

# MAKING SENSE OF THE ROME WE SEE TODAY

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## LECTURE 5: THE ROME OF THE ITALIAN CAPITAL POST-1871

In order to talk about Rome as the capital of a unified Italy we have to talk briefly about what preceded the unification: very briefly, at the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 (Congress of Vienna), the Italian peninsula comprised eight separate state entities... in the south Garibaldi and his followers fought for a republic as did Mazzini in the north... however, in the north Cavour led a strong movement fighting for a monarchy... so, in 1860 Garibaldi agreed, for the sake of unity, to a monarchy... and in 1861, Victor Emmanuel II, the last king of Sardinia/Savoy became king of a united Italy (in Florence)... neither of these, however, included the papal states (including today's Lazio with Rome and the Vatican, Umbria, Marches) which held out until Garibaldi's men entered Rome on 20 September 1870... and Rome was made capital on 1 July 1871...

Little of significance had been built from the mid-1700s... the papacy and the Church had declined... and Rome stagnated...

Indeed, in these circumstances, it is self-evident that Rome was going to grow and change even more than most other cities as it modernised, as the populace urbanised, as the needs of the city as national capital grew... and, of course, the new state needed to create a new national identity... and what better than to return to its original greatness... the Italy and Rome of the classical Roman empire...

### **Illustration 1: Pre-Capital City, Nolli's map, 1748**

### **Illustration 2: Pre-Capital City, 1830 []**

- no great changes since the Nolli plan of 1748

### **Illustration 3: Soldiers entering Porta Pia, XX Sett 1870 [Storia Fotografica, 1900-1918, p20]**

- though the wall was breached just 50m to the north

### **Illustration 4: Piano Regolatore, 1882, Capital City [Kostof, 1973, p45]**

- So Rome became the capital of Italy in 1871
- the city is still within the Aurelian wall!!!!
- only 200 000 inhabitants
- but this is not only what is there in 1882 but shows planning for the future
- many proposed new streets and street-widenings.. not all realised though..
- those realised include:
  - Corso Vittorio Emmanuel II
  - the Lungoteveres
- many areas already under construction and many proposed
- the Vatican's Borgo has expanded, as has Trastevere and the area up to S Maria Maggiore and Testaccio...

- and several of the axial streets are now lined with development
- there is now a railway station...
- and there are several large sites planned for state ministries..

The earliest and, initially at least, the most damaging of the major modernisations was the cutting of the Corso Vittorio Emmanuel II through Renaissance Rome... and we're going to look carefully at how that was done ...

**Illustration 5: GoogleEarth plan, Corso Vittorio Emmanuel**

- the city has had the north-south throughway for centuries, the Corso...
- the east-west route from the Vatican to the Lateran via the Capitoline and the centre of the city had been an intricate typically medieval series of winding lanes
- and what was needed was a direct route modernising the city
- it is not quite straight and has a couple of little kinks in it
- planned before the 1882 plan and carried out immediately in the 1880s
- not at all like Hausmann's Parisian boulevards, though Paris was the obvious model

**Illustrations 6-14: Corso Vittorio Emmanuel today, Photographs [SST, 2011]**

- this is what the street looks and feels like
- going west from S Andrea delle Valle along the street, we pass through several piazzas or squares, we pass the Cancellaria, we see a couple of late-Renaissance churches, Borromini's Oratorio, one building looking like a late-Renaissance palazzo, and numerous five- and six-storey neo-classical/neo-Renaissance 19thC palazzi....

**Illustration 15: Nolli plan, detail... from here to there....**

- the question was how to get from the bridge crossing the Tiber to the Vatican to the centre of the city...

**Illustration 16: Corso Vittorio Emmanuel, One Option [Kostov, III Rome, p17]**

- an 1881 proposal by Narducci was more Hausmannian in character
- here compared with the later approved 1882 plan

**Illustration 17: Detail of the Piano Regolatore, 1882 with my scribbles**

- showing the careful threading from the bridge to S Andrea delle Valle

**Illustration 18: Nolli detail, showing significant sites with my scribbles**

- with my scribbles showing the buildings and spaces that the street carefully threads its way through
- the **three sites circled** were each severely affected by the carving
- and each is treated differently... from a conservation point-of-view...

**Illustrations 19-27: Palazzo Regis or Palazetto Farnesina or Museo Baracco**

- front facade... engraving by Falda's 1655 publication ... 1522 palazzo by Sangallo the Younger, very tightly surrounded, almost invisible...
- photographs of the side and rear exposed by the 1886 demolitions
- 1885 plan and perspective by the architect, Guj...

Rui proposes demolishing the small block in front of it too... and having the Palazetto facing onto the Piazza della Cancellaria!!!

- 1889 drawings of the side facade (now the very visible, even main, facade facing the Corso) and rear facade (also very visible now) by Guj
- only built later... completed in 1905...
- in municipal ownership till 1947... and opened as the Barracco Museum in 1948...
- 2011 photographs of rear and the exposed-side and narrow front lane
- this tidying up of the rear, retaining what still exists of Sangallo's 1522 palazzo and its main facade, and the addition of a new (now principle) facade facing the Corso, all makes sense to me

### **Illustration 28: Nolli detail, Palazzo Fieschi-Sora: With my scribbles**

- claimed to be by Bramante... but I am sure that it's much later... probably post 1530... possibly 1547 when it was sold to the Soras...
- in municipal ownership from 1882... then military... and now a technical college

### **Illustrations 29-38: Palazzo Fieschi-Sora**

- plan and elevation drawn by Letarouilly, 1830 [Letarouilly, Vol III, PI 149]
- look carefully at the spacings of the windows... not accurate... also, no towers on corners... though they may have existed in 1820s when drawn by Letarouilly... though Falda drew them differently in 1655, set back from and above the top-most cornice moulding...
- 1880s photographs showing first the untouched facade and then truncated... last two bays demolished...
- 2011 photographs showing the original facade now shortened by two bays... with the central entrance bay moved one bay and the corner bay reconstructed... but other changes include removal of all of the pediments over the second storey windows and the introduction of a new string course
- and then a new main facade facing onto the Corso is an apparent but much degraded repetition of the original facade... but with incorrectly spaced fenestration, without decorative pediments over the second storey windows, and a new stringcourse between second and attic storeys, and incomplete accentuation of the corner bays...
- not much of this makes sense to me... the ancient facade has been shortened and spoiled at the upper levels... and the new Corso-facing facade is an inaccurate incomplete and watered-down copy of the original...

### **Illustration 39: Nolli detail, Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini: With my scribbles**

- a very grand palazzo... described in the late 1400s as "one of the grandest in Rome..."
- built circa and later 1440s... as the mint...
- added to over the centuries... most extensively in 1740s...
- two courts... typical... one for formal arrivals, one for stables, servants, etc
- previously faced onto Via Banchi Vecchi as main entrance

### **Illustrations 39-51: Palazzo Sforza-Cesarini**

- now main access from the Corso
- the Corso cuts through the rear court ... leaving a sliver for a new grand facade... of 1888
- but the very grand court of late 1400s shows how grand it was in the 1400s...
- so this carving through the very grand palazzo has not really damaged it... even if it is now very well “disguised”...
- indeed, all of this is very carefully thought through... and, I think, very successful as conservation or, as the Italians call it, “restauro”...

So, we have explored Rome’s equivalent to Paris’s Hausmanisation... although it was a very different endeavour... and this attempt was, clearly, to protect as much of the ancient city and its constituent parts (of all periods) as possible... though this was not always the case

And the other major set of endeavours **to make Rome trafficable and accessible** were to line the Tiber with arterial roadways... Rome had long obtained its water supplies from distant sources via aquaducts (indeed, some of the ancient Roman aquaducts still function to this day) and the Tiber had been just an open sewer...

So, lining the river bed with roads, the **Lungotevere**, did three things:

- gave easy access to much of the ancient and densest parts of the city....
- enabled a series of bridges to be built
- given that the river did fairly frequently flood its banks, it provided the opportunity to prevent flooding, especially to the lowest-lying parts of the city... in particular, the Ghetto... the ancient site of the cattle-markets (which were where they were for precisely this reason)...

**Illustration 52: 1882 Piano Regolatore, showing the Lungotevere sections then planned: and my scribbles showing what we’re going to look at**

- The first and most urgent was the stretch from Ponte Sisto to Ponte Rotto lining the Ghetto... which was conducted both as a slum-clearing and as road-making project... from 1876

**Illustrations 53: View up the Tevere from Ponte Rotto at the Giudia, before 1876** [Ponte Fabriccio poster, Sept 2018]

**Illustration 54: View from the Isola at the Giudia, before 1876** [Kostov, p67]

**Illustration 55: Watercolour, Fountain at Ponte Sisto, 1878** [Roesler Franz, Pl 79]

- romanticised view of fountain at the Ponte Sisto
- already lost at the time of painting... this piece of Lungotevere constructed in 1876-78

**Illustration 56: View across the Tiber and Isola to the Ghetto, 1915** [Storia Fotografica, p252]

- this view reminds us of the importance of the Lungoteveres for flood-control

**Illustration 57: Bird's eye view of Lungotevere, Ponte Sisto and Model Building-Type with Colonnade [GoogleEarth]**

- this building type with colonnade was intended to line the Lungotevere on both sides for the entire length...

**Illustration 58: GoogleEarth view of the Lungoteveres, Ponte Sisto to Ponte Rotto**

**Illustration 59: The Trastevere Lungotevere from the other side, The Kentridge Sgraffito [SST, 2017]**

- opened on 21 April 2016, *Triumphs and Laments*... all of them... joys and sorrows... in no order...
- like other relics embedded, the frieze is here always... past and future... disintegrating...
- Google it... you'll love it... the opening with the shadows and the music must have been wonderful...

**Illustration 60: Higher section of Lungotevere: Photograph looking down to Ponte S Angelo, circa 1870 [RIBA, James Anderson, p152]**

- romanticised view carefully picturesque
- before any thoughts of the Lungotevere...

**Illustration 61: Photograph looking down to Ponte s Angelo, circa 1890 [InsoleraSette, p11]**

- very similar view... now showing modernity and growth
- Lungotevere under construction, bridge and pontoon for materials to Palazzo del Giudizio

**Illustration 62: View from balloon of the Lungotevere a little further up under construction, 1904 [InsoleraSette, p14]**

**Illustration 63: Watercolour, The Tiber, View to Ponte Sisto, 1882 [Roesler Franz, PI 78]**

And while we thinking about the nostalgic impulse driving this image, we must recognise that many grieved for "Roma sparita" ... the already lost or disappearing Rome... the loss of a passing/past era... and while we may, today, recognise the impulses of the carving through of the Corso Vittorio Emmanuel II and its relative success, the making of the Lungotevere's and the growth of the modern city, left many resistant to these trends... as exemplified by these watercolours by photographers and artists like Ettore Roesler Franz, from 1875-1895... frankly nostalgic, frankly resistant to growth and change..

**Illustration 64: Watercolour, Casa Mattei in Trastevere, Piazza in Piscinula [Roesler Franz, PI 20]**

- painted before a 1900 photograph... clearly a partial invention... romanticised...

**Illustration 65: Photograph of 1900, Casa Mattei in Trastevere, Piazza in Piscinula** [Marta, p187]

- photograph, factual, in 1900

**Illustrations 66-68: Modern photographs, Casa Mattei in Trastevere, Piazza in Piscinula, 2014** [SST, 2014]

- the first image is a 1900 photograph... in Trastevere... facing onto Via Lungara... going by the portone, a grand palazzo in the making... of the Mattei... [Marta, p187]
- then Roesler Frans's **earlier** painting of 1882 showing the corner of the same building... very picturesque... with an invented open top floor...
- then today's photograph... now with the same open terrazzo copied from Roesler Frans's invention... and the windows all changed by magpie-like...
- assembly of ancient windows... removal of the unifying stringcourse... done apparently in the 1940s and 50s...

**Illustration 69: Watercolour, the Portone, Casa Mattei, Trastevere, Via Lungara** [Roesler Franz, Pl 15]

So we have Roesler Frans's nostalgia overlaid with a more recent falsification... a real confection... over sweet... saccharine... an invention of the past, feeding a discourse of nostalgia...

But, that said, we must now turn to the even more damaging renewals and endeavours of the State to modernise Rome and to recall its great classical ancestry... and to establish Rome as a great world-capital...

Most damaging was the extraordinary **monument to the first King of the unified Italy, Victor Emmanuel II**... and I should say immediately that it is not just the scale and proportions of the monument itself that is quite so surprising but what creating a space for it did to the townscape... Emmanuel II died in 1878...

**Illustration 70: Nolli detail showing demolitions, 1885-1945** [InsoleraSette, p52]

**Illustration 71: Engraving, XVII, Palazzo and Palazzetto di Venezia** [Barberini et al, p12]

- the Palazzo itself was a medieval building... much aggrandised in 1451... possibly by Alberti...
- Palazzetto, built 1471

**Illustrations 72-73: Palazzetto di Venezia, pre-1900 and 1910 photographs** [Storia Fotografica, p193]

- the Palazzetto pre-1900
- demolition/dismantling of the Palazzetto Venezia

**Illustration 74: Inside the Palazzetto's cloister, 2017** [SST, 2017]

**Illustration 75: The Palazzetto from the Victor Eman II Mon, 2018** [SST, 2018]

**Illustration 76: June 1911, Inauguration of the Vittorio Emmanuel II Monument**  
[Storia Fotografica, p206]

**Illustration 77: circa 1911, View fm the Vittorio Emmanuel II Monument** [Storia Fotografica, p206]

**Illustration 78: 1918, View fm the Vittorio Emmanuel II Monument today** [SST, 2018]

**Illustration 79; Bird's eye view of the Vitt Emm Mon in 1924** [Storia Fotografica, p157]

- with the few residential blocks between the Monument and the reassembled Palazzetto
- see S Maria in Aracoeli and the Capitoline

**Illustration 80; Side view of the Vitt Emm Mon in 1928** [Storia Fotografica, p249]

- with the few residential blocks between the Monument and the reassembled Palazzetto now demolished
- see S Maria in Aracoeli and the Capitoline

**Illustration 81: Bird's eye view of demolitions for the Via del Mare, 1929**  
[InsoleraSett, p57]

- demolitions under way... Teatro Marcellus lower down

**Illustration 82: Looking up Via del Mare, 1932** [Storia Fotografica, p85]

**Illustrations 83-84: 1931 and 1935, Workers and Mussolini** [InsoleraSett, pp83, 84]

**Illustrations 85-86: Mussolini at the Colosseum, 1927** [Storia Fotografica, pp210,211]

**Illustration 87: Via del Impero, view east to Colosseum, 1932** [Storia Fotografica, p80]

**Illustration 88: Via del Impero, view west to Vitt Emm II Monument, 1932** [Storia Fotografica, p80]

**Illustration 89: Via del Impero, view west to Vitt Emm II Monument, first military parade, 1932** [Storia Fotografica, p80]

**Illustration 90: GoogleEarth image with scribbles**

- showing the areas of the **1890-1935 demolitions** around the Victor Emmanuel II Monument

There were several other significant places where the Fascist-view demanded demolitions and opening up of the city-scape... which I simply don't have time for... these include:

The Borgo ... the space between the Piazza di S Pietro and the river

## Largo Argentina

Mausoleum of Augustus and the Ara Pacis (which means that I have not spoken about one of the few modern buildings inside old Rome, the 2005 museum of the Ara Pacis by the American, Richard Meier... which, while I am sure that it is functional, I am very critical of it in the way it sits in its urban space... tho, this may be improved when the Mausoleum and its immediate surrounds are eventually properly treated...)

But there is always another reason for damage... war... and, although the combatants had agreed that Rome would be treated as a special case, on 19 July 1943, a mis-directed load of bombs, aimed at the nearby railway station, hit the residential quarter of S Lorenzo and the medieval church of San Lorenzo fuori le Mura...

### **Illustrations 91-94: S Lorenzo fuori le Mura, On-Site poster of the 19 July 1043 damage**

### **Illustrations 95-105: S Lorenzo fuori le Mura, Photographs [SST, 2017, 2019]**

### **Illustration 106: GoogleEarth image with scribbles**

- showing the sites and buildings that we've looked at....

All of that said, we come to the end... and I have omitted some of the most interesting churches ...

S Ivo alla Sapienza

S Agnese fuori le Mura,

S Maria del Popolo,

S Giovanni Laterano,

Saint Peters itself

And literally scores of modest medieval churches

And I have said very little about the great houses, the palazzo, of Rome... or I have just referred to them in passing... many of the great palazzi can be seen now because many of them are now museums, several only relatively recently...

Palazzo Altemps, not far north of Piazza Navona

Palazzo Braschi (the museum of Rome), abutting the south end of Piazza Navona...

Palazzo Massimi (Termini)

The Capitoline Museums (which also gives a view over the Forum Romanum)

Villa Giulia (Etruscan museum)

Centrale Montemartini

Crypta Baldi

The Villa Farnesina

Villa Borghese

Castel S Angelo

Palazzo Colonna

Palazzo Doria Panphilli

Ara Pacis

MAXXI