

# Post COVID Rome: “Being in the World” and Urban Metabolism

## Post COVID Roma: “Ser-en el mundo” y Metabolismo Urbano

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### Resumen:

Este trabajo pretende proponer una reflexión sobre cómo está reaccionando la ciudad de Roma ante las consecuencias sociales y urbanas provocadas por la situación de pandemia. Partiendo del análisis de la densificación y la hiperdensificación urbanas -y de sus correlaciones con el globalismo-, el documento pretende también subrayar un fenómeno más amplio vinculado al progresivo “abandono” de las grandes ciudades. De hecho, el fenómeno de la pandemia corre el riesgo de catalizar dos tendencias actualmente en fase embrionaria en Italia, generando un escenario de consecuencias inciertas: por un lado, la pérdida de atractivo urbano podría sugerir un progresivo “abandono” de las grandes ciudades; por otro, las ciudades podrían tener que enfrentarse a la necesidad de frenar los fenómenos de dispersión y promover una mayor densificación del perímetro urbano.

Además, la pandemia está mostrando cómo, en la base de la emergencia, hay un problema de espacios y que más allá del distanciamiento social, que acabará como empezó el contagio, será tarea del arquitecto ayudar a la comunidad a superar la memoria del trauma vivido, lo que llevará a una mayor conciencia de cuidado de los espacios y del metabolismo urbano.

### Abstract:

*This paper aims to propose a reflection on how the city of Rome is reacting to the social and urban consequences caused by the pandemic situation. Starting from the analysis of urban densification and hyper-densification –and their correlations with globalism– the paper also intends to underline a broader phenomenon linked to the progressive “abandonment” of large cities. In fact, the pandemic phenomenon risks catalyzing two trends currently at an embryonic stage in Italy, generating a scenario with uncertain consequences: on the one hand, the loss of urban attractiveness could suggest a progressive “abandonment” of large cities; on the other hand, cities may have to deal with the need to stop sprawl phenomena and promote greater densification of the urban perimeter.*

*Furthermore, the pandemic is showing how, at the base of the emergency, there is a problem of spaces and that beyond the social distancing, which will end as the contagion began, it will be the architect's task to help the community to overcome the memory of the trauma experienced, leading to a greater awareness of taking care of spaces and urban metabolism.*

Palabras claves: Metabolismo, organismo urbano, paisaje, post-covid, sobre-turismo, Roma.

Keywords: Landscape, metabolism, over-tourism, post-Covid, Rome, urban organism, .

*“This elemental worldly kind of encountering, which belongs to Dasein and is closest to it, goes so far that even one’s own Dasein becomes something that it can itself proximally ‘come across’ only when it looks away from “Experiences” and the “centre of its actions”, or does not as yet “see” them at all. Dasein finds itself proximally in what it does, uses, expects, avoids in those things environmentally ready to hand with which it is proximally concerned”.*

- *Being and Time, Martin Heidegger*

## **1. PREMISES AND PROMISES OF THE PRE COVID ERA**

Urban density is the basis of 21st century civilization, both as regards its relational dynamics and its socioeconomic phenomena. Density was the premise and the engine responsible for the creation of large commercial and financial hubs - settlement models disconnected from the territory on which they insist-and, at the same time, the incubator of much of the anti-urban thought of the last 10 years (that to whom we owe the “green rediscovery” and the new paradigm of sustainability that gathers its followers precisely in the cities). The growing antithesis between city and village was based on the growth of large cities, at least until the first decade of this century, leading, respectively, to urban hyper-density and abandonment of the territory. However, although the signs of a cultural crisis—even in part triggered by this dialectic—had already appeared for some time (well represented by the fears of hyper-tourism in Rome and Venice for which no solution proved to be feasible), they were the nightmares of the economic recession and the ghost of widespread poverty to make a reflection on the anthropic structuring of internal territories impossible to postpone.

An unexpected event such as that relating to the COVID-19 pandemic phenomenon has called into question all models of urban development based on density, to the point that large Asian cities such as Shenzhen, Chongqing and Hong Kong—engines of hyper-urban development whose exponential growth it has always been linked to the capitalist transformations of the last twenty years—today appear increasingly

“distant” from a possible evolutionary horizon. The pandemic phenomenon thus risks catalyzing two trends currently at an embryonic stage in Europe and, in particular, in Italy, generating a scenario with uncertain consequences: on the one hand, the loss of urban attractiveness-with the worsening of its disadvantages - could suggest a progressive “abandonment” of large cities, giving life to a landscape similar to that of late antiquity (with the return to small towns and the fragmentation of large contemporary collectors, from knowledge to power); on the other hand, cities may have to deal with the need to stop sprawl phenomena (due to the unsustainable consumption of resources to deliver services to distant sectors) and promote greater densification of the urban perimeter (and this for reasons of the fact that the crisis has shown how the peripheral suburbs are—in fact—lacking in services, also revealing the limits of the “civilization of the car”). This condition must also be linked to the contrast between identity and specificity of the territories, a bitter contrast especially in recent years.

«What we recognize today as the clear margin between identity and homologation is actually—very often—closer to a hypothetical threshold, a sensitive border that includes the formative processes of the historicized urban structure but which, at the same time, includes phenomena and images of contemporaneity. This multiplicity of connections and meanings makes it difficult, at first glance, to recognize shared characteristics and values within a highly globalized world such as the one we live in. To this it must be added that the dualism of identity / homologation is not perceived, in all areas, in equal measure; the recent reconstructions in Germany and Eastern Europe testify, in this regard, a feeling linked to a specific territory although probably far from the sensitivity of other contexts» (Ciotoli & Falsetti, 2021, p. 7).

It should be noted that, in what we can define as the “pre-Covid era”, the attention of the scientific community had been almost completely capitalized by phenomena opposite to those mentioned: the abandonment of internal territories and the progressive depopulation of areas which, by now, had lost their historical weight. Think, in this sense, of the research conducted by the

Politecnico di Milano on the theme of Fragile Territories, exhibited during the “Biennale Session. Fragile territories. Risk as an opportunity for change” in the 2018 edition of the Venice Biennale, collective events that have had an echo at a national level through a communication also addressed to those outside the world of architecture. Even before the health emergency the communicative aspect of sociability and academic research took place through multimedia platforms, however, the impossibility of having a direct dialogue and an exchange in the places usually assigned to such activities, has led —almost paradoxically— to a reduction in the circle of listeners. This phenomenon, apparently opposite to the horizontal communication that the internet should guarantee, leads in fact to a further closure of the communication of architectural research, this time within the virtual walls of tools such as Zoom, Google Meet and other platforms. On the one hand, we have the impossibility of simultaneously following the events that take place, at the same time, on different platforms, with different listeners. On the other hand, the serious difficulty of proposing a confrontation in simultaneous moments, and this due not only to possible connection problems, but also to the impossibility of carrying out an active dialogue made up of questions and answers, without “stopping the word” from the person who speak at that moment.

The transformation of the urban landscape, understood in its twofold civil and social instance, and the modification of the instruments of anthropic communication (with a migration of the dialectic between the actors within a sphere which, on the one hand, increases the character of simultaneity of events, on the other hand it nullifies the metabolization of its contents, dispersed among dozens of similar events) and work, are therefore at the basis of a transformation that could take on the characteristics of a permanent mutation in our way of life.

### **When in Rome (do not) do as the Romans do: models and critical issues of the Italian capital**

This analysis, drawn up two years after the start of the pandemic - with some critical issues still ongoing - intends to

return, as far as possible, the situation in Rome in relation to the impact it had on the usability of the architectural heritage and cultural tourism. The specific conditions of the Roman context were affected by the vertical collapse of the tourism sector on a national scale: in fact «in 2019, tourism in Italy had set its historical record; had reached 436.74 million presences (+ 1.8 % compared to 2018) and 131.38 million tourists (+ 2.6 % compared to 2018), in 2020 there was a strong contraction following of the pandemic which resulted in a 57.6 % reduction in the number of arrivals and 52.3 % in the number of nights spent in hotels».<sup>1</sup>

As for the capital, the portrait that emerges - as of February 2022 - is that of a city that has only partially recovered its previous structure, with almost all the central districts (except for the triangle between the Pantheon, Piazza Navona and Trevi Fountain) deserted at night. The gentrification process, underway for several years in the historic center and progressively extended to the areas close to the Aurelian walls, has also shown, on the occasion of the pandemic, the fragility of a model that tends to alienate the original inhabitants (enticed by the prospect of easy earnings deriving from the rents of properties located in central areas) by replacing them with “hit and run” tourism of large numbers, which deserts urban fabrics and economies favoring a mono-culture of activities “at the service” of tourists. In this sense, what Rem Koolhaas affirmed in the early 2000s appears emblematic: «Europe is destined to become a machine for mass tourism, for the use and consumption of the whole world. She is deputed to represent culture. All the more reason, therefore, to celebrate the contemporary. It is evident, in fact, that this role as a world tourist center will be increasingly oppressive, present and decisive for our way of considering the historic city and the use we intend to make of it. better groped to rebalance the views, rather than admitting the definitive separation and incompatibility between these two ages of the city» (Chaslin, 2003, p. 58).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://italianinidati.com/turismo-in-italia/>

The Covid-19 pandemic, of which we are still experiencing the long aftermath, seems to have temporarily overshadowed a whole series of disciplinary problems that had dramatically worsened in recent years. The reference is naturally to the phenomenon of over-tourism, prophetically anticipated by Rem Koolhaas, which with its unsustainable numbers and associated processes (gentrification, functional specialization, depopulation) was literally devouring the historic centers. The rise of mass tourism (in its many forms, from cruises to individual and group trips) to a social paradigm of the last decade, combined with the entry into the tourism market of new categories of geographically homogeneous travelers following the processes of globalization (Brazilians, Indians, Chinese, etc.), has increased exponentially the pressure on the infrastructures and historical fabrics of European countries, destabilizing the fragile balances that guaranteed their quality of life.

Although over-tourism is, at the level of scientific literature, a phenomenon that is now widely debated, in practical terms no solution has been developed capable of putting a stop to the problem. This situation is largely attributable to the regulatory inability to regulate the human masses who, increasingly (thanks to the multitude of more or less deregulated accommodation facilities) besiege the historic centers. Covid seems to have overturned the perspective of flows but not that of the processes that seem to lead univocally towards an inevitable crisis in the management models of tourist cities. The destruction of entire urban pieces can in fact also occur through a slow process of zeroing out cultural values. a condition currently experienced by the historic centers of many Italian cities. For about fifty years, the historicized fabric has undergone substantial changes in morphology and even in the activities that, over the centuries, have settled inside it.

Services, productivity and even the residential function have been almost completely replaced by the massive presence of tourists and the corollary of shops and occupations that have sprung up to satisfy their needs. Now that this model is entering a deep crisis (with the

closure of hotels, large franchises, b & bs) the pause imposed on us by Covid could offer the opportunity to rethink the role of historic centers by setting their rebirth on the basis of a criterion that tends to reactivate its life cycles as some cities in Northern Europe have essentially begun to do, which have limited the number and type of activities in historic centers with a high tourist impact. For some years now, many European jurisdictions have in fact imposed a limit on the number of days in which each house can be rented in a year, for example, in Paris, this limit consists of a maximum of 120 days per year. In Barcelona, all short-term rentals have to be licensed and no new licenses have been issued since 2014. Perhaps the time has come to leave behind the hateful advertising slogans of the 'Bilbao effect' or the Barcelona model (which are now displeasing all and which have become synonymous with negative trends) and to look towards a new season.

After all, it is good to remember how: «the territory is the field in which our total life, subconscious and aware, of spontaneous awareness and self-awareness, takes place, but it is also the total representation that our psychological reality makes of the world. It therefore includes all the relationships between external nature and the psychological world of man to which he is reactive, and this whole psychological world, insofar as we admit its continuity, that is, the solidarity participation of every sector (outside of dissociating phenomena, which, without excluding them, we must give as abnormal and external to social life)” (Muratori, 1967, p. 194).

As regards mobility and tourist flows in the capital, with the exception of the tangible aspects, it is necessary to refer to the numerous reports published monthly by the various observatories and statistical analysis institutes. In fact, if the decline and decrease in tourist flows can also be observed with the naked eye both in the lower number of presences in the topical places and in the aspects immediately connected to this (full taxi stands, ease of reservations in restaurants and museums, etc.), there it is a whole series of other data, such as those related to transport, which can only be understood if related to an extra-urban dimension.

The recent Report of the Observatory on Mobility Trends, prepared by the Technical Mission Structure of MIMS (Ministry of Infrastructure and Sustainable Mobility), for example, recorded that the level of road transport of goods and passengers in Italy has now returned to pre-pandemic levels, while rail transport, passenger air transport and local public transport are struggling to recover from the previous situation. Even now that an increasing number of offices and companies (both public and private) are promoting the return in the presence of their employees, the traffic of passengers - and commuters - at Termini station appears significantly less than in the pre-covid period.<sup>2</sup> This condition is affected by the change in the types of work, which has led public transport operators (local and national) to focus on a reduction in the number of journeys / convoys to cope with the loss of income deriving from passenger traffic.

The Censis report "Italy under stress. Diary of transition 2020/21", published in April this year, highlighted how « (...) the spread of smart working, the systematic use of videoconferencing and the restrictions on filling trains, have forced long-distance routes to look to the future in a different way, no longer focusing only on business routes such as the Rome-Milan but also expanding the network to medium-sized cities and some tourist resorts. A gradual repositioning with a flexible offer that will adapt to new needs, giving up speed peaks but connecting many centers without intermediate changes, thus providing concrete support to local economies».<sup>3</sup>

In the first half of 2021 Rome gradually began to repopulate and, with the exception of the center, the "ministerial" districts (the Sallustiano, the Nomentano and the part of Trastevere near the Gianicolense) saw the gradual return of employees and employees, the number of which, although far from pre-pandemic levels, has certainly contributed to removing the memory of the bleak void of 2020. The occasion of the prolonged stoppage of activities has led some companies to start restructuring or refitting cycles of the offices, such as the Enel of Viale Regina Margherita. The headquarters of the company, which

housed 3,000 employees on a total area of about 80 thousand square meters (and on which a large part of the economy of the surrounding area depended, which over time became increasingly linked to the complex), is in fact currently affected by a radical redesign intervention by the Viel and Citterio studio. The project by the Milanese studio aims to implement the idea of a "building-city" in which the prismatic volumes facing Viale Regina Margherita are broken down through the dialectic of transparency of the envelope, opening the complex also to the use of citizens.

The hotel situation is more delicate for a city that essentially lives off tourism and offices: in December 2021, Federalberghi reported 20 % cancellations for the pre-Christmas period, with a worsening trend. This situation worsened further following the crisis in Ukraine, with numerous cancellations by Eastern European tourists. Already from the analysis "Scenario and prospects of recovery of the tourism supply chain in Rome and Lazio" presented by Intesa Sanpaolo and Studies and Research for the South, it was found that, in 2020 «tourism demand in Rome had decreased by 74.1 % and in Lazio by 71.8 %. (...) The decrease was more contained for Italian visitors (about -45 %) than for foreign ones (about -88 %). It is estimated that the crisis has cut over 70 % of the value of tourism expenditure recorded in 2019 and 75 % of the turnover of companies in the "core" sector of the Roman tourism chain, with a negative impact on GDP of -1.97 %»<sup>4</sup>. The shy optimism of the early autumn months therefore seems threatened by the gradual worsening of the situation in 2022, nevertheless many citizens - who have begun to perceive covid as a long-lasting problem - try to live the city's opportunities as much as possible, as demonstrated crowding of cinemas and shops in the center in January 2022. What has been exposed so far appears in stark contrast to the historical adaptability of the

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<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Rapporto Pendolaria 2021, <https://www.legambiente.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Rapporto-Pendolaria-2021.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.censis.it/sites/default/files/downloads/Diario%20della%20transizione\\_4\\_2021.pdf](https://www.censis.it/sites/default/files/downloads/Diario%20della%20transizione_4_2021.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/turismo-covid-roma-domanda-calo-74percento-AD7IhINB>

Roman koiné, which has always exported typologies and models that are susceptible to modification with respect to social and landscape contexts. It is no coincidence that, as Alberto Ferlenga noted, «(...) we can still observe today how the typical figures of the urban world brought from Rome, have mixed with other geographies and cultures, generating extraordinary forms of adaptation —“recognizable differences”— well different from the architectural homologations made later, in the same regions, by colonial powers or modernity. An aptitude for the interpretation of specific conditions and the “resilient” variation to climates or habits brought to the mountains or deserts by models among the highest among those produced by the urban culture of all times, which has influenced a vast area of the Mediterranean but which, even at home, has constituted an indelible character, renewing itself with the Renaissance city and arriving, albeit with difficulty, up to us» (Ferlenga, 2021, pp. 11-12).

## **2. TAKING CARE STARTING FROM CULTURE: THE ROMAN MUSEUM SYSTEM TO THE TEST OF COVID**

Rome represents an excellent exemplum for analyzing a whole series of problems arising as a result of the pandemic from Covid 19, as well as for investigating the direct consequences had on the tourist fabric and on the museum system, with the aim of favoring possible solutions. Rome is in fact the city where the greatest number of architectural and archaeological assets in the world is quantitatively concentrated; this heritage inherited from the past is «(...) largely integrated into the life of the city; not only a “monument” to visit and admire, but still used for public, collective and private functions (...)».<sup>5</sup> From this statement, a further degree of problem emerges, that is what are the concrete possibilities of re-functionalizing these areas following a long period of interruption of use both at a social and at a working level, given the

high number of people in smart working. Furthermore, due to the heterogeneity of the architectures, generations and institutions that work in the management of the museum heritage, the case of the Capital allows for a specific reflection on the reconfiguration of the exhibition and fruition spaces in a logic of distancing and flexibility of the workplace.

The impacts of the pandemic on the Roman museum system and, on a larger scale, on the national system are in fact well known; the two periods of closure —from March to May 2020 and subsequently from November to January 2021— inevitably “forced” the administrators to devise new forms of use of the galleries, exhibition spaces and architectural works, arriving at outlining innovative information campaigns and cultural promotion. Moreover, as a recent report by ICOM (International Council of Museum) pointed out that «(...) since May 2020, worldwide, all museums and places of culture have had to reduce (or in any case modify) their activity drastically of 95 %».<sup>6</sup>

Similar data are present in a report published by the Archaeological Park of the Colosseum (PArCo) —in pre-Covid period one of the most visited archaeological areas in our country— which shows that the museum system in question «in the previous two-year period 2018-2019 had recorded an increase in visitors of 9.3 % compared to 2017, in 2020 it saw a lack of over 5 million visitors and an economic loss of about 51 million euros due to lack of ticketing revenues. The long period of closure of the PArCo (...), as well as other places of culture, caused a sudden halt in the intense program of enhancement».<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the decrease in tourism, these places had to adopt safety policies for their workers and, at the same time, for visitors. The Archaeological Park of the Colosseum has also agreed with the Rome 1 Local Health Authority (ASL Rome 1) to efficiently manage possible emergencies for employees and tourists. Specifically, «the ASL Rome 1 guaranteed support on two fronts: from a technical-scientific and training point of view, for the implementation of the measures necessary for safe use and from a health point of view, with a monitoring open daily from 9.00 to 19.00 for the management of visitors who

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.riccaroma.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Roma-Ricerca-Roma-Patrimonio-il-nostro-di-tutti.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See the report “Colosseum Archaeological Park 2020-2021” published by the Archaeological Park of the Colosseum (PArCO).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

are “feverish” with codified procedures, and the activation of surveillance on any suspicious cases, as well as a more general first aid intervention in case of need».<sup>8</sup>

The architect should therefore resume his “historical role”, namely that of suggesting the way to organically experience space, otherwise we will all be citizens without cities. The “urban opportunities” offered by large cities such as Milan, Rome, Florence, Naples and others have almost completely disappeared, like the possibility of going to the theater, enjoying cinema events or exhibitions. The museum, probably one of the most affected by the economic crisis following the pandemic, proposed interesting “alternatives” beyond the virtual world. If in fact there are many online exhibitions-organized not only by important museums (such as, for example, the Roman MAXXI and its constant commitment through book presentations on the YouTube channel as well as podcasts dedicated to individual works exhibited within its spaces) but even by individual artists through tools such as Artsteps, etc. - it is interesting to focus on other activities, which have involved a few citizens and which pose stimulating elements for reflection. Among the most original advertising campaigns implemented in the capital to tackle the crisis in the sector, we can observe the Legendary Ticket or the ticket for an entrance to the National Museum of XXI Century Arts MAXXI valid for about 100 years.<sup>9</sup> The campaign’s attempt—that was very successful—<sup>10</sup> is to “give confidence” and concrete possibilities to art, believing in its immortal value.

It is interesting to underline how, unlike the advertising campaigns of large institutional museums, part of Rome’s cultural life is increasingly characterized by activities carried out by small businesses. In this case, we refer to associations, study and research centers which, although not very active during the first months of the Italian lockdown, began to take action towards June/July 2020 to continue the sharply interrupted cultural programs. It is a really interesting and decidedly counter-current phenomenon, among which it was decided to cite two cases that show how these centers have been able to activate, around them, part of the citizenship and the neighbourhood. The first example is that of

an art gallery, “Embrice 2030”, founded in 2007 by Professor Carlo Severati and located in the Garden City of Garbatella. As reported on the gallery’s website, “Embrice” is a «(...) space for study, debate and proposals around the themes of architecture, literature, arts, communication, education, culture in general».<sup>11</sup> During the first lockdown, the gallery decided to promote some studies and project proposals on the area of the Torre del Fiscale in Rome, exhibiting analyses and drawings, photographic documents, in-depth animations, planimetric drawings and texts based on an urban planning approach and reading of the physical consistency of the city, in order to stimulate a dialogue between architects, administration and citizens.<sup>12</sup>

Subsequently, “Embrice” managed to resume with exhibitions and initiatives dedicated, specifically, to personalities and topics “forgotten” by official culture, who dealt with the integral relationship between art, architecture and design. This was the case of the first Embrice exhibition of the year 2021, dedicated to Paola d’Ercole, architect and artist, focused on an “unedited” part of her production, carried out in a fairly long time ranging from 1965 to the 2000s. In the words of the founder of “Embrice”, Carlo Severati, «New social needs are emerging with the pandemic, with their differences for each geographical area; sanitation should also mean to repair our cities and their surroundings, and the territory. Within narrow limits: acid rains, like those in the Ruhr or Padania, and several pipelines of fossil fuel arriving from everywhere constitute a heavy condition for Europe. The architectural or environmental design invention includes a definition of a new development model».<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See the report “Colosseum Archaeological Park 2020-2021” published by the Archaeological Park of the Colosseum (PArCO).

<sup>9</sup> See the MAXXI website: <https://www.maxxi.art/maxxi-legendary-ticket/>.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. [https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/arte\\_e\\_cultura/21\\_aprile\\_17/maxxi-legendary-ticket-biglietto-che-dura-100-anni-db498b7c-9f82-11eb-8597-6499de4a4df8.shtml](https://roma.corriere.it/notizie/arte_e_cultura/21_aprile_17/maxxi-legendary-ticket-biglietto-che-dura-100-anni-db498b7c-9f82-11eb-8597-6499de4a4df8.shtml).

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. <https://embrice2030.com/embrice/>.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. <https://embrice2030.com/2020/06/19/mostra-via-latina-demetriade-campo-barbarico-degrado-o-area-archeologica/>.

<sup>13</sup> Carlo Severati, <https://embrice2030.com/2020/05/20/2468/>.

“Centro Studio Giorgio Muratore”<sup>14</sup> is the other Roman reality that has tried to create its line concerning the major mainstream cultural events in the capital. It is a centre dedicated to the archival dimension and historical research which, during the first lockdown, began a series of small interviews published on the Centre’s website and social channels. In particular, there have been two cycles of activities developed close to the Covid: the first concerned a series of “Scientific Autobiographies” where multifaceted figures from the world of architecture and art, active in the Roman area, told their professional experiences, trying thus to outline a sort of link between old and new generations. The centre —directed by Professor Clementina Barucci— is active in increasing the knowledge of the protagonists of Rome and the Roman School, also focusing on the historiographical rediscovery of “minor” figures. Some of these architects’ works have also been reviewed through the “Roman Architecture in Cinema” project, which is an active blog at the Center that stimulates young researchers in identifying the relationships between the post-crisis Rome of the 1950s in film scenarios by De Sica, Rossellini, Fellini, etc. An operation that seeks formal as well as theoretical references to the current situation of the capital, in which the abandonment of large cities collides with situations of severe social degradation.

Finally, it should be noted that, on 3 November 2021, the Chamber of Deputies allocated numerous funds for the culture and restoration of architectural and artistic works, establishing a series of interventions aimed at the protection and enhancement of the cultural heritage. Concerning the Capital, funds of approximately 500 million euros were authorized to be channeled into the Caput Mundi-Next Generation EU project, intended mainly for large tourist events. The text presented to the Chamber

provides that this funding is aimed at the regeneration of the heritage, concentrating economic efforts around some main projects, such as: «(...) restoration of the cultural and urban heritage and of the complexes of high historical-architectural value of the city of Rome (€ 169.4 million); the jubilee paths (From pagan Rome to Christian Rome), which envisages the enhancement, safety measures, anti-seismic consolidation, restoration of places and buildings of historical interest and archaeological itineraries (€ 159.4 million); #Mitingodiverde, which includes interventions on parks, historic gardens, villages and fountains (€ 60.5 million)».<sup>15</sup> Among the objectives to be pursued there is also the «(...) redevelopment of at least 200 cultural and tourist sites»<sup>16</sup> also considering that the list of beneficiaries / implementers of this funding are —in addition to the City of Rome and the Archaeological Superintendence, Fine Arts and Landscape for the metropolitan area of Rome— the Colosseum Archaeological Park (PARCO), the Appia Antica Archaeological Park, the Diocese of Rome, the Ministry of Tourism and finally the Lazio Region.

Still, two years after the onset of the pandemic, many doubts remain about the evolution of the situation, a condition also aggravated by the current war in Ukraine. Rome has certainly shown that it intends to survive the emergency, through a series of “virtuous” proposals and promotional campaigns aimed at making the immense wealth available virtually usable. The hope is to allow a resemantization of infrastructures, services and buildings which, over time, have changed their role concerning the social, economic and cultural context. Giving a new meaning to an architectural element that is now isolated and “minimized” in its role, allows the contemporary designer to activate a whole series of “positive” actions for the urban and landscape environment, emphasizing the role of social and cultural catalyst of the ‘architecture. Therefore, it will now be up to the new administration to coordinate the control room of the museum system and Roman mobility, taking advantage of the various critical issues to give the capital of Italy a turning point, as organic as possible.

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. <https://archiwatch.it/>.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1105396.pdf?\\_1562378484936](https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1105396.pdf?_1562378484936)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1105396.pdf?\\_1562378484936](https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1105396.pdf?_1562378484936)



### 3. CONCLUSIONS

If the world of architecture is trying to pursue and govern —without great success, as some belated awareness of the end of the villages demonstrate—the phenomena in progress, politics has long been in a state of unconsciousness, ignorant —in the etymological sense—and disinterested in what happens at the foot of its buildings. The pandemic is showing instead how, at the base of the emergency, there is a problem of spaces and that beyond the social distancing, which will end as the contagion began, it will be the architect's task to help the community to overcome the memory of the trauma experienced. Moreover, as Alberto Ferlenga maintains, the pandemic was: «a terrible and unexpected moment of transition; a global emergency that has highlighted as never before the insufficiencies of those cities, those spaces and those homologated objects that have accompanied the lives of all of us in recent decades. There is no material destruction this time, but the damage is no less. And once again the differences and “resistances” expressed by our millenary urban experience and revealed by the lockdowns could be useful not only as a study ground but as a design tool». If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is precisely this: that the house is the primary component of man's space and as such must be organically configured with its external spaces. This configuration cannot and should not be left to chance but it is the architect's task to suggest how to live the space organically.

Premises and promises of the pre Covid era and When in Rome (do not) do as the Romans do: models and critical issues of the Italian capital are written by Marco Falsetti; Taking care starting from culture: the Roman museum system to the test of Covid is written by Giusi Ciotoli.

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