

# *Città & Storia*

## THE MEGA EVENT

NEW RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE IN ECONOMICS, EXHIBITIONS, URBAN TRANSFORMATION



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# Città & Storia

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## THE 1960 OLYMPICS AND ROME'S URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS

In a recent article, called *Revisionismo monumentale* (revisionism of monuments), Vittorio Vidotto claims that the Olympics of 1960 in Rome «were an occasion for Italy to demonstrate the politic modernity reached by a country that returned to be democratic after several years of fascist dictatorship, and which now experienced a great economic development»<sup>1</sup>. This synthetic judgement clearly outlines what the 1960 Olympics meant for our country, especially for Rome, that hosted the games. The event marked – above all - a significant step ahead towards the modernisation of the architecture and town planning, in spite of the endless contradictions that characterised it.

The XVII Olympiad was held from August 25 to September 11, 1960 in Rome. For this event, an enormous number of sport venues were built (or rebuilt) in only 5 years. Some of these gained a great architectural importance. The success of this extraordinary project, which at the time did not fail in arousing endless controversies, has left a precious heritage of venues to Rome, in terms of quantity as well as quality, this event can be credited with generating generous state funding, as well as a series of courageous initiatives from the part of the State, the Municipality and the CONI, the first of which was to have entrusted engineers and architects of high professionalism. The choice on Nervi, Del Debbio, Moretti, Libera, Vitellozzi, Ligini, to mention only a few, represented in itself a guarantee for the Olympic venues to be unified by the same architectural language, in which the form and function, skill and aesthetics, would have re-

Abbreviations: AC = ARCHIVIO DEL CONI; ACS = ARCHIVIO CENTRALE DELLO STATO; ASC = ARCHIVIO STORICO CAPITOLINO.

<sup>1</sup> V. VIDOTTO, *Revisionismo Monumentale*, in M. Casciato (ed.), *Roma città Olimpica*, «do.co.mo.mo», 2010, 27, p. 4.

flected the artistic culture and technology of that time, freed from past styles and from any kind of rhetoric of power. These valuable pieces of architecture together with some urban interventions completely changed the aspect of some of Rome's most important zones, while some of the road infrastructures even influenced – in good and bad sense- the future development of the city.

Though it needs to be considered, that most of the adapted planning solutions from the part of the Municipality, had been first suggested in the fascist era, when the possibility to host the Olympic games in the capital was being pondered, in 1940 and then in 1944. Therefore, it's useful to examine the genesis and history of some of these proposals, as these were exactly the ones with which the new city administrators restarted after the war.

The link between the sport politics of the fascist period and that of the post-war Christian Democrat, was the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI)<sup>2</sup>, that functioned as the coordinator of activities of various Italian Olympic committees<sup>3</sup>, but which really had a determinant role, both before and after the conflict, not only of the planning of the sport facilities, but also the choosing of the areas in which they had to be carried out. This way influencing- even if indirectly- the urban development politics, just in the most crucial years of Rome's contemporary history (1951-1962), when the 1931 Urban Planning had been already out-dated, and the new one was still in drafting stage.

### *A «sporty urban planning» for “l'Urbe”*

«Of all the capitals, Rome presents this singular privilege of not owning any of the grand sporting organisations that form the pride of the major civil centres»<sup>4</sup> with this sarcasm, as accurate consideration, the architect Dario Carbone in 1923 underlines the grave absence of Rome from the scene of great international events, owing mainly to the lack of suitable sport facilities<sup>5</sup>. Indeed this problem was concretely faced for the first time in the 1920s, a period in which «Sport was recognised by the regime as a State religion» (1829)<sup>6</sup>. On the wave of the increas-

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank the architect Stefano Pinci, and Anna Maria Ponci, Olga Colazingari of the CONI for the much information that they supplied during the research of this study.

<sup>3</sup> The modern Olympics were inaugurated in 1896; the CONI was established in 1914 in Rome.

<sup>4</sup> D. CARBONE, *Progetto per l'espansione di Roma al mare*, Roma 1923, cit. in L. TOSCHI, *Impianti sportivi a Roma nell'era fascista*, in M. Canella, S. Giuntini (eds.), *Sport e Fascismo*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2009, pp. 279-303: 288.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in L. ROSSI, *Una capitale poco sportiva. Attività agonistica e luoghi di svago a Roma tra il 1870 e il 1940*, in *Sport e Fascismo*, cit., pp. 259-278.

<sup>6</sup> «La Gazzetta dello Sport», 5 November 1929, cit. in L. TOSCHI, *Impianti sportivi a Roma*, cit., p. 286.

ing interest shown by the fascist regime in all sporting disciplines, important initiatives were taken in Rome, some of which would have a significant weight on the future urban development of the city. In a few years the Hippodrome was opened for the racecourses, designed by Marcello Piacentini<sup>7</sup> (1925), situated on the foothills of Villa Glori, north from the centre; the “Motovelodromo Appio” at Cessati Spiriti (1926) and the Hippodrome of the Capannelle, which was reconstructed by Paolo Vietti Violi (1926), both situated south from the centre<sup>8</sup>. In 1927 the National Stadium was renovated (later Stadium of the National Fascist Party) a work of Piacentini and Angelo Guazzaroni, the same engineers who in 1911 had constructed it on the eastern borders of the Flaminio quarter<sup>9</sup>. There was no lack of ambitious projects, which in accordance with the politic ideologies of the time, reinterpreted Classic architectural themes with a modern twist. In this regard, it should be noted that in 1923 the architects Guido Franceschetti and Attilio Parsi assisted by Pietro Lombardi, planned a kind of “gymnasium”, an architectural complex that would include a number of sport facilities, located around a roman bath- inspired building<sup>10</sup>; while in 1926 a newspaper called *La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*, announced a national contest, then won by the architect Duilio Torres, for a spacious sports centre, called “Terme Littorie”, in the area of Acqua Acetosa<sup>11</sup>. That same year Armando Brasini carried out a prototype project for a sports hall, assigned by a committee created for purpose of promoting the construction<sup>12</sup>.

The most important initiative was to construct the Fascist Academy of Physical Education, which was decided by the “Opera Nazionale Balilla” (ONB)<sup>13</sup>, an

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 279-280.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 280.

<sup>9</sup> The stadium was inaugurated in 1911 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Italian Unification. In July 1927 it was transferred from the University's Institute of Physical Education to the Governorate, and later to the National Fascist Party. It was substituted with the Flaminio Stadium on the occasion of the 1960 Olympiad. See *Ibidem*, pp. 282-283; R. GIANNANTONIO, “*Ellade e Roma*” lo Stadio Nazionale tra Giulio Magni e Marcello Piacentini, Pescara, Carsa, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> *Progetto di Gymnasium per l'educazione fisica*, Rome 1923, cit. in L. TOSCHI, *Impianti sportivi a Roma*, cit., pp. 287-288.

<sup>11</sup> See «*La Rivista Illustrata del Popolo d'Italia*», IV, 1926, 4, pp. 5-15; «*Architettura e Arti decorative*», IV, 1926, 4, pp. 161-191. Cit. in *Ibidem*, p. 284.

<sup>12</sup> For bibliography *Ibidem*, p. 285.

<sup>13</sup> The organization was founded in April 1927 and aimed to help and educate the youth, in physical and moral sense. In 1937 the ONB was substituted by the PNF (National Fascist Party) under a new name: GIL (Italian Youth of the Lictor). See S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, in A. Greco, S. Santuccio (eds.), *Il Foro Italico*, Rome, Multigrafica Editrice, p.15; S. FINOCCHIARO, *L'educazione fisica, lo sport scolastico e giovanile durante il regime fascista*, in *Sport e Fascismo*, cit., pp. 119-258: 124.

Italian fascist youth organisation. The work started in 1928 and it was the first Italian school dedicated to teacher training for teachers of physical education. Around this building, North-West from the centre, on the right bank of the river Tevere and the foothills of Monte Mario, the most important sporting complex of Italy of all times was created: the Foro Mussolini (later Foro Italico), designed by the architect Enrico Del Debbio. This building was initially inspired by the “gymnasium”, but has emerged as one of the most significant modern poles of the city<sup>14</sup>.

Between 1928 and 1933 Del Debbio worked out a series of complete and incomplete versions of urban plans, on which he based a number of venues, including the Stadium of the Marmi and the Stadium of the Cipressi (later Centomila and then Olympic) (fig.1). Both of these buildings were finished and opened on the 4th November of 1932, together with the Accademia and the Monolite Mussolini, situated at the entrance of the sports centre<sup>15</sup>. Some years later, the Foro got connected to the left bank of the river Tevere, thus to Flaminio quarter, through a new bridge leading right to the main entrance (Duca d'Aosta Bridge, 1935-39)<sup>16</sup>. It's important to underline that the area on which the sports centre rose, was chosen by Del Debbio himself, because it was morphologically and environmentally ideal to host these kinds of venues, but the lower part was subject to flooding from the river Tevere. For this reason it was drained and raised, allowing the architect to easily realize the playgrounds in the “classic way”, without the need to elevate the constructions that would have disturbed the beauty of the sur-

<sup>14</sup> *Il Foro Mussolini*, Milano, Bompiani, 1937, p. 15; S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., p. 7; G. DEL DEBBIO, *Il Foro Italico di Enrico Del Debbio. Le vicende del piano e le sue trasformazioni (1928-1960)*, in *Piani urbanistici, architettura ed arte della Terza Roma: il Foro Italico e l'E42*, «MdiR Monumentidiroma», II, 2004, 1-2, pp. 29-34: 29; ID., *Il Foro Mussolini (ora Italico) di Enrico Del Debbio. Le vicende del Piano Regolatore Generale e delle sue architetture dal 1928 al 1960*, «Spaziosport», I, 2007, 4, pp. 9-12; M.L. NERI, *Enrico Del Debbio*, Milano, Idea Books, 2006, pp. 100-104; ID., *Il complesso monumentale dell'Accademia di Educazione Fisica*, «Spaziosport», I, 2007, 4, pp. 22-26.

<sup>15</sup> The main works planned in Del Debbio's final project of 1932, were: the Fascist Academy of Physical Education (Accademia Fascista di Educazione Fisica), the Marmi Stadium (or Mussolini Stadium), Cipressi Stadium, an indoor and an outdoor swimming pool, gyms, tennis courts, accommodation for athletes, parking lot, an athletic field, the train station, the residence “Balilla”, and the shooting range. Above these works there were also other ones, designed by Del Debbio together with other architects. See Del Debbio's plans edited in 1932 and 1933 in S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., pp. 12-13; 79-80; G. DEL DEBBIO, *Il Foro Italico di Enrico del Debbio*, cit., pp. 29-33.

<sup>16</sup> Del Debbio planned two bridges of which, only this one was realized. For the constructional vicissitudes see S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., pp. 15; 58-59.



Fig. 1 - E. Del Debbio, Foro Mussolini general plan, project, 1932. (From A. Santuccio, *Storia Urbanistica*, cit.).

rounding area<sup>17</sup>. The Cipressi stadium was built with these criteria, as most of the facilities planned by Del Debbio, and had a big basin shape surrounded by grassy ramparts without wall structures. Nonetheless, between 1934 and 1937, on the occasion of Hitler's visit to Rome (May 1938), it was suited to the functional and representative needs of the regime: the ramparts were replaced by steps made out of reinforced concrete, whereas the external elevation received a decorative appearance of classic style, designed by the architect Luigi Moretti<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> See G. DEL DEBBIO, *Il Foro Italico di Enrico Del Debbio*, cit., p. 29.

<sup>18</sup> With the realization of the first tier, the ONB entrusted ing. Pintonello, who assisted ing. Angelo Frisa, director of the enlargement works. Anyhow, before getting to the end of these works, the ONB assigned the project to Luigi Moretti. See V. PAOLINI, *Identità e trasformazioni dello Stadio Olimpico*, in *Piani urbanistici, architettura ed arte della Terza Roma*, cit., pp. 45-51.

The first substantial extension of the sports town was due about the mid-Thirties, when the fascist dictatorship began to consider it as an ideal place for propagandistic political ceremonies. In this framework fitted in Luigi Moretti's overall project<sup>19</sup>, drawn up on behalf of the ONB, of which there is a detailed description saved and a complete planimetric drawing, elaborated perhaps from 1933 and the beginning of 1934<sup>20</sup>. The architect proposed to connect Foro with a vast territory North of Rome<sup>21</sup> and to realize new architectural works, such as Arengo delle Nazioni, this way creating a large space for popular propagandistic assemblies<sup>22</sup>. The Foro, which already represented the new monumental centre of Mussolini's Rome, for Moretti had to represent the monumental North entrance of the city and to be connected to other achievements, required by the Duce, along the main routes of the centre<sup>23</sup>. For this purpose Moretti himself suggested to divert the ancient Via Cassia<sup>24</sup> towards the inside of the sports complex and to connect it to the city-centre with another bridge to be built below the existing Ponte Milvio<sup>25</sup>. It's not known if this grand project had been invented also for

<sup>19</sup> Moretti's first task to rearrange the Foro Italico in 1933 regards a project for the realization of a fountain. The most interesting work was the Fencing Academy (Accademia di Scherma), built between 1934-36. S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., pp. 12-15; 56. He was entrusted with the planning by the direction of the ONB See C. ROSTAGNI, *Luigi Moretti, 1907-1973*, Milano, Electa, 2008, p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> See the printed report of L. MORETTI, *Foro Mussolini-Piano Regolatore T.-Vincoli di piano regolatore della zona del Foro Mussolini*, project report, to which a drawing is attached that shows the boarders and constraints to be made in the zone. The text was published and dated in 1936-37 by A. Greco and A. Santuccio, while C. Rostagni reckons that it should be dated back in 1933-34. Anyway Moretti's plan succeeded Del Debbio's plan of 1933 on which Moretti's plan drew, see M. Luisa Neri, Enrico Del Debbio, Milano, Idea Books, 2006. See S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., pp. 18; 79-81; C. ROSTAGNI, *Luigi Moretti*, cit., pp. 54; 197-198; note 106.

<sup>21</sup> The territory was delimited from Via della Camilluccia, from Cassia, from Viale Angelico and from Parco di Monte Mario, corresponding to the Northwest quadrant. The same delimitation had already been defined in Del Debbio's 1933 plan.

<sup>22</sup> For Moretti the Foro had to constitute an unitary monumental complex and include the following buildings: the Fascist Academy of Physical Education, the Athletic Stadium, the Olympic stadium, the indoor and outdoor swimming pools, the tennis courts, the riding track, the "Casa Sperimentale del Balilla" (experimental house of Balilla), the "Colonie Elioterapiche" (heliotherapeutic colonies), the High-School of Physical Education, the National Orthogenetic Centre, the Great Theatre for assemblies, the Open Theatre for mass performances, the Arengo Nazionale, the Fascist Art Museum, the Fascist Cultural Centre, the Library of the Fascism, the guest-rooms, the athletes' accommodation, the big warehouses, the camp-sites and parks. L. MORETTI, *Foro Mussolini*, cit., p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> For further considerations: *Ibidem* p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> The main road, which conveyed the northern traffic towards the city.

<sup>25</sup> L. MORETTI, *Foro Mussolini*, cit., p. 81. For Moretti's plans see also P.O. ROSSI, *Lesposizione del 1942 e le Olimpiadi del 1944. LE42 e il Foro Mussolini come porte urbane della Terza Roma*, in

hosting the 1940 Olympics, for which Italy had proposed to nominate Rome as a candidate city since July 1932.

It should just be mentioned that the Games were assigned to Tokyo (July '36), while Italy became candidate for the '44 edition. The possibility to celebrate this extraordinary event in Rome was a reason to consider the extension of the Foro, but only until June 1939, when also for the '44 games the hope faded away, as they were assigned to London<sup>26</sup>. On this regard, Moretti's second project of 1936-37 has to be mentioned, but in particular the one of 1939, that he introduced with various alterations, the Palazzo del Littorio (from 1940 Ministry of the Foreign Affairs), that substituted Arengo delle Nazioni, which had been eliminated<sup>27</sup> (figg. 2-3).

However, those years it was the CONI that dealt directly with the Olympic matter, involving itself not only with the planning of venues, but also with their locations. One of the first plans was to build an "Olimpionico" Stadium in the Acqua Acetosa area (1933)<sup>28</sup>, north from the city. Later it was put aside and substituted by another, bigger project, pertaining a "Città Sportiva" (sporty city) located always north from the centre, including obviously the Foro Mussolini. It was the CONI who announced it in two pamphlets, titled *Roma Olimpica* created in collaboration with the ENIT (National Authority of Tourism Industry) and specifically published in 1935 and 1939<sup>29</sup>. From the images that can be found in the last edition<sup>30</sup>, it can be deduced that the City (fig. 4) expanded from the Foro Mussolini towards the East, over the river Tevere, embracing the vast area that confines Flaminio, the Acqua Acetosa area and the Tor di Quinto (and the hippodrome with the same name), meant by the 1931 Urban Planning for

*Piani urbanistici, architettura ed arte della Terza Roma*, cit., pp. 13-28.

<sup>26</sup> About this fact see B. ZAULI, *L'Olimpiade a Roma. Cinquant'anni di speranze e di lotte*, «Capitolium», XXXII, 1957, 2, pp. 1-2; L. TOSCHI, *Romane Olimpiadi. Giochi frivoli e ludi necessari (1908-1960)*, «Lancillotto e Nausica», V, 1988, 3, pp. 36-41; ID., *Roma Olimpica. Schermaglie della diplomazia e scelte urbanistiche*, «Lancillotto e Nausica», XII, 1995, 1-3, pp. 69-72; ID., *Sport e urbanistica a Roma durante il fascismo*, «Studi Romani», XLIII, 1995, 3-4, pp. 277-296; ID., *I giochi negati, Roma e le Olimpiadi del 1940 e del 1944*, «Lancillotto e Nausica», XIV, 1997, 1, pp. 74-85; ID., *Impianti sportivi a Roma*, cit., pp. 290-292.

<sup>27</sup> For these projects refer to S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., pp. 18-19; P.O. ROSSI, *L'esposizione del 1942*, cit., p. 28; ID., *Roma. Guida all'architettura moderna 1909-2000*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2003, p. 46; C. ROSTAGNI, *Luigi Moretti*, cit., pp. 54; 198-199.

<sup>28</sup> For this project, edited by ing. Giulio Arata, see L. TOSCHI, *Sport e urbanistica a Roma*, cit., pp. 286-288; ID., *Impianti sportivi a Roma*, cit., pp. 283-284.

<sup>29</sup> The 1935 edition referred to the 1940 Olympics, and the other more complete and detailed one, that of the 1944 Olympics.

<sup>30</sup> CONI, *Roma Olimpica*, Roma, Tipografia F. Capriotti, 1939.



Fig. 2 - L. Moretti, Foro Mussolini, general plan, project, 1936-37. (From C. Rostagni, *Luigi Moretti*, cit.).

the town commons, residences and industrial buildings. Compared to Moretti's urban plans, the hub of the whole sports complex results to be moved to the large area next to Flaminio quarter, where the northern traffic (coming from Cassia and Flaminia roads) would have been conveyed towards the city, through the XXVIII Ottobre Bridge<sup>31</sup>. This area would have accommodated the sports hall, the Velodrome and a number of service facilities near to the existing National Stadium. The Olympic Village, immersed in the green fields, was situated a bit further north, along the Via Cassia<sup>32</sup>. As written in a pamphlet of '39, all the structures «will not only be architecturally aesthetic, but what counts more, they will also be technically unexceptionable. Grandiose avenues, adorned open spaces with statues, fountains, flowerbeds, rationally located parking lots, will

<sup>31</sup> The present Flaminio Bridge, began in 1939, based on the project of A. Brasini. P. NICOLOSO, *Mussolini architetto*, Torino, Einaudi, 2008, pp. 129-130; M. TALAMONA, *Il Villaggio olimpico*, in B. Reichlin, L. Tedeschi (eds.), *Luigi Moretti Razionalismo e trasgressività tra barocco e informale*, Milano, Electa, 2010, pp. 313-327: 317, note 32.

<sup>32</sup> The Olympic Village was composed of a series of buildings with two, three, four and even more floors, symmetrically lined along a road, which culminated on a plateau, dominated by a tower and a semi-circular building. See CONI, *Roma Olimpiaca*, cit., pp. 32-33.



Fig. 3 - L. Moretti, Urban Design of Foro Mussolini, project, 1939. (From C. Rostagni, *L. Moretti*, cit.).

Fig. 4 - CONI, Zone of the Olimpiad, project, 1939. (From *Roma Olimpiaca*, cit.).



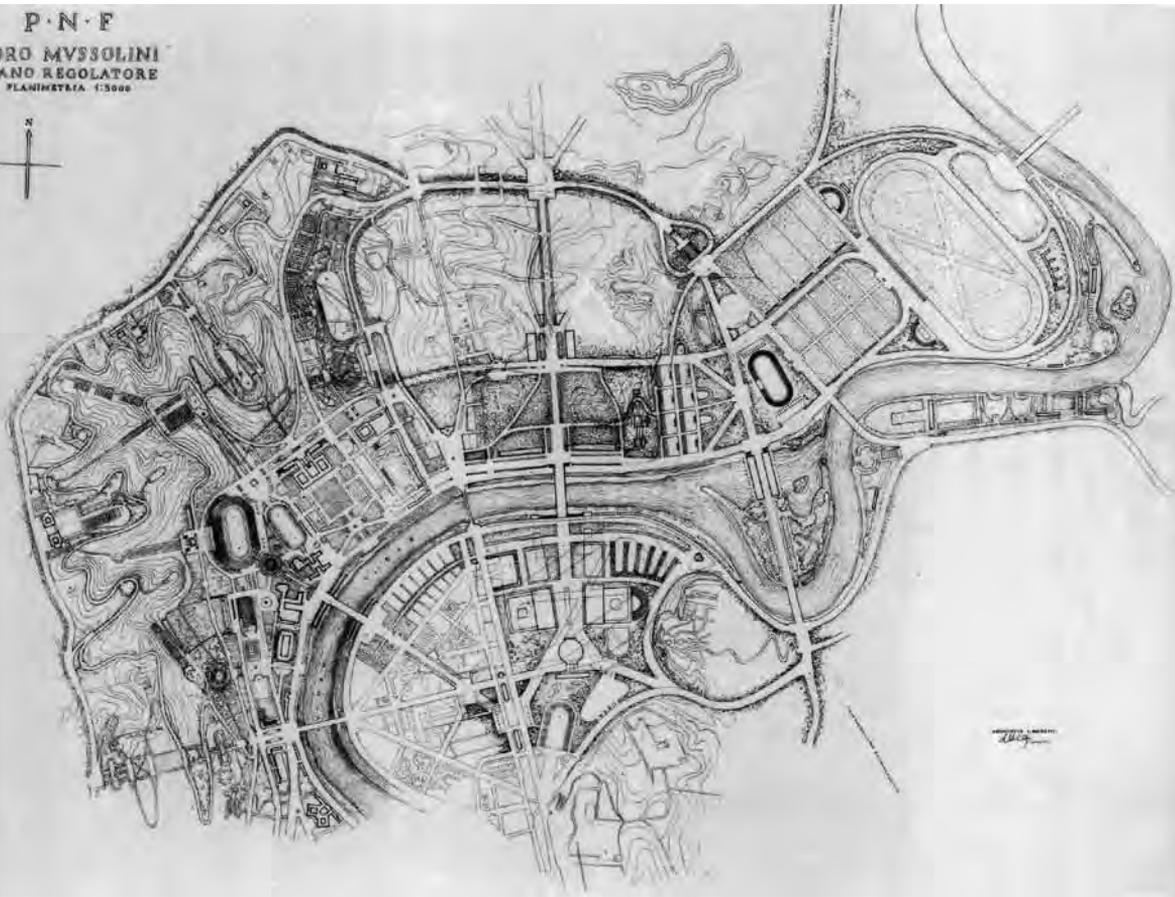


Fig. 5 - L. Moretti, Foro Mussolini, Urban Design, project, 1940-41. (From C. Rostagni, *Luigi Moretti*, cit.).

create of this zone one of the most preferable meeting points in modern Rome»<sup>33</sup>.

The importance of this plan was in the fact that for the first time the area dedicated to sport covered all the northern part of the city, including also the zone on the other side of the Tevere, next to the built up areas. The author of the plan isn't mentioned in the pamphlet *Roma Olimpica*, but it's possible to imagine that he was guided by Luigi Moretti, who -in those years- was engaged with the urban arrangement of the Foro. The same architect used some of the urban solutions from the '39 plan of the CONI in his new project (fig. 5), edited in 1941<sup>34</sup> within the "piano del Ventennale" (a twenty-year plan, that Mussolini had required from the Governor of the city).

The possibility of hosting the '44 Olympics had not yet vanished, when the CONI already gave up on the idea to concentrate all of the sporting venues in

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39

<sup>34</sup> About this project see S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., p. 19; C. ROSTAGNI, *Luigi Moretti*, cit., pp. 98-200.

the northern areas, and proposed to locate them taking into account the urban composition as well as the new zone-expansions of the city, towards the Sea and Castelli, particularly in the Tre Fontane locality, where the Esposizione Universale (universal exposition) quarter was just under construction in 1942 (E42), another extraordinary event that the regime was preparing for the Capital<sup>35</sup> (we will mention this below). This new orientation clearly took into account the future shifting of the demographic barycentre towards southern zones of the city, and of the necessity of creating some sporting facilities, otherwise they would be decentralised too much in the northern areas. Such intentions emerge from an accurate study published by the CONI in March 1940, titled *Studio di massima su gli impianti sportivi di Roma* (General study about the sport facilities of Rome), written on behalf of the Governor of the Capital City, Prince Gian Giacomo Borghese, in order to resolve the long-lasting problem of «ginnico-sportiva» (gymnastic and sport) facilities of the city<sup>36</sup>. The type of venues were indicated in it as “da grande” (for big), for “medio spettacolo” (medium performance), and “da esercitazione” (for training)<sup>37</sup>, necessary to satisfy the needs of the same committee and of the other sporting and recreation organisations of the city (GIL, GUF, OND)<sup>38</sup>. For each of them, the most suitable location was indicated within the urban territory. On the base of such *Studio* the Governance should have provided a «Piano regolatore sportivo» (sporty urban design) of the “Urbe”<sup>39</sup> and preside over the carrying-out and functioning of each single work<sup>40</sup>. After all, due to the second conflict that began, as known, in September 1939, the plan

<sup>35</sup> In June 1936, the “Bureau International des Exposition” reunited in Brussels, granted Italy the Universal Exposition of 1941, postponed to 1942, in concomitance with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fascist Revolution. The 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1937 Mussolini approved the quarter’s general plan giving an immediate start to the works. See L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L’Eur e Roma dagli anni Trenta al Duemila*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1986, pp. 11-59; P. FERRARA, *L’Eur: un Ente per l’E42*, in M. Calvesi, E. Guidoni, S. Lux (eds.), *E42 l’Esposizione Universale di Roma Utopia e scenario del Regime*, Catalogo della mostra (Roma, Archivio centrale dello Stato, aprile-maggio 1987), Venezia, Marsilio, 1987, I, pp. 73-90; G. FIORAVANTI, *L’Olimpiade delle Civiltà: programmi, strutture, organizzazione*, in *Ibidem*, pp. 91-101.

<sup>36</sup> CONI, *Studio di massima su gli impianti sportivi di Roma*, Roma, SAET, 1940, pp. 5-7.

<sup>37</sup> 1) Venues for national and international events; 2) Venues for the normal and every-day sports events; 3) Venues for young male and female training purposes. *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Italian Youth of the Lictor (GIL), Fascist University Groups (GUF), National Recreational Organisation (OND).

<sup>39</sup> CONI, *Studio*, cit., pp. 5; 20-21.

<sup>40</sup> To understand the aim of this program it’s interesting to point out some numerical data. The venues of the first group were 15, out of which 7 were *ex novo*; those of the second group were 19, out of which 12 were *ex novo*; those of the third one were compressively 79 out of which 67 were *ex novo*, and other 223 gyms and several tennis courts were planned for each park of the city. *Ibidem*, pp. 9-47.



Fig. 6 - Rome's City Plan with the indications of the existing sport venues, and those to be realized according to the CONI, 1940 c. (ASC, Stragr. 680-1).

was not carried out any more. The only elaborated chart received on this regard is represented by an unpublished city plan, datable 1940, stored at the "Achivio Storico Capitolino", that bears exactly the same position of every single sports venue scheduled by the CONI (fig. 6).

It is interesting to observe, that among the suggested plans, the one that regards the locating of the structures for "grande spettacolo" (big performance), is a very important one. CONI suggested to divide them into two groups and situate them on the extremes of the major "asse cittadino" (main city route)<sup>41</sup> «in

<sup>41</sup> The "asse cittadino" (city route), which should have connected Foro Mussolini with the E42, was formed by the following streets: Tiziano, Flaminia, del Corso, Piazza Venezia, dell'Impero, dei Trionfi and Imperiale.

the form of two poles: one in the North, where in the centre there is the Olympic Stadium of Foro Mussolini, and one in the South, close to the E42, with the Palazzo dello Sport in the middle»<sup>42</sup>. It's possible that such a solution could continue a similar idea commenced for the first time by the architect Marcello Piacentini in 1936, when the Olympics of '44 was still taken into consideration<sup>43</sup>. Anyhow, the idea of creating the two sports poles, was resumed and carried out after the war, appropriately on the occasion of the 1960 Olympics, but in a deeply altered environmental context.

### *The 1960 Olympics*

Shaken by the “economic miracle”<sup>44</sup>, at the end of the Fifties Rome went through a phase of great transformations, just like many other Italian cities. Changes happened in nearly all the sectors of civil society, especially in the field of constructions, favoured by the strong demographic increase, occurred in the last decade. If in 1931 the city counted 1,014,219 inhabitants, in 1951 it had 1,652,000 and by 1961 a good 2,188,000<sup>45</sup>. This quick growth, accompanied by an inevitable increase in motorization, wasn't provided with the appropriate urban planning, nevertheless the '31 Urban Planning in force had been considered a useless tool since 1946<sup>46</sup>.

The problem of the new Design was concretely faced in 1951 by the Municipality, led by Rebecchini, a Christian Democrat Mayor, who presented to the council – getting it approved on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October- an article about *criteri generali di impostazione* (general criteria), to which the new plan should have been adapted<sup>47</sup>. Due to complicated vicissitudes that accompanied the work, the new plan was accepted only in 1962 and approved by the President of the Republic in 1965<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> CONI, *Studio*, cit., pp. 20-21.

<sup>43</sup> M. PIACENTINI, *L'esposizione Universale dell'anno ventesimo e la più grande Roma del piano imperiale*, «Il Giornale d'Italia», 14 October 1936, cit. in L. TOSCHI, *Sport e urbanistica a Roma*, cit., pp. 288-289.

<sup>44</sup> About this argument, see G. CRAINZ, *Il Paese mancato. Dal Miracolo economico agli anni ottanta*, Roma, Donzelli, 2005.

<sup>45</sup> About the layout of Rome's population see the research of F. CICCONE-V. DE LUCIA, *L'ipotesi delle quattro città*, «Urbanistica Informazioni», 1984, 78, cit. in P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 297.

<sup>46</sup> In fact, it had been considered to draw up a new Design since 1946 during the temporary administration of Prince Doria Pamphili. See about the vicissitudes of the 1962 Urban Design: *Ibidem*, p. 237.

<sup>47</sup> L. BENEVOLO, *Le discussioni e gli studi preparatori al Nuovo Piano Regolatore*, in *Roma: Città e Piani*, Torino, Edizioni di “Urbanistica”, 1966, pp. 199-234: 206.

<sup>48</sup> For a clear reconstruction of the complete vicissitudes of the General Urban Design of 1962 see I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, Torino, Einaudi, 1971, pp. 251-282; P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 237- 249.

Meanwhile, during the Fifties the city continued its development like before, using detailed plans (*piani particolareggiati*) and variants, which were elaborated independently, without a general coordination, however modifying the volumetric indications of the '31 Urban Planning<sup>49</sup>. This way, entire urban areas were completely altered by substituting their own types of buildings with other denser ones and with the reduction of the road-surfaces and green areas<sup>50</sup>. Out of the limits of the Urban Planning, hundreds of hectares of grounds were developed without any urban planning: on these working-class suburbs, barracks and parcels rose, which hosted around 200,000 people between 1935 and 1955<sup>51</sup>. Within a decade (1950-60) problems with traffic, public green, schools and public transport reached an extremely high level<sup>52</sup>. Rome, as accurately observed by some people, developed «without any plan» left to the disorder of the property speculation<sup>53</sup>. The main problems were represented by the vehicular traffic congestion especially in the central zone, and the indiscriminate spreading of the city, like wildfire, mostly under the heavy weight of the phenomenon of the building lots' speculation<sup>54</sup>.

In this upsetting territorial image it's easy to understand why the Olympic infrastructures, for which the Municipality was responsible, namely the same authority that didn't manage to carry out a suitable urban development policy, would have been regarded as «a new phase of the compelling urban destruction»<sup>55</sup>. From the distance of more than fifty years, even if it's difficult to share such an opinion, it needs to be noticed, that in effect the urban infrastructures built for the Olympics suffered from the lack of a general planning on an urban level and they are separate even from the indications of the urban planning then under preparation. This kind of anarchy regarding the future development of the city is incredibly present right from the initial phase of the works.

When in 1951 Italy officially presented Rome's candidacy in Vienna<sup>56</sup>, the Municipality had already decided to actualize the 1940 plans of CONI, without assessing the concrete feasibility with respect to the changed urban situation. In fact,

<sup>49</sup> Particularly from 1931 to 1957, 152 detailed plans and 174 variants were edited. See I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, cit., p. 188. L. BENEVOLO, *Le discussioni*, cit., p. 201.

<sup>50</sup> I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, cit., pp. 160-161; 188-189.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 165. About building abuses see also: P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 292-297.

<sup>52</sup> I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, cit., pp. 237-239.

<sup>53</sup> The observation of Ernst von Glasersfeld was published in «Die Weltwoche» (Zurigo), the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1958, quoted in A. CEDERNA, *Mirabilia Urbis*, Torino, Einaudi, 1965, pp. 67-68.

<sup>54</sup> About the city problems see the reports of INU (1953-54) and the report of ass. Storoni of '53, published in L. BENEVOLO, *Le discussioni*, cit., pp. 205- 231.

<sup>55</sup> A. CEDERNA, *Mirabilia*, cit., p. 61.

<sup>56</sup> B. ZAULI, *L'Olimpiade*, cit., pp. 1-3.

in the report *Criteri generali di impostazione* regarding the new Urban Planning compiled precisely in 1951, it's fixed that the venues of Foro Italico, adequately enhanced, should host the main heart of the games (Centro Olimpico Nord), while an other sports centre would have been situated in the South of the city (Centro Olimpico Sud) in the Universal Exposition quarter (Esposizione Universale-E42)<sup>57</sup>. The reason for this placement is that it would have significant consequences on the city's future urban aspect, which were mainly the same as in the fascist era, as far as the North Sports Centre is concerned. Its enhancement was justified by the necessity of using the structures of "Foro Italico" together with the possibility to arrange vast free common or state-owned areas near to the centre, avoiding this way to having to expropriate. The creation of the sports centre in the E42 zone, was explained with the necessity of sustaining the expansion of "Roma al mare" (Rome to the Sea), with the prospective of giving an impulse to finish the building of the quarter, left incomplete in 1942. In 1951 the work of converting the area into an administrative and residential quarter, that from then on was called EUR (Esposizione Universale Roma) started under Virgilio Testa's guidance, who in January of the same year got nominated as special commissioner of the "Ente Autonomo Esposizione Universale" (Independent Authority of the Universal Exposition)<sup>58</sup>. It's important that in the same year engineer Dagoberto Ortensi, consultant of the CONI, already suggested a plan for the Olympiad in which he concentrated many of the venues right at the EUR, but the project would not continue<sup>59</sup>. The question of the location of zones dedicated to the sporting activities didn't come up any more, if not in 1957, when the PRG's study elaborated by the CET (Comitato di Elaborazione Technica - Technical Elaboration Committee), thought of situating them instead of at the EUR, along the motorway, scheduled in the eastern part of the city (this was not carried-out)<sup>60</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> The report was edited by the "Giunta Municipale" (Municipality Committee) and approved by the Town Council the 12 October 1951. Relating to the sports venues the article n. 8 says: «The venues of Foro Italico, adequately enhanced, will be the main nucleus of the Olympic Games. For this the zone must be defended, keeping the sports function in an adequate green frame. Another centre for the sporting venues could be created in the Universal Exposition zone, which will be served by the metro». L. BENEVOLO, *Le discussioni*, cit., p. 209.

<sup>58</sup> The Authority, founded in 1937, was entrusted with the creation and management of the Universal Exposition, which should have taken place in 1942, giving the launch to form a city quarter. After all, the exposition wasn't held, but the construction of the quarter started in those years and continued after the war. (About the E42 see above the note 35). About the whole vicissitude, see: L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit., pp. 10-74. About Virgilio Testa see: *Ibidem*, p. 103, note 1.

<sup>59</sup> See the report published in «Momento Sera», 12 July 1951, cit. in *Ibidem*, p. 88-89.

<sup>60</sup> M. MANIERI ELIA, *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, «Urbanistica», 1960, 32, pp. 106-119: 106. About the motorway, see: O.P. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 246.

After the historical assignment of the Games on the 16th of June in 1955,<sup>61</sup> the research took action for the areas destined to the venues, which were between 30-40 hectares above the parking surfaces (around the double of those of the venues)<sup>62</sup>. To avoid heavy expenses, Municipality lands as well as those of the EUR authority areas were chosen<sup>63</sup>. The CONI assumed the duty to build all the venues with an agreement, that after the Olympics, these would remain in the property of the mentioned authorities (Municipality, EUR, etc.) to satisfy the ever-increasing sporting needs of the Capital in the future. For this, the CONI had already thought of an efficient internal organisation, they set up a Technical Committee in October 1954, the COR (Olympic Constructions Rome), which was lead by Mario Saini and the engineer Luciano Berti (secretary), who availed themselves of the advice of the engineer Cesare Valle from the Ministry for Public Works<sup>64</sup>.

The road connection problem between Foro Italico and EUR, wasn't faced simultaneously with the decision of creating two sporting poles at the North and South of the city (how it should have been on the contrary), but only later, in the mid-Fifties. Anyhow, the anachronistic idea to use the "maggior asse" (major city route), suggested by the CONI in 1940 was discarded, and instead it was planned to build an expressway on the western part of the city, named for the occasion Via Olimpica (called also as Via Salaria - EUR). The same road was later inserted in the studies of the new Urban Planning, elaborated between 1954 and 1957 and designed with such features that could prevent the property speculation in the Aurelia zone and behind the Vatican, still rarely built-up<sup>65</sup>. As it can be seen, such a project was discarded because it was considered to be too expensive and difficult to fulfil<sup>66</sup>. All the sporting venues and road infrastructures

<sup>61</sup> B. ZAULI, *L'Olimpiade*, cit., pp. 1-3.

<sup>62</sup> *Programma di Costruzione approvato dalla Giunta Esecutiva del CONI il 10 e l'11 ottobre 1956, per un importo di spesa di 10 miliardi*, AC, Programma COR 1960, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> «This way – declared the CONI in 1956 – the financial problem of many tens-of-billions of Liras got resolved», *Ibidem*.

<sup>64</sup> Rapporto Ufficiale, *Giocchi della XVII Olimpiade Roma 1960, Rapporto Ufficiale del Comitato Organizzatore*, Roma 1962, I, pp. 53-55. See the interview with Maurizio Clerici, one of the architects of the COR, *A Colloquio con Maurizio Clerici*, «Spaziosport», IV, 2010, 13, pp. 49-55.

<sup>65</sup> Beginning from 1954, its layout was inserted in the preparations of the new Urban Design, edited by the CET (Technical Preparations Committee) and from the "Grande Commissione" (Great Committee), charged, in the summer of the same year, with the drawing-up of the Design. The members of the committee were: Lenti, Marino, Monaco, Piccinato, Quaroni, Muratori, Nicolosi and Del Debbio. See P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 203-204; 238-239.

<sup>66</sup> See the "Delibere del Consiglio Comunale" n. 6 of 1958, n. 5 of 1959, cit. in A. MONTENERO, *Via Olimpica la connessione viaria della XVII Olimpiade*, in *Roma città Olimpica*, cit., p. 8.

were financed by the CONI and by the State<sup>67</sup>, mainly by the Ministry for Public Works, governed by Giuseppe Togni from 19 May 1957.<sup>68</sup>

### *The Olympic centres and road infrastructures*

With the realization of the Northern Olympic Centre, the northern part of the city changed its aspect in a short period of time, as the most of the sports facilities and their related services were concentrated there. The areas involved were mainly the same as the ones indicated by the CONI in the 1939 project, including the Foro Italico district, the eastern part of the Flaminio quarter, the Acqua Acetosa zone and the Tor di Quinto one (fig. 7). On the contrary, the road infrastructures and venues were located elsewhere<sup>69</sup>.

The Foro Italico was enhanced with new necessary venues for playing sports, while the urban structure remained mostly the same as the one outlined before the war (fig. 8)<sup>70</sup>. It was the same architect Del Debbio, author of the original plan, who on the occasion of the Olympiad, in 1956 conducted the arrangements of the internal tracks and the gardens<sup>71</sup>. The first venue to be built was the Olympic Stadium (1949-53), designed by Carlo Roccatelli and Annibale Vitellozzi to substitute the old Cipressi Stadium. For the directors of the CONI the stadium had to be «the big business card» for the assignment of the Games and in fact, it was appreciated by nearly all the members of the CIO who visited it between '53 and '55<sup>72</sup>. Despite the impressive volume generated by the egg-shaped base and a stair of 3 tiers, to be able to welcome 90,000 viewers, the stadium appears to be coherently inserted in the surrounding nature, thanks to its height of only 12,390 metres, designed so it did not reach over the treetops<sup>73</sup>. After the assignment of

<sup>67</sup> «The funds were distributed, Act 1310/1953 (Legge Pelle), with a State competition for the Capital's responsibility: it was an annual contribute of 3 billions for 1952, 1953, 1954, prorogued with the Act 1310/1955 also for 1955 and was raised to 4 billions; the roads for the Olympics were built with these funds». L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit., p. 111, note 9.

<sup>68</sup> G. TOGNI, *Lo Stato per le Olimpiadi*, «Capitolium», Edizione speciale Olimpiadi, XXXV, 1960, pp. 8-11.

<sup>69</sup> See the indicating map published in ENIT (Ente Nazionale per le Industrie Turistiche) *Le Olimpiadi 1960. Giochi della XVII Olimpiade: Roma 1960*, Roma 1958.

<sup>70</sup> Also the fascist monuments were substantially conserved, despite the many controversies from the part of the left-wing political currents. About this theme, see the interesting study of V. VIDOTTO, *Il mito di Mussolini e le memorie nazionali. Trasformazioni del Foro Italico 1937-1960*, in *Roma: architettura e città negli anni della seconda guerra mondiale*, Roma, Gangemi, 2004, pp. 112-121.

<sup>71</sup> S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., p. 21; G. DEL DEBBIO, *Il Foro Italico di Enrico Del Debbio*, cit., p. 34.

<sup>72</sup> B. ZAULI, *L'Olimpiade*, cit., p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> The stadium represented a symmetric venue set on two axes of 319 and 160 metres. On

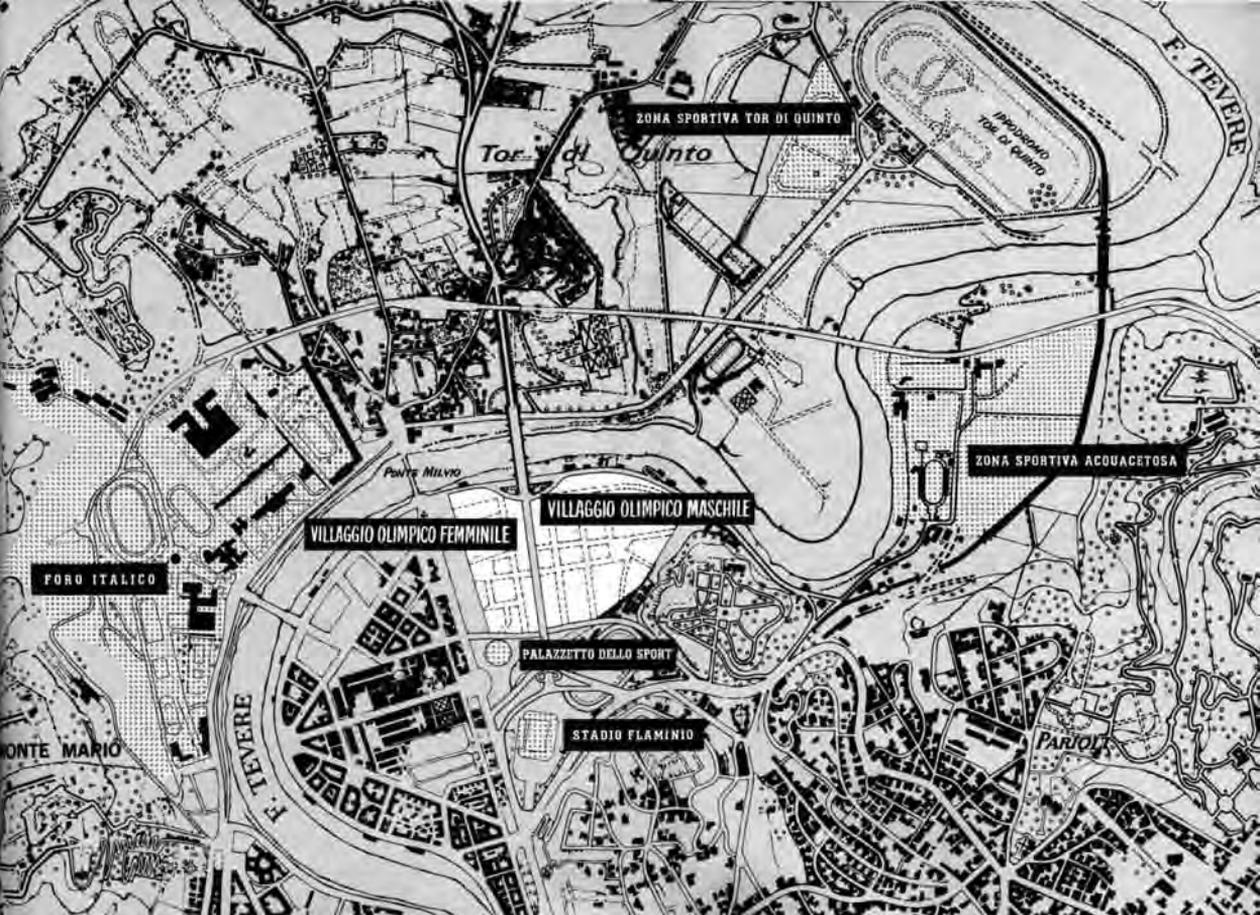


Fig. 7 - Northern Olympic area, 1958. (From ENIT, *Le Olimpiadi 1960*, cit.).

the Games, several venues were built, such as: the Farnesina Athletic Stadium, designed by Magrelli, situated near the palace of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which also was finished in the same period; the Swimming Stadium, designed by Vitellozzi and Del Debbio, built near the existing indoor swimming-pools; the International Student Hostel (“Casa Internazionale dello Studente”) which was constructed on the fields overlooking the Ministry, planned by Del Debbio and Piero Maria Lugli<sup>74</sup>. The International Student Hostel was the only building

occasion of the 1990 World Football Championship it was nearly completely reconstructed. Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., pp. 56-57; About the architectural characteristics and the constructional vicissitudes see: V. PAOLINI, *Identità*, cit., pp. 49-51; ID., *Stadio Olimpico*, in C. Marcosano Dell’Erba, R. Vittorini (eds.), *Roma 1960 Guida alle architetture della XVII Olimpiadi*, attachment of *Roma città Olimpica*, «do.co.mo.mo», cit., p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., pp. 62-64 and p. 84; S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., p. 21; P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 122; 203-204; M.L. NERI, *Enrico Del Debbio*, cit., pp. 253-262; M. MARANDOLA, *Lo Stadio del Nuoto* (1957-1959), *Piani urbanistici, architettura ed arte della Terza Roma*, cit., pp. 53-55.

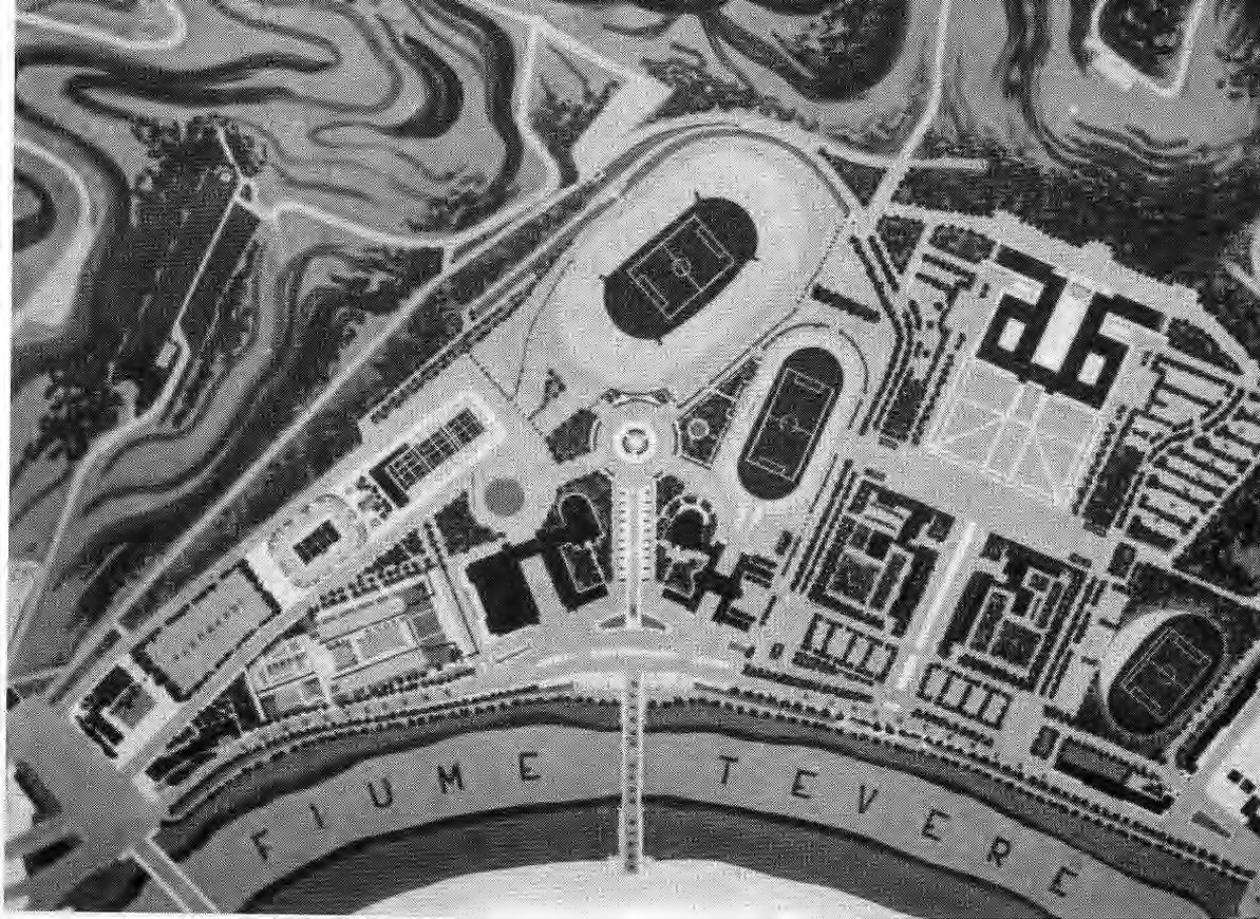


Fig. 8 - E. Del Debbio, General Urban Design of Foro Italico (ex Foro Mussolini), 1956-60. (From G. Del Debbio, *Area Olimpica Nord*, cit., detail).

that wasn't included in the urban plans of the Foro before the war<sup>75</sup>. The existing venues, like the Fencing Hall, tennis-courts and the indoor swimming pool were revised, whereas the race field of Stadio dei Marmi was completely rebuilt, but leaving the ten Carrara marble tiers crowned with 60 marble statues that encircle the sports ground<sup>76</sup>.

The urban interventions made in the eastern zone of the Flaminio quarter, north from the centre, were no doubt more radical. This area has always been occupied by sports venues since the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Among these we can mention the National Stadium, the Villa Glori Hippodrome, already quoted, the former Parioli grounds (built on the pre-existing Piazza d'Armi), and the Rondinella racetrack (fig. 9)<sup>77</sup>. The '31 Urban Planning intended the area in big part to be a public park, but over the years it was occupied by a cluster of

<sup>75</sup> It was inaugurated in 1958. S. SANTUCCIO, *Storia urbanistica*, cit., p. 21.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49; Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., pp. 55; 66-65.

<sup>77</sup> See P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 209.



Fig. 9 - Plan of Rome's northern zone, 1940 c. (ASC, Stragr. 680-1, detail).

shacks that in 1957 hosted over 480 evacuated families<sup>78</sup>. From 1948 the Municipality gave up on the idea of having a precious green area near the centre, for the sake of turning it into a residential quarter, and on this purpose announced a competition for the urban arrangement of the district, that in 1949 was won by Claudio Longo (fig. 10)<sup>79</sup>. The plan was approved in December 1950, and partly

<sup>78</sup> M. TALAMONA, *Il Villaggio*, cit., 320.

<sup>79</sup> About the competition see: F. GORIO, *Progetto definitivo per la sistemazione della zona ex Piazza d'Armi a Roma*, «Urbanistica», XIX, 1950, 3, pp. 40-41. Longo's detailed plan, approved by the Municipality the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1950, was partly carried-out. In 1958 some roads had already been constructed, among which the Francia Avenue (which was linked to Flaminio Bridge in height through an embankment), and some buildings on Tiziano Avenue (fig. 11). In 1957 the project was re-elaborated to host the "Villaggio Olimpico", later it was presented to the CONI, however didn't continue. The new plan was assigned by Minsiter Togni to a group of architects, mentioned above. See M. TALAMONA, *Il Villaggio*, cit., p. 319.



Fig. 10 - C. Longo, project for the arrangement of the zone ex Piazza d'Armi in Rome, 1949. (From F. Gorio, *Progetto definitivo*, cit.).

carried-out (fig. 11), but in October 1957 the area was chosen for the implementation of the Olympic Village, by a dedicated Committee, chaired by Minister Togni. In December, the same minister appointed a group of roman professionals for the planning: Vittorio Cafiero, Adalberto Libera, Luigi Moretti, Vincenzo Monaco and Amedeo Luccichenti. In March 1958, a good 35 hectares-large area of lands was sold for the price of one billion Liras to the INCIS (National Institute for the Housing of State Employees), which was employed in the realisation of the Village and the distribution – after the conclusion of the Games-of the homes (a good 1348)<sup>80</sup> to the families of State employees.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., p. 90; M. Talamona indicates 1502 lodgings. M. TALAMONA, *Il Villaggio*, cit., p. 320.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 319 and note 57; *Villaggio Olimpico quartiere di Roma*, Roma, Edizioni Incis, n.a. (1960).



Fig. 11 - View of the ex Piazza d'Armi, 1957 c. (AC).

Creating the Olympic Village, the city gained a « heritage of enormous value»<sup>82</sup>, moreover at a ridiculous price, considering that out of a total of 64 billion Liras, 26,5 were spent for the Olympiad only in the Capital<sup>83</sup>. The story of this area – said by Manieri Elia - was only one of many in those years that enriched «the case of continuous deterioration of Rome's green heritage».<sup>84</sup>

Paradoxically, the new quarter imprinted an unpublished modernity on the urban design of the city's northern zone, composed exactly in relation to the issue of the public green and the surrounding nature. The writers in fact, wanted to give the residential settlement of a dimension of 6,500 inhabitants<sup>85</sup> the features of a «park-city»<sup>86</sup> that would respect the place's typical aspects, dominated mainly by the hills of Villa Glori. Only the road network (partly done and partly to be

<sup>82</sup> N. CIAMPI, *Come si è giunti alle Olimpiadi 1960*, «Capitolium», Edizione speciale Olimpiadi 1960, XXXV, 1960, p. 68.

<sup>83</sup> G. TOGNI, *Lo Stato*, cit., p.11; M. MANIERI ELIA, *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p. 119.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 108.

<sup>85</sup> *Luigi Moretti*, edited by S. Santuccio, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1986, p. 105; O.P. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 210.

<sup>86</sup> The expression is perhaps of Moretti. Cit. in M. TALAMONA, *Il Villaggio*, cit., p. 320.



Fig. 12. View of the Olympic Village and Corso Francia Viaduct. (From A. Pica, *Pier Luigi Nervi*, cit.).

built) was saved from Longo's previous detailed plan, whereas the planimetric connection of buildings was completely modified, for which only 7 hectares were assigned, respect to the 16 for green areas and the 12 for roads and services<sup>87</sup>. The quarter was set on two routes: the large East-West Avenue (Viale XVII Olimpiade) that reached Viale Tiziano and the North-South road that connected to the centre with the higher Flaminio Bridge. However, this one instead of being built on the embankment, as Longo had thought so, was replaced – perhaps an idea of Cafiero e Libera- by a viaduct that passed over the Village for about 1 Km and terminated near the Parioli hills (Corso Francia viaduct, fig. 12). On an urban level, the viaduct gave the idea of a ribbon, laid down on thin pillars, reducing the environmental impact. In this respect, some of the urban and constructional details applied during the implementation phase of the work (assigned to Pier Luigi Nervi) must be explained, like for example the «splitting the viaduct in two»<sup>88</sup> ordained by Moretti to «enhance the expansion joints»<sup>89</sup>, but that, con-

<sup>87</sup> Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., pp. 89-90; P.O. Rossi, *Roma*, cit., p. 212.

<sup>88</sup> The “split” refers to a passage of 5 m, which separates the two courses, wide 10.5 m each. A. PICA, *Pier Luigi Nervi*, Roma, Editalia, pp. 36-37.

<sup>89</sup> *Luigi Moretti*, edited by S. Santuccio, cit., p. 105.

tributes to dematerialize the road surface, making it nearly insubstantial. The same criteria guided the architects also in the planning of the residential objects: form, dimension and position of the buildings are the fruit of a unitary planning vision with a concept based not only on the orientations of the modern movement, but also on the necessity of reducing the environmental impact.

Moretti himself explains how the volumetries were specified: «the architects calibrated the volumetry with a trend in conveniently descending building heights, from the parallel alignments with Tiziano Avenue at the feet of Villa Glori hill. Therefore, they kept down the height under approximately 10 metres, so that prospectively, for those who pass on the Francia Avenue flyover, the Villa Glori hill can be almost entirely enjoyed in its beauty and so can be the contour lines of the hill, that stand out on the other side of the Tiber, towards the North»<sup>90</sup>. In other words, in the areas next to Tiziano Avenue and Villa Glori, they tried to reduce the impact, adopting buildings with only 2 floors, while those with 4 and 5 floors were settled in the internal areas of the Village.

The buildings had a variously articulated planimetric arrangement, although introducing substantially only 2 types of buildings, cross-shaped and lined, but in height they were standardized by the same structural and decorative solutions<sup>91</sup>. Particularly, they all rise on reinforced concrete “pilotis”, they have flat roofs, terracotta tiles and, white ribbon windows<sup>92</sup>. Naturally, the quarter was donated with all the necessary public services for the needs of the citizens, such as an indoor market and a religious building, constructed later on<sup>93</sup>.

The Olympic Village built between September 1958 and May 1960 with the population of little more than 150 per hectare and with buildings surrounded by green areas, materialized the idea of the modern quarter in perfect contrast with the urban and suburban ones of the Capital. For many years it would be considered as one of the best complexes of public initiative carried-out in Rome<sup>94</sup>.

<sup>90</sup> See the report: *Nuova impostazione urbanistica dell'ex Campo dei Parioli per le necessità del villaggio olimpico e del nuovo quartiere residenziale* s.d. (11 giugno 1958), Archivio privato Monaco e Luccichenti, sheet 276, dossier Villaggio Olimpico, cit. in M. TALAMONA, *Il Villaggio*, cit., p. 320, note 67.

<sup>91</sup> The affirmations of the designers are very interesting and are included in the volume: *Villaggio Olimpico quartiere di Roma*, cit. The arch. Libera writes about “coerenza del linguaggio architettonico” (coherence of the architectural language) and Luccichenti underlines the attention dedicated to the layout of the urban spaces, which represent the biggest value of the quarter. *Ibidem*, pp. 38-49.

<sup>92</sup> P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 210; C. MARCOSANO DELL'ERBA, *Villaggio Olimpico*, in *Roma 1960 Guida alle architetture della XVII Olimpiadi*, cit., p. 5.

<sup>93</sup> Referring to the church of St. Valentine realized in 1983-86 and designed by Berarducci. See P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 339.

<sup>94</sup> The first ones to underline the quarter's innovations are the same architects who thought,

The exceptional sports hall, Palazzetto dello Sport (1954-57), designed by Annibale Vitellozzi e Pier Luigi Nervi, and the Flaminio Stadium, designed also by Nervi (1957-59) contributed to the increasing quality of the quarter's urban image<sup>95</sup>. The first one was built near Tiziano Avenue on a site –until then this area was occupied by barracks – chosen most probably by the CONI, that since 1940 had planned to build an ice rink (Palazzetto del Ghiaccio), while the other one was raised to substitute the old National Stadium, by then run-down<sup>96</sup> (figg. 13-14).

A few important comments must be made about the viaduct, that, as already said, was linked to Corso Francia through the Flaminio Bridge and created a road connection – scheduled more times – with Via Cassia and Via Flaminia to the city centre, but according to a different route from the one in the studies of the new Urban Planning. This track should have lead to Tiziano Avenue, and from there it should have reached Corso d'Italia and the eastern parts of the city, through a tunnel below Villa Borghese. Having not built the tunnel, the viaduct was finished with four ramps close to the feet of Parioli Hills, consequently overflowing the streets of the city-centre and the riverbanks with the northern traffic<sup>97</sup>. Therefore, functional problems created by new traffic routes in the northern zones of the city, as well as the equally important ones of the Urban Planning,

that it was destined to be a model «on which one should return to reflect [...] with the problems that it creates and with the solutions that it offers, considering, that with its typical and very modern aspect it merits to represent us in front of the future generations, as a sincere expression of our years and as a fundamental part of which, in the flowing of city life, will remain a trace of the Olympiad, a sign of a moment, of a taste». *Villaggio Olimpico quartiere di Roma*, cit., p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> In 1960 Nervi's Palazzo and the Palazzetto dello Sport had already been considered among the best works for the previous fifteen years in Italy. (See R. PERRIS, *Roma al 1990*, «Arredo Urbano», 1989, 33, pp. 84-95: 91-92). Visits of famous architects, such as Le Corbusier and Kenzo Tange witness to the undisputed architectural and structural quality of the venues. Le Corbusier, observing the Village, discovered, that his ideas of the contemporary city's urbanisation were applied, and contemplated in the *Ville Radieuse*, confirming with astonishment, that it was the first time when he saw it realized. (For the visit of Le Corbusier in Rome in September 1960, see: M. TALAMONA, *Rome 1960-1995. Le quartier olympique paradigme du Moderne*, typewritten report of research, Ministère du Logement, Plan Construction et Architecture, Paris 1997; P.O. ROSSI, *Le Corbusier, Pier Luigi Nervi et les équipements olympique de Rome*, in *L'Italie de Le Corbusier*, XV Convegno (Roma, National Academy of St. Luce, Department of Architecture, University of Roma Tre, House of Architecture, 13-15 December 2007), Foundation Le Corbusier-Editions de la Villette, Paris 2010, pp. 244-253. About Kenzo Tange see: *A colloquio con Maurizio Clerici*, cit., p. 53.

<sup>96</sup> About these stadiums see: *Palacio de los deportes, en Rome*, «Revista Informes de la Construcción», February 1958; *Pier Luigi Nervi e Antonio Nervi Stadio Flaminio a Roma*, «Casabella», 1960, 236, pp. 26-29; L. TOSCHI, *Uno stadio per Roma Dallo Stadio Nazionale al Flaminio (1911-1959)*, «Studi Romani», XXXVIII, 1990, 1-2, pp. 83-95.

<sup>97</sup> P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 212.



Fig. 13 - P.L. Nervi, A. Vitellozzi, Palazzetto dello Sport, 1954-57. (From A. Pica, *Pier Luigi Nervi*, cit.).

Fig. 14 - P.L. Nervi, A. Nervi, Flaminio Stadium, 1958-59. (From A. Pica, *Pier Luigi Nervi*, cit.).





Fig. 15 - Bird's-eye view of the Acqua Acetosa sport venues. (AC).

remained unresolved. Criticism rose from these circumstances, from an urban point of view<sup>98</sup>.

It was definitely less complicated to adjust the Acqua Acetosa zone that hosted the main training facilities for athletes. The area of about 22 hectares, characterized mostly by swamp lands, was bought by the CONI in 1954 for building a sports centre that suited the sports requirements of the capital. Also because of its future utilization it became the most important training centre of the Olympiad, being situated only 1 Km from the Olympic Village. Annibale Vitellozzi, the author of the project for adjusting this zone, placed the main buildings on a square area situated in the centre of this section, connecting each of building with an archway, made out of reinforced concrete (fig. 15). To the north and south of this area Vitellozzi placed the grounds and sports venues (4 football pitches, 3 rugby fields, 3 hockey fields on grass, a baseball court, a volleyball court, an indoor swimming-pool and 6 gymnasiums) inside a square-shaped road circuit. On the west side, near the main entrance, he built the Institute of Sports Medicine that he designed in collaboration with Cesare Ligini<sup>99</sup>. The works were completed in

<sup>98</sup> Observations made by Mario Manieri Elia in *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p.108, and recently re-confirmed in another short writing, titled: *1960 Roma Olimpiadi e miliardi*, in *Roma città Olimpica*, cit., p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., pp. 65-66; G. VACCARO, *Impianti sportivi all'Acqua Acetosa*,

June 1960 and regarded also the adjustment of the green inside the complex. The close-by Tor di Quinto zone, situated about 2 Km from the Olympic Village but on the opposite bank of the river Tevere, hosted another 2 football pitches with connecting services on a 5 hectare large area<sup>100</sup>.

The Olympic centre at the EUR, diversely from the one in the North that was based on a unitary urban project, was ideated as a whole of functional public works for the completion of the quarter, which would increase the value of the areas and boost the edification. It's necessary to point out that after the war the EUR was basically a desert, inhabited by only evacuated families<sup>101</sup>. Still in 1951, when the Municipality decided to create the second Olympic pole, «the EUR was an enormous ruin - (wrote Ceroni in '53 in the *Messaggero*) – horrifying and shocking dead city, which seemed to have been buried by a lava of terrors.»<sup>102</sup> It's clear that the quarter was born for two reasons: to host the Universal Expo of 1942 and to create a first quarter of the Capital, that extended towards the sea, and characterized by monumental buildings that could visibly show the power and ideology of the fascist regime<sup>103</sup>.

A large part of the projected works, based on Marcello Piacentini's Urban Planning of 1939 (E42 fig. 16), was left incomplete. Only the principal road system was realized, formed by orthogonal network, innervated on a great central artery, the Via Imperiale (later Via Cristoforo Colombo), coming from Rome and heading towards the sea. The edifices on the contrary remained incomplete, with the only

«Architettura Cronache e Storia», 164, 1969; P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 218-219; C. MARCOSANO DELL'ERBA, *Zona sportiva dell'Acqua Acetosa*, in *Roma 1960 Guida alle architetture della XVII Olimpiade*, cit., p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> N. CIAMPI, *Come si è giunti*, cit., p. 68; Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., p. 85.

<sup>101</sup> An idea of the EUR's post-war situation (1945-48) is given by L. SQUARZINA, *Teatro*, Roma-Bari, Laterza 1959, pp. 51-92; L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit., pp. 71-72.

<sup>102</sup> «Il Messaggero», 23 May 1953, cit. in L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *Ibidem*, cit., p. 94.

<sup>103</sup> About this topic see above note 58 and E. TEDESCHI, *Piano dell'Esposizione Universale di Roma 1941*, «Architettura», XVI, 1937, 4, pp. 181-192; «Architettura», spec. dossier, 1938, 12; «Casabella», 1937, 114; «Capitolium», 1939, 8-9, pp. 371-414; P. MARCONI, *Il quartiere dell'E42 fulcro del piano regolatore di Roma Imperiale*, Istituto di Studi Romani, Roma 1940; «La Casa», 1959, 6; L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit.; *E42 l'Esposizione Universale di Roma Utopia e scenario del Regime*, vols. 2; R. MARIANI, *E42 progetto per l'«Ordine Nuovo»*, Milano, Edizioni di Comunità, 1987; V. QUILLICI, *L'E42 in evidenza*, in «Urbanistica», 1987, 88, pp. 68-84; G. CIUCCI, *Dall'E42 all'EUR Una storia ancora incompleta*, «Casabella», 1987, 539, pp. 34-37; R. MARIANI, *La progettazione dell'E42, La prima fase*, in «Lotus», 1991, 67, pp. 90-126; M. LUPANO, *La parte di Piacentini, E42 Dalla fase ideativa alla fase esecutiva*, *Ibidem*, pp. 127-143; P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 134-149; G. CIUCCI, *Roma capitale imperiale*, in G. Ciucci, G. Muratore (eds.), *Storia dell'Architettura Italiana, Il Primo Novecento*, Milano, Electa, 2004, pp. 396-415.

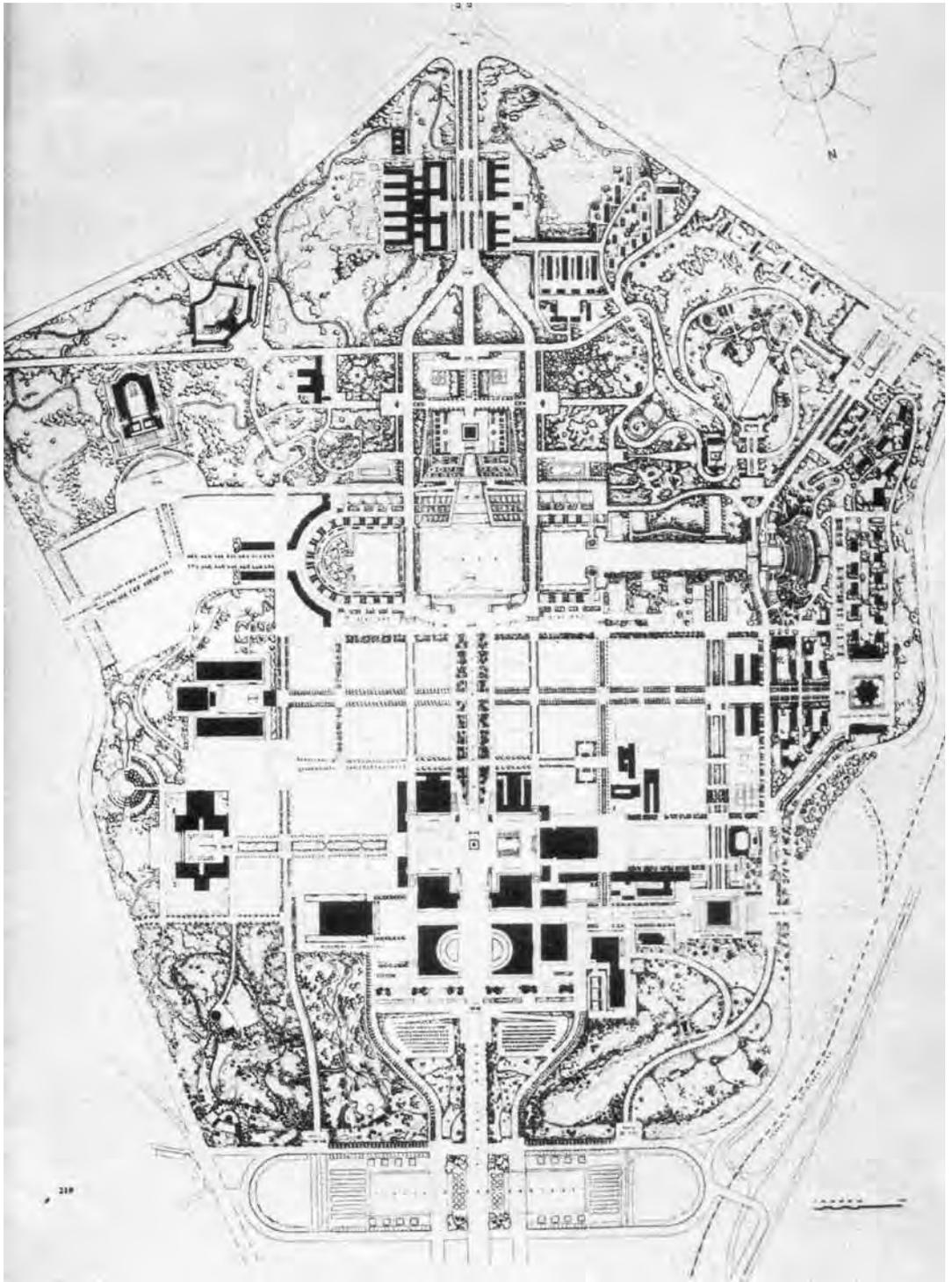


Fig. 16 - Final plan of the 1942 Exposition (E42), 1938-39. (From L. Di Majo, I. Insolera, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit.).

exception for the EUR authority's building<sup>104</sup>. The metro that should have connected the quarter to the Termini station was never finished. The abandonment of construction-sites and the war events that ended in '45 marked the inescapable decay of the quarter. Immediately after the war this immense district of a good 400 hectares was at the exclusive disposal of the EUR authority. The area that was situated outside the limits of the current Urban Planning of '31, between the beach and the city, proved to be a big problem for the new Democratic Government. One of the most important ones was the quarter's salvage for the sake of avoiding the pointlessness of huge expenses, which had been sustained by the State before the war, for the realization of the various venues<sup>105</sup>. The problem was faced concretely by Virgilio Testa, a town planning expert, who in 1952 prepared a complex program that aimed to transform the exposition area into a modern «garden-city» capable of housing 70,000-100,000 citizens, donated with modern public facilities and a building complex that could satisfy the Capital's various cultural interests. For its realization the EUR authority's capital was involved, as well as private ones, earned mainly by selling building lots<sup>106</sup>. Piacentini himself would have occupied of this project<sup>107</sup>. Even if the program was thought to be difficult to fulfil (because of the characteristics of the buildings that recall the recent fascist past, and also because of being in a serious state of abandonment), it was still put in act during the Fifties, thanks also to the Olympiad<sup>108</sup>.

In 1952, relating to the described targets, the EUR Authority worked out a new plan for the construction of the quarter, later revised in 1954<sup>109</sup>, with the aim of changing the original plan of the E42 and to introduce mainly the sporting facilities for the Olympic Games. The new plan substantially kept the already existing road structure and the monumental building complex, but modified the purpose of many building lots in the central zone and the southern area, which were mainly intended for housing<sup>110</sup>. The sporting facilities, which by then didn't

<sup>104</sup> See G. MURATORE-S. LUX-A. GRECO-E. CRISTALLINI, *Il Palazzo dell'Ente Eur*, Roma, Editalia, 1992.

<sup>105</sup> L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit., pp. 78-83.

<sup>106</sup> About the post-war EUR see: «Civiltà del Lavoro», special issue about EUR, June 1965; Ente Autonomo Esposizione Universale di Roma – EUR, *Attività dell'Ente dal 1951 al 1968*, Roma, 1969; L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit., pp. 81-100. About the EUR's importance see the considerations of G. ZUCCONI, *La città contesa. Dagli ingegneri sanitari agli urbanisti*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1993, pp. 183-184.

<sup>107</sup> L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit., p. 81, note 16.

<sup>108</sup> It's to be noticed that at least until 1955, it was still the phase in which occurred to «make golden bridges» in case the EUR collapsed. *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>109</sup> The plan was updated periodically until 1967. See P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 137.

<sup>110</sup> See L. DI MAJO-I. INSOLERA, *L'Eur e Roma*, cit., pp. 81-83. The southern sector was oc-

have any function, were located in the southern sector and in the northern part to substitute some works planned in 1939 by Piacentini (fig. 17). It concerned an understandable compromise with the past, which inevitably brought a series of contradictions with itself. This is valid first of all for the majority of the buildings realized on the occasion of the Olympiad, the Palazzo dello Sport, designed by Nervi (1956-59)<sup>111</sup>, which was placed on a slope—over the artificial lake—along Via Cristoforo Colombo, where an impressive celebrations “ara”<sup>112</sup>, visible even from the quarter’s entrance, was programmed in the E42’s plans. The Palazzo dello Sport, which was set in this space with its circular shape of a good 122 metres in diameter, and with its completely glass-covered walls, became the perspective background of the EUR’s main road, fulfilling a role, which was surely strange from an urban point of view<sup>113</sup> (figg. 18-19). «A very different feeling, effectively- wrote recently Mario Manieri Elia – would have had the transparent, daring structure ideated and constructed by Nervi, if it had been de-monumentalized and liberated from any kind of scenic role of an enhanced axial centrality»<sup>114</sup>. Other venues were placed in various zones of the quarter. The Olympic Velodrome (1954-60), designed by Dagoberto Ortensi, Cesare Ligini, Silvano Ricci (fig. 20), winners of the national competition organised by the CONI<sup>115</sup>, was built on a modest lot of land cut out on the eastern margins of the quarter, where originally in the E42 a fun-park was planned, based on the latest

cupied by woodland, all arranged within 1942. M. DE VICO FALLANI, (1937-1943): *contributo alla storia dei parchi e giardini dell'E42*, in *E42 l'Esposizione Universale di Roma Utopia*, cit., II, pp. 156-163: 157.

<sup>111</sup> About Nervi’s pieces of work see A. PICA, *Pier Luigi Nervi*, cit.

<sup>112</sup> The monument was dedicated «to the glorification and celebration of the new order, originated from the fascism». See *Carte Cini*, folders of E42, quoted in E. GUIDONI, *L'E42, città della rappresentazione. Il progetto urbanistico e le polemiche sull'architettura*, in *E42 L'Esposizione Universale di Roma Utopia*, cit., II, p. 48.

<sup>113</sup> In the same period the artificial lake, circa 900 m long, and the slope in front of the Palazzo got definitively arranged. See *Rapporto Ufficiale*, cit., p. 68.

<sup>114</sup> M. MANIERI ELIA, *1960 Roma Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p. 3. Always in merit to the urban arrangement of the Palazzo, Claudia Conforti believes that «permanence of the morphologic drawing of the E42, if witnesses the arrogance of a cultural hypothesis that even if challenged by events, doesn't accept leaving the scene, pays homage to the extreme coherence of a personage, who was probably the wisest and most cunning manipulator of the Italian architectural culture of the Twentieth-century». See the observations of C. CONFORTI, *Roma, Napoli, la Sicilia*, in F. Dal Co (ed.), *Storia dell'Architettura Italiana. Il Secondo Novecento*, Milano, Electa, 1997, pp. 176-241: 180.

<sup>115</sup> *Rapporto Ufficiale*, cit., p. 72; *Concorso Nazionale per il Velodromo Olimpico di Roma*, extract from the magazine «L'Architettura Cronaca e Storia», 1956, 5; *Il Velodromo Olimpico a Roma*, *Ibidem*, VI, 1960, 58, pp. 242-251. The venue was demolished in 2008.



Fig. 17 - M. Piacentini, general plan of the EUR with indication of the Palazzo dello Sport and of the Velodrome, 1957. (AC, folder n.1).



Fig. 18 - View of the EUR, in the foreground the Palazzo dello Sport, 1960. (AC).

project of Gaetano Minucci and Carles Buigas<sup>116</sup>. This venue, which was one of the best ones those days, would shortly fall into disuse, caused mainly by its position<sup>117</sup>. The so-called Piscina delle Rose (Roses Swimming Pool) with its facilities (1958-1959), designed by Giorgio Biuso, Sergio Bonamico and Guido Gigli, was located on a rearranged area, a large solarium entirely decorated with flowers, which surrounds the artificial lake<sup>118</sup>; a training-ground complex, designed

<sup>116</sup> The park's first project was edited by Vietti and included a 24-hectare large area, which later was reduced to only 15 and Minucci and Buigas were entrusted with its arrangements. E. GUIDONI, *L'E42, città*, cit., pp. 58-65.

<sup>117</sup> See the observations of C. CONFORTI, *Roma*, cit., p. 181.

<sup>118</sup> Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., pp. 75-76; S. MORNATI, *Piscina delle Rose*, in *Roma 1960 Guida alle architetture della XVII Olimpiade*, cit., p. 3.

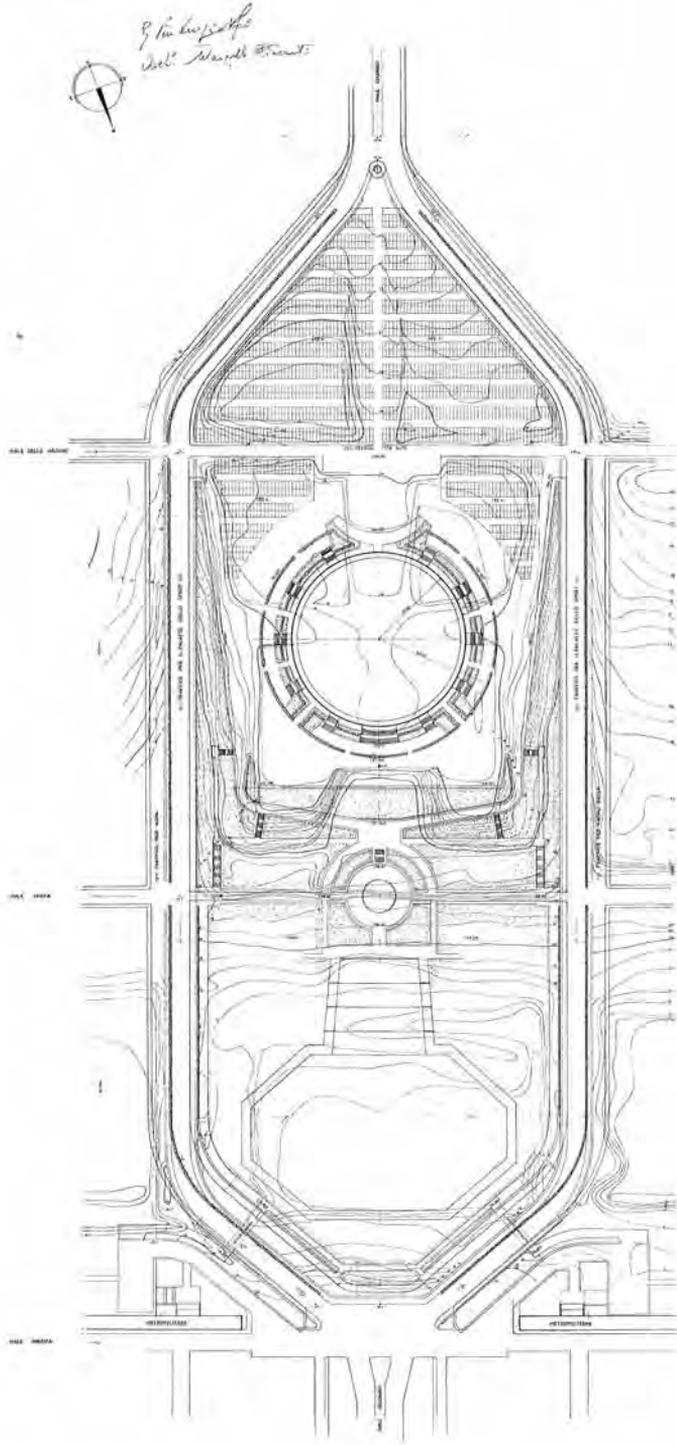


Fig. 19 - M. Piacentini, P.L. Nervi, Palazzo dello Sport at the EUR, the area's final arrangement, 1957 c. (AC).



Fig. 20 - Olympic Velodrome, 1960 c. (AC).

by Maurizio Clerici, was realized on a 17 hectare large area in the Tre Fontane locality, near the quarter's northern entrance, which until then had been used as the Authority's parking lot<sup>119</sup> (fig. 21). The EUR's case, without leaving behind the architectural and structural quality of the sport venues, once more underlines how determining can be the planning of an urban structure for the development of an architectural piece of work.

As of the road connection between the two Olympic centres, as signs showed it, the initial project of Via Olimpica, for which the works should already have began since 1957<sup>120</sup>, was abandoned and substituted with a simpler and less expensive one (fig. 22). This project intended to create a road, always in the western part of city, allowing the utilization of already existing road sections (in total 7 Km) linked to other new ones (8.5 Km). It included also the construction of a new segment (4.5 Km), which would have continued from Foro Italicò onto Via Salaria, in order to facilitate the access to the venues from Acqua Acetosa and Tor di Quinto<sup>121</sup>.

<sup>119</sup> Rapporto Ufficiale, cit., p. 76.

<sup>120</sup> M. MANIERI ELIA, *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p. 109.

<sup>121</sup> The final layout of the road was as follows: «departs from the EUR, it continues on a



Fig. 21 - View of the sport venues of the Tre Fontane zone, 1960. (AC).

This latter segment made part of the so called «north flow» (via del Foro Italico), foreseen by the studies of the new Urban Planning and planned to continue towards the East-End of the city<sup>122</sup>. It's to be mentioned that this road passed over Corso Francia that cut across onto a lower level with a viaduct of significant structural, rather than ornate quality, designed by one of the most brilliant engineers of that time, Riccardo Morandi (1958-1960)<sup>123</sup>.

The Via Olimpica, constructed between 1957 and 1960, was an object of many controversies regarding its layout, passed by the historical Villa Doria Panphili,

short track of via Cristoforo Colombo, opens into Marconi Avenue and before passing the railway's bridge (Roma-Pisa) throughout a new section reaches the "circonvallazione gianicolense" and throughout other sections reaches Aurelia, passing behind the Vatican, it arrives to the Foro Italico», *Srada di Collegamento EUR-Foro Italico*, Roma 24 ottobre 1957, AC, folder 75. See also: *Programma di Costruzione approvato dalla Giunta Esecutiva del CONI il 10 e l'11 ottobre 1956*, cit., p. 7. The last section used two abandoned railway tunnels. Regarding its extent see: M. MANIERI ELIA, *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p. 108.

<sup>122</sup> I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, cit., p. 246; P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 203-204.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 212; M. MARANDOLA, *Cavalcavia della via Olimpica su corso Francia*, in *Roma 1960 Guida alle architetture della XVII Olimpiadi*, cit., p. 10.

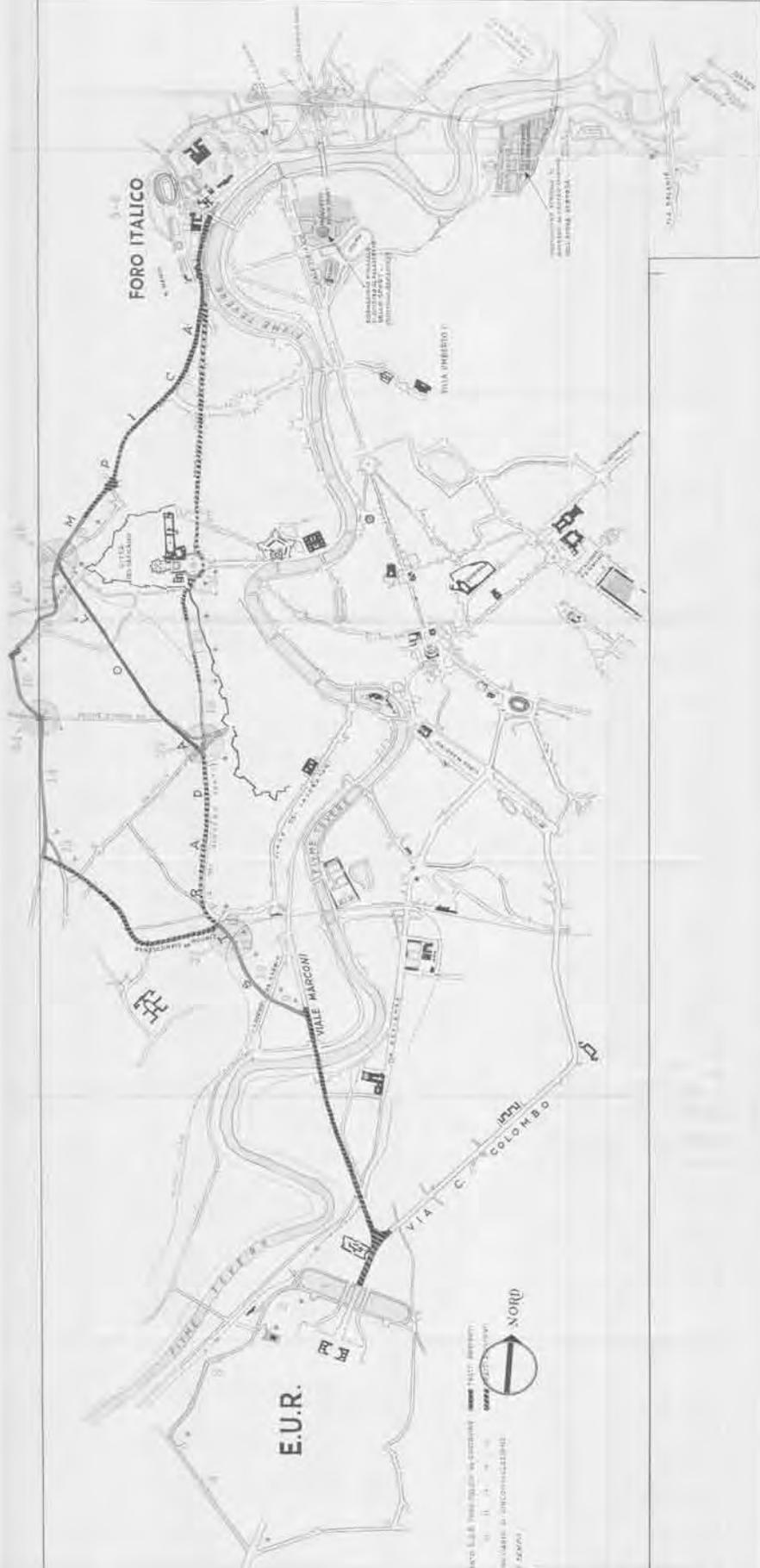


Fig. 22 - Municipality of Rome, Division V, project for the arrangement of the Olympic road, 1957. The realized section is the external one. (AC, folder n.75).

dividing it in two<sup>124</sup>. According to someone, this road section would have been modified deliberately, to increase the value of the lands in the western zone of the city (particularly in the section of Via Cipro-Via Gregorio VII), enabling the expansion of the city towards the West<sup>125</sup>. A choice, which was in clear contrast with the studies of the Urban Planning, that on the other hand calculated the shift of the demographic centre in the opposite direction, towards the East and South-East<sup>126</sup>.

Surely, in its final form, the Olimpica was an abnormally flowing road, as some sections of it allowed speeding, some on the contrary passed through densely inhabited quarters, while the junctions without traffic lights caused sudden slowing-downs<sup>127</sup>. It must be said though, that if one considers the inefficient urban infrastructure that the city then had, the Via Olimpica and the «north flow», despite their layout errors, were «the first attempt to organise the main traffic routes tangent to the city, this way diverting all the non-strictly necessary passages in the historical city centre» wrote Insolera<sup>128</sup>.

The necessity to reduce the traffic in the historical centre persuaded the city administration to prematurely carry out, in occasion for the Olympiad, a series of works on the road network, included in the new Urban Planning, just approved by the Town Council (in June 1959)<sup>129</sup>. In particular the vehicular subway at Mellini riverbank-Prati, communicating to Cavour Bridge; the Arnaldo da Brescia riverbank subway (with the reconstruction of the ones on Piazza della Libertà); the Porta Pincana subway<sup>130</sup>. This latter one was connected to Piazzale Flaminio through a new road, built on the section of Via del Muro Torto next to Mura Aureliane<sup>131</sup> (figg. 23-25).

Such works, even in their fragmented state formed the first barrel of the tangential flow at the ancient nucleus on the riverbanks and on the Prati-Piazza della Croce Rossa route<sup>132</sup>. Nevertheless these were regarded with hostility by part of the Press and the “Italia Nostra” Association, partly because they were reckoned

<sup>124</sup> At this section the Via Olimpica followed a trend, which was included in the '31 Urban Design: M. MANIERI ELIA, *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p. 109.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*, 106-119; ID., *L'attuazione del Piano*, «Urbanistica», 1960, 30, p. 109; I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, cit., pp. 246-247.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 246-250; P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., pp. 203-204.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibidem*; M. MANIERI ELIA, *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., pp. 109-110.

<sup>128</sup> I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, cit., p. 247; A. MONTENERO, *Via Olimpica*, cit., p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> We refer to the so-called plan of the “Giunta Municipale” (Municipality Committee): P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 241.

<sup>130</sup> M. MANIERI ELIA, *L'attuazione del Piano*, cit., p. 109.

<sup>131</sup> Via del Muro Torto was arranged on two one-way courses for an extent of circa 1200 m. See *L'arteria di scorrimento da Piazzale Flaminio a Piazza della Croce Rossa*, «Urbanistica Romana» edited by «Capitolium», 5, 1966, pp. 3-12.

<sup>132</sup> P.O. ROSSI, *Roma*, cit., p. 204.



Fig. 23 - View of the vehicular subway at Mellini Riverbank – Prati corresponding to Ponte Cavour and Ponte Margherita, 1960. (From M. Manieri Elia, *Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit.).

to be inadequate to resolve the traffic problem alone in the historical centre, and also because they lead to the destruction of some century-old trees<sup>133</sup>.

In any case it must be said that after the Olympiad, between 1962 and 1966, the second barrel of the mentioned tangential was built: from Porta Pinciana to Piazza della Croce Rossa, through a road that passed under Corso d'Italia, a subway corresponding to the junctions of Via Puccini, Via Po, Piazza Fiume, Piazza Porta Pia and Croce Rossa<sup>134</sup>. Similarly, these works increased many controversies too, always from the part of the "Italia Nostra" Association, that considered them inadequate to resolve the traffic problem<sup>135</sup>, just like the previous plans, while they would have

<sup>133</sup> M. MANIERI ELIA, *L'attuazione del Piano*, cit., p. 109.

<sup>134</sup> For technical data and functional aspects, see: *L'arteria di scorrimento da Piazzale Flaminio*, cit. pp. 13-44.

<sup>135</sup> Perhaps they would have made it worse. The only vantage of the Corso d'Italia subways would have been the reduction of the above-mentioned junctions to a single traffic current. See I. INSOLERA-M. MANIERI ELIA, *Tre anni di cronaca romana*, «Urbanistica», 1964, 40, p. 61; M. MANIERI ELIA, *L'attuazione del Piano*, cit., p.109; ID., *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p. 110.



Fig. 24 - View of the road artery, which joins Piazzale Flaminio and Porta Pinciana, 1960.  
(From *L'arteria di scorrimento da Piazzale*, cit.).



Fig. 25 - View of Via del Muro Torto set on two one-way courses 1960. (From *L'arteria di scorrimento da Piazzale*, cit.)

altered a particularly valuable environment, for the presence of the Mura Aureliane as well as the entire Corso d'Italia planted with quadruple lines of plane trees, which represented one of the best realizations of Umbertian Rome. In fact, nearly half of the tree-plantation was later demolished, breaking irreparably the unity of the Corso, which lost its value as a promenade for which it was originally created<sup>136</sup>. For the Municipality administration, which even seemed to be sensitive to the Association's questions brought up, the arterial road in the section of Piazza Flaminio and Piazza della Croce Rossa, that was about 3.5 Km long, represented a condition of decentralization wished by the new Urban Planning, and at the same time, an avant-garde piece of work on technical and urban level<sup>137</sup>.

The described pieces of work are the most important ones that were realized in Rome. It mustn't be forgotten that many other works had been carried-out in the Capital (for example like the completion of the International Fiumicino Airport)<sup>138</sup> and in other localities on national territory, for a total cost of a good 64 billion of Liras, as mentioned above<sup>139</sup>. The Olympic event, as it can be seen, had a relevant impact on Rome's future urban development. In fact, the realized road infrastructures obliged any later Urban Planning to be accepted, as Insolera wrote as early as 1962 «the dislocation of great land holdings as driving reason for expanding the city [...] With

<sup>136</sup> Observations made by the Italia Nostra Association, mentioned in I. INSOLERA-M. MANIERI ELIA, *Tre anni di cronaca romana*, cit., p. 61.

<sup>137</sup> To illustrate the effort to the citizens, which was made for the realization of this work, but also to answer the questions made by many technical spheres, the Municipality dedicated an issue of the Capitolium (a review edited by its own Information Service and Public Relations) about the arterial road. See above note 131.

<sup>138</sup> T. BRECCIA FRATADOCCHI, *I progetti per l'aerostazione di Roma-Fiumicino (1957)*, «OPUS. Quaderno di Storia dell'Architettura e Restauro», 2003, 7, pp. 526-542.

<sup>139</sup> See G. TOGNI, *Lo Stato*, cit., p. 11; M. MANIERI ELIA, *Roma: Olimpiadi e miliardi*, cit., p. 119.

the plan of the Olympiad any other choice or alternative was precluded»<sup>140</sup>. However, such infrastructures, despite the numerous problems that were left unsolved, would have revealed to be efficient, constituting «the frame of a contemporary city, in a form that later crystallized for more than forty years» according to Nicolini<sup>141</sup>.

Above the controversies that accompanied the organization of the Games and that regarded mostly the plot between politics and private interests, the event marked an important phase in Rome's urban history, conferring it, as seen by Vidotto, «the international acknowledgement of a modern city, definitively released from the fascist past»<sup>142</sup>.

The Olympic Village, Corso Francia and the close-by sports venues represented the modern Rome's face, conditioning even the future housing development of the north sector of the city. Here in fact, other two important monuments were recently built: the music hall complex (Auditorium Parco della Musica) by Renzo Piano and the MAXXI by Zaha Hadid, an emblem to represent the excellence of the modern movement<sup>143</sup>. After the second post-war period, Rome didn't have any extraordinary event that could be compared to the 1960 Olympiad capable to affect, on an "urban scale", the process of the city's modernisation. Not even the 1990 World Football Championship represented an architectural occasion for Rome, and it didn't create any benefit for the infrastructural network either<sup>144</sup>. The only event that, for its range of ventures and quality of the realized works, can flank to the 1960 Olympiad, was the 2000 Jubilee with a good 700 projects carried-out or intended to increase the value of particularly strategic parts of the city on urban and cultural levels<sup>145</sup>.

*Adele Fiadino*

<sup>140</sup> I. INSOLERA, *Roma moderna*, cit., p. 250.

<sup>141</sup> R. NICOLINI, *La città delle Olimpiadi: i nuovi poli architettonici e le nuove polarità sportive*, in R. Cassetti, G. Spagnesi (eds.), *Roma contemporanea Storia e progetto*, Roma, Gangemi Editori, pp. 131-141: 133.

<sup>142</sup> V. VIDOTTO, *Roma Contemporanea*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2006, p. 296.

<sup>143</sup> About the urban transformation of the Flaminio quarter, see considerations of various scholars in A. Vittoriani (ed.), *Dalle Armi alle arti*, Roma, Gangemi, 2004.

<sup>144</sup> R. PERRIS, *Roma al 1990*, cit., p. 94.

<sup>145</sup> About these interventions, see «Casabella» Dossier Roma, 1996, 639; G. CIUCCI-F. GHIO-PO. ROSSI, *Roma. La nuova architettura*, Milano, Electa, 2006.