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SUMMARY – KEYWORDS

Abstract

Rome is world-famous for its rich urban heritage and its historic center. However, the current configuration of the urban fabric of the city center does not concentrate only on ancient or medieval times. This study aims at analyzing the impact of the urban policies of the Liberal and Fascist periods on the development of Rome's city center. These two periods are of particular interest because they were marked by intense activity in terms of urban renewal and restructuring. In the trade-off between modernisation and preservation faced by the public authorities, the urban policies of the period reveal postures of use and instrumentalization, both for institutional and nationalist purposes. Finally, it is important to note that although the Mussolini period represented a rupture in the sector, some of the regime's policies have their roots in the Liberal period (1870-1922).

Keywords

Italy ; Rome ; urban policy ; *Risorgimento* ; Fascism ; modernization ; cultural policy

INTRODUCTION:

"Il mito di Roma ha formato il mondo occidentale. Ma è vero anche il contrario: nei suoi differenti sviluppi è stato il mondo occidentale ad aver modellato, a seconda delle esigenze, il passato dell'antica Roma"¹.

This quote is taken from a book called "*La Roma di Mussolini*", written by Paolo Sidoni in 2019. The first part of the sentence, "*Il mito di Roma ha formato il mondo occidentale*"², underlines Rome's central role in shaping the world as we know it today. In this context, the use of the term "*mito*" is not insignificant. A myth is generally defined as a historical fact transformed into a legend. By using the word myth, the author anchors his remark in a symbolic dimension, underlining the important figure of the city in the collective imagination. The myth of Rome would therefore refer to the symbolic power of the legends associated with the Eternal city and its history, in the sense that these legends have shaped and influenced present-day Italy.

The quote continues as such: "*Ma è vero anche il contrario: nei suoi differenti sviluppi, è stato il mondo occidentale ad aver modellato, a seconda delle esigenze, il passato dell'antica Roma*"³. This second part suggests that the modern world also had an influence on the city's ancient past. In other words, today's world would have shaped the past of ancient Rome according to its needs. The use of the verb "*modellato*", which in English could be translated to *modelled*, implies that the remark includes a physical, spatial dimension. Therefore, if we analyze the sentence through the prism of architecture and built heritage, we understand that, according to the author, today's Italy is modifying ancient Rome's past according to its needs, through the alteration of its built heritage.

Thus, it can be argued that Sidoni's quotation reveals both the influence of ancient Rome and its '*mythization*' in Italian construction, and the action of present-day Italy on the memory and conservation of ancient Rome, through the management of its heritage. This complex relationship between Rome, Italy, past and present highlighted by Sidoni will precisely be the main point of our analysis.

¹ Loose translation: The myth of Rome has shaped the western world. But the contrary is also true: in its different phases of development, it is the western world that modelled according to its requirements the antique past of Rome. Sidoni, Paolo. *La Roma di Mussolini: la più completa ricostruzione delle trasformazioni della città durante il regime fascista*. Prima edizione., Newton Compton editori, 2019.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTIVE PART:

The Eternal City is today world-famous for its heritage. Every year, millions of tourists visit the Colosseum, St Peter's Basilica or the Trevi Fountain. Although a real tourist attraction, the city's heritage has on many occasions been seen by the Italian authorities as an obstacle to the modernization and smooth running of the capital. Hence, the city of Rome is an interesting case study in the analysis of the trade-off between heritage preservation and the need to adapt the historic center to modern uses.

Section 1 : The Roman exception in terms of heritage:

This issue of balance between legacy preservation and modernization emerged in Rome in the 19th century and is still with us today. One example is the delay in the construction of the line C of the Roman subway, where archaeological excavations represented a financial burden for the municipality.⁴ New questions are also being asked today, particularly in relation to the growing number of tourists visiting the city center. These issues of trade-off between modernization and preservation are also present in other cities which have a huge amount of historical buildings within their historic center, such as the Greek capital, Athens. However, the city of Rome, especially during the 1870-1943 is a rather interesting example as it link the question to political and power issues.

A. Definition of the period under study:

While this arbitration is a recurring issue in cities with a high concentration of urban heritage, the case of Rome stands out in the study of the relationship between heritage, politics, and national construction, even beyond a particular political and historical context.⁵

⁴ « Rome, éternel chantier archéologique ». *Le Monde.fr*, 3 avril 2017. *Le Monde*, https://www.lemonde.fr/sciences/article/2017/04/03/rome-eternel-chantier-archeologique_5105271_1650684.html.

⁵ “*Au delà du context politique, le cas de l’Urbs, ville éternelle, est particulièrement incisif pour étudier les rapports entre le politique et le patrimoine dont le produit serait l’élément d’une culture nationale en cours d’institutionnalisation*” – Loose translation: Beyond the political context, the case of the *Urbs*, the eternal city, is particularly incisive for studying the relationship between politics and heritage, the product of which being the element of a national culture in the process of being institutionalised. Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste,

This idea is underlined by many authors who pointed out that the weight of ideology and political representations, as well as the links between national construction and archaeology, represent a rich subject for study, especially in the case of the Eternal city.⁶ To a certain extent, it is what Sidoni is referring to in its quote. Present-day Italy shapes the antique Rome to its needs. The sentence underlines how preservation choices were made to meet the needs of the political power in place. It is therefore in the aim of understanding the issues surrounding the management of heritage within the Eternal city in all their singularity that we will focus on two significant historical periods: the period beginning in 1870, following the Capture of Rome and its proclamation as capital; and the Fascist period, which extends from 1922 to 1943.

Indeed, the period of Italian unification is considered a key moment for the management of archaeology in Rome.⁷ The transfer of the capital's functions to the city implied the incorporation into its urban fabric of new functions and greater growth than that experienced by the *Urbs* in recent decades. To this regard, the year 1870 marked the beginning of the public arbitrage between the city's growth and its ancient urban fabric. The period between 1870 and 1922 was therefore particularly rich in terms of debates on heritage and its management, as well as the institutional disputes associated with it. The latter were part of wider stakes regarding the control over the territory of the new capital, particularly between the Papal State, the new municipality, and the Italian State.

Fascism was also a significant period regarding the modernization of the city and the preservation of built heritage. Benito Mussolini's control over institutions and his particular interest in urban issues can still be seen today throughout the city center. Numerous researchers have pointed out that the Rome we know today owes a great deal to these two periods, which were particularly productive in terms of urban development.

gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux»: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/revu.145.0905>.

⁶ “*Le poids des ideologies dans les projets de rénovation du centre historique de Rome a été longuement souligné par les chercheurs*” Loose translation: The importance of ideologies in renovation projects in Rome's historical center has been for a long time highlighted by researchers. On the subject, one could cite either “*Roma moderna: un secolo di storia urbanistica*” by Italo Insolera, or “*Le origine dell'urbanistica moderna*” by Leonardo Benevolo. Ibid.

⁷ “*Ce n'est qu'avec l'entrée de Rome dans le Royaume d'Italie, en 1870, suivie de la promotion de la ville au statut de capitale, que la question du paysage urbain reprend, après des décennies de morne gestion pontificale, une place importante dans le débat politique et dans l'histoire de la ville. (...) Le soucis archéologique était présent, mais les fouilles étaient de faible ampleur, et les découvertes de toute façon n'étaient pas menacées par les rares travaux de modernisation de la ville*” Loose translation: It wasn't until Rome became part of the kingdom of Italy in 1870, followed by the city's promotion to the status of capital, that the issue of the urban landscape, after decades of lacklustre pontifical management, once again occupied an important role in the political debate and the history of the city (...) The archaeological concern was present, but the excavations were small-scale, and in any case the discoveries were not threatened by the rare works to modernise the city. Bocquet, Denis. « La ville entre modernisation et patrimoine archéologique. Quel paysage urbain pour Rome capitale? (1870-1922) ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 59, n° 1, 1999, p. 147-61. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3406/camed.1999.1265>.

The choice of these two historical periods will also enable us to address and understand the links between archaeology and national construction. As Sidoni points out, the city of Rome was a symbol, both for the nationalists of the *Risorgimento* and for the *Duce*, who placed the rhetoric of romanity at the heart of his ideology. Studying romanity and its place in the political discourse of the period will therefore enable us to understand how preservation choices can be explained by questions of usage.

As these two periods are intimately linked, questions concerning the potential continuity and rupture regarding their archaeological policies will corroborate our analysis. The question that will guide this dissertation is therefore the following: to what extent the decisions concerning the preservation of Rome heritage during the Liberal and Fascist eras are connected to the construction of the Italian nation and the associated institutional struggles?

To ensure that our analysis is as clear and rigorous as possible, we will start by defining the main terms of our subject.

We can distinguish two main periods in our analysis: the first, the liberal period, lasts from 1870 to 1922. The second one covers more than twenty years, from 1922 to 1943 and is known as the Fascist period. Although our aim here is not to study the history of these two periods, it is important to contextualize our subject.

The period under study begins with the *Risorgimento*, the Italian term for the unification of the various duchies and kingdoms of the peninsula under the auspices of Piedmont-Sardinia⁸. *Risorgimento*⁹ is an Italian word we could translate as “rebirth”, “reawakening” or “renewal”. The period is indeed marked by the resurgence of liberal and nationalists’ ideas, under the guidance of famous figures like Giuseppe Mazzini or Giuseppe Garibaldi. Having played a significant role in the Republican parenthesis of 1848-1849, their influence accelerated the development of liberal and nationalist ideas during the unification period, spanning from 1860 to 1871. In 1870, the Capture of Rome from the Papal States marks the end of the Italian unification. With the sacrament of the king, Vittorio-Emanuele II di Savoia, in 1861, the new nation-state becomes a constitutional monarchy, up until 1946.

⁸ The peninsula is before its unification divided between the Kingdom of Sardinia, or Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Duchy of Modena and Reggio, the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza, the Papal States and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, whereas Lombardy and Veneto were under Austrian domination.

⁹ The term *Risorgimento*, was not used to describe the period in 1860. According to the *Dizionario* published in 1872, the term “*risorgimento*” describes “*il risorgimento della nazione a vita civile migliore*”. Niccolo Tommaseo and Bernardo Bellini, *Dizionario della lingua italiana nuovamente compilato dai Signori Niccolo Tommaseo e Cav. Professore Bernardo Bellini*, volume IV, Torino/Napoli, UTET, 1872, p.369 as cited in Brice, Catherine. «De quoi le Risorgimento est-il (vraiment) le nom?» *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle*, n° 52, juin 2016, p. 65-79. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4000/rh19.4991>.

Even after the unification, the various regions of Italy were very different culturally, prompting the Chancellor of the Austrian Empire at the time, Klemens Wenzel von Metternich, to describe Italy as “*only a geographical expression*”. Hence the constitutional monarchy that was established in Italy was strongly marked by a process of national construction. The issue of defining the identity of the new Italy was indeed central in political debates during this period. As a matter of fact, the choice to appoint Rome as the capital of Italy can be seen as directly connected to this question. After its proclamation, a rapid population growth was expected in the city, leading political and urban authorities to give a great emphasis on modernizing and expanding the city. The establishment of the capital had a profound impact on urban and heritage policies in the *eternal city*, placing unprecedented pressure on city planners, including pressures from outside Italy.¹⁰

On October 25, 1922, the March on Rome enabled Mussolini, the head of the Fascist movement, to seize political power. The monarchy of Vittorio Emanuele III was however not abolished, although the king did not enjoy any power during Mussolini’s time in office: the *Duce* succeeded in seizing political power and becoming a true dictator until his fall in 1943.¹¹ The fascist period was marked by strong imperialist aspirations from the *Duce*, particularly in Ethiopia from 1935. During this period, no institutional opposition was to be found in the context of urban planning, which enabled the *Duce* to oversee massive and ambitious development and renovation work, both in the center of the city and in its periphery. Indeed, even if we will not focus on the matter during this dissertation, Mussolini’s work in the suburbs of Rome was significant.

B. Definition of the main terms under study:

In this dissertation, we will mainly focus on heritage preservation policies implemented during these two periods. The definition of heritage dates from the 19th century. The concept of heritage is structured around the idea of the common good. Hence, the term refers to all the tangible or intangible remains of the past of a defined group at a defined time, to which value is attached. Indeed, this is where the notion of heritage can be seen as evolutive: it is the recognition of the value of a historical building (even in very bad state) by a society that makes it heritage, and that will enable its preservation. The term

¹⁰ Costa, F. « Urban Planning in Rome from 1870 to the First World War ». *GeoJournal*, vol. 24, n° 3, 1991, p. 269-76. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41145199>.

¹¹ @NatGeoFrance. « Mussolini et l’ascension du mouvement fasciste en Italie ». *National Geographic*, 13 octobre 2022, <https://www.nationalgeographic.fr/histoire/2022/10/mussolini-et-lascension-du-mouvement-fasciste-en-italie>.

heritage is thus used from the time when its preservation becomes self-evident for a given society. This idea is well expressed in a phrase by André Chastel: “*le patrimoine se reconnaît au fait que sa perte constitue un sacrifice et que sa conservation suppose des sacrifices*”¹². Built cultural heritage refers to the heritage present in towns and cities, in the form of buildings or urban ‘*fragments*’ such as ruins.¹³ It is therefore important to note how the need for recognition of heritage makes its preservation dependent on political will. In the context of our subject, the notion of heritage is closely linked to that of archaeology. In Paolo Orsi's *Enciclopedia Italiana*, published in 1929, archaeology is defined as “*la scienza dell'antichità, quando per antichità s'intenda non il patrimonio letterario di un determinato popolo antico, non la sua storia, ma la sua documentazione monumentale, data essenzialmente dalle opere artistiche, dai prodotti industriali, dalle iscrizioni*”¹⁴. Orsi's definition therefore describes archaeology as the study of the “*monumentale*”, meaning buildings, edifices and works of art, excluding from the field the analysis of the history of the community and its other productions, as for instance literary. From a certain point of view, archaeology can therefore be seen as the science that analyses built heritage. Therefore, archaeology plays a major role in the recognition and preservation of this heritage.

Section 2 : The importance of political action in the preservation of heritage:

While the importance of preservation is now undoubted, this dissertation aims at demonstrating the issues and the debates which took place in Rome during the period concerning the city center and its heritage. The subject is interesting as it revolves around issue of territorial control and power between the main public authorities who had to cooperate on the matter: the State, the Municipality and the Holy See. In this second introducing section, we will briefly introduce this particular relation linking national construction and heritage. Lastly, we will proceed to the introduction of the main actors.

¹² Loose translation : heritage can be recognized by the fact that its loss constitutes a sacrifice and that its preservation presupposes sacrifices. André Chastel, as cited in Fioux, Thomas. *Le patrimoine face aux enjeux urbains contemporains : quelle protection pour le patrimoine civil au sein de l'aménagement urbain ?* 2016. Université Grenoble-Alpes, <https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-01419404/document>.

¹³ Tweed, Christopher, et Margaret Sutherland. « Built Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development ». *Landscape and Urban Planning*, vol. 83, n° 1, novembre 2007, p. 62-69. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2007.05.008>.

¹⁴ Loose translation: the science of antiquity, when antiquity is understood to mean not the literary heritage of a particular ancient people, not its history, but its monumental documentation, given essentially by artistic works, industrial products, and inscriptions. *Treccani*, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/archeologia_res-812b6cbd-8baa-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/archeologia_res-812b6cbd-8baa-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/)

C. A link between politic, heritage and nationalism:

In fact, during the period of both liberal Rome and fascism, the recognition and renovation of heritage was subordinated to and influenced by the representations of the main political players and their aspirations to forge a certain national identity. Thus, it can be argued that the period 1870-1943 was marked by a certain alteration of the city's history, for nationalist purposes. Some authors refer to this as *archaeological narrative* or *patriotic archaeology*, without the archaeologists, to emphasize the use of ancient heritage in the construction of a national storytelling. The links between archaeology and nationalism are studied by a lot of scholars, as for instance Margarita Diaz-Adreu and Timothy Champion in “*Nationalism and Archeology in Europe*”: according to them, “*c’est l’apparition du nationalisme qui a stimulé la création même de l’archéologie comme science. (...) Le nationalisme est profondément inscrit dans le concept même d’archéologie, dans son institutionnalisation et dans son développement.*”¹⁵

D. An issue at stake for public and private actors:

Our main method for studying the policies related to archaeology from 1870 to 1943 will be to analyze the substance of the *piani regolatori generali* (PRG). The PRG are considered the central document of Roman urban planning, bringing together the main political decisions of the municipality. The document defines the main areas to be built on, preserve, and renovate, for a period of 25 years. In the period under our consideration, four regulatory plans were drawn up: a first one in 1873, followed by a second in 1883 and another in 1909. Finally, the only plan drawn up during the Fascist era was designed in 1931. The latter was accompanied by numerous *piani particolareggiati* (PP). The regulatory plans were wide-ranging, legislating on the urban development of the city as a whole. There were usually divided in two, one section only focusing on the renovation and modification of the city center. As our subject of study focuses mainly on urban heritage preservation, we will mainly analyze certain parts of the plans, especially the one concerning *Municipio I*, considered to be the historic center of Rome. Moreover, in the course of our discussion, we will also refer to other texts and laws that were important for urban planning at the time. Indeed, the regulatory plan is

¹⁵ Loose translation : It is the emergence of nationalism that stimulated the very creation of archeology as a science. (...) Nationalism is deeply rooted in the very concept of archeology, in its institutionalization and in its development. From an idea written in « *Nationalism and Archeology in Europe* » as cited in Kaeser, Marc-Antoine. « Nationalisme et archéologie: quelle histoire ? » *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines*, vol. 2, n° 1, 2000, p. 155. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/rhsh.002.0155>.

mainly a municipal instrument and does not register the state's action on urban heritage preservation. The regulatory plans drafted during both the Liberal and Fascist periods were not always strictly followed, nor considered particularly efficient. According to Denis Bocquet, the regulatory plan “*est avant tout le support administratif d'une manifestation de souveraineté institutionnelle municipale sur l'espace urbain, et parfois d'un projet politique*¹⁶”. In fact, archaeology more generally became an issue of territorial control in the Italian capital. Indeed, after the Capture of Rome, several institutions had their views on the new capital, namely the Capitol, which is the municipality, the State and the Holy See. Certain preservation choices were in fact influenced by the exercise of these powers, such as the creation of the Vittoriano or the destruction of the Christian church of the Colosseum.

¹⁶ Loose translation : is above all the administrative support for a manifestation of municipal institutional sovereignty over urban space, and sometimes a political project. Denis Bocquet, as cited in Mazonod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazonod_f.pdf.

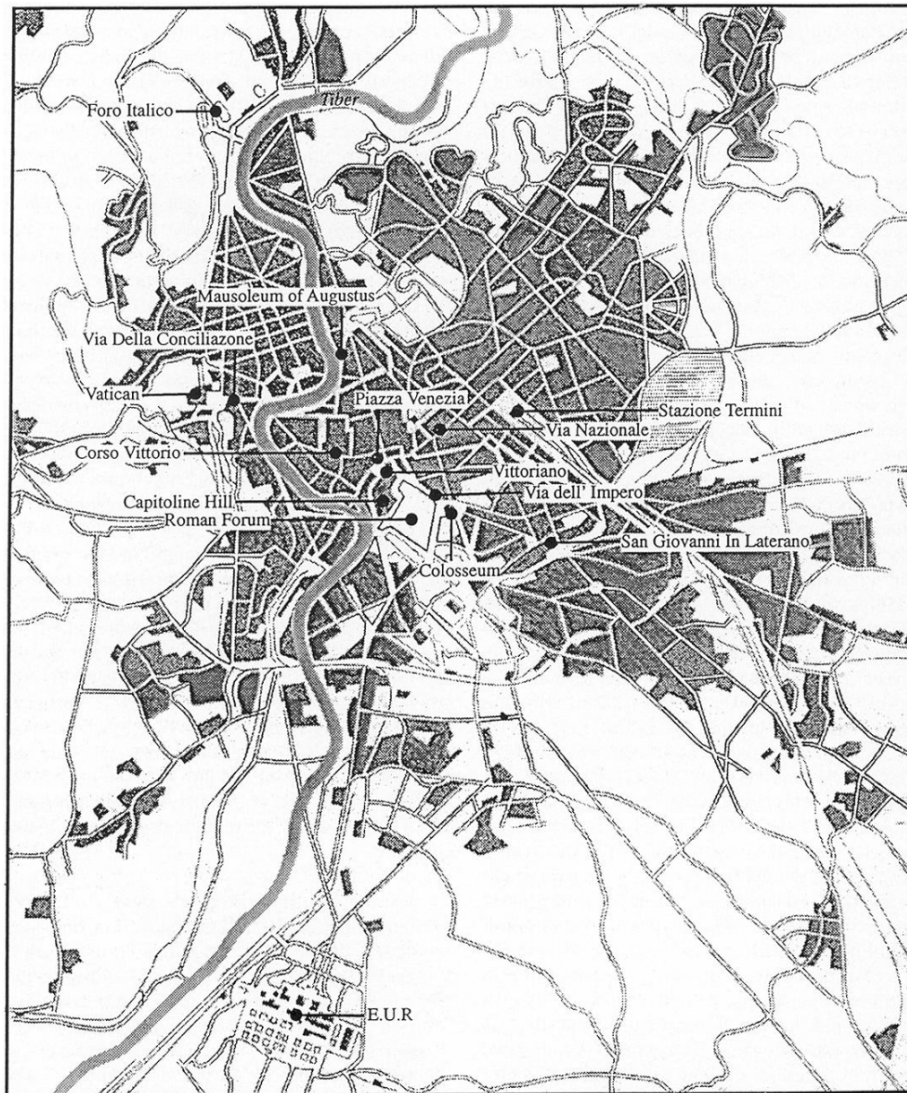


Figure 1 : The major changes wrought in the fabric of Rome by Liberal and Fascist regimes.¹⁷

The response to our key question will be divided in two parts. The first part covers the period between 1870 and 1922, during which the municipality, the Italian state, and the Papal authorities worked towards the modernization of Rome in the sight of making the city a capital. The second part will analyze Fascist policies related to heritage preservation, and whether they represent rather a continuity or a rupture with those of the Liberal period. In the second chapter, we will also look at the influence of public-private partnerships, which will allow us to go beyond the ideological and political analysis of the construction of Rome, by including the question of the mobilization of capital and land speculation. One objective is to examine the way we can trace the origins of Fascist policies concerning heritage back to the Liberal period.

¹⁷ See Agnew, John. « The Impossible Capital: Monumental Rome under Liberal and Fascist Regimes, 1870-1943 ». *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 80, n° 4, 1998, p. 229-40. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/491051>.

Although it is a very specific subject, it should be noted that the latter can be considered as a starting point for a broader reflection regarding heritage preservation issues and the links between architecture and politics.

The subject also provides us with an example of the complex debate surrounding the trade-off between the need for modernization and the need for preservation. Other case studies, such as Haussmann's Paris, can be taken as example in this subject.

Finally, the evocation of certain Fascist renovation works will allow us to evoke the relationship of the Italians with Fascist heritage. In "*Histoire de la civilisation Romaine*", Pierre Gros defines the city as "*l'expression d'une société, de ses valeurs et de son idéologie*¹⁸". This definition applies perfectly to the dictator's vision of the city. Indeed, after the fall of fascism, there were many reflections on the Fascist legacy in the city and its influence on the world today. Some even argued to destroy some of Mussolini's doing, without success.

¹⁸ Loose translation: the expression of a society, its values and its ideology. Gros, Pierre. « Chapitre V. La ville comme symbole. Le modèle central et ses limites ». *Histoire de la civilisation romaine*, par Hervé Inglebert, Presses Universitaires de France, 2005, pp. 155-232. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/puf.ingle.2005.01.0155>

CHAPTER 2: TURNING A CITY INTO A CAPITAL (1870-1922):

This chapter deals with the period from 1870 to 1922. When it became the capital, Rome still was a provincial city. Hence one of the major challenges it faced was to prepare for strong population growth and new economic activities. How to modernize a city with such a rich urban heritage was a major problem for the authorities. Also, during this period, archaeological conservation became a real ground of rivalry between local and national powers. Conservation decisions were influenced both by the desire to modernize the city and by the ambition to give the Italian population a sense of belonging through urban planning.

Section 1 : The choice of Rome as a Capital city:

This first section is devoted to assessing the impact of the decision to make Rome the capital on its heritage and its preservation. While it is largely because of its history and ancient heritage that Rome was chosen as the capital, this designation greatly alters the plans and scope of the policies linked to the preservation of this heritage. We will begin by analyzing the main tenants of the Roman question¹⁹, before assessing the consequences for the city's heritage.

E. How the designation of Rome as Italy's new capital is a symbolic choice:

As we mentioned in the introduction, although Italy was politically unified in 1860, differences in culture and tradition between its different regions hampered the construction of the identity of the new nation-state. Building a sense of belonging and nationhood was thus considered as crucial by parliamentarians. Thus, the choice of the capital city was seen

¹⁹ In italian, *Questione romana*, mainly describes the dispute between the temporal power of the papal states and the new Italian rulers over Rome territory. Beginning in the period of the *Risorgimento*, the dispute will end with the Lateran Pacts of 1929. As a matter of facts, it is interesting to look at the impact of the *Questione romana*, on urban policies. Taking the example of the Colosseum, while the religious nature of the building is altered by the Liberal authorities, a cross is restored by Benito Mussolini in the 1930s, after the Lateran Pacts. Beard, Mary, et al. *Le Colisée: l'histoire et le mythe*. Éditions Tallandier, 2024.

as an opportunity to foster nation-building in Italy. To a certain extent, the decision to make Rome the capital can be interpreted as an attempt to forge a sense of nationhood based on a universal historical reference point, embodied in the city of Rome.²⁰

a. The polycentric nature of Italy in 1860 making the choice of a capital city complex:

For almost a decade, the question of the future capital occupied an important place in the Italian political landscape. The most important work on the subject was “*Questioni Urgenti?*” by Massimo D’Azeglio. The choice took shape on three occasions during the *Risorgimento* period: the first vote, taking place in 1861 was in favor of Rome, even though the city still belonged to the Papal States. The sovereign functions therefore remained in Turin, as the capital of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, the driving force behind Italian unification. In 1864, a new vote was organised within the September Convention, which led to the transfer of the capital to Florence, at the request of the French Emperor Napoleon III.²¹ Finally, a third vote was held, leading in 1871 to the transfer of the country's central institutions to Rome. The numerous transfers of capital show just how difficult this choice was. According to researchers such as Géraldine Djament-Tran in “*Le débat sur Rome Capitale. Géohistoire d’un choix de localisation*”, the reason for the difficulty of the choice is essentially due to the urban polycentrism of Italy at the time. The peninsula was home to many medium-sized cities, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. In the eyes of the parliamentarians, it was a choice between incomplete metropolises, characteristic of the fragmentation of Italy at the time. According to Berti Domenico, “*I paesi hanno centri intorno a cui gravitano naturalmente. Italia ha il suo centro filologico, che è Firenze, ha il suo centro religioso, che è Roma, ed ha il suo centro politico e militare, che è il Piemonte e le Alpe²²*”. We can also add the fact that Naples was the most populous city at the time, and that establishing the capital in Turin would make it impossible to

²⁰ It should be noted that the Papal States became Italian in 1870, after the Capture of Rome on September 20th. However, the question of the capital was already present in the Italian debate since 1860. The choice of Rome had already been mentioned, and a vote in favor was taken in 1861, on Camillo Cavour's initiative, a fierce defender of the Roman cause, as seen in his speeches dating back from March and April 1861.

²¹ This choice must be understood in the light of French protection of the Papal States. The *September Convention* is a diplomatic agreement between France and Italy, which specifies that the French troops protecting the Papal States must leave within two years. In return, Italy promised not to invade the Roman region. In this context, moving the capital from Turin to Florence was a sort of guarantee for the French Emperor.

²² Loose translation : Countries have centres around which they naturally gravitate. Italy has its philological centre, which is Florence, its religious centre, which is Rome, and its political and military centre, which is Piedmont and the Alps. Djament-Tran, Géraldine. « Le débat sur Rome capitale. Géohistoire d’un choix de localisation ». *L’Espace géographique*, vol. 34, n° 4, 2005, p. 367-380. *Cairn.info*, <https://doi.org/10.3917/eg.344.0367>.

differentiate Italian unification from Piedmontese colonization. As a result, no single city had all the attributes of a future capital. Moreover, the major north-south division also needed to be considered. As the two regions were far apart in terms of development and culture, some members of parliament felt it was important to add a geometric criterion of centrality. These criteria and Italian's fragmentation of centrality were to play in favor of the *pro-Romans*.

b. How the choice of Rome is inherently grounded on a historical rhetoric for the construction of the feeling of nationhood:

The transfer of sovereign functions to Rome was contemplated even before it was conquered by the Italian nationalists in 1870, but many members of parliament were opposed to it. The Roman question was a dividing issue, giving rise to a complex political cleavage opposing a majority of parliamentarians from the right, left and the center, who were pro-Romans, to a few prominent figures such as Giuseppe Ferrari and D'Azeglio, and to Catholic representatives, who were anti-Romans.

According to the pro-Romans, Rome was the only city capable, as the deputy Alessandro Casati put it, of “*fondere tutte le differenze*”, “*unificare le molteplici divisioni*”²³. According to the *pro-Romans*, establishing the capital in Rome would resolve the lack of unity and national identity. The pro-Roman arguments of the 1860s and 1870s were rooted in the concept of the Third Rome²⁴, developed by the Italian revolutionary figure of Mazzini. Throughout the 19th century, he was an important figure in Italy's national awakening²⁵. In order to build the nation's identity, Mazzini drew on Rome's past, linking it with the glorious future of the Italian nation. “*Dopo la Roma degli Imperatori, dopo la Roma dei Papi, verrà la Roma del Popolo*”²⁶. This Roman messianism, which insisted on the crucial importance of the city in the nation-building, can also be found in Camillo Cavour's speeches: “*Senza Roma, l'Italia non può*'

²³ Loose translation : Merge all differences – Unify the multiple divisions. Alessandro Casati, 1861, as cited in *ibid.*

²⁴ In Italian, *Terza Roma*

²⁵ According to Mazzini, « *Oggi l'Italia è disunita ed oppressa : noi non abbiamo bandiera nostra, non nome politico non voce tra le nazioni d'Europa* » Loose translation : Today Italy is disunited and oppressed : we have no flag of our own, no political name, no voice among the nations of Europe. Prosdotti, Emanuela. « Antiquités, archéologie et récit des origines dans la construction nationale italienne (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles) III ». *L'Antiquité à la BnF*, 1 juin 2021, <https://doi.org/10.58079/b8ps>.

²⁶ Loose translation : After the Rome of the Emperors, after the Rome of the Popes, comes the Rome of the People. Giuseppe Mazzini, 1849 in a speech in front of the Italian Assembly as cited in Djament-Tran, Géraldine. « Le débat sur Rome capitale. Géohistoire d'un choix de localisation ». *L'Espace géographique*, vol. 34, n° 4, 2005, p. 367-380. *Cairn.info*, <https://doi.org/10.3917/eg.344.0367>.)

*costituirs*²⁷” or in Garibaldi’s: “*Roma o morte!*”²⁸” In other words, it was by reinterpreting the city’s past that the pro-Romans intellectuals of the period envisaged the construction of the future nation. As for the anti-Romans, this historical-political argument represented the instrumentalization of the city’s history as a justification for its natural place as capital. Indeed, for parliamentarians like D’Azeglio, this name-based argument confuses a city with an era.²⁹

c. A choice leaving aside any urban criteria:

In 1975, the writer Alberto Moravia wrote: “*Ora tutto il problema di Roma non esiste se non si tiene conto del fatto che gli Italiani pensano che Roma dovrebbe essere una capitale e che Roma invece non lo è ne’ sembra avviata a diventarlo nel futuro*”³⁰”. This phrase underlines the way in which the choice to make of Rome a capital was to some extent tied to its past, without the decision necessarily being based on more spatial and urban criteria. The anti-Roman camp made this point on many occasions, denouncing the insalubrity of the Roman region, its backwardness in terms of railway connections as well as the city’s tendency to consume rather than produce. Indeed, in 1871, Rome was not the most densely populated city. Within the Aurelian’s Wall, which defined the perimeter of the ancient city, there was a great deal of abandoned agricultural land between the various gardens of the Roman villas. Located around the four major basilicas, the main traffic arteries were outside the center, which did little to improve the

²⁷ Cavour even writes : “*Tutta la storia di Roma dal tempo dei Cesari al giorno d’oggi è la storia di una città la cui importanza si estende infinitamente al di là del loro territorio, di una città, cioè, destinata ad essere la capitale di un grande Stato*” Loose translation: The entire history of Rome from the time of the Caesars to the present day is the history of a city whose importance extends infinitely beyond their territory, of a city, that is destined to be the capital of a great state. Pietro Scoppola, I discorsi di Cavour, N.16, p.40-43; discours du 25 mars 1861. As cited in *ibid*.

²⁸ Loose translation : Rome or death. Garibaldi’s work indeed allows us to understand better the messianic figure of Rome at the time : « *Rome ! Qu’est-ce que pour moi, servent adepte de l’Antiquité, sinon la capitale du monde ? Reine détronée ! Mais ses ruines, immenses, gigantesques, desquelles sort, spectre lumineux, la mémoire de tout ce qui fut grand (...) et civilisateur. (...) Enfin, Rome était pour moi l’Italie, parce que je ne vois l’Italie que dans la réunion de ses membres épars, et que Rome est pour moi le seul et unique symbole de l’Unité Italienne* » Loose translation : Rome ! For me, a fervent follower of antiquity, what is it if not the capital of the world ? Queen dethroned ! But its ruins, immense, gigantic, from which emerges, a luminous spectre, the memory of all that was great (...) and civilising. (...) Finally, Rome was Italy for me, because I see Italy only in the reunion of its scattered members, and Rome is for me the one and only symbol of Italian unity. See « *Mémoires de Garibaldi* » par Alexandre Dumas, 1994 as cited in Prosdotti, Emanuela. « Antiquités, archéologie et récit des origines dans la construction nationale italienne (XVIIIe-XIXe siècles) III ». *L’Antiquité à la BnF*, 1 juin 2021, <https://doi.org/10.58079/b8ps>.

²⁹ D’Azeglio indeed qualifies the *Pro-Roman* argument of being a « *conceito rettorico-classico* ». Loose translation : rethorical-classical concept. As cited in Djament-Tran, Géraldine. « Le débat sur Rome capitale. Géohistoire d’un choix de localisation ». *L’Espace géographique*, vol. 34, n° 4, 2005, p. 367-380. *Cairn.info*, <https://doi.org/10.3917/eg.344.0367>.)

³⁰ Loose translation : Now the whole problem of Rome does not exist if we do not take into account the fact that Italians think that Rome should be a capital city and that Rome is neither a capital city nor does it look set to become one in the future. Alberto Moravia, « *Delusione di Roma* » as cited in *ibid*.

functionality of the metropolitan organisation. Moreover, roman economic activity was negligible, and the income of the papal city depended mainly on the generosity of the Christian world. The new capital also lagged in terms of communications with other Italian cities and regions, as the Papal States had delayed its development³¹.

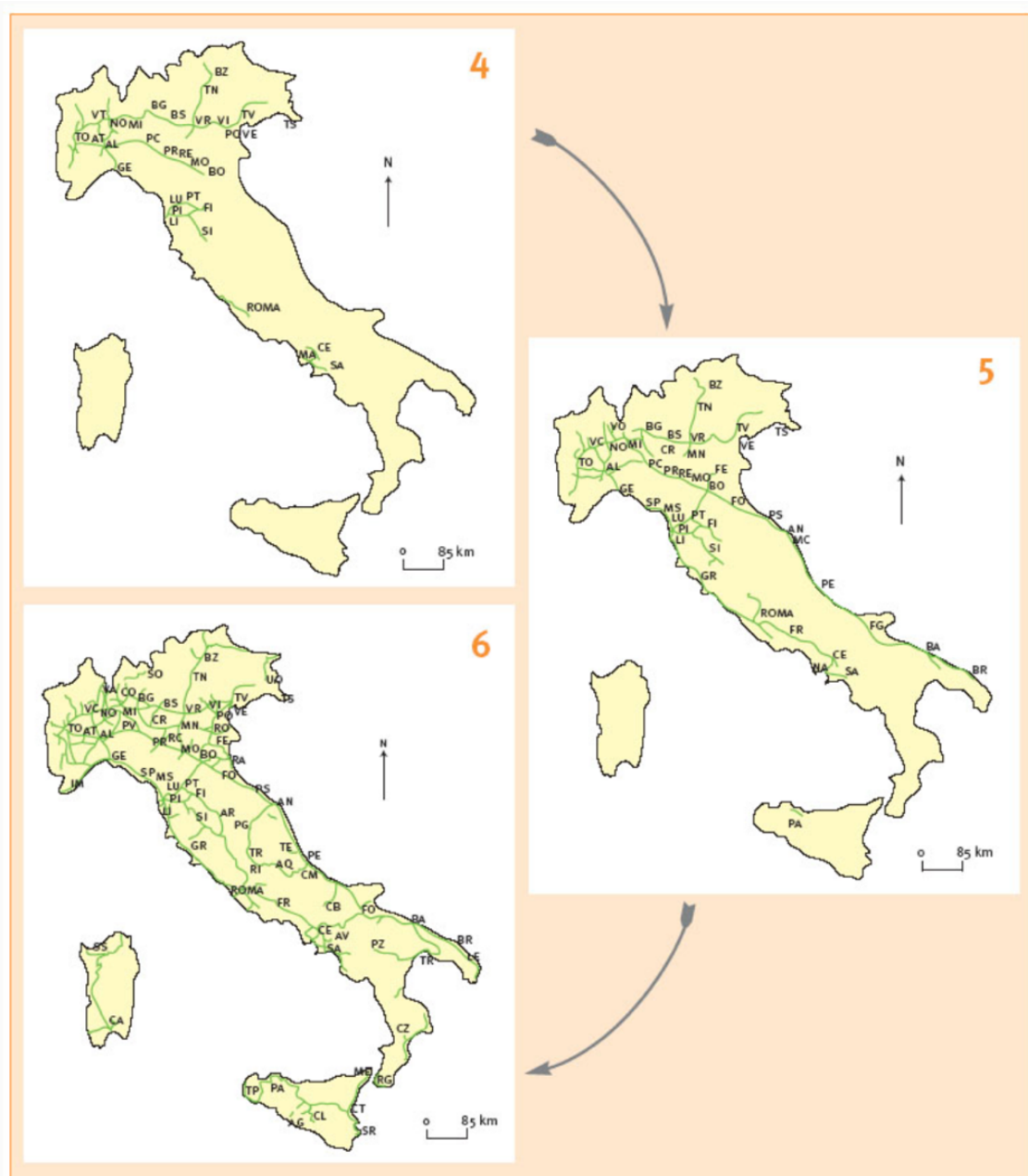


Figure 2: Italy's rail network in 1860, 1865 and 1876³²

These arguments were used against the proclamation of Rome as the capital, showing that the city in its present state was not fit for hosting the royal functions. According to some authors, the choice of Rome was somehow disconnected from the urban reality of the city.

³¹ This delay was partially made up in 1876. However, by 1871, the northern region already had a considerable network linking the metropolises, which was not the case for the Romain region.

³² *ibid.*

Indeed, reflections about the relationship between the inherited city and the city to be built are mentioned but remain general in nature.³³

In this first subsection, we highlighted how the thinking that led the parliamentarians to choose Rome as the capital was based on more theoretical and rhetorical arguments, stemming from an almost messianic representation of the Eternal city. However, this thinking did not involve an urban perspective as it neglected the consequences for the future of the city itself. While Rome lends its name and its glory to the new Italian nation, the reflection is not focused on the functional aspect and the consequences of this choice for the city.³⁴

F. A turning point for the archaeological policies of the capital:

In 1871, Rome was chosen as the capital mainly for its name and prestige, without giving much thought to the consequences of this choice for the metropolis itself. However, the question was not long in coming. The desire to preserve the heritage of ancient Rome was already present before 1871, and various proposals were put forward by the municipal and state authorities to reconcile modernization and preservation.

a. Rome before 1870: an archaeological concern that was already well established:

This subsection does not aim at identifying all the processes involved in the conservation of the archaeological heritage that existed before the Capture of Rome. However, by understanding the methods and frameworks that preceded our period of study in terms of preservation of urban heritage, we will be able to better appreciate the rupture that took place after 1871. Before the promotion of the Eternal city to the status of capital, the fields of

³³ Bocquet, Denis. *Rome ville technique, 1870-1925: une modernisation conflictuelle de l'espace urbain*. École française de Rome, 2007.

³⁴ Bocquet, Denis. « La ville entre modernisation et patrimoine archéologique. Quel paysage urbain pour Rome capitale? (1870-1922) ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 59, n° 1, 1999, p. 147-61. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3406/camed.1999.1265>. And Djament-Tran, Géraldine. « Le débat sur Rome capitale. Géohistoire d'un choix de localisation ». *L'Espace géographique*, vol. 34, n° 4, 2005, p. 367-380. Cairn.info, <https://doi.org/10.3917/eg.344.0367>.)

archaeology and the conservation of Rome's urban heritage were already receiving sustained and institutionalized attention. Excavations as well as the preservation of urban archaeology were a source of interest for the French during their occupation, as well as for the Holy See. The Central Archaeological Zone, comprising the Forum, the Palatine, the Colosseum, and the Baths of Caracalla, was gradually demarcated during the French period and became the subject of numerous strict regulations. The area was indeed already protected by the Edict of September 27, 1827, in which Pope Leo XII recommended the complete enclosure of the Forum, in accordance with the archaeological knowledge of the time.³⁵ The creation of the *Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra* in 1852 also underlined the Holy See's commitment to the study and preventive conservation of ancient sites, which seemed to have become an integral part of the city's urban landscape³⁶. The main objective at the time was to protect the remains from art dealers and property speculation. From this period onwards, there was a desire to remove the antiquities and isolate them within the urban landscape. But the city's urban growth was very slow at the time, and religious power structures prevented the city from expanding and modernizing. Indeed, the papal authorities were opposed to a policy of growth and renewal for the Holy City. As a result, archaeological excavations and discoveries were not threatened by potential urban modernization, and the subject did not become a source of debate or opposition. In 1871, with the arrival of new authorities and urban planning bodies, the emerging desire to create a capital within the Eternal city led to a debate on how the new city and the old city should interact. In this sense, the year 1871 marked a turning point in urban politics in the Urbs.

b. *Roma Capitale*: a decisive turning point for archeology:

The modernization of the city in 1871 was considered essential in the perspective of a strong growth following its promotion to capital. It was an important issue, as it concerned the prestige and authority of the future capital. According to Frank J. Costa, the eyes of Italy and Europe were on the new capital, ultimately giving to the matter an international dimension.³⁷ In fact, Rome was expected to grow both demographically and economically, requiring the creation of new districts, especially industrial and residential, and new transport

³⁵ R.T Ridley, *The Pope's archeologist: the life and times of Carlo Fea*, Rome, 2000. as cited in Bocquet, Denis. « L'archéologie à Rome après 1870. Une lecture politique et spatiale ». *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée*, vol. 113, n° 2, 2001, p. 759. *shs.hal.science*, <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00129556>.

³⁶ *Institutions rattachées au Saint-Siège Commission Pontificale pour l'Archéologie Sacrée Profil*. <https://www.vatican.va/content/romancuria/fr/istituzioni-collegate-con-la-santa-sede/pontificia-commissione-di-archeologia-sacra/profilo.html>. Consulté le 20 mars 2024.

³⁷ Costa, F. « Urban Planning in Rome from 1870 to the First World War ». *GeoJournal*, vol. 24, n° 3, 1991, p. 269-76. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41145199>.

connections, particularly to connect the two banks of the Tiber. The city, which was to be the home to Italy's new administrations and institutions, was also supposed to be equipped with ministries.³⁸ Another challenge for the planners of the time lied in the health control of a dense city that had recently been hit by a malaria epidemic. Almost from the start of the planning process, one fundamental factor became clear: the modernization plan for the city had to take into account the inherited aspect of the urban fabric. The main issue in 1871 was therefore how to incorporate the archaeological heritage into the new urban landscape. Despite the contradictions between planners, there was a genuine concern from both the municipality and the state to preserve the city's urban past, which clashed with the authorities' strong desire to provide the city with a modern urban center, a matter of prestige and legitimacy for the new capital, having both European and international ambitions. This dilemma between modernization and preservation gave rise to different approaches and opinions. Firstly, preservationists opposed any form of modernization and focused on protecting the existing architectural and environmental heritage. Augustus J.C. Hare, an English writer for example writes: "*It avails little to deplore the vast modernization going on; for the changes are, for one reason and another, inevitable: and they are not so much due to national ideas of the superiority of Rome as to the ambition to convert Rome into what it never was - an industrial metropolis. Fortunately, the minority that fights for preservation of ancient monuments, a world heritage, still manages to hold its own, though uneasily*³⁹". At the contrary, some people were in favor of modernizing and completely restructuring Rome to meet the expectations of the city's new role. This is the case of Alessandro Viviani⁴⁰, who advocates modernization, sometimes at the expense of preserving the historic center and the surrounding Roman villas. Finally, a third camp argued for the development of a new part of the city dedicated to its new activities, to the east of the historic center. This was the case of Quintino Sella, who understood that sparing the old center by expanding the city beyond Aurelian's wall was equivalent to sacrificing the 'Green' Rome.⁴¹ Thus, there was a great deal of dissent, and many ideas were put forward for the development of the city. According to many authors, however, the parliamentarians recognized the exceptional character of the city, which became one of the reasons why the discussions were fast and constructive. Without denying the importance of the archaeological destruction that took place after 1871, a genuine concern for conservation, albeit partial, was

³⁸ On the matter, several possibilities are envisaged : as some consider the need to recycle catholic buildings in the historic center, other advocate for the creation of an entirely new districts. Italo Insolera, « *Roma Moderna : un secolo di storia urbanistica.* » as cited in *ibid.*

³⁹ Augustus J.C. Hare, as cited in *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Viviani is a significant character for the city planning of Rome in 1870, as he directs the *Ufficio Tecnico Comunale*. Two other important characters in the period between 1870 and 1875 are Luigi Piancini, mayor of Rome between 1872 and 1874, under which he helped to draft the first *piano regolatore* and Quintino Sella, minister of Finances.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

evident at the level of political power.⁴² In fact, even if the doctrine of conservation was not dominant, most of the bodies responsible for protecting the heritage were already in place. Indeed, the authorities were already giving archaeology an important role, with the creation of the *Soprintendenza per gli scavi e la conservazione dei monumenti di Roma* in 1870⁴³ and a municipal archaeological commission in 1872⁴⁴. In November 1870, a commission of architects and engineers published a report setting out the main urban planning guidelines for Rome at the end of the 19th century. Its main recommendations included (a) the creation of a new district to the east of the historic center, served by a new railway station⁴⁵; (b) the improvement of communications by building a tunnel under several hills and widening existing roads; (c) the creation of public gardens around the *Castel Sant'Angelo* and the preservation of the Prati district to the west of the Tiber; and (d) the use of the *Castro Pretorio* district for military purposes.

The first section of this thesis is mainly dealing with the question of the capital and its choice. The first part of this section identified the main arguments that led the Italian parliamentarians of the time to promote Rome as the capital of Italy. The second part of this section demonstrates how this change of status influenced the policy of preserving the city's heritage and the inherited urban fabric, particularly in view of the need to modernize the city.

Section 2 : Between modernization and preservation:

By studying the various regulatory plans, we can identify the main directions taken by the municipality for the development of the city. The plan is indeed the result of the work of the Municipal Commission. To further our analysis, we will also look at the action of the State, especially in the case of the embankment of the Tiber and the *passaggiata archeologica*. Especially in the late 19th century, archaeology became a battleground between the State, the Municipality, and the Holy See.

⁴² Bocquet, Denis. « La ville entre modernisation et patrimoine archéologique. Quel paysage urbain pour Rome capitale? (1870-1922) ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 59, n° 1, 1999, p. 147-61. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3406/camed.1999.1265>.

⁴³ A state body whose first administrator was Pietro Rosa.

⁴⁴ Municipal body : created after the state's one, the commission is a sign of the municipality losing ground in the sector to the State.

⁴⁵ Which was going to become *Termini*.

A. Modernization policies in the center:

The City municipality's urban policy for Rome combines modernization with the preservation of a certain heritage. The regulatory plans are extensive instruments, and, in the context of Italian urban planning, they are quite of importance. In this section, we will also describe an important urban work of the period, which is the embankment of the Tiber.

a. The various objectives of the General Regulatory Plans:

The drafting of a General Regulatory Plan⁴⁶ is made compulsory in Italy by the law of June 1865⁴⁷. Since then, the instrument has become the city's most authoritative urban planning document. According to the law, the PRG was divided between a *piani d'ampliamento* (urbanization plans for the suburbs) and a *piano d'allineamento* (alignment plans for the city center). The PRG, presented by Giambattista Pianciani in 1873, aimed at providing adequate space for the new government functions and for the accommodation of civil servants from Florence and Turin, who would be located entirely outside the historic center. It planned a major urban expansion of the city, sacrificing much of the *agro*, the agricultural land surrounding the city of Rome. New districts plan to be created and redeveloped, such as Prati, Trastevere, Testaccio, Castro Pretorio and Esquilino.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ In Italian, *Piano Regolatore Generale*

⁴⁷ These plans are made compulsory for all municipalities with more than 2,000 inhabitants. They replace the “*regolamento edilizio*” (town planning regulation), which until then formed the basic rules in the sector. Mazonod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain.* 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazonod_f.pdf.

⁴⁸ In light red on figure 3.

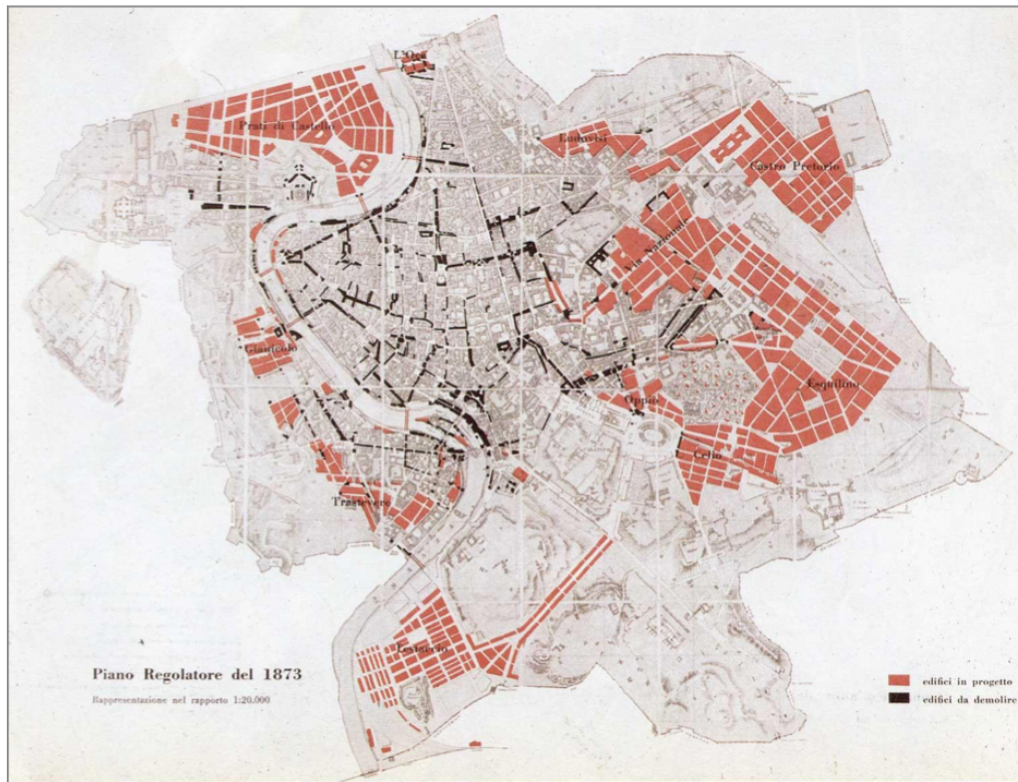


Figure 3: The 1873 *Piano Regolatore* imagined by Pianciani⁴⁹

In the case of the Esquilino especially, the development erased the underlying urban heritage.⁵⁰ The 1873 regulatory plan marked the beginning of the practice of the *svrentamenti*⁵¹. The most famous is undoubtedly that of the *Corso Vittorio Emanuele II*, one of the most strategic arteries of the city center, linking the Church of the Gesù to the *Vittorio Emanuele* bridge. The regulatory plans of 1873 and 1883 also provided for the construction of many other streets, including *Via del Tritone*, *Via Cavour*, between *Via del Corso* and *Piazza Barberini*, and the extension of *Via Nazionale*, linking *Largo Magnanapoli* to *Piazza della Repubblica*.

⁴⁹ ASC, Ripartizione V Lavori Pubblici Piano Regolatore, Posizione 7 Varie. As found in *ibid*.

⁵⁰ It should be noted that the ancient city was much larger than the papal and baroque city. In the *Esquilino*, which was built from 1870 onwards, documents from the period show that many antiquities were stolen, and were sold at auction to private collectors.

⁵¹ Derived from the Italian word « *svrentare* », it refers to the excavation of the city center in order to create wide communication routes. As there is no commonly accepted translation of the word, we will keep using the Italian term.

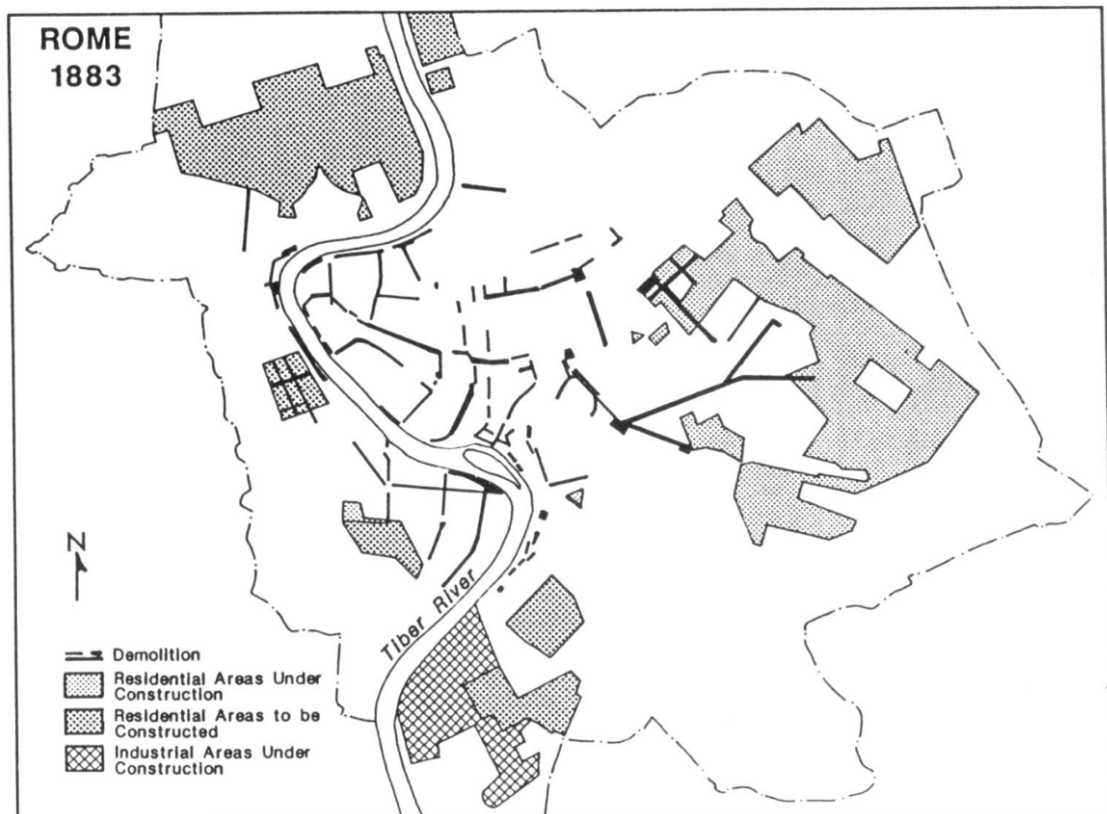


Figure 4: A sketch of the 1883 *piano regolatore*⁵²

The plan also included many other works, such as the renovation of the Jewish ghetto, the embankment of the Tiber River and the construction of a metal bridge over the Central Archeological zone. It should be noted that even if this project was abandoned, it illustrates the way in which the municipality ignored the Central Archaeological Zone in the construction of its regulatory plans. The last plan of the Liberal period was presented by Edmondo Sanjust de Teulada. Trained as an engineer, his plan was a continuation of the 1883 plan as it planned to continue the city's urban expansion to prepare for the strong urban growth awaited in Rome. The plan also called for the construction of monuments to promote a new national pride, based on the artistic and architectural codes of Imperial Rome. As a matter of facts, the 1909 plan made less use of *svrentamenti* than the 1873 and 1883 plans: only *Via Tomacelli*, near the *Mausoleo di Augusto*, *Via Zanardelli*, between the north of *Piazza Navona* and *Ponte Umberto*, and a new section of *Via Del Tritone* were built.

⁵² Costa, F. « Urban Planning in Rome from 1870 to the First World War ». *GeoJournal*, vol. 24, n° 3, 1991, p. 269-76. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41145199>.

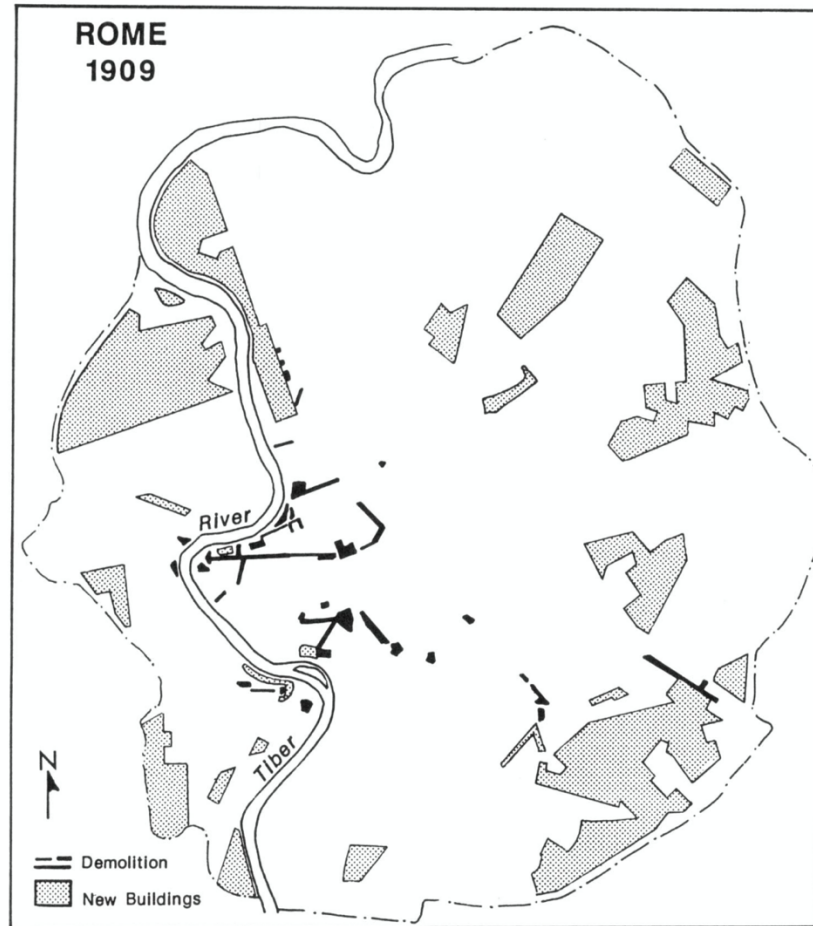


Figure 5: A sketch of the 1909 *piano regolatore*⁵³

It is important to note that the official plans were not strictly followed: the plans of 1873 and 1883 were often emptied of their substance, a fact that led Pianciani to resign. The financial power of the great builders also allowed them to build outside the 1909 plan.⁵⁴

b. A case study on the embankment of the Tiber:

From 1870 onwards and as part of the wish to modernize the urban landscape, monuments were built on top of pre-existing structures in Rome, causing much destruction⁵⁵. The project of the embankment of the Tiber, the city's main construction site for over fifty years, is a good example of how ancient ruins were perceived at the time as an obstacle to

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Bocquet, Denis. « L'archéologie à Rome après 1870. Une lecture politique et spatiale ». *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée*, vol. 113, n° 2, 2001, p. 759. *sbs.hal.science*, <https://sbs.hal.science/halshs-00129556>.

⁵⁵ Bocquet, Denis. « La ville entre modernisation et patrimoine archéologique. Quel paysage urbain pour Rome capitale? (1870-1922) ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 59, n° 1, 1999, p. 147-61. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.3406/camed.1999.1265>.

modernization and, in this case, to the normal flow of the river's waters. From 1870, the embankment of the Tiber became a major project for Rome. The city was indeed at great risk of flooding⁵⁶.

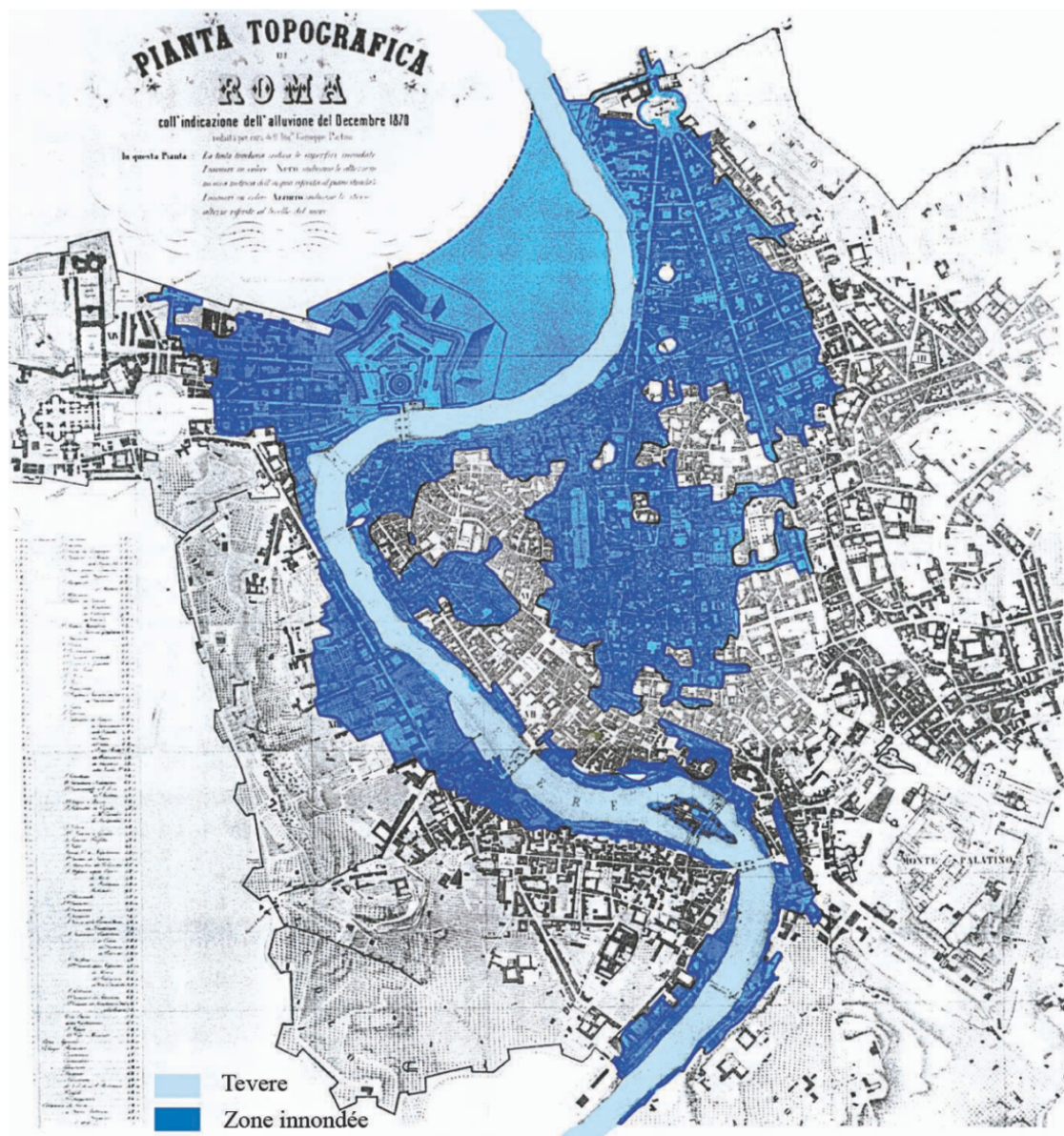


Figure 6: Flooded areas in the winter 1870-1871⁵⁷

⁵⁶ As seen for instance during the floods in the winter of 1870-1871.

⁵⁷ Graphic design by Hélène Nessi based on a map published by S. De Paolis and A. Ravaglioni in "La terza Roma. Lo sviluppo urbanistico, edilizio e tecnico di Roma capitale. 1870-1970. Rome, 1971 as cited in Bocquet, Denis. *Rome ville technique, 1870-1925: une modernisation conflictuelle de l'espace urbain*. École française de Rome, 2007.



Figure 7: The banks of the Tiber as they were before the Liberal period⁵⁸

Protecting the city by damming the river was therefore seen as a matter of legitimacy for the new government. However, the riverbed was full of ancient ruins, which civil engineers of the time believed would prevent the water from flowing away. The project chosen in 1871 was that of the engineer Cesare Canevari. As an integral part of the Corps of Civil Engineers, the choice of his project symbolizes the State's control over the Tiber constructive site. He insisted as part of his project on the importance of removing the ancient remains and dredging the riverbed to remove the remains so as not to slow down the flow of the river. The same applies in his view to the ancient bridges that were to be demolished because they had been identified as bottlenecks. One of the examples is the *Ponte Rotto*, destroyed in 1887,

⁵⁸ Anonymous photograph, published by S.Romano in « *L'immagine di Roma. 1848-1895. La città, l'archeologia, il medioevo nei calotipi del fondo Tuminello*, Naples, 1994 as cited in *ibid.*

or the *Ponte Cestio*, destroyed between 1888 and 1892. Canevari's project also included the removal of the Tiber Island. From 1875 onwards, this project aroused a great deal of criticism and opposition, especially from the municipality⁵⁹. In the 1880s voices raised against the removal of the island, which, according to Eugenio Mancinelli, gave the river a tragic aspect, in the theatrical sense of the word, and condemned the overly technical design of the state engineers. In the end, the island was not destroyed but modified. Its edges were encased in reinforcements and almost the entire surface was covered in cement. According to Bocquet, "*le thème de la protection de l'île Tibérine se confirme alors comme révélateur du début d'une évolution de la perception des impératifs de la modernisation et de leur impact sur la ville.*"⁶⁰. A similar dynamic could be observed with the ancient bridges at the beginning of the twentieth century.

B. Archaeology: a ground for institutional rivalries:

From 1870, Rome was the scene of rivalries between the Municipality and the Italian State, which both sought to establish their legitimacy as the new powers in control of the new capital. Urban heritage, which covered a large part of the city's territory, became a privileged sector in the expression of these disputes. The reason for this was mainly administrative and legal since archaeology became after 1871 both a State and a municipal matter. More generally, certain conservation choices reflect a political desire to build the nation through urban development and to detach the territory from the papal authorities. In this section, we will focus mainly about the Central Archeological Zone, as the main part of the urban fabric that has been affected by the State's action.

⁵⁹ According to Bocquet, critics like Angelo Vescovali's were at least initially, in 1875, a criticism of the State's control over the Tiber works rather than a genuine concern for conservation. See Bocquet, Denis. « L'archéologie à Rome après 1870. Une lecture politique et spatiale ». *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée*, vol. 113, n° 2, 2001, p. 759. *shs.hal.science*, <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00129556>.

⁶⁰ Loose translation: the issue of the protection of the Tiberina island was then confirmed as the beginning of an evolution in the perception of the imperatives of modernisation and their impact on the city. As cited in Bocquet, Denis. « La ville entre modernisation et patrimoine archéologique. Quel paysage urbain pour Rome capitale? (1870-1922) ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 59, n° 1, 1999, p. 147-61. DOI.org (*Crossref*), <https://doi.org/10.3406/amed.1999.1265>.

a. Archaeology as a battleground between the black nobility and the Italian state:

The Italian Municipal and Provincial Law of 1865 formed the basis for the organization of local authorities in Italy, and therefore organizes municipal life in Rome. Inspired by an anti-centralist doctrine, it gave many prerogatives to the municipalities and did not grant Rome any derogatory status.⁶¹ Therefore, after 1871, the Capitol was seen by the intransigent Catholic authorities as a privileged place to express their opposition to the aims of the Italian government. At the same time, the municipality became the property of the so-called Black nobility of Rome⁶². In fact, in 1870 the city was largely owned by the Catholic aristocracy.⁶³ From *Roma Capitale* onwards, archaeology was to play a key role in the rivalry for control of a considerable part of the city. While the transformation of the city was mainly entrusted to the municipality, controlled by an anti-government aristocracy, the control of certain parts of the urban space became crucial for the Italian state to establish its legitimacy. Moreover, in the idea to foster the Italian identity, it was important for the royal government to control the symbols of the Third Rome. Archaeology therefore proved to be not only a means of acquiring territorial jurisdiction within the city, but also a way to control the image of the city through archeology. In 1870, the king's lieutenant general Alfonso La Marmora, abolished the *Commissione pontifica per l'Antichità e le Belle Arti*⁶⁴ and gave to the Ministry of Public Instruction the responsibility for archaeology preservation. This was followed by the creation of the *Soprintendenza per gli scavi di Antichità e per la custodia dei monumenti della provincia di Roma*, which definitively marked the State's desire to displace the papal power represented by the Capitol in the field of archaeology. In a broader sense, and as the appointment of Pietro Rosa to head the institution shows, the State was seeking to control a significant part of Roman territory through the control of the Central Archeological Zone, which had also an undeniable symbolic power at the heart of the Roman landscape. We therefore witnessed a total displacement of municipality's control within the Central Archeological Zone. In 1872, a municipal commission, the *Commissione archeologica municipale* is created, although the control of the zone was already largely lost. The commission failed

⁶¹ Contrasting for instance with the French system on the matter. See Bocquet, Denis. « Chapitre II. La municipalité romaine entre ancien régime et unité: Les fondements du pouvoir local ». *Rome, ville technique (1870-1925): Une modernisation conflictuelle de l'espace urbain*, Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2007, p. 51-71. *OpenEdition Books*, <https://books.openedition.org/efr/1500>.

⁶² In Italian *nobiltà nera*: designates the fraction of aristocracy that was opposed to the Capture of Rome and hostile to the new constitutional monarchy in Rome. They were often close to the Papal authority.

⁶³ This was mainly due to the censal system and the law of 1865 which gave prerogatives to landowners. See *ibid.*

⁶⁴ This choice is understandable as the commission would have become municipal otherwise.

to build a clear vision for the future of the city and was content to regulate archeological discoveries in the Esquilino.

b. The construction of the Vittoriano: a case study:

The Central Archeological Zone, which was mainly managed by the State, was ignored in the regulatory plans (1873, 1883, 1909). The municipal plan simply did not indeed devote a section to it. According to the architect Giambattista Demora, the omission of such an important part of the city was the proof that the Capitol was giving up some of its prerogatives. Around the Central Archaeological Zone, the municipality was only concerned with the construction of *Via Cavour*.

During the period, the State decided to build a monument in the zone, the *Vittoriano*. To do so, the State had to destroy parts of the Imperial Forums, hence why for certain scholars, the construction of the *Vittoriano* “*illustre à la fois l'imposition traumatique d'un monument symbolique de la nouvelle Rome en plein Coeur du centre historique de la ville, et la volonté de l'État italien de marquer face à la mairie son pouvoir sur la capitale*⁶⁵”. After two separate competitions, in 1882 and 1883, the Prime Minister, Agostino Depretis, chose the site for the building. The decision was made despite the regulatory plan and in opposition to the City Council. The symbolic significance of this monument was questioned, notably by Raffaele Panella, who spoke of “*d'expropriation symbolique et matérielle du noyau de la Rome antique*⁶⁶”. The *Vittoriano's* installation was, according to the author representative of a relationship with the ancient city based on an instrumentalist logic: with this gesture, the State sought to definitively establish its power over the Eternal city, despite the preservation of its archaeology. For Catherine Brice in “*Monumentalité publique et politique à Rome: Le Vittoriano*”, those monuments constructed by the State in the period can be considered as figures of the State's power and legitimacy : “*Les monuments publics de cette fin du XIXème siècle sont l'expression d'une sensibilité politique, d'une esthétique publique, d'un rapport entre l'État et les masses; ils sont à la fois le récepteur de toute une série d'images et d'acceptions du Risorgimento et l'émetteur d'une nouvelle histoire, d'un nouvel imaginaire politique. Ils sont les instruments d'une stratégie particulièrement visible dans le cas de Rome, nouvelle capitale du Royaume*

⁶⁵ Loose translation : illustrates both the traumatic imposition of a monument symbolic of the new Rome in the heart of the historic center and the desire of the Italian state to demonstrate its power over the capital to the Capitol. Bocquet, Denis. « La ville entre modernisation et patrimoine archéologique. Quel paysage urbain pour Rome capitale? (1870-1922) ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 59, n° 1, 1999, p. 147-61. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3406/camed.1999.1265>.

⁶⁶ Loose translation : a symbolic and material expropriation of the core of ancient Rome

d'Italie. (...) Symboles d'un pouvoir nouveau en cours d'affirmation, il s'agit bien, au sein du mouvement general de "monumentomanie" (...) d'une stratégie d'occupation de l'espace romain spécifique à cette ville.⁶⁷

As early as 1883, although the destruction did not begin until 1885, the City Council condemned the archaeological losses caused by the scale of the works. Although the condemnation was politically motivated by power struggles between the city council and the state, it also gave rise to a growing pro-preservation sentiment.

c. The beginning of seeing archaeological areas as real urban spaces:

Even if ignored by the municipal regulatory plans of 1873 and 1883, the rest Central Archaeological Zone evolved during the Liberal period, mainly under ministerial leadership, and at the turn of the century became a favored area of expression for state archaeologists, notably Guido Baccelli. It is in fact with the aim of protecting the area from speculation that Demora suggested to Baccelli, then Minister of Public Instruction that he take charge of the area. In 1881, the *Commissione Reale* was thus created. Six years later, the Commission issued a *Piano per la sistemazione della zona monumentale riservata di Roma*. In 1887, on the initiative of Baccelli and Ruggiero Bonghi, the first law on the archaeological zone was passed: it covered a large part of the city, including the Imperial Forums, the Palatine hill, the Colosseum, the Trajan Baths, the Temple of Claudius and the *Via Appia* as far as the *Porta San Sebastiano*.

⁶⁷ Loose translation : The public monuments of the late 19th century are the expression of a political sensibility, a public aesthetic, a relationship between the State and the masses; they are both the receptor of a whole series of images and acceptances of the Risorgimento and the emitter of a new history, a new political imaginary. They are the instruments of a strategy that is particularly visible in the case of Rome, the new capital of the Kingdom of Italy. (...) Symbols of a new power in the process of being asserted, they are indeed, within the general movement of "monumentomanie" (...) a strategy of occupation of Roman space specific to this city. Brice, Catherine. « Monumentalité publique et politique à Rome. Le Vittoriano ». *Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome*, vol. 301, n° 1, 1998, p. 0-0. *www.persee.fr*, <https://doi.org/10.3406/befar.1998.1276>.

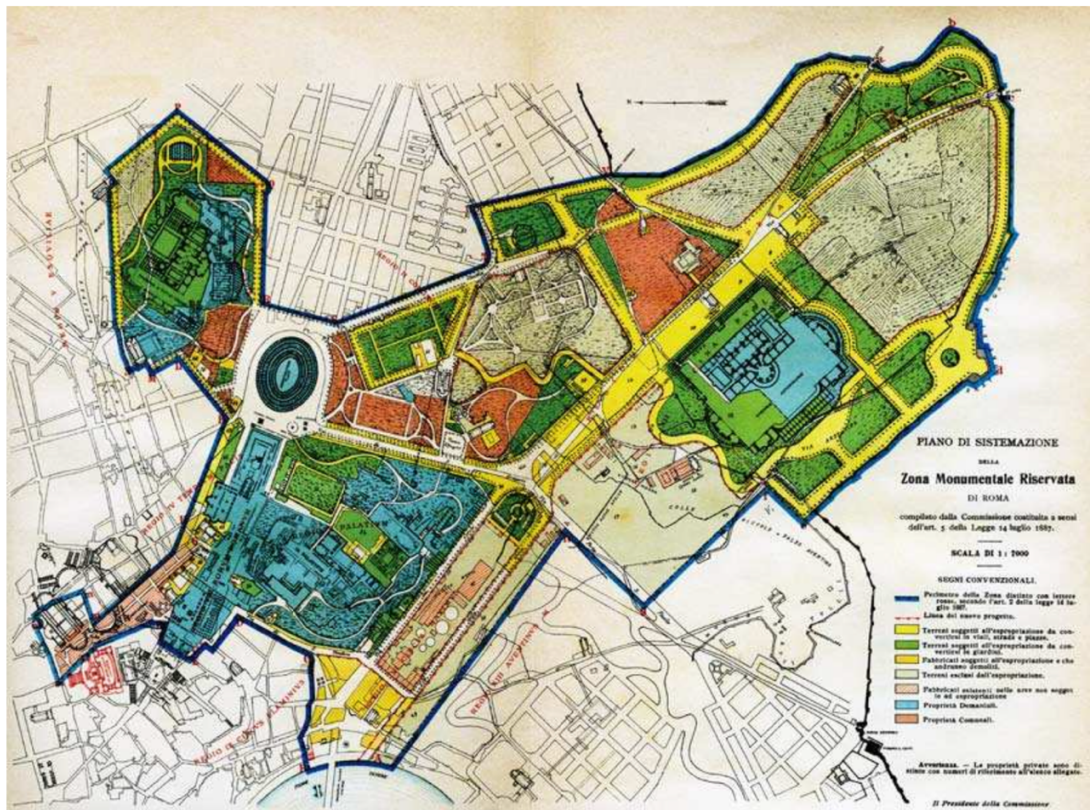


Figure 8: The archaeological park as imagined by Baccelli in 1887⁶⁸

This law, which was finally postponed until 1889, also provided for and authorized the isolation of the ancient buildings, which was an objective for both the State and the Capitol. The expropriations, planned over a period of ten years, with a view to creating an urban park, were handled by a commission created for the occasion. Composed of members appointed by both the State and the City Council, the commission could soften institutional rivalries over the Central Archaeological Zone: for instance, it included both the General Director of Antiquities at the Ministry of Public Instruction, Giuseppe Fiorelli, and the deputy mayor, Mario Ceselli. Although the law was extended at the end of its term by the new Minister of Public Instruction, Emanuele Gianturco, the perimeter of the zone was considerably reduced. The initial project was relaunched in 1898 by Baccelli, who also managed to obtain substantial funding to achieve his aims, notably thanks to the help of the journal the *Tribuna*. Half of the funding came from the State and the other half from the municipality, launching the start of large-scale works. The improved relations between the state and the town council enabled for instance Boni to move the tracks of the new tramway. According to Bocquet: “*au tournant*

⁶⁸ Capobianco, Valeria. *V. Capobianco, “La Zona Monumentale Riservata: storia di un paesaggio urbano”, in “Il Primo Miglio della Via Appia a Roma”, a cura di D. Manacorda, R. Santangeli Valenzani, Atti della Giornata di Studio, Roma, CROMA, 2010. www.academia.edu, https://www.academia.edu/27962195/V_Capobianco_La_Zona_Monumentale_Riservata_storia_di_un_paesaggio_urbano_in_Il_Primo_Miglio_della_Via_Appia_a_Roma_a_cura_di_D_Manacorda_R_Santangeli_Valenzani_Atti_de_lla_Giornata_di_Studio_Roma_CROMA_2010. Consulté le 1 avril 2024.*

du siècle la zone archéologique centrale a pris place dans l'espace urbain et s'impose comme domaine gouvernemental au coeur de la capitale. Le domaine privilégié de l'action étatique au coeur de la capitale n'est plus guère contesté⁶⁹". It should be noted, however, that the rivalry between institutions continued to exist in other parts of the city, notably on the Tiber construction site, at least until 1910. With the laws of 1914 and 1917, the Central Archaeological Zone was consolidated and extended to include the Imperial Forums and the *Campidoglio*. The area was fully integrated into the city in 1917. During the Fascist period, the archaeological zone was more protected than ever. However, the staging and construction of major axes between the forums deviated from Baccelli's original idea. The area was no longer seen as a park with recreational functions, but rather as a transit zone. According to Bocquet, "*la ville moderne, dans son rapport à la ville antique, y perd un espace dont Baccelli avait mis en scène à la fois la quietude et l'intégration à l'espace urbain*⁷⁰"

⁶⁹ Loose translation: At the turn of the century, the central archaeological zone took its place in the urban space and established itself as a government domain at the heart of the capital. The privileged domain of state action in the heart of the capital is no longer disputed. See Bocquet, Denis. « L'archéologie à Rome après 1870. Une lecture politique et spatiale ». *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome - Italie et Méditerranée*, vol. 113, n° 2, 2001, p. 759. *sbs.hal.science*, <https://sbs.hal.science/halshs-00129556>.

⁷⁰ Loose translation : the modern city, in its relationship with the ancient city, loses a space staged by Baccelli meant for tranquility and integration into the urban space. See *ibid*.

CHAPTER 3: "LA ROMA DI MUSSOLINI" (1922-1943):

The links between the archaeological policies of Liberal Rome and those of Mussolini should not be overlooked. To some extent, sketches of fascist urban policy for the capital city find their origin in the Liberal period. Mussolini's Fascist's mythization of ancient Rome in the public discourse can to a certain extent be linked to the nationalists Third Rome of the 19th century, although at the time, the reference was used to construct a new Italian national identity. In 1870, the common past was emphasized in order to unite a nation that was not, at first sight, united. The reference to the past thus served the purposes of national construction and the construction of a new identity, embodied in the Third Rome of which Mazzini spoke. During the Fascist period, the dictator Mussolini sought to follow in the footsteps of the Rome of the emperors, in particular the one of Augustus. The regime's propaganda was based on the continuity of imperial Rome, using concepts such as *romanity*⁷¹. For the *Duce*, establishing his regime as a descendant of Rome's glorious past was, in a sense, a way of giving it signs of nobility. The myth of Rome was closely linked in Fascist ideology to the hero, indomitable and invincible, that Italy wished to embody. To this goal of *grandeur*, Mussolini added the need to sanitize Rome, to transform it into a flawless showcase for the Fascist regime. To this end, he continued the *svrentamenti* and the construction of housing districts outside the city. The expropriation policy itself was maintained by the regime from 1922 to 1943. In literature written after the Fascist era, authors emphasized the *Duce's* desire to transform the city of Rome, and to anchor Fascist ideology in stone, particularly through his heritage preservation policy.⁷²

In the city center, it can be argued that the *Duce's* hygienist policy was some kind of an extension of liberal policies. In terms of archaeology, the real break with Fascist ideology is to be found in the new desire to build in Rome the showcase of the Fascist regime. Experts speak of a kind of showcasing of Rome's ancient ruins and urban fabric, which was not necessarily happening during the Liberal period. At the time, preservation decisions were made, notably in the Colosseum, but these were the result of institutional rivalries rather than

⁷¹ Note that the word "*romanity*" is a loose translation from the term "*romanité*". Malvano Bechelloni, Laura. « Le mythe de la romanité et la politique de l'image dans l'Italie fasciste: » *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, vol. n o 78, n° 2, mai 2003, p. 111-20. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/ving.078.0111>.

⁷² "In generale la letteratura posteriore alle trasformazioni della capitale durante il regime fascista ha posto l'accento sulla smania di grandezza di Mussolini, sulla volontà di immortalare nella pietra, a favore dei posteri, il marchio fascista e di collegare in maniera fisica l'ideologia al mito di Roma attraverso gli scoprimenti e i restauri archeologici" Loose translation: In general, the literature following the capital's transformations during the Fascist regime has emphasized Mussolini's eagerness for greatness, his desire to immortalize in stone, for the benefit of posterity, the Fascist brand, and to physically link ideology to the myth of Rome through archeological discoveries and restorations. Sidoni, Paolo. *La Roma di Mussolini: la più completa ricostruzione delle trasformazioni della città durante il regime fascista*. Prima edizione., Newton Compton editori, 2019.

a desire to make a spectacle of the sites. Under Mussolini's regime, the urban landscape of the city center was radically altered, the result of a desire to establish a direct genealogy between Fascism and Imperial Rome. This chapter will also analyze how the Fascist period represented a period in which political divisions were not a determining factor in conservation policy choices, unlike the period 1976-1980. The first section will focus mainly on Mussolini's representation of the city and of archaeology in general, while the second section will detail the various restructurings undertaken by the dictator.

Section 1 : How the fascist urban policy is rooted in a vision of romanity:

We will begin by looking at the ways in which Mussolini saw his regime as an extension of Rome's imperial past. We will then look at to what extent Mussolini's vision of the city led to the implementation of an altering preservation policy, between *svrentamenti* in the historic center and the enhancement of the city's Roman identity.

A. The historical rhetoric at the core of the fascist ideology:

Both geographically and historically, the city of Rome was a starting point for Mussolini's fascist ideology. The concept of romanity is to be found at the heart of the Italian dictator's image policy. The *Duce* combined this historical dimension with a genuine architectural and territorial approach. Therefore, the following section will help us to understand how Mussolini's interest in Ancient Rome was particularly strong, leading to a growing interest in the period's architectural style. For some scholars, the Fascist period is thus the culmination of "*la nationalisation de la romanité et la romanisation de la nation*"⁷³.

⁷³ Loose translation : the nationalization of romanity and the romanization of the nation. See Foro, Philippe. « Romaniser la Nation et nationaliser la romanité : l'exemple de l'Italie ». *Anabases. Traditions et réceptions de l'Antiquité*, n° 1, mars 2005, p. 105-17. *journals.openedition.org*, <https://doi.org/10.4000/anabases.1325>.

a. *Romanity*, the symbolic physiognomy of fascism:

While the romanisation of the nation had been underway since 1870, in the 1920s romanity became the main symbolic physiognomy of fascism⁷⁴. “*Rome et l’Italie sont deux termes inséparables. Rome est notre point de départ et de référence, elle est notre symbole, ou si l’on préfère notre mythe. Nous rêvons l’Italie romaine, c’est à dire sage et forte, discipline et impériale*”⁷⁵. This phrase, pronounced by Mussolini in one of his speeches, perfectly describes the dictator’s image of the Eternal city. It is indeed once again the city’s symbolic power that Mussolini exploited as a propaganda strategy from the 1920s onwards, mainly through the myth of romanity.⁷⁶ The Fascist objective was not simply to create a popular consensus through the glorious past of the Eternal city, but in fact to place the Fascist ideology in the classical or ancient imperialist genealogy. In the dictator's speeches, it should be noted that the evocation of the antique period does not refer to a “*détermination temporelle, mais une catégorie de l’esprit*”⁷⁷, which allows him to connect the different periods as he wants, without encountering any contradictions. “*Aujourd’hui en Italie, ce n’est pas le temps de l’histoire, c’est le temps des mythes*”⁷⁸. The frequent use of myths in fascism ensured that no archeologists or scientist could ever contradict the *Duce*. In a way, fascist rhetoric places its arguments outside of history, allowing it to modify it as it pleased.⁷⁹ Mussolini’s rhetoric thus removes archaeology and its preservation from the very realm of knowledge and science: the field becomes eminently political, giving the dictator

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Loose translation : Rome and Italy are two inseparable concepts. Rome is our point of departure and reference, our symbol or if you prefer, our myth. We dream of a Roman Italy, wise and strong, disciplined, and imperial. Avezou, Laurent. « Chapitre XIV. Mussolini et Hitler ». *La fabrique de la gloire*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2020, p. 289-304. *Cairn.info*, <https://www.cairn.info/la-fabrique-de-la-gloire-heros-et-maudits-de-l-his--9782130818472-p-289.htm>.

⁷⁶ Perhaps anecdotally revealing, the term fascist comes from the Roman fasces, symbolizing during the imperium the power to coerce and punish. Once worn by certain magistrates, Mussolini refers to it several times in his political speeches: “*Romain est le faisceau du lecteur, romaine est notre organisation de combat, romain est notre orgueil et notre courage*” Loose translation: Roman is the fasces bundle, Roman is our fighting organization, Roman is our pride and courage. From Mussolini’s speech of April 21, 1922. *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Loose translation: temporal determination, but a category of the mind. Massimo Bontempelli, *L’avventura novecentista*, Florence, Vallecchi, 1938, p.42 as cited in Malvano Bechelloni, Laura. « Le mythe de la romanité et la politique de l’image dans l’Italie fasciste: » *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, vol. n o 78, n° 2, mai 2003, p. 111-20. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.3917/ving.078.0111>.

⁷⁸ Loose translation: Today in Italy, it is not the time of history, it is the time of myths. See Mario Torelli, “*Fascismo e archeologia. Creazione e diffusione di un mito attraverso i francobolli*”, dans R. Olmos, T.Tortosa et J.P Bellon (dir.), *Repensar la Escuela del CSIC en Roma*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2010, p.385-405, p. 398. ; Pascal Boyer, “*Tradition et vérité*”, *L’Homme*, vol. 26, n°97, 1986, p.309-329, p.309 as cited in Ruffinengo, Chiara. « La narration archéologique au temps du fascisme : récits, mises en scène, objets ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, n° 101, décembre 2020, p. 71-86. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.13703>.

⁷⁹ “*il s’avère possible de manipuler la base des connaissances, les sources archéologiques, sans qu’aucune méprise ou contradiction ne crée d’obstacle, puisque “rien” dans le temps du mythe, “n’est censé être vrai ou faux”*” Loose translation: it proves possible to manipulate the basis of knowledge, the archaeological sources, without any misunderstanding or contradiction creating an obstacle, since "nothing" in the time of myth, "is supposed to be true or false". See *ibid.*

greater room for manoeuvre. In 1942, when Italy was suffering the consequences of the Second World War, the *Duce* declared before the Chamber of Fasces and Corporations: “*Je ne dis pas que coule dans nos veines tout le sang qui coulait dans les veines des anciens Romains, mais il est certain que nous sommes le peuple dans les veines duquel coule la majeure partie du sang des anciens Romains.*”⁸⁰. To a certain extent, the rhetoric of the Roman past is used to hide the misery of the present⁸¹. Within this rhetoric, the city of Rome occupied a central place as the sacred space where greatness had previously been embodied.⁸² In the ideology, the city was linked to a genuine palingenic faith, as if the history of the urban space was an inexhaustible source of power and strength.⁸³ It is important to note that although both Liberal and Fascist Rome drew on a certain vision of Romanity, the two periods did not use the same elements. Indeed, the two rhetoric did not draw on the same symbols of ancient Rome: the nationalists of Liberal Rome, for example, found it difficult to refer to the oligarchic power characteristic of the Roman Republic or to the figure of the emperor. Mussolini, on the other hand, drew more on ancient Rome to legitimize the military and political power derived from charismatic leaders at the head of an empire, which was actually what he was trying to recreate.⁸⁴

b. Romanity as the future of fascism :

Mussolini not only placed Fascist Italy in a historical lineage with the Rome of the emperors, but the dictator also intended to embody a renewal of that Rome in its modern version. For the dictator, romanity had nothing to do with archaeology or antiquity: the myth of ancient Rome was a real driving force for the future of the regime.⁸⁵ This is one of the main differences between the use of the myth of ancient Rome during the *Risorgimento*: while the nationalists used this memory of a common past as a unifying force, Mussolini wanted to embody the Rome he idolized: it was in fact a kind of renaissance of ancient Rome that he

⁸⁰ Loose translation : I do not say that all the blood that flowed in the veins of the Romans flows in our veins, but it is certain that we are the people in whose veins most of the blood of the ancient Romans flows. see “*Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*” . La Fenice, Florence. SUSMEL E et SUSMEL D (1951-1963). As cited in Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/reru.145.0905>.

⁸¹ Paul Zanker, *Augusto e il potere delle immagini*, Turin, Universale Bollati Boringhieri, 2006, p.49 as cited in *ibid.*

⁸² Mosse, George L. *La nazionalizzazione delle masse: simbolismo politico e movimenti di massa in Germania (1815-1933)*. Il mulino, 2009.

⁸³ Aramini, Donatello. « L'Institut d'études romaines et le mythe d'Auguste en 1937 ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, traduit par Laura Fournier-Finocchiaro, n° 101, décembre 2020, p. 37-57. [journals.openedition.org, https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.13628](https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.13628).

⁸⁴ Foro, Philippe. « Romaniser la Nation et nationaliser la romanité : l'exemple de l'Italie ». *Anabases. Traditions et réceptions de l'Antiquité*, n° 1, mars 2005, p. 105-17. [journals.openedition.org, https://doi.org/10.4000/anabases.1325](https://doi.org/10.4000/anabases.1325).

⁸⁵ Gentile, Emilio. *Fascismo di pietra*. 1. ed. nella Economica Laterza., GLF editori Laterza, 2010.

wanted to establish. In 1870, Rome was seen as a model of freedom and progress, while the *Duce* saw it as a mirror of Italy's past glory. For the dictator, the imperial past of ancient Rome was a way of legitimizing his imperialist and authoritarian aspirations^{86 87}. Beyond the myth of Rome, Mussolini openly referred to the emperor Augustus. The cult of the figure reached its peak in 1937 with the organization of the *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* in the *Via Nazionale* exhibition center⁸⁸. The event commemorated the city's Roman past. The exhibition clearly expressed the Fascist desire to link the city to Roman tradition, as the name of the last gallery underlines: “*L’immortalité de l’idée romaine. La renaissance de l’Empire dans l’Italie fasciste*”⁸⁹. In addition to the use of romanity as a founding myth essential to Mussolini's Fascist rhetoric, the scholars show that the *Duce* himself tended to become romanized and increasingly embodied an imperial personality.

Paradoxically, a historical perspective of Italy provided the dictator with a vision of the future: “*La Roma mussoliniana vuole armonizzare il passato storico col presente che marcia a grandi insonni tappe verso l’avvenire*”⁹⁰. In this sense, Rome was both a historical reference point and a model of virtue, citizenship and greatness, values that were central to the Fascist ideology of the time.

In this subsection we have discussed how romanity and the mythization of the city of Rome were essential components of the Fascist propaganda. Indeed, the rhetoric of the city's past was used as a pledge of a glorious and untroubled future by the dictator, who sought to place his regime in the genealogy of Imperial Rome. The importance of romanity was translated into his architectural policy. The city of Rome was central to Mussolini's regime, and his ambition was to remake it in his own image. In turn, architecture and urban space itself were central to his vision of fascism and its image.

⁸⁶ Visser, Romke. « Fascist Doctrine and the Cult of the Romanità ». *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 27, n° 1, janvier 1992, p. 5-22. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200949202700101>.

⁸⁷ Ancient Rome's sacralization of the political order through the cult of the State was a reference point for the *Duce* to justify his aspirations to establish a new state religion in which the individual would be totally subordinate to society. Aramini, Donatello. « L’Institut d’études romaines et le mythe d’Auguste en 1937 ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, traduit par Laura Fournier-Finocchiaro, n° 101, décembre 2020, p. 37-57. [journals.openedition.org, https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.13628](https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.13628).

⁸⁸ Chapoutot, Johann. « Mussolini et Hitler, nouveaux Auguste? Autour du bimillenaire de la naissance d’Auguste, 1933-1938 ». *REVISTA DE HISTORIOGRAFÍA (RevHisto)*, vol. 27, novembre 2017, p. 127. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.20318/revhisto.2017.3967>.

⁸⁹ Loose translation: The Immortality of the Roman Idea. The Rebirth of the Empire in Fascist Italy See *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Loose translation: Mussolini's Rome wants to harmonize the historical past with the present that marches in great sleepless steps toward the future. See F. Casetti “*La Roma di Mussolini*” *Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d’Italia*, avril 1932, p.38.

B. An urban policy combining necessity and glory:

Mussolini's urban policy for the historic center of Rome was directly linked to his vision of romanity and the destiny of the Fascist population. It pursued a dual objective: to make Rome hygienic, symmetrical, and perfectly organized on the one hand, and to restore Rome's "greatness", which he believed was linked to its ancient heritage. on the other hand. It should be noted that the former objective was similar to the modernization objective of the liberal period.

a. Making Rome the showcase of the fascist regime:

The Fascist regime used urban planning as an instrument of power and propaganda.⁹¹ Many authors see in Mussolini's policies a desire to make Rome the showcase of its glorious regime. "*Dans cinq ans, Rome devra apparaître puissante, comme elle fut aux temps du premier Empire d'Auguste. Vous continuerez à libérer le tronc du grand chêne de tout ce qui l'entrave. Vous dégagerez les alentours du Théâtre de Marcellus, du Capitole, du Panthéon; tout ce qui a crû lors des siècles de décadence doit disparaître. (...) Vous libérerez également les temples majestueux de la Rome chrétienne des constructions parasites et profanes. Les monuments millénaires de notre histoire doivent se dresser tels des géants dans leur nécessaire solitude.*"⁹² Translated from part of a speech by the *Duce* in 1925, this quote reflects the Italian dictator's view of Rome. The first thing that stands out in this extract is the desire to isolate the ancient city: the *Duce* wanted to create perspectives within the city, angles from which to view it, to make it all the more spectacular. It was actually with this in mind that Mussolini ordered the construction of the *Via della Conciliazione*: the aim was to open up the medieval urban fabric to create a magnificent view of the St. Peter's Basilica. Some extracts from Mussolini's speech, on the other hand, describe the medieval and baroque remains as "*tout ce qui a crû lors des siècles de décadence*"⁹³, "*constructions parasites et profanes*"⁹⁴ that serve to undermine the antique. According to Mussolini, "*les problèmes de grandeur sont d'une*

⁹¹ Jannièrre, Hélène. « Chapitre X. Images d'une ville moderne pour l'Italie fasciste. La photographie publiée, Quadrante 1933-1936 ». *Figure de la ville et construction des savoirs*, édité par Frédéric Pousin, CNRS Éditions, 2005, p. 117-27. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.editions-cnrs.4304>.

⁹² Loose translation : In five years' time, Rome must appear as powerful as it was at the time of the first empire of Augustus. You will continue to clear the trunk of the great oak of all that stands in its way. You will clear the area around the Theatre of Marcellus, the Capitol, the Pantheon; everything that has grown during the centuries of decadence must disappear. You will also free the majestic temples of Christian Rome from parasitic and profane constructions. The millennial monuments of our history must stand like giants in their necessary solitude. Translation from a speech of Mussolini, as cited in Iosa, Ioana, éditeur. *L'architecture des régimes totalitaires face à la démocratisation*. L'Harmattan, 2008.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

autre espèce: il faut libérer tout la Rome antique des objets médiocres qui la défigurent, mais aux côtés de la Rome monumentale de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge, il faut créer la Rome monumentale du XXème siècle⁹⁵

The dictator's desire to separate antiquity and liberate the Roman ruins is clear. It should be noted that this is not a new tendency, as we saw, for example, in the political reflections on the Pantheon during the years of liberal Rome. The use of these expressions is indicative of the fascist contempt for traces of the past other than the one left by the Imperial Rome. As a result, many remains of these periods were erased in Rome. As a matter of fact, the entire Alessandrino district was destroyed. The Imperial city for the *Duce* is seen as: *“géométrique, simple, mais essentielle. Rome est un centre de commandement. La ville romaine n'est jamais une erreur... la ville romaine est ville d'ordre, de classement, de hiérarchie, de dignité⁹⁶”* It is in order to restore this aspect to the historic center that the *Duce* wanted to proceed with the gutting of the center and the destruction of certain buildings. In the words of Scriba Friedemann, *“le centre-ville est décoré de vestiges archéologiques installés de manière pittoresque, selon une stratégie d'esthétisation et de spécularisation de la politique capable d'influencer et de s'imprimer dans la mémoire collective⁹⁷”*. Hence, the years 1922-1943 saw veritable construction projects which aimed at creating in Rome stage set for Fascism. According to the historian Flavia Marcello, *“Les monuments servaient d'arrière-plan aux parades militaires, tel un décor de films de Cécil B Demille.⁹⁸”*

b. The inevitable modernization of the center of Rome:

However, it would be too simplistic an analysis to stop at this stage. As Fabien Mazenod argues, the *Duce's* urban policy did not neglect the need to modernize the city center to make it more functional, with the aim of making a definitive break with its status as the

⁹⁵ Loose translation : the problems of grandeur are of a different nature: we must free all of ancient Rome from the mediocre objects that disfigure it, but alongside the monumental Rome of antiquity and the Middle Ages, we must create the monumental Rome of the 20th century see *“Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini”* . La Fenice, Florence. SUSMEL E et SUSMEL D (1951-1963). As cited in Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/reru.145.0905>.

⁹⁶ Loose translation : Rome is geometric, simple but essential. Rome is a command centre. The Roman city is never a mistake... the Roman city is a city of order, of classification, of hierarchy, of dignity. W. George *“Rome Antique”*, Quarante, 4, 1993, p.13 as cited in Malvano Bechelloni, Laura. « Le mythe de la romanité et la politique de l'image dans l'Italie fasciste: » *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, vol. n o 78, n° 2, mai 2003, p. 111-20. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/ving.078.0111>.

⁹⁷ Loose translation : the city centre is adorned with archaeological remains installed in a picturesque manner, according to a strategy of aestheticization and speculative politics capable of influencing and imprinting itself on the collective memory as cited in Ruffinengo, Chiara. « La narration archéologique au temps du fascisme : récits, mises en scène, objets ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, n° 101, décembre 2020, p. 71-86. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.13703>.

⁹⁸ Loose translation : the monuments were used as backdrops for military parades, like the sets of Cécil B. Demille's films. As cited in « ARCHITECTURE ET POLITIQUE. La Rome du Duce ». *Courrier international*, 3 octobre 2007, <https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/2007/10/04/la-rome-du-duce>.

provincial capital of a medium-sized power.⁹⁹ If the aim was to build a capital as grandiose as that of Augustus, Rome had a greater need for modernization in order to establish itself among the great European cities.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the dictator despise for ancient Rome is also a reality. The link between the city of Rome and Mussolini is not self-evident: before 1920, the *Duce* had denounced during several occasions the dirtiness of the city. In particular, the dictator shared the hatred of Rome that was widespread at the turn of the century.¹⁰¹ One of the imperatives of Fascist urban policy was therefore to continue modernizing the city of Rome, in particular by improving the circulation of air, light and people. In a speech delivered on April 21, 1924, the *Duce* said that “*les problèmes de nécessité jaillissent à cause du développement de Rome, et se résument dans ce binôme: logements et communications*”¹⁰². As a matter of fact, the will to modernize was omnipresent: “*Nella documentazione degli anni Venti e Trenta sullo sviluppo urbanistico di Roma l’aggettivo che ricorre con assillo è “moderno”*”¹⁰³ writes Sidoni. The dictator wanted to solve these problems through urban renewal, in particular by cutting wide avenues through the old medieval and Renaissance urban fabric. Fascist *svrentamenti* were the subject of numerous press articles at the time and were seen by Romans as the birth of modern Rome. A number of researchers have examined the destructive *svrentamenti* through the prism of archaeology and architecture. In his thesis, Mazenod shows how, despite their destructive nature, the *svrentamenti* met the real needs of the city as identified by the Fascist authorities. It is therefore important to understand how Mussolini's urban policy was at the service of a desire for “*greatness*”, but also responded to real objectives of “*necessity*”, which had already been identified during Liberal Rome. According to Mussolini, Rome “*doit être une ville digne de sa gloire, et cette gloire, doit être renouvelée sans cesse afin de la transmettre, comme héritage de l’âge fasciste aux générations qui viendront*”¹⁰⁴ This phrase can be interpreted in terms of the renovation of

⁹⁹ Foro, Philippe. « Romaniser la Nation et nationaliser la romanité : l'exemple de l'Italie ». *Anabases. Traditions et réceptions de l'Antiquité*, n° 1, mars 2005, p. 105-17. [journals.openedition.org](https://doi.org/10.4000/anabases.1325), <https://doi.org/10.4000/anabases.1325>.

¹⁰⁰ Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/relu.145.0905>.

¹⁰¹ Criticism is also levelled at the Italian state, which is affiliated to the city of Rome: affairism, a centralizing and bureaucratic state, corruption. See Gentile, Emilio. *Fascismo di pietra*. 1. ed. nella Economica Laterza., GLF editori Laterza, 2010.

¹⁰² Loose translation : the problems of necessity arising from the development of Rome can be summed up in this binomial: housing and communication. Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/relu.145.0905>.

¹⁰³ Loose translation : In the documentation of the 1920s and 1930s on the urban development of Rome, the adjective that recurs the most is « modern ». See Sidoni, Paolo. *La Roma di Mussolini: la più completa ricostruzione delle trasformazioni della città durante il regime fascista*. Prima edizione., Newton Compton editori, 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Loose translation : must be a city worthy of its glory, and this glory must be constantly renewed so that it can be handed down to future generations as a legacy of the Fascist era. Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/relu.145.0905>.

ancient archaeology and its display in the face of Fascist intervention. But it can also be understood in terms of the need to make Rome a modern, dynamic, and attractive city.

c. Differences and similarities with the Liberal period:

It is interesting to compare the Fascist period with the Liberal period in terms of the will and objective to modernize the city. The policy of urban renewal, as set out in the regulatory plans of 1873 and 1909, also provided for major *svrentamenti*, such as *Corso Vittorio Emanuele II* and *Via del Tritone*. Indeed, there are links between the urban policies of Liberal Rome and those of the Fascist era. Examples include the renovation of the area around the Mausoleum of Augustus, planned in 1909 and the Borghi district, planned in 1873. There is therefore a continuity between the Liberal and Fascist periods in terms of urban renovation and policy.

With regard to the politics of grandeur, many authors have highlighted the rupture with Mussolini, who was obsessed with creating a true showcase in the Eternal city. To a lesser extent, however, similar intentions can also be found in the Liberal period, as embodied in the construction of the *Vittoriano*. Moreover, the projects of the dictator and his architects were no more destructive than those of the Liberals. In 1919 the state decided to preserve a series of houses and churches in *Via de' Specchi*. The area was destroyed in 1929. On the other hand, the Fascist government opposed the construction of a tunnel under the Capitoline Hill, which had been proposed during the Liberal period¹⁰⁵.

The Fascist period, however, marked a period of political and administrative non-opposition in this area, which allowed a series of ambitious projects to be carried out and, in the long term, represented a real breakthrough in the history of urban planning. Historians such as Italo Insolera, Leonardo Benevolo and Antonio Cederna refer to the political factors as the exceptional concentration of local and central powers in the hands of a single man. Indeed, while the period 1870-1925 was marked by the importance of the institutional differences between the municipality, the State and the Papal States, in 1922 Mussolini decided to abolish the municipal council of the capital. In 1925, a governorate of Rome was created under the direct authority of Mussolini as Prime Minister. The dictator thus had control over all the institutions involved in urban renewal. This exceptional context made it possible to carry out a series of ambitious projects.

¹⁰⁵ Mazenod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazenod_f.pdf.

The dictator also wanted to make more structural changes to the urban fabric of Rome. During the Liberal period, the Third Rome (*Terza Roma*) was set in stone. During the Fascist period, however, the dictator sought to create a material link between the old and the new Rome. Finally, while in the Liberal period the modernization work was more concerned with welcoming the new Roman population, in the Fascist period the creation of new squares and avenues was also to be seen in the context of the dictator's proud aims of grandeur and image. Overall, his action contributed to today's tertiarization of the city center.¹⁰⁶

In this first section, we analyzed the general direction of Mussolini's urban policy. A first section devoted to the vision of Rome and romanity as a whole has allowed us to understand how the political actors of the Fascist era viewed the notions of grandeur and modernity. We showed how the myth of *romanity* was central to the Italian dictator's image politics and to his overall vision of the Italian nation and its future. Applied to the discipline of urban planning and architecture, Mussolini's Roman myth translates into a profound desire to transform the city in his own image. Mussolini was also aware of the need to make Rome modern and functional. As we have seen, it was this characteristic that brought Mussolini's planning policies closer to those of the parliamentarians and architects of the liberal era.

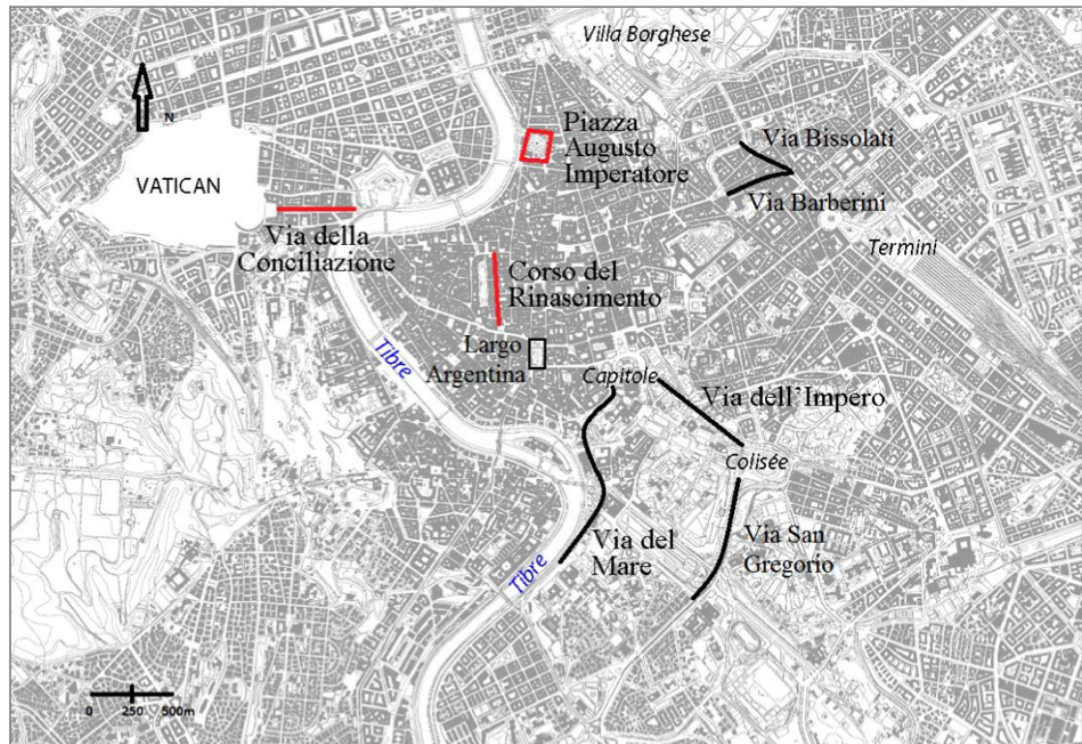
Section 2 : Mussolini's action in the center of Rome:

During the Fascist period, most of the public works were under the direct or indirect control of Mussolini. The first Fascist projects, which were the *Via dell'Impero*, *Via del Mare* and the restoration of the Capitoline Hill, involved only the administrative authorities and the architect. It was therefore the dictator, accompanied by his chief architect Antonio Munoz, who decided what was to be preserved and what was to be destroyed. This is the subject of the first part of this section.

The analysis will be carried out bearing in mind that the Fascist period was characterized by a great concentration of power in the hands of a Fascist administration, which strongly integrated the main principles of the renovation described in the first section. For the operations that followed the three mentioned above, the question of funding became central. In fact, due to a lack of resources, the public authorities called for a partnership with private companies such as INA and INPS. This collaboration introduced a new factor into the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

decisions on conservation and renovation: profitability. We will look at this issue in more detail in the second sub-section of this section.



— Rues et places ouvertes avec le concours de l'INA

Figure 9: The main public spaces created during the Fascist period.¹⁰⁷

A. Making its marks on urban space:

In this first sub-section, we will look at the various operations carried out during the Fascist period. This part will be divided into two case studies of the most important *sventramenti*. They were so important that the historian Cederna described the *Duce* as a ripper. We will also analyze the way in which Mussolini, through the operations he carried out, sought to achieve his double objective: that of a modern Rome, with wide avenues, worthy of a great European capital of the twentieth century, and that of a Rome that united romanity and Italianity. The aim of this section is therefore to understand how the objectives of necessity and grandeur were incorporated into the various urban projects launched by the *Duce*. The first section will focus on the construction of the *Via dell'Impero*, while a second will deal with the construction of *Piazza Augustea*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.



Figure 10: The 1931 *Piano Regolatore*¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Graphic design published by F.Castagnoli, C.Cecchelli, G.Givannonni and M.Zocca, *Topografia e urbanistica di Roma*, Storia di Roma, vol. 22, Bologna, 1958 ; as cited in Bocquet, Denis. *Rome ville technique, 1870-1925: une modernisation conflictuelle de l'espace urbain*. École française de Rome, 2007.

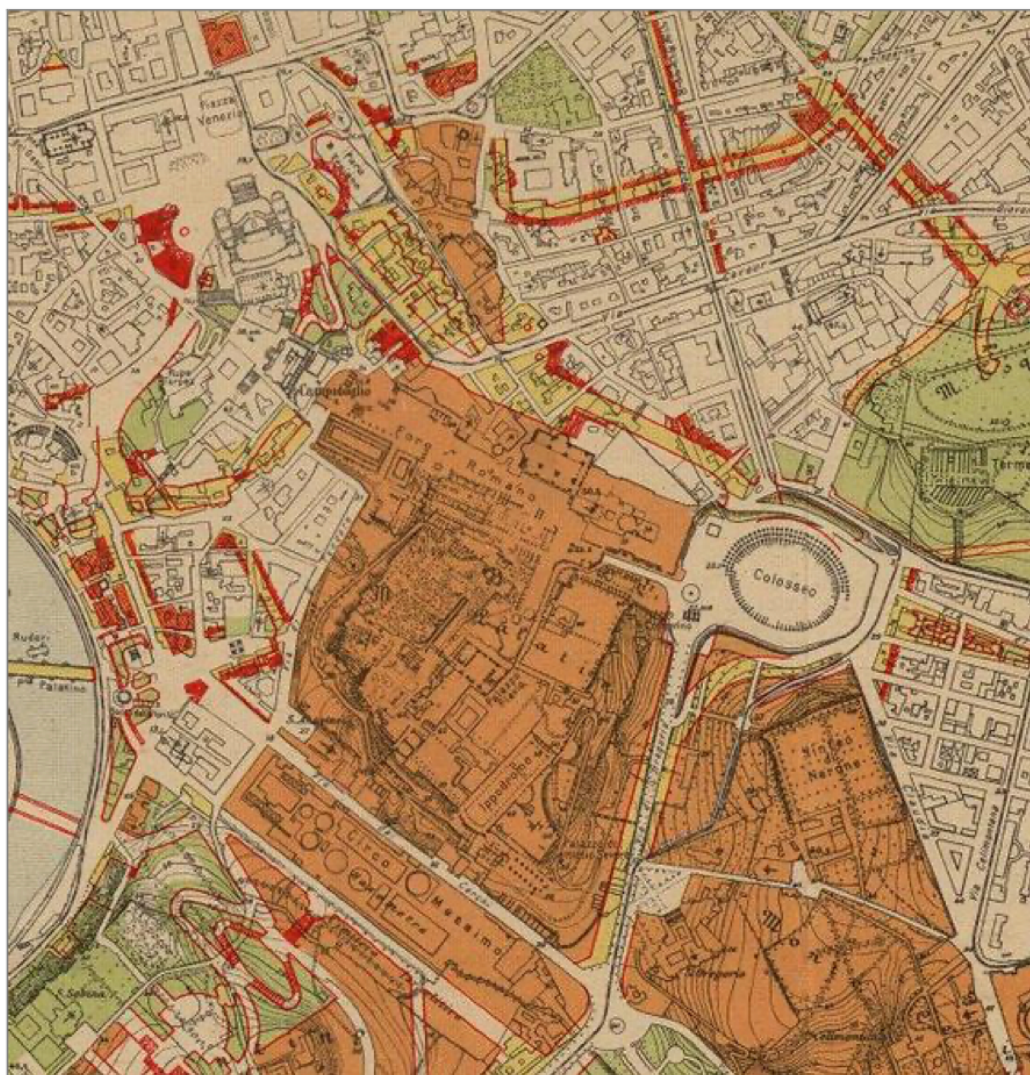


Figure 11: The 1931 *piano regolatore* concerning the Central Archaeological Zone¹⁰⁹

a. **Via dei Fori Imperiali (1930): a case study:**

The renovation of the Central Archeological Zone, which included the construction of *Via dell'Impero*, *Via del Mare* and the restoration of the Capitol, is a typical case study of the Fascist regime's desire to anchor the Roman-Italian link in the ground. Mussolini's project was partly inspired by an idea proposed by the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1919. Fascist architects such as Munoz, Calza Bini and Ballio Morpurgo took up the work of Vittorio Emanuele III's architectural commission as inspiration for the future transformation of the

¹⁰⁹ Mazenod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financer de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazenod_f.pdf.

city¹¹⁰. The work was entrusted to the *Istituto Case Popolari* and its director, the architect Alberto Calza Bini. It began in 1927. The work in the area had a double purpose: to restore certain monuments, such as the Theatre of Marcellus and the Forum Boarium, and to create an axis that would open the center of Rome to the sea and to “*les contrées lointaines où l’Italie voulait étendre son Empire*”¹¹¹ The axis also linked the city center to the developing Roman districts. The opening up of these areas should be seen in the context of the construction of the *Via del Mare*¹¹². Before the Fascist invasion, the area was very dense: it lays between the Jewish ghetto and its synagogue to the north-east, the Capitol to the east and the Tiber to the south-east. The area around the Theatre of Marcellus and the Forum Boarium was mainly medieval. To complete the *Via del Mare*, these medieval remains were destroyed, as was *Piazza Montanara*¹¹³. Extensive excavations were also carried out along the Tiber to uncover the Roman temples surrounding the Bocca della Verità. For those in power, the Bocca della Verità was thanks to those excavations “*liberata dalle catapecchie che la soffocavano*”¹¹⁴. Afterwards, the *Via del Mare* was surrounded by red brick buildings designed by the architect Ignazio Giudi.



Figure 12: *Via del Mare*, 2010¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Published for the most part in Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (1920), *Relazione sulla sistemazione edilizia del Colle Capitolino e delle sue adiacenze*, in *Bollettino d’arte*, numéro 5-8, p.49-72 as cited in *Ibid*.

¹¹¹ Loose translation : the distant lands where Italy wanted to extend its empire as cited in *Ibid*.

¹¹² Today *Via del Teatro di Marcello*

¹¹³ It was an emblematic square in medieval Rome, before it was destroyed : today, only a small portion of what once was remains, known as *Via Montanara*.

¹¹⁴ Loose translation : freed from the drains that suffocated it. See Cardilli, L. (1995) *Gli anni del Governatorato (1926-1944): interventi urbanistici, scoperte archeologiche, arredo urbano, restauri*, Kappa, ed., Roma, p.85. *Ibid*.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*.

The opening of *Via dell'Impero* was the most expensive and massive operation undertaken by the Fascist government. This 900-meter-long avenue links *Piazza Venezia* to the Colosseum and crosses a vast archaeological area that includes the Flavian Amphitheatre, the Imperial and Republican Forums and the Basilicas of Maxentius and Constantine. This archaeological area was and still is therefore of great symbolic importance. It is understandable that to link it geographically to the heart of Fascist Italy, *Piazza Venezia*, was a way of uniting “*les forums de la maîtresse du monde antique et le nouveau “Foro Italico” de l’Empire italien*”¹¹⁶. This operation, the most famous of the period, was also the most destructive in terms of heritage. For the construction of this axis, 7.6 hectares of the Imperial Forum were covered with cement. The renovation also meant the destruction of an entire district, the *Alessandrino*, and the demolition of a hill, the *Velia*¹¹⁷. The medieval and renaissance buildings of the neighborhood were razed to the ground and many of its inhabitants were dispossessed. Fernando Salsano estimates that 8,348 people were displaced¹¹⁸.



Figure 13: *Via dell'Impero*, 2010¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Loose translation : the forums of the mistress of antiquity and the new 'Foro Italico' of the Italian Empire. Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Seronde-Babonau, Anne Marie. *Rome, croissance d'une capitale*. Édisud, 1980.

¹¹⁸ *Il ventre di Roma: trasformazione monumentale dell'area dei fori e nascita delle borgate negli anni del governatorato fascista*. <https://art.torvergata.it/handle/2108/973?mode=full>. Consulté le 6 avril 2024.

¹¹⁹ Mazonod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazonod_f.pdf.

b. The reconstruction of the Ara Pacis (1934): a case study:

“*Le fascisme n’écrit pas l’histoire, il la fait*¹²⁰”. Fascist action on the Ara Pacis is a good example of Mussolini’s will to choose and preserve a certain heritage. In the case of the *Ara Pacis*, there was a desire to create a new urban sanctuary for the emperor Augustus around his mausoleum, even though the building was in very poor condition. The Ara Pacis is one of the most important symbols of Augustan propaganda. Built on the same site as his Mausoleum and a solar clock to which he gave his name - Horlogium or Solarium Augusti - these buildings exalted his imperial domination on the city of Rome. However, after numerous overflows of the Tiber, the sanctuary was buried and forgotten, covered by the Palazzo Peretti. In 1938, the reconstruction of the Ara Pacis by the Fascist regime can be seen in the context of the *Duce’s* desire to establish himself as the new Augustus. It should be noted that reconstruction work had already begun in the 16th century but had never been completed.

The two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of Augustus was used by the Council of Ministers to order an excavation beneath the *Palazzo Peretti*. In order not to jeopardize its preservation, cutting-edge techniques were used, such as freezing the soil by injecting large quantities of liquid carbon dioxide. This gesture on the part of the government testifies to the Fascist lack of interest in truth and historical context. The remnants of the buildings were in a very poor state of repair, and many were destroyed around them in order to get them out of the ground. The explanation behind their importance is that they were being transformed into veritable fascist relics - they were being placed in the space of myth – mainly because according to the dictator, “*le sol historique sur lequel on agit a une puissance magique*¹²¹”. According to many archaeologists, the renovations were carried out purely out of self-interest: they all pointed to the dictator's disdain and lack of artistic curiosity. Another example of Mussolini's renovations, which destroyed the setting of a work of art and thus took it out of its context, was the creation of *Via della Conciliazione*. Constructed between the Castello Sant’ Angelo and the St’Peter Basilica, the main purpose of the road, in addition to creating a major thoroughfare, was to create a new perspective on the imposing monument. However, this breakthrough contradicts Bernini's original intention when he created the

¹²⁰ Loose translation : Fascism does not write history, it makes it. Chapoutot, Johann. « Mussolini et Hitler, nouveaux Auguste? Autour du bimillenaire de la naissance d’Auguste, 1933-1938 ». *REVISTA DE HISTORIOGRAFÍA (RevHisto)*, vol. 27, novembre 2017, p. 127. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.20318/revhisto.2017.3967>.

¹²¹ Loose translation : the historical ground on which we act has a magical power. Emilio Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini*, 1932, p.106, cité dans Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio*, p.151 as cited in Ruffinengo, Chiara. « La narration archéologique au temps du fascisme : récits, mises en scène, objets ». *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, n° 101, décembre 2020, p. 71-86. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.13703>.

square in front of the imposing basilica: let the peasant discover the building in the middle of a medieval street in the Borghi district.

B. The public-private partnership and its consequences on the conservation of heritage:

It was with a view to safeguard the built heritage from property speculation that Mussolini's regulatory plan divided operations to be undertaken into two categories. The first concerned renovation work in areas of little artistic or heritage interest. In these areas, intensive building work was carried out with the help of private companies, as in the case of *Corso del Rinascimento*, *Via della Conciliazione* and the renovation of Augustus's mausoleum¹²². The second category, on the other hand, covered restoration work on ancient monuments and their surroundings, and represented areas in which the work was directed exclusively by the public authorities, such as the *Via dell'Impero*, and the renovation of the Capitol. This categorization did not prove operational, as it was based on subjective choices. In fact, the distinction between the two categories was not crystal-clear: one might well ask why the imperial forums constituted a more important heritage site than the Mausoleum of Augustus. It is therefore important to note that these changes in methods are primarily due to a lack of public funds.

During the Fascist period, the financing of the operations became a problem. Hence the government decided to institute public-private partnerships to continue constructions.

a. The question of finances:

The question of funding was at the heart of Mussolini's renovation policy. The works and excavations were a real burden for the municipality, which was still in charge of modernizing the city. For example, the “*Zona Imperiale*” operation between 1928 and 1933, which included the construction of *Via dell'Impero*, *Via del Mare* and the restoration of the Capitoline Hill, cost the City Council over 3.2 billion lire. This sum included the cost of expropriation, compensation, demolition, and the construction of the city's technical

¹²² ASC, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1931-1933, Protocollo 4982/2, Fascicolo 7, Sotto Fascicolo 2. As cited in Mazenod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazenod_f.pdf.

networks.¹²³ In 1927, Principe Ludovico Spada Veralli Potenziani, a member of the Governorate, asked Mussolini for funds: “*Il problema finanziario della capitale ha avuto sempre e ha tuttora un duplice aspetto: l'uno economico inteso come equilibrio tra oneri e mezzi; l'altro politico socio in rapporto all'ingrandimento ed al rinnovamento della città per lo sviluppo demografico e delle sue funzioni. Si è ampiamente dimostrato che, per un complesso di situazioni propria della Città di Roma, il pareggio del bilancio ordinario non si può raggiungere con i soli mezzi del Governatorato, ma occorre l'intervento dello Stato*¹²⁴”. In order to complete the Fascist restoration project, the State agreed to grant the Municipality an annual subsidy. Thus, the Royal Decree-Law No. 370 of March 27, 1927, allocated 1 billion lire to public works, while Law No. 348 of March 31, 1932, granted 792 million lire per year as a contribution to general regulatory plans. It is understandable that this regular state aid to the Governorate represented “*un véritable tournant dans l'histoire des relations entre les deux pouvoirs*¹²⁵”. Indeed, even if the aid was insufficient, it represented a genuine coordination between two bodies that had been in competition with each other during the Liberal period. It was therefore mainly with the aim of obtaining additional funds that the State called on private companies to carry out renovation projects. The *Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni* (INA) was a life insurance company founded in 1912. The second partner mentioned is the *Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale* (INPS). Founded in 1898, it dealt with the administrative procedures relating to workers' invalidity and old age. The main works and renovations involved in this public-private partnership were the renovation of the area around *Piazza Navona* and the *svientamento* of *Corso del Rinascimento*, awarded to the INA under an agreement signed in April 1936. Another project was the renovation of the area around the Mausoleum of Augustus, awarded to the INPS under a first agreement signed in June 1934 and a second agreement signed in December 1939. Finally, from May 1939, the two companies worked together on the *Via della Conciliazione*. The purpose of the agreements was to divide the tasks between the Governorate and the private companies. Expropriations and evictions were left to the Governorate, which was responsible for selling the empty land and buildings to the companies. The demolition of the buildings and the construction of new urban developments was the responsibility of the companies. The companies were also

¹²³ ASC, Segreteria Personale del Duce, Carteggio ordinario, Fascicolo 500 019, Busta 839, ‘Problemi vari della capitale anno 1933’ as cited in Ibid.

¹²⁴ Loose translation : The capital's financial problem has always had and still has a dual aspect: one economic, understood as the balance between burdens and means; the other socio-political in relation to the enlargement and renewal of the city for demographic development and its functions. It has been amply demonstrated that, due to a series of situations peculiar to the City of Rome, the ordinary budget cannot be balanced with the means of the Governorate alone, but State intervention is needed. ASC, Segreteria Personale del Duce, Carteggio Ordinario, Fascicolo 500 019, Busta 838, ‘Problemi vari della capitale anno 1927’ as cited in Ibid.

¹²⁵ Loose translation : a real turning point in the history of relations between the two powers. Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/relu.145.0905>.

responsible for selling the new buildings and other architectural assets, as well as the public spaces to the Governorate of Rome.

For these companies, the collaboration was interesting because it allowed them to become owners of large parts of the city center. It was also profitable for these companies, which ultimately made a lot of money renting out their newly renovated buildings. For example, the cost of constructing two buildings on *Via della Conciliazione* was estimated at 45.4 million lire¹²⁶, while their rental value is estimated at 90 million lire¹²⁷. Through their partnership with the Governorate, these companies also gain a certain reputation and publicity. Their buildings, some of which are architectural masterpieces, take pride of their location in the center of Rome, in full view of tourists and residents.¹²⁸ It is important to note, however, that some projects were not profitable such as the operation carried out in *Piazza Navona* in connection with the *Corso del Rinascimento*.

b. The consequences of the public-private partnership on archeology preservation:

Involving private companies inevitably raises the question of profitability. Indeed, as we said in the first sub-section, the State's partner companies in these operations certainly derive a great deal of publicity from the actions undertaken in the historic center, but they also seek to remain profitable, in other words to ensure that the costs of demolition and construction do not exceed the income from these activities. However, after the agreements were signed, the costs of demolition and, more specifically, of archaeological excavations, turned out to be higher than expected, which eventually posed a problem in terms of profitability. This section will therefore provide an insight into the relationship between the State's partner companies and archaeology.

Before assessing the attitude and impact of private companies and speculation on built heritage, it is important to note that the behavior and decisions of companies do not reflect a lack of desire to preserve heritage. It is clear that these companies would have been keen to preserve. It was more the cost and loss of rental income that held them back. Indeed, the

¹²⁶ Construction costs include the purchase of the land, technical surveys, archaeological work, demolition and reconstruction. INA, Archivio Servizio Immobiliare, 8952 '*Via della Conciliazione*' as cited in Mazenod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazenod_f.pdf.

¹²⁷ INA, Fondo del Cinquantenario, Serie 15, Sottoserie 1, Fascicoli 37-58, 1944. As cited in Ibid.

¹²⁸ Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/ru.145.0905>.

financial burden of excavation and storage was a subject of debate for both INA and INPS. To gain a better understanding of the impact of the latter's activities on the Roman heritage, we will look at two separate examples: firstly, the case of *Corso del Risorgimento* and *Piazza Navona*, and secondly the case of *Via della Conciliazione*. In reconstruction work, considering the pre-existing urban fabric of the land slows down the work and increases its costs. In the case of the *svrentamento* on *Corso del Rinascimento*, located in the heart of Rome's Baroque district, remains of the Domitian stadium were found embedded in the walls of the Piazza Navona buildings. Two solutions were considered by the Governorate's Public Works Department: to leave the remains in the open air, or to incorporate them into a building specially designed so that they could be seen from the outside. The first solution was quickly ruled out by the public authorities, who were anxious not to alter the appearance of the adjacent Piazza Navona. A third option, developed by the architect Arnaldo Foschini, was finally chosen. The INA and the relevant government departments (Public Works, Antiquities and Fine Arts) were divided on the question of funding for the archaeological excavations. The preservation of the ruins of the Domitian Stadium was a loss of money for the company, which had to pay for the delay in the discovery, bearing in mind that it could not rely on the rental of the ground floor of the building for its financial equilibrium. In October 1940, the INA asked the Governorate for a refund of 26.4 million lire, to which the Governorate replied negatively: “*per quanto riguarda il ritardo subito dalla costruzione per effetto dei rinvenimenti archeologici si deve ugualmente considerare quanto essa possa esser fatto rientrare in quella quota di imprevisti che ogni progetto deve contemplare*¹²⁹”. In 1950, the State finally granted the company a sum of 1 million in compensation for the partial use of the buildings. The buildings were originally intended for residential use. Once the archaeological work had been completed, the INA decided to convert the new buildings into offices, in order to increase the financial profitability of the operation. We can therefore deduce that “*les solutions de gestion du patrimoine prises par le partenariats public-privé ont contribué à la tertiarisation du centre-ville*¹³⁰”.

The second example in this section regards the renovation of the Borghi district. Located between the Castel Sant'Angelo and St Peter's Basilica on the right bank of the Tiber, the area is dense with buildings from the medieval and Renaissance periods. The renovation of

¹²⁹ Loose translation: With regard to the delay suffered by the construction due to archaeological discoveries, it must also be considered how much this can be included in the contingency quota that every project must contemplate. ASC, Ripartizione X Antichità Belle arti 1920-1953, Busta 191, Fascicolo 1, 'Piazza Navona', 1940. As cited in Mazenod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazenod_f.pdf.

¹³⁰ Loose translation: the asset management solutions adopted by the public-private partnership have contributed to the tertiarization of the city center. Mazenod, Fabien. « Rénovation urbaine de la Rome fasciste, gouvernance et enjeux patrimoniaux »: *Revue d'Économie Régionale & Urbaine*, vol. décembre, n° 5, février 2015, p. 905-24. DOI.org (Crossref), <https://doi.org/10.3917/reru.145.0905>.

the district involved the creation of a wide axis linking the banks of the Tiber to St Peter's Basilica. For the renovation, the public authorities provided numerous architectural clauses to ensure that the avenue's landscape was to be consistent with the adjacent neighborhood. However, nothing was mentioned about the buildings that would be sacrificed to create this axis, namely the Annunziata oratory and the Palazzo dei Convertendi. It is thus the private partners, INPS and INA for the *Via della Conciliazione*, who took the initiative to destroy and save in order to relocate, what Benevolo calls a *ripristino* (restoration). And that even if this behavior can be seen as contrary to a logic of pure profitability. This decision should be seen in the context of an image policy: the relocation of the oratory represents excellent publicity for the INA on the one hand and strengthened links between the papal and the public authorities on the other. These two examples help us understand how profitability, through the establishment of a partnership between the public and private sectors, was a central theme of heritage renovation and preservation policies in Fascist Rome.

CONCLUSION:

This thesis's main objective was to underline and identify the main political decisions made during the Liberal and Fascist period in Rome concerning built heritage preservation. As the many researchers who have written on the subject have shown, the Liberal and Fascist periods were highly productive in terms of policy and urban planning changes in the center of Rome. In fact, this is the main reason why the analysis limited itself to the study of these two historical periods. Their analysis has indeed enabled us to understand the links that unite them, which are sometimes neglected in studies focusing solely on the fascist period.¹³¹ As numerous authors such as Mazenod and Bocquet have demonstrated, the origin of certain Mussolini urban works can be found during the Liberal period.

To a certain extent, the center of Rome as we know it today was shaped by those two periods of time, which had a great influence on how the ancient urban fabric interacts and is integrated into the modern one. When looking at the Rome we know today, a lot in the historic center as well as in the suburbs can be attributed to the period 1870-1943. As the Liberal period brought up the *Vittoriano* and the beginnings of the practice of *svrentamenti*, it also altered greatly the way the banks of the Tiber were. Mainly due to the will to remove the papal symbolic control over the city, choices were made to enhance the Roman and antique side of the city, at least more than the Baroque one, as it was mainly linked with the Papal times. The Fascist period contributed greatly to constructing the Central Archeological Zone we know today, by ultimately deciding to construct the two main axes that surrounds it: *Via dei Fori Imperiali* and *Via del Teatro Di Marcello*. The *Duce* also continued the *svrentamenti* in the center. Although we haven't focused on the contours of the town center and the small-scale operations that took place during these periods, their impact was also significant and is still visible today.

In order not to flatten the debates and aspirations of the urban policies of the Liberal and Fascist periods, this essay examines the potential reasons behind certain conservation choices. During the Liberal period, the need to foster identity and a sense of belonging to the newly Italian population was crucial for the public authorities. It is ultimately why Rome was chosen as the capital: the parliamentarisms imagined that they could use the historic past of the city to create a common denominator within its new population. Conservation choices

¹³¹ See Mazenod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazenod_f.pdf.

after 1871 can also be interpreted in this dynamic: an incentive to preserve the antique was put as the latter was used to foster the propagation of a new identity. For the Fascist period, romanity was not only a starting point, but a central item of the ideology. Mussolini's will to impose its marks on the city can be seen for instance in the case of the Ara Pacis. Moreover, its aim to sanitize the city has resulted in the depopulation and the tertiarization of the historic center. In short, preservation choices reflect the way archaeology was intertwined into usage postures. The management of archaeology in the historic center had a privileged place in the institutional disputes of the period 1870-1922, while it became a scenic backdrop in the Rome of the *Duce*.

The preservation doctrine became the norm from the 1960s onwards. In 1980, UNESCO recognized the historic center as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The main debate about archaeology in the 1970 was about whether we should destroy the *Via dei Fori Imperiali*. After a vote, the final decision was not to do anything.

Studying the evolution of the conservation of Rome's archaeological heritage, especially in periods when it was not as well protected as it is today, calls into question its supposed untouchability. Today, despite the threat posed by mass tourism to the Roman and Baroque heritage, it is recognized worldwide, and its value is undisputed. It is important to remember, however, that this was not always the case. This study highlights the importance of conservation policies and actions aimed at recognizing urban heritage. Today, numerous studies support the idea that the heritage and urban wastelands made up of ruins in Rome, in the center or in the suburbs, can constitute veritable archaeological parks, and places where past and present can thrive within a city.

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Appendix 1

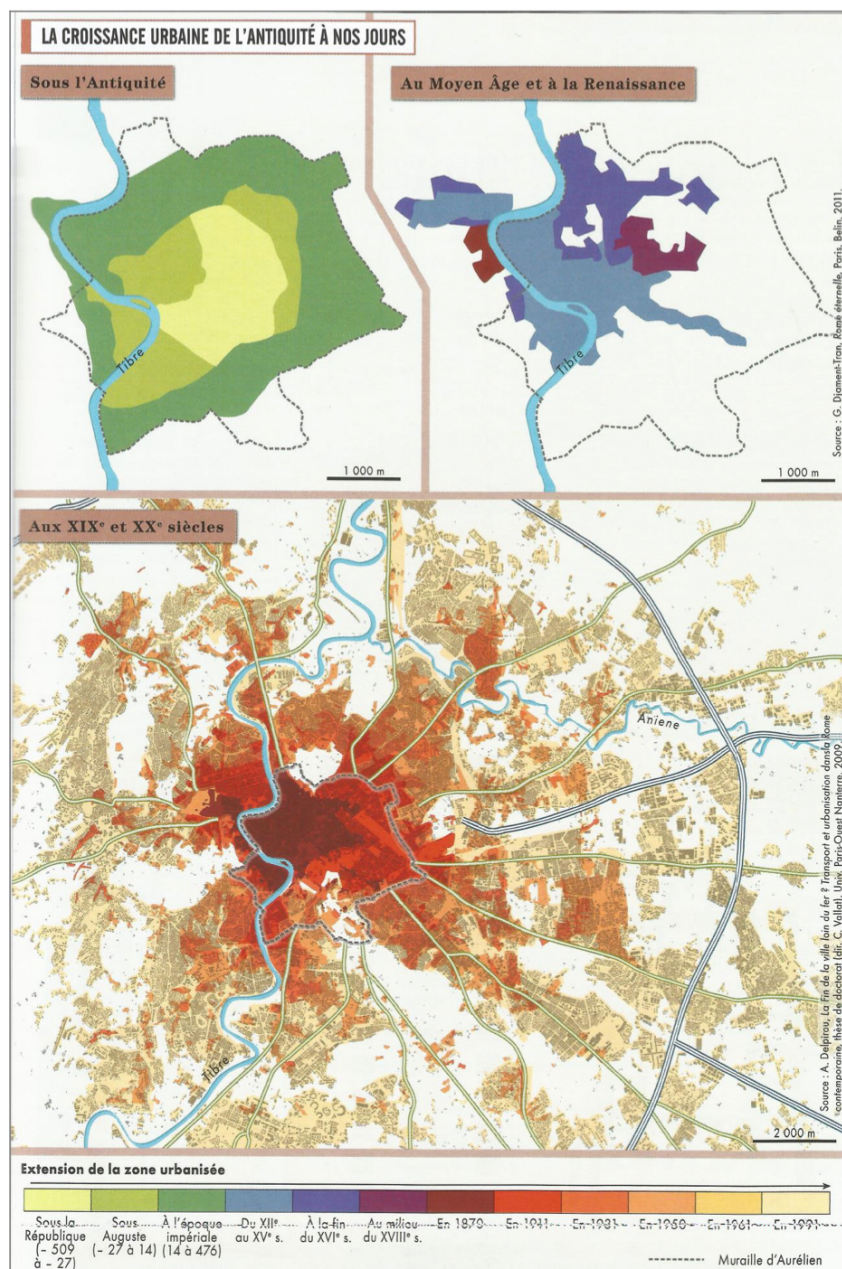


Figure 14: Evolution of Rome urban fabric¹³²

¹³² Mazenod, Fabien. *Fabriquer la Rome fasciste. L'action de l'Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (INA). Investisseur immobilier et financeur de l'aménagement urbain*. 2014. Jean Moulin LYON III, https://scd-resnum.univ-lyon3.fr/out/theses/2014_out_mazenod_f.pdf.

