so that in addition to improvement of the acoustics, they would partly solve the problem of the absence of a heating system in the buildings (Trabalzi, 1989). Objectively, Guidi's plan was smart, but it went through many changes and in the end only six blocks that followed his project were built; the rest seems more an improvised work, built according to the needs of the moment. For years the primary school and the church of Primavalle were the only social structures in the *borgata*; to improve this situation in the area, Guidi's plan comprehended the integration of a new church, the *Casa del Fascio* (House of Fascism), a police station, a post office, a theater, an athletic field and new schools. Some of these buildings were built later, or never; as similarly happened with the roads that Guidi planned, but that do not really exist, or they do not respect the original plan. The apartments in Primavalle remained small and included one or two rooms plus a kitchen and a bathroom; the low-income housings search for an *existenz-minimum* concept, based not on the amount of space needed to residents, but on the number of rooms needed to make an apartment. In summary, Guidi embraced the Modern Movement search for an *existenz-minimum*<sup>8</sup> for low-income

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<sup>8</sup> The *existenz minimum* is a theory formulated by masters of rationalism, through a series of biophysiological norms, which were functional and organizational towards the living space. The house is

housing, along with other objectives such as green space and adequate isolation, but without falling into the visual monotony that tended to afflict low-income housing projects inspired by the Modern Movement (Trabalzi, 1989).

Lower class families were those who populated the *borgate*: these families tended, especially in the past, to be quite large, and this led the residents of the *borgate* to deal with a particularly difficult and uncomfortable situation as the houses in these areas were extremely small and inadequate to such big family units. Dissatisfaction, diseases, and resentment were the feelings that inevitably grew among the people living in the peripheries.

### *Primavalle from the War to Nowadays*

Given this situation, one may wonder: "how can architects design housing that responds to the needs of the inhabitants where those future occupants are often unknown when the design decisions are being made?" (Trabalzi, 2010, p. 131) Guidi's proposed plan was already questionable, but this plan was not even fully implemented, allowing for improvisation on the part of developers and little regard for laws on the books regarding development. This sense of abandon and lawlessness served only to increase urban and social discomfort, worsening the living conditions that certainly were barely adequate beginning. Despite its initial planning, Primavalle did not include the promised social services, not even the necessary public transportation networks, as these were realized

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conceived as the artificial space built by men for men, within which they can satisfy the biological and social needs of their own existence (Zanin, 2012).

only after the end of World War II; but it is not surprising that lack of social services together with a deteriorating housing conditions would be the principal structural issues facing the residents right after the end of the war (Trabalzi, 2010, p. 138). It was a result of the post-war development that characterized all the *borgate* with an institutional void that both inspired and legitimized the actions of the residents and led them to improve and ameliorate the neighborhood in the ways that better suited them. (Trabalzi, 2010).

### *Considerations*

Considering the social aspect, however, very little changed for the citizens after the fall of Fascism. In the 1960s taller buildings were built, rapidly filling the natural areas of the *borgate*, now degraded areas (Trabalzi, 1989, p.43). But it was from this period that basic services were introduced: two schools, a post office, and a clinic were built. Unfortunately, real estate speculation and illegal building filled the area with corrupted owners and indifferent officers, and Primavalle began to obtain the reputation and image that we have today of it, that of a shabby cluster of concrete structures housing 200,000 residents but with few services for them (Trabalzi, 1989). Having fully ignored not only Guidi's initial plan, but above all the urban laws and construction norms, now we find ourselves dealing with a reality where all the residents have a car, but not a parking spot. The image of Primavalle is that of a dangerous refuge for criminals and political radicalism, which emerged from the 1970s when drug trafficking started being frequent (Trabalzi, 1989, p. 45).

Nowadays, the stereotype is alive in people's heads. Their fears and prejudices regarding this area did not change. Is this a hopeless area of Rome? Projects in the world

show that it is possible to conjugate institutions, economy, quality of life and residents' freedom to change their living spaces according to their need and sense of aesthetics (Trabalzi, 2010, p. 142). What is needed to redevelop this historical neighborhood is probably a practice that better connects policy to architecture.

## CASE STUDY 2

### *San Basilio: An Introduction*

San Basilio is located in the northeast of Rome. It is considered a unique case of public building because of its conformation and morphology of its constructions, characterized by a linear arrangement of different types of buildings. San Basilio was erected as a historical *borgata* between 1928 and 1930 to accommodate people displaced from the city center during the Fascist era remembered as the most intense period of the *sventramenti*.

San Basilio was created as an official *borgata* by the fascist regime; it was demolished and rebuilt after the end of World War II, witnessing all distortions of social housing policies, also becoming one of the areas where the political and social conflicts, post WWII, have had the most tragic consequences (Rendina & Griffin, 1991). This is, in fact, a former *borgata* and working-class neighborhood, classified this way not because of its social or urban peculiarities, but for its own history characterized by conflict, poverty, hardship and marginalization; a story that is too often forgotten, and that continues to be so, as it is lost between the complexes and journeys of a still fragmented and impoverished civil society (Fusco, 2013, p. 110).

The *borgata* of San Basilio was born due to a public sanction at the end of the 1920s, during the period of the great disemboweling, when most of the working class residents in the *rioni* (districts) of the center were forcedly expelled from the areas of settlement and deported to the Agro. The *borgata* was composed of small houses of one or two floors, made of "carpilite", a material made from a mix of wood chips, sawdust and lime; some of these houses were arranged in such a way to form the word "DUCE" (Duce) (Fusco, 2013). These houses were real shacks, with no water and sanitary systems. Particularly, the *borgata* of San Basilio was defined semi rural because the regime had provided each house with a small vegetable garden so that families could cultivate and meet part of their food needs by themselves. The houses were designed to have a functional duration of 10 years, but they remained there for more than 20 years. The only paved road was the one where the bus circulated; the others were all unpaved (Rendini &Paradisi, 2004). In 1939 the *borgata* was officially inaugurated but the living conditions of the inhabitants were difficult: people came together to fight against typhus and tuberculosis every day, enclosed in an isolated and marginal reality.

*"It was 1943, and there was hunger, the ugly kind. We had chickens, but often in the morning we would wake up and the hens were gone. They'd steal them. It was those guys from the neighborhood, Rome people. There was no light, roads, nothing, but we had a lot of water. We didn't have shoes. San Basilio became flooded when it rained, there was water everywhere, to us it seemed like going to the beach [...] Then, they started knocking down the little*

*houses, made of straw and wood, to make houses out of stone. In the meantime I got bigger and San Basilio was always normal, there were few families, it was okay. Before I was in the little houses with my other brothers, then they gave us houses and we went to these new buildings, we began to be better off. There was a bathroom, there was gas [...] my mother and I went to church, and at that time there was a priest who helped young people find jobs. He told me to go to the employment office where they found me a job at the "Viscosa"; then it closed after two years, they left to go away I don't know where, and we were all fired" (Interview to L.C., resident in San Basilio) (author's own translation)<sup>9</sup>*

Beyond the fascist rhetoric there was the reality of the living conditions of an unsuitable location, built without any regard for the everyday life of future residents. So, the displaced families -who already got used to city life-, suddenly found themselves in the countryside, surrounded by a rustic environment not reconcilable with their habits; the vegetable gardens, for example, ended up being neglected and soon filled with piles of garbage (Grifone and Rendina, 1991, p.113).

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<sup>9</sup> "Era il '43, la fame era bbrutta, c'avevamo le galline, ma la mattina spesso ce svejavamo e le galline non c'erano più. Se le rubbavano. Erano quelli del quartiere, gente de Roma. Non c'era la luce, le strade, niente, però c'avevamo tanta acqua. Le scarpe non ce l'avevamo. Quando pioveva San Basilio se allagava, c'era acqua dappertutto, a noi ce sembrava de annà ar mare [...] Poi hanno cominciato a buttà giù le casette, fatte de paja e legno, pè fa le case de pietra. Nel frattempo me so fatta grande e San Basilio era sempre normale, c'erano poche famije, se stava benino. Prima stavo dentro le casette con gli altri miei fratelli, poi c'hanno dato case e siamo andati a sti palazzi novi, cominciavamo a sta bene. C'era il bagno, c'era il gas [...] Io e mia madre annavamo in chiesa, e allora c'era un prete che aiutava i giovani a trovà lavoro. Me disse di andare all'ufficio de collocamento dove me trovarono un posto alla "Viscosa"; poi dopo du' anni a chiuso, so andati fori non so dove, e noi tutti licenziati." (Interview with L.C., resident in San Basilio)

### *Urban Development and Demographic Growth*

At the end of WWII the geography of the capital showed signs of distorted urban policies from the Fascist period. The houses of the *borgata* at the end of the war had passed the 10 years of habitability provided for; therefore, they became so unlivable that in the early 1950's the demolition and rehabilitation of the *borgata* finally took place, beginning with the construction of a new group of houses following the project of the architect Mario Fiorentino which involved the construction of a neighborhood that could accommodate 1,000 inhabitants, in terraced houses made of stonework (Fusco, 2013, p. 113). The project testified a sort of continuity between the urban idea of the fascist *borgata* and new redevelopment projects that linked the urban and the rural. In 1954 the fascist houses were demolished to make room for new and more modern buildings. San Basilio, today, looks like a neighborhood composed almost entirely of public housing, and characterized by a large population growth which stabilized only in 1980, when its inhabitants were around 21,500.

In 1948, workers in San Basilio became even more conscious of their condition of isolation, living in a *borgata* where even transportation did not pass through. So they built the first infrastructure known as the *Via del Casale di San Basilio*, thanks to which for the first time a bus was able to cross the streets of the *borgata*. The bus was the 109, which –even if always full- has taken a huge symbolic value in the collective memory of the inhabitants: it symbolized the residents' integration in the capital and the result of their battles and claims (Rendina and Havens, 2004). Between the 1970s and 1980s, then, San Basilio was not considered a *borgata* but a proper 'neighborhood': the change is

visible in terms of socialization among people, and urban development (Fusco, 2013, p. 125). A need for sociability started to arise, people started feeling a collective conscience maybe dictated by urban changes.

However, the local elders claim that the new generations are colder, less friendly and that they communicate less with the people of the district. The decline of social forms leads to a radical transformation of social structures. The air of the city center begins to enter the peripheries and takes away the atmosphere of community to allow the city to violently burst into the schemes of the suburbs. But San Basilio continues to be a battleground and a place experiencing massive drug trade, creating a problem that seems to be a normal aspect of the neighborhood. It was during the 1980s, in fact, that it started assuming the stereotype -similar to other *borgate*- of being a dangerous place and with a bad reputation, a deposit of any kind of social distress (Fusco, 2013, p. 129). The situation created is paradoxical, because at the time when the socio-economic conditions began to improve, right when the *borgata* began to assume a semi-integrated structure to the city, its image became more and more negative.

### *Political Activism*

The scene of political struggle in San Basilio began to gain shape after World War II. When the I.A.C.P. (Autonomous Institute for Public Housing) proposes to the families of the *borgata* compensation for houses and adjacent lands with a compensation at 60.000 Lire per family, the majority of the population rejected and stood opposite with demonstrations and demands for new housings. Their refusal had a symbolic value:

removing the marks left by the fascist policies represented a way for them to begin a new chapter of their history (Fusco, 2013, p. 122).

In San Basilio, political parties played an important role, as they were the actors playing and promoting instances from the *borgata* during its process of social, cultural and political integration. People of the place witnessed, indeed, that the political experiences of the neighborhood, both the left and the Christian Democrats, saved many children, as political activism gave young people a new way of expression. The only real active political entity left in San Basilio is the circle of PD (Democratic Party), in which the elderly continue to meet to talk about the "glorious past".

From the evidence presented, it appears that the entity of the 'political party' has lost its ability to be an interpreter of the district and to mediate. From the end of the Second World War, the district has been the site of expression of different political factions. San Basilio was a "red zone" (*zona rossa*), but this did not prevent the local parish and the DC (Christian Democrats) from being active in the neighborhood. With the disappearance of the two historical parties and the gradual dwindling of social and political tensions, there was a radical change in the size and form of political participation (Fusco, 2013, pp. 153-154). However, not all the political activities disappeared: indeed, in recent years they have taken on new forms and new vigor (Fusco, 2013, p. 160).

### ***Considerations***

Although there the neighborhood has developed a lot in the recent decades, it still faces problems related to employment, the lack of commercial and cultural services, the absence of youth centers, urban decay, the lack of educational facilities and institutions,

and finally the problem that frightens most inhabitants: drug dealing (Carpaneto et al., 1997). All these problems generate a consequent and general collective fear.

The neighborhood is very neglected in landscaping: the facades of buildings, for example, are neglected; the maintenance - for lack of money and Italian bureaucratic rigidity - has never been planned or carried out. Ironically, San Basilio is the only area of Rome with almost no problems of traffic and parking, which are two serious daily problems in the Italian capital with which people always deal. For these reasons San Basilio turns out to be a missed opportunity for the unique residential potential it owns, but both the social policies of the Italian government, and the administration, led to severe urban and social blight.

## Chapter 3 – CASES STUDY

### *Introduction*

Since the previous chapter analyzed the situations of people displaced into the periphery of Rome and the conditions of those neighborhoods, in this chapter I explore the conditions of citizens displaced within the urban center and the development of their neighborhoods. More precisely, I use two study cases to compare a neighborhood generally considered<sup>10</sup> left wing, Garbatella, and the neighborhoods in Northern Rome generally considered right wing. Which specific classes were displaced in those areas? How did their living conditions differ?

### **Case Study 1: In-City Displacement: La Garbatella**

#### *The Origins*

The neighborhood of Garbatella was realized by the *Istituto per le Case Popolari* (ICP), a national building society founded in 1903. It was located in the industrial district of Ostiense and dedicated to public low-cost housing. The neighborhood was primarily

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designed to house railway workers (De Michelis, 2009). Garbatella is distinguished from other districts created by the ICP in Rome for its location and its experimental design as a Garden City. During the first period between 1920 and 1923, Garbatella developed along the model of the Garden City elaborated by the English urban planner Ebenezer Howard. But with the fascist reforms the neighborhood style moved from the original design -not becoming like Howard's utopian Garden City- to a structure that helped to develop a strong sense of community among citizens, and to promote a Roman identity.

Sir Ebenezer Howard, English reformer and urban planner, faced the problem of overcrowding in cities, of poor sanitation, crime and the depopulation of the countryside resulted from the Industrial Revolution. He found a solution to these difficulties with what he called the 'Garden-City', an urban agglomeration of definite dimensions able to distribute the population in the country in an organized and balanced way, allowing a more efficient use of the territory. The Garden City is an idea that comes from an idealization of contact with nature: it had to be realized with a central park around which the low-density residential areas would develop, served by wide and clean boulevards and a railway track to enclose the entire city. Howard did not consider the historical or formal aspect of the new industrial city, but he rather focused on purely social and economic factors; moreover, the presence of the sun and fresh air would help in curbing disease, while housing in a natural environment would have a calming effect on people and on social tensions, thereby improving relations between citizens (Legates and Stout, 1996 p.328).

Garbatella was founded in 1920 as a popular neighborhood to house the workers of the planned "industrial area" of Ostiense, and is characterized by *villini* (small houses)

and *palazzine* (apartment blocks) divided into lots and structured, at least in the historical center, on three floors at most, with great care for detail and large green interior spaces (squares, courtyards and gardens) created as meeting points for the people. The early buildings are surrounded by lands used as a vegetable garden, Subsequently this characteristic was lost in favor of condominium buildings, up to those buildings that most greatly represent the neighborhood: the four "Alberghi" (Hotels) in Piazza Michele Carbonara, which proved to be important – even essential- structures when it came to the issue of in-city displaced people from the center.

### *Garden City Model*

During the years following WWI, Italy was not experiencing a great time, especially considering its economic and social situation. The development of industry in Rome urged policy makers to consider a remodeling of the city according to the new ideals of progress and modernization, looking for new solutions to urban problems. An experimental solution to these issues was the model of the Garden City, and during the 1920s, three garden suburbs were planned: Garbatella, Montesacro and Nuova Ostia (De Michelis, 2009, p. 509). Workers particularly felt the need for new houses. WWI had worsened the problems of hygiene, overcrowding and the lack of basic services such as water and heating; to solve these problems in 1903 the Institute for Public Housing (ICP) was established. The idea they launched before fascism was that "a beautiful house does not mean an expensive house" (De Michelis, 2009, p. 510), and consequently the buildings built on behalf of the ICP were at low cost but only in terms of the material used as all the rest, architecturally speaking, was detailed and well-finished, so much that

it remembered the 'Baroque' style: in fact, we usually refer to the style of Garbatella with the term "Barocchetto" (De Michelis, 2009).

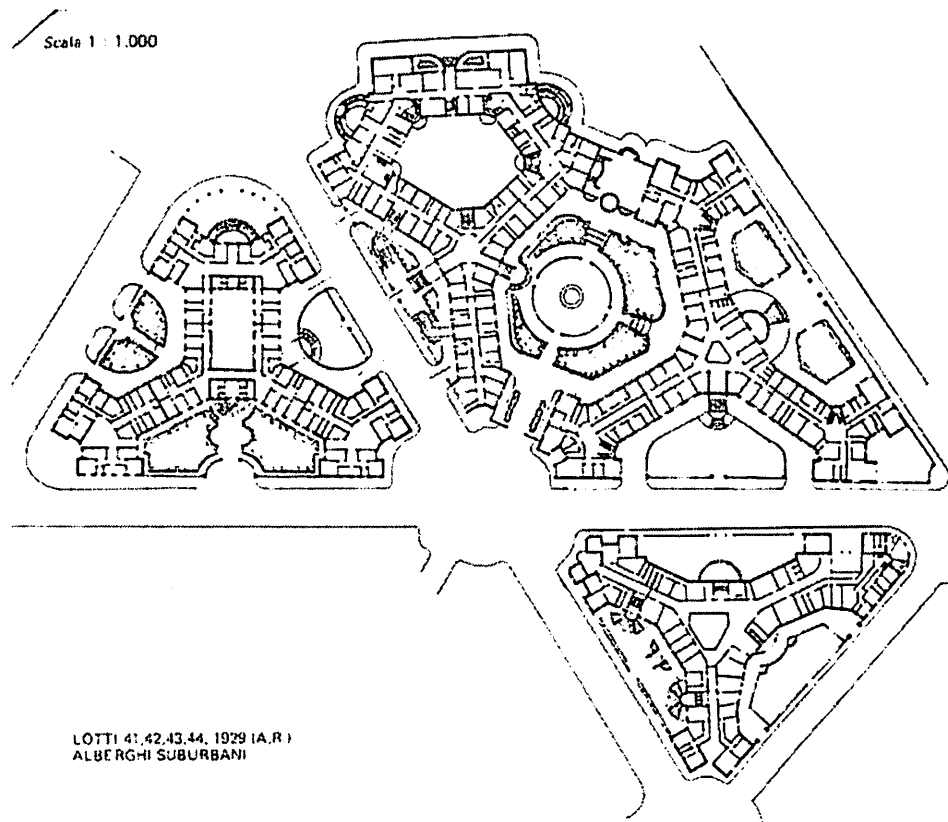
The ICP maintained that housing had a civic function aimed to promote human values and social responsibilities; therefore, its aim was not only to improve the living conditions of the working class, but also to promote the integration of classes (Salvadori, 2007). Thus, the neighborhood developed a strong sense of community, in part also thanks to the new model of housing that comprehended common areas such as terraces or patios, which inevitably led to contact among people. From the early 1920s to the semi-detached houses were preferred to single-family *villini* or apartments with two or three rooms at the most, as it was needed to build housings in the shortest time possible. Considering that the territory of the Garbatella was out of the 1908 Master Plan, and consequently of low commercial value at the time, they tried to qualify the district including through the construction of streets, green spaces (common and private), schools, markets and churches. From 1920 to 1922 engineer Plinio Marconi supervised a group of architects who designed forty-four individual buildings of various kinds, a 190 residential units and 37 commercial spaces. These buildings were topographically separated into 5 *lotti*, literally 'lots', meaning curvilinear roads surrounding (De Michelis, 2009, p.511).

The initial planning of Garbatella respected the rules of the Garden City and was even an interpretation of the English model in a Roman context (Legates and Stout, 1996). However, after the initial phase several factors had a great impact on the neighborhood, primarily the rise to power of Mussolini: the rise of Fascism dramatically changed the urban planning of the area, as the relationship between green and built areas

significantly dropped in favor of buildings which were more similar to modern condominiums than the previous *villini* were. Even so, the plan to build public spaces -in addition to private living spaces- such as kindergartens, was maintained (Salvadori, 2007). In the years that followed the *sventramenti* -or 'urban disembowelments'- entire neighborhoods in the historic center were devastated and millions of people were left homeless. The problem of the 'housing necessity' grew and this issue was not certainly negligible considering that the number of applicants increased as well: its population grew from 3,454 in 1922 to 23,178 in four years, through the absorption of the thousands of people displaced from the historic center due to the effects of uncontrolled rents and the Fascist *sventramenti* (De Michelis, 2009). The ICP responded to the demand by introducing, from 1923, two housing models inspired by the *villini*: the '*rapid housing*' and the '*super-block*'.

### ***Housing and Urban Experimentation***

The difference between the *palazzetti* built initially in 1920 and those built from 1923 onwards can be easily seen in the four *lotti* called *Alberghi* -"White", "Yellow", the "Third Hotel" and "Red - Lot 42"- (Figure 3), significantly different from a structural and aesthetic point of view (Salvadori, 2007).



**Figure 3 Plan of Alberghi in Garbatella.**

**Source: Rossi, Gatti & Castelli (2012).**

These *Alberghi* are four residential buildings designed in the late 1920's and built by Innocenzo Sabbatini in Piazza Michele Carbonara. Three of them, the "white" the "yellow" and the "third hotel" fit together to form a "Y"; and the fourth, painted red, seems a reversed bottle. In fact, they were public dormitories with shared facilities, designed to temporarily concentrate all those displaced from the city center (De Michelis, 2009). Several taverns and boxing gyms were built around the *Alberghi*, where the presence of fascists and their sympathizers has never been really appreciated by local residents. Clearly, a process of politicization of the neighborhood was taking place:

during the days of bombs and hunger, from these areas people started assaults to the trains in the Ostiense railroad station<sup>11</sup>. All those people were taking up the arms, risking, and even sacrificing their life. Many of their names can be found today on the plaques in the streets of Rome, remembering to them as martyrs of the Resistance: a plaque in travertine is dedicated to Iole Zedde at the *lotto 28* in *Via Guglielmo Massaia 22*, where the sixteen year old girl was born and used to live before dying by accident on September 12, 1944 due to a gunfire from a young German soldier guarding the wagons in the train Ostiense station (Rivolta, 2009).

The Garbatella at the end of the 1920s was a real area of urban experimentation, in which various solutions were applied: indeed, this variety of types of construction highlighted the different role played by the various interventions. The "first" Garbatella was connected to the idea of a garden city that was typically Italian; each one had a piece of land around the apartment that was used for vegetables, and particular attention was paid to the selection of rare plants for the ornamentation of the gardens. With the consequent achievements the *case rapide* ("fast-homes") no longer provided fractionated lots but spaces and community facilities. The decision to build suburban "alberghi" was adopted following the failure of the policy for the *case rapide*. In 1920 the houses were generally two stories high, with a small individual green space. The apartments consisted of three or six rooms and no bathroom. They were very simple residences, built with low cost materials, but they had certain solidity.

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<sup>11</sup> The station opened on July, 26 1940 and was built on the will of Mussolini for the occasion of Hitler's visit to Rome

In 1926, architect Marconi designed semi-economic houses. This type of building -addressed to a different social class from that of the *villini*- was generally composed of three *fabbricati* (covered buildings, isolated from streets and empty spaces and separated from other buildings by walls) linked by connecting arcades and arranged around a courtyard which is still today characterized by plants and flowers (Rossi et al., 2012). These constructions were those with the highest population density after the *Alberghi*: they were four levels high and consisted of four apartments per floor. Between 1925 and 1927 the neighborhood was built for the *sbaraccati*<sup>12</sup>, and was composed of over 500 housings (Rossi et al., 2012).

The *Alberghi* had to give shelter to the displaced from the historic center after the policy of demolition, or *sventramenti*, of the area of the Coliseum, Theatre of Marcellus and of the *Via dell'Impero*, now called *Via dei Fori Imperiali*. Those people taken away from their work and from their residence had no choice but to live in a "rapid housing" or in an *Albergo*, which was nothing more than a public dormitory. The innovation of this "neighborhood" consisted in the existence of a general plan of lots, which gave a sense of unity to the whole area. In 1929-30 new buildings were built around Piazza Bartolomeo Romano, with completely different characteristics from the previous areas: large volumes and more complex plans characterized them (Rhodes, 2008). These buildings were the Public Baths and the Theatre, the Cinema-Theatre Garbatella, known as the Palladium today (Salvadori, 2007). After 1935, the experiment on the efficiency of public housing stopped (Salvadori, 2007). The final action on the "garden borgata" took place with the

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<sup>12</sup> All those that had to take or abandon all their stuff and move from where they used to live.

construction of the church “San Francesco Saverio” and the school “Cesare Battisti” in which there are characters of the “architecture of the state” with the eagles in the typically fascist *littorio style*, around the beautiful tower of the school and the porch, which strongly recalls *Romanità*<sup>13</sup>(Rossi et al., 2012).

### *Considerations*

Because of population growth and the construction of larger multi-level residential blocks, which promoted community life and a sharing of living spaces, Garbatella contributed very well to the development of a sense of community and of a distinct Roman identity. In the 10 years of growth and change, because of the way the people were treated by the fascist regime, and the fact that Fascism changed the aspect of Garbatella and moved the neighborhood away from being realized as a Garden City, the neighborhood “remained resolutely left wing” (De Michelis, 2009, p. 518). In the collective stereotype<sup>14</sup> it is one of the most popular “*quartiere rosso*” (red neighborhood), usually opposed to the “*quartieri neri*” (black neighborhood) of northern Rome, identified as right wing and upper class, such as Parioli, Pinciano and Trieste.

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<sup>13</sup> That sense of being proud of heritage of the Roman world.

<sup>14</sup> Again, I refer to people in Rome. Talking to any resident in Rome who has always lived in the Italian Capital, the Roman will always refer to Garbatella –or San Lorenzo- as left wing neighborhood (‘*zona rossa*’), and Northern Rome as the right wing/fascist quarter (‘*zona nera*’).

## Case Study 2: The Upper Class Neighborhoods

### *Parioli*

When Rome became the capital, new neighborhoods quickly developed over the Aurelian walls. Among these new districts, *Parioli* (Figure 4) gave the feeling of being an oasis in Northern Rome, near Porta Flaminia, as the neighborhood "remained immune to the rampant building fever" (Carpaneto et al., 2006, p. 59).

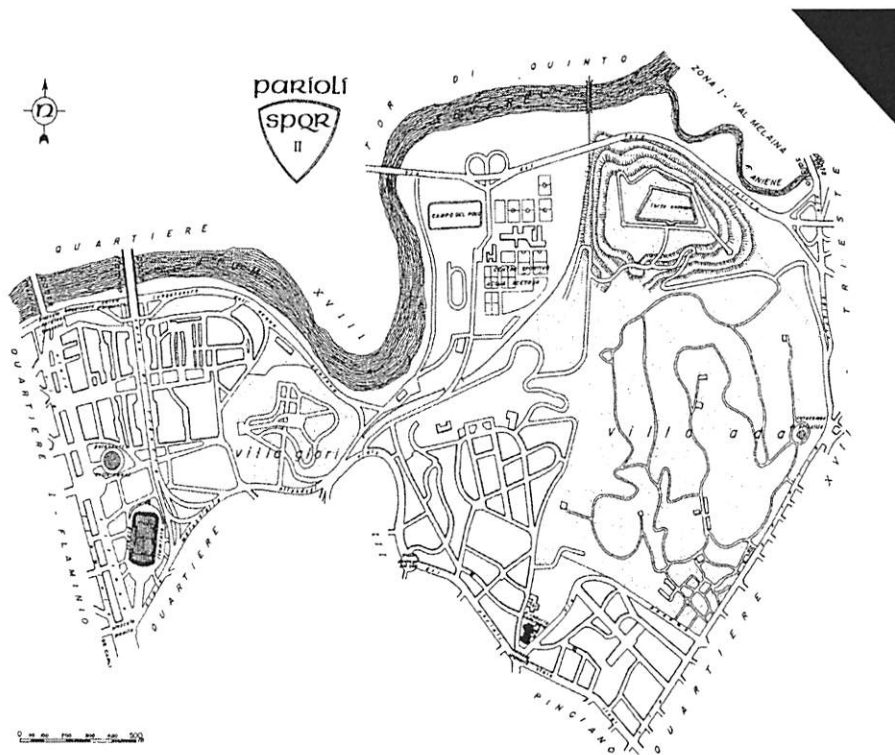


Figure 4 Parioli Plan.

Source: Grifone and Rendina (1991)

In the early 1900s, the building growth of the neighborhood recalled Edmundo Sanjust Teleuda, who developed the building plan recalling the Parisian urban style, with a prevalence of *palazzine*<sup>15</sup>, villas and gardens. It was an area designed and dedicated to the high bourgeoisie, developed to enable them to go for pleasant walks around the neighborhood, and of living in big and comfortable houses. With the advent of the fascist regime Parioli became the "aristocratic area" (Carpaneto et al., 2006, p. 62), although they had already hosted many nobles and members of the bureaucracy in the past. The neighborhood was immersed in green spaces, provided with an efficient public transportation system that connected this area to the historical center: the area was, indeed, connected to the city center by three tram lines and the trolleybus N. 103.

Fortunately, the area did not suffer from damage during the war, by the end of which there was an increasingly growing desire of people to live in Parioli. The demand for housing in this area grew intensely, especially for the Olympic games that were held in Rome in 1960. The area at the hillside of Villa Glori, Viale Flaminio and Viale Pilsudsky were assigned for the construction of sports facilities. Thus the Olympic Village was created. The buildings were not more than 5 floors high; they allowed a clear view towards the hill of Villa Glori. Furthermore, the structures resembled the architectural model of Le Corbusier, as all the buildings are raised on *pilotis*, not only to improve the view from the buildings, but also to preserve the housing from moisture. With the master plan of 1965 in Parioli, as well as in other districts of the 'historical

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<sup>15</sup> Elegant apartment buildings with several floors and different apartments per floor; well separated from the surrounding buildings

peripheries', it was possible to increase volumes and surfaces by 30%. Demolishing and rebuilding allowed obtaining several extra spaces (Rendina & Griffin, 1991).

Nowadays, this area hosts embassies and consulates, foreign banks and financial companies. The life scenes and rhythms have considerably changed, considering that there are fewer residents and more commuters. However, the charm of this area still resists, also due to the functionality and safety that make this area the most protected of Rome.

### *Pinciano*

This area includes Villa Borghese and it is located between Via Flaminia and Via Salaria Vetus, bordering the area of Parioli, and is known as *Pinciano*. Architecturally, the neighborhood can be considered an album of Roman history (Carpaneto et al., 2006) as it preserves important examples of rationalistic structures, of the fascist period, functional type structures or with modern influences.

Since 1920, at the outbreak of the phenomenon known as '*pariolismo*' -that led to an increase in housing demand- Pinciano welcomed a flood of famous professionals, entrepreneurs, actors, young people looking for fame, that contributed to form an area characterized by noble and distinguished people. The neighborhood was connected to the center by tram N.3 and bus N.52, which were full of the "noble ladies" who wanted to reach the historic center. The proximity and similarities to the Parioli neighborhood led generated the funny effect for which the residents of the area of Pinciano believed they belonged to Parioli. Pinciano, in the collective imaginary, is therefore the district of

'purebred dogs', the district of elegance, of old paintings and beautiful lounges<sup>16</sup>  
(Rendina & Griffin, 1991).

### *Trieste*

When Rome became the capital of Italy, not only those belonging to the upper classes reached the city, but also lower classes that settled in the Agro. The neighborhoods are structurally developed around the historic center.

The Trieste neighborhood witnessed a repetition of the phenomenon that occurred in other neighborhoods in which fascism, to take care of the housing problem in Rome on its own, tried to concentrate the state's funding for housing into a single institution: the I.A.C.P., the 'Autonomous Institute for Public Housing' (Carpaneto et al., 1990). It seemed that these institutions, and the interventions of affordable housing in this neighborhood, were in favor of the middle classes, offering the best quality of life and distinct architectural products for a decorum value and typical of the traditional ways of living of the European urban bourgeoisie (Ciucci, 1989).

This area contains almost 70,000 inhabitants, so it is inevitably populated and intensive, and also beset by a diverse set of problems. The sensations engendered to those arriving in the district are many: among the tree-lined streets, churches and modern villas,

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<sup>16</sup> My personal experience can confirm my point: I've been working with several different families' children for almost three years and the apartments in the areas are all really elegant and prestigiously furnished. The important families of doctors, lawyers, judges, solicitors, and so on, all know each other, as these families former generation was already settled in the neighborhood, at least one or two previous generations.

Trieste still reflects the eminent past, and traces of being a mixed neighborhood, on the border between different realities.

## Conclusions

In Chapter 1 of this thesis I went through an historical summary and analysis of the most important events that involved, or could have somehow contributed, to my research. The historical background covers a period going from the Unification of Italy, to the Fascist urban reforms in Rome. I divided this chapter in two parts: the first one explores the situation of the new born Republic and more specifically of Rome, as the Capital of Italy. I went through the problems affecting the city, such as low-key industrialization or lack of sanitary services; but I also analyzed interesting aspects of the Capital, like the peculiar relationship with the Church: specifically, the never-ending rivalry between Church and State and the which contributed to shape the city aspect, under an urban design and architectural point of view. I conclude the first part of the chapter mentioning the Lateran Pact –that ended the historical contrast between Church and State- in order to introduce Mussolini's active role in the Capital. The regime's diplomatic union with the Church allowed the demolition of the *spina del Borgo* and the creation of new neighborhoods. This is an important event considering that lately, in my second chapter, I will analyze the case of the *borgate* and of Primavalle that was populated mostly from people coming from the area of the Borgo.

Said that, the second part of this first chapter jumps into Fascism, that represents the 'key event' for my research, as the actual urban design of Rome and consequent issues can be reconnected to the fascist reforms in the capital, back in time. Using former urban plans, I go through an excursus of how the citizens were allocated in the different

areas of the historic center, how different were the areas, and how they influenced the new Capital. It was fundamental talking about the strength and weakness of Rome by then, about the fact that Rome was stuck in her ancient time, full of ruins or ancient buildings, or buildings reflecting a Papacy power that was no more. Understanding these aspect is important to understand how Mussolini wanted to reshape Rome, and for which purpose. As rationalism and modern tendencies already touched other European Capitals, Mussolini wanted Italy to develop, to expand, and to get involved in the international field. Pushed by his spirit of *Romanità*, he wanted to restore Rome's ancient glory, that of the great emperors when Rome was powerful and majestic. He also wanted to intensify agriculture, as he believed was a great and untouched resource, and reach a sort of 'city unity' by creating neighborhoods with people from the same class, meaning separating people based on their social class.

I continue the chapter introducing and analyzing his project of isolation of Rome's monuments, the *sventramenti* that took place in order to reshape Rome according to the new fascist urban plan, and the social consequences derived. As a consequence of the *sventramenti* too many people lost their houses and had to be displaced either in the city, in neighborhood like Garbatella (that I will analyze as a case study in Chapter 3), or in the peripheries in the so-called *borgate*. The living conditions in the borgate were terrible, those who were displaced there were isolated. The inevitable consequence was the malcontent of the residents that could not imagine they had to live in such degrading conditions. I will talk of the *borgate* in Chapter 2, which is about the periphery of Rome, the conditions of the *borgate* and of the people living there, and lately -in Chapter 3-

analyzing the different conditions of the working class in-city displaced, and touch on the conditions of the upper class.

What I attempt to make clear in the chapter is the way lower class and working class were treated by fascism, how people were treated based on their class and the malcontent these reforms generated in the citizens. Moreover, in the historic center before the fascist urban reform, different classes used to stay close to each other in the area. They collaborated with each other. There were streets full of certain categories of workers, such as the street of the artisans, that of the butchers, the one of hat makers, and so on, and in the same area people from middle class, or others, were living and co-living with them, also because of necessity and collaboration: whatever they needed, they had different people in the same area that could always help. This aspect of social living disappeared with the *sventramenti*, and led to isolation and separation instead of unification.

In Chapter 2 I focus my attention on the borgate, starting with an introduction on their creation, position around the city center, and general conditions. I, then, examine two specific borgate: Primavalle and San Basilio, as they both are two interesting cases for the area potentials, how they developed, the kind of persons displaced there, their living conditions and political activism to improve their life quality. The two *borgate* I consider are really different among each other, and it was interesting hearing from residents how the area changed through the years, sometimes sad, especially for San Basilio, considering the great potential this area had but that was not used properly. When I go through the description of the *borgate*, I do not stop my argument to the fascist period, but I go deeper and talk of the conditions today. And that is because, due to a

scarcity of sources related to this topic or to these neighborhood, it is really hard to collect specific information; therefore, I decided it could be interesting to see how this areas, which developed in fascist time, and were filled of *sbaraccati* because of the new fascist urban plan, evolved and how they changed in time. The attempt here is to show how, once again, the original fascist project did not result as thought: the houses, the sanitary system, transportation and social services did not work or simply did not exist. Those people, victims of the *sventramenti* have been deprived of their homes, they have been promised a new one, and ended up in shacks, somewhere in the periphery of Rome.

Finally, I decided to organize Chapter 3 with two study cases: the first one on the neighborhood Garbatella, and the other on Roma Nord. The first study case explores how the neighborhood was originally planned, the modern architectural influence and the idea for it to be a Garden City Model. Later on I focus on the role of the ICP and how it intervened to help the *sbaraccati*. The neighborhood has an innovative and unique plan and structure, constituted of cheap material-made housings and the *alberghi*, with the function of hosting people just temporarily. But the number of people left without a house was huge, therefore Garbatella hosted them in the temporary buildings, but these turned into permanent housings to them. The Garbatella is considered, still today, a left winged neighborhood. The study case stresses the political tension among the left and right wing in the 1950s.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to find sources regarding Northern Rome area, so the study case results very poor of information. I introduced three neighborhoods: Parioli, Pinciano and Trieste. This area, Roma Nord, was where the upper class has been living even before the *sventramenti*. Even esthetically, the area results totally different

from the other, and of course the living conditions. In the 1950s public transportation in Primavalle was far and inefficient; in San Basilio there was only one bus, N. 109, that residents were able to have only after several conflicts; Parioli had three tramlines and trolleybus N.103; Pinciano had the efficient tramline N.3 and bus N.52. Parioli is one the first among the fifteen neighborhoods created in Rome in 1911 and officially established in 1921. The district was completed during the 1950s. It was built as a neighborhood for the upper middle-class, was intended to the leaders of the fascist regime and state officials. It is a historically rich neighborhood, and is currently considered one of the classiest neighborhoods of the capital. The residents are characterized by uncontrolled consumerism, refined clothing, and are politically right wing oriented, or at least against the left wing.

I wanted to explore the phenomenon more deeply, but the stereotype of left wing oriented neighborhoods, and right wing oriented neighborhoods, still exist nowadays. It is true that despite the coming of fascism, Rome's Northern area has historically been considered for the upper class, but with fascism and the urban plan reform followed by *sventramenti* and displacements, the situation got worse. Those displaced in the *borgate* were living in unbelievable conditions, while those in neighborhoods such as Garbatella, or San Lorenzo, did not have an easy life, and matured resentment towards the fascists, more of which used to live in Roma Nord, or were associated to the EUR area. Given the differences of life styles, the privileges given to those who adhered to fascism, and the class separation feeling caused by the fascist, which led people to sympathize only with those belonging to their same class, led to an intensification of tensions between opposed political identities in the different neighborhoods of the Italian Capital.

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