

# Rome and the institutions: the State, the Church, the Municipality

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Abstract: Rome, what city is it? What subjectivity does it have? Is there a subjectivity in Rome? Turning to the cities of the world we understand that the urban dimension is given by a social subjectivity: Milan was the society of the Brambilla and small entrepreneurs, then it grew, and now it is no longer, in some ways. Turin was the city of Fiat. What was Rome? What subjectivity does it express? Does it express a social subjectivity that becomes an institution or expresses an institution that wants to grow a city? My idea is that Rome is a city that has no subjectivity of its own, it is a city that lives on an institutional identity, lives on institutions and would not live if these were not there.

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What kind of city is Rome? What subjectivity does it contain? Is there a Roman subjectivity? Wandering among cities around the world one can see that the urban dimension is determined by a social subjectivity: Milan was the society of Brambilla (tr. note: from a song in the 40s Brambilla became the prototype of a middle class or upper middle class family) and of small entrepreneurs, then it has grown and is no longer in certain aspects. Turin was the city of Fiat. What has Rome been? What subjectivity does it express? Does it express a social subjectivity that becomes an institution or does it express an institution that wishes to make a city grow? My belief is that Rome is a city without a subjectivity of its own, it is a city that lives by institutional

1. Deregistered speech by Giuseppe De Rita, incorrect by the author; June 28th, 2018 at the Round Table *Rome. Still Capital of Italy?*, Faculty of Architecture, Sapienza University of Rome.

identity, it lives on institutions and would not live if it weren't for them. Maybe that was true at the time of Octavian Augustus, who made of Rome a city capable of becoming an empire. As for the rest? Long has Rome been an institutional city... of the Vatican, of the Church. The pontiff himself decided, prior to the jubilees, the city planning of Rome, at the time of Via Sistina and of Via Condotti. Rome is bound to an institutional culture that expresses the idea of a city. Rome's becoming the Capital corresponds to three particular levels, that intertwined and have not been resolved. Rome as urban institution of the new Capital; the mayor Ernesto Nathan wanted to be other than a city at the service of the pontificate, something other than under papal stewardship. The first regulatory plan at the time, the first decisions, gave the idea of a Rome institution that also became city, that also became streets and became also buildings. Of that is anything left, that is of a secular institution that thinks of Roma as something that creates *city*. Maybe in the period of Veltroni and of Rutelli this idea existed, form an institution that creates and drives the city to become a social reality and not only institutional. Rome capital of information technology, Rome capital of cinema, Rome for the jubilee... these slogans were tried out, but of deeds there were none. The administration is incapable of having a proper subjectuality and so is unable to impose on Rome its own. Why does this happen? Because the institution cannot be the promoter of a city, because institutions devours the city? What is the public administration of Rome today? A public administration that devours the administration of Rome Capital, with its absentee Atac (tr. note: Rome's public transport company), with its absentee municipal employees, its swallows the institutions. A city that lives on institutions finds that, in the end, it can eat up the institutions and it need not respect the institutional values of a city. Thinking back over the last few years, it was Rome, with its more plebeian or bourgeoisie dimension, that devoured the institution Municipality of Rome. The Municipality of Rome no longer matter in the destiny of the city, because it has gnawed at it from the inside, as institution. Go to a Capitoline administration, in a Capitoline office, and ask for advice. The mayor herself declares "I have no officials." It's not that she has literally no officials, she does not have the structural and organizational dimension of the institution capable of creating the city.

When in 1870 the government institution came to Rome and actually made it into the capital, there was not just the question of the geography and of the transportation, there was the symbolic question. To become the city of the government institution a city fitting to the symbol had to be created. Re-reading the history we see that the Italian state, from 1870 to 1881, in eleven years, had made of Rome an important city of services. It had created the Zecca (the Mint), the Bank of Italy, and the ministries. The state institution had created an institutional city. Is Rome still so? Is our state still capable of making of Rome, its city, the city of the Italian state, an institutional city? My feeling is no. Just as for the municipal realities there is an erosion from below, the bureaus win out, the great mass of the public administration wins out, the great mass of the day-to-day errand runners that run around Rome making deals wins out, the great mass of a tourist sector of the basest kind wins out. And the Italian state finds itself asking: is this my Capital? The answer is probably no. As compared to Berlin, Paris or London if we are to think of Italy as a great State. This is the major problem, a city founded several millennia ago, re-founded in 1870 as an institutional city both for the municipal administration and for the state administration.

The same thing occurred in the Catholic church. What has it been for years? A great international subject, perhaps the greatest Italy has had in terms of global geopolitics. Is it still so?

Think of what Rome has been during and after the war, what was Pacelli's Rome and what it is today. What Rome has been not only in diplomatic heights, but in quality of life and solidarity. What was the Roman seminary, what has mons. Ronca been for the Roman seminary, how dozens and dozens of noble palaces opened their doors to partisans and to Jews, how Adriano Ossicini has made of Fatebenefratelli (tr. note: hospital on Tiber island) a world of solidarity and clandestinity. The Church had shown that it could make of Rome the capital of its empire, of its prestige. It is so no longer. But what happened? This is not a problem for many of you, but I am Catholic. Even in the church there has been a similar diminishing, the bureau has won out. The last that rose high as pontiff had been Paul VI, carrying along with him his church, others did so rhetorically. John Paul II was an excellent pope, but he had nothing to do with Rome, he did not draw it upwards.

In Rome the problem is set for whoever wishes to reason in terms of an institutional city, a city that lives only if it is within an institutional culture at a level that is not a diminution. If you hold in your hands a re-founded Capital city, or Rome during postwar Italy, ambitious, rich in cultural initiatives and so on... and you diminish it, the Capital is no longer worth anything. If you have a church which is now the greatest geopolitical subject in the world and you for Rome diminish it, the Roman church is no longer. Cardinal Bertone would say to cardinal Vallini, vicar of Roma, in his and in the pope's name: "Eminence, John Paul II and I, from here (the Vatican) to Castel Gandolfo do not want to see things in the way." Rome did not exist.

The problem is understanding whether with the Church, with the State and Rome Municipality it is possible to make an effort to reason on a large scale and react to the diminution, to try and raise the institutional dimension of the city once more. The institutional dimension of Rome is an inevitable condition, because we do not have FIAT, the rag-sellers of Prati (tr. note: small textile workers), the Milanese Brambilla (tr. note: small entrepreneurs), we do not have the autonomous society with respect to the institution. Rome is forever destined to have an institutional role, but those who in some way represent, in this perimeter of a city, the institutional dimension: the municipality, the state, the church must not fail to keep up.

Allow me a quote from the poet Belli: "two commoners are arguing, and one point, one says to the other: *il tuo sta basso, ma il mio va' ssopr'a li tetti* (yours stays low, but mine rises above the roofs)." <sup>2</sup> This is what Rome needs: to understand, to reason... I am not saying "ssopr'a li tetti," but somewhat higher than the level at which institutions – State, Municipality and Church – have brought everyone... lower down.

2. Gioacchino Belli, *Sonetti Romaneschi III, Un quadro bbuffo*, 1833.