

a selected chapter from

Rome: A New Planning Strategy

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CHAPTER 5: THE NEW STRATEGY FOR ROME

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THE NEW STRATEGY FOR ROME

Authentic "polycentrism", therefore, is founded first of all on an evaluation of the "catchment areas" of the services that define it. The location of the centers and infrastructures of such services is a subsequent question (we would say "secondary" if with this adjective is meant not inferiority in importance, but rather a temporal and conceptual subordination).

The polycentrism supported here in Rome means, first of all, a theoretical assignation of the potentiality of the catchment area of the Roman system to respective "*units*" of service that locationally assume the

role of realizing the objectives, reasserted by everybody numerous times of: *integrating functions, improving accessibility, distances, traveling times, not exceeding the thresholds that have been indicated as "overloading"*.

The locational problem of the new strategy therefore, is posed as a problem of *not* letting all the users participate in *any* function in *any* part of the system (the 2,8 million Roman citizens plus the by now recognized other 700 thousand citizens of the Roman "system"); but to functionally distribute the services in such a way as to not render "indifferent" (but on the contrary very... "different", i.e. preferred) the access to this or that function, with a process that we call "*de-polarization*"; such a process is none other than that of instituting other alternative poles to those existing already (but of a "polarizing" capacity that is adequate to those existent ones: or rather better, without the negative aspects of the overloading).

5.1 The "Catchment Areas" of the New "Urban Centers"

The new strategy was defined in 1980, very summarily but very precisely, by the "Frame of Reference for Regional Planning" of the Lazio Region (the Irspel study already mentioned), in the point in which it asserts that the Frame of Reference intends to pursue:

"the hypothesis of "decentralization" relative only to the rare and very rare services, which consists of the identification of three or four distinct territorial ambits to be rendered autonomous, albeit within the compact and concentrated system of the city with the relative locating of the services centers in three or four fundamental catchment areas, within which the needs for services can be measured further, with the fundamental strategic aim of ensuring a "decentralization" that is not however so dispersed as to be inconclusive for the purposes of the city-effect."

The design plan of the new strategy is resolved thus in the determination of the existence (and subsequently in the study of their location) of a *certain number of systems* of central or business and administrative services (such as the SDO), that correspond to as many "virtual catchment areas".

The 3,5 million users of the Roman metropolitan or urban system may give life - at the frequency thresholds of the services allowed by current economic and social development - to about *6/7 centers* and as many *catchment areas*.

For the moment, given the still strong polarizing capacity of the historic center (which it will certainly not be easy to oppose), the distributive

nature of the morphological and urbanistic realities of the urban boundary, the importance assigned to a "spatial line of development" that integrates the communes of the East side of the city from Tivoli to the Castelli Romani, and given other conditions that it would take too long to enumerate here, the organization of these new *catchment areas* can be configured (some of which are already discounted such as EUR and the future SDO), as collected in six centers of reference and distributed in six corresponding territorial sectors:

1. an "*internal*" sector that continues to gravitate on the old Centre;
2. a set of *other sectors* (corresponding more or less to the four cardinal points of the city and its hinterland) which would be presented as the same number of *territory "cones"*, that each gravitate however on *its own center*;
3. an "*external*" sector, relative to the set of communes of the hinterland that are part of the East-South line of development from Tivoli to the Castelli Romani¹, with a "linear centrality" (if one accepts the pun), made up by the communes located to the South and East of Rome and which should begin to gravitate on the new "linear-center";

These territorial sectors, therefore, represent as many catchment areas and include evidently also the citizens of the areas around Rome (that today are part of the Roman system, and gravitate upon it); of the 700 thousand users that they represent, 400 thousand should be concentrated by afferece to the sector that we have defined as "external" or "east" or also "Latin"².

5.2 The Spatial Distribution of the Catchment Areas

The spatial distribution of the catchment areas (with its quantitative implications) has been proposed by aggregation of Rome's municipal "*circoscrizioni*" and of the adjacent communes³ (see Map 1). Only in the

¹More details and explanations are in the contribution already mentioned from 1985 (Archibugi, 1985).

²Because the ancient inhabitants of the area were called "*latins*", and because it was crossed by the ancient *via latina*; the other 300 thousand would be distributed, in very irrelevant proportions, in the other sectors of afferece, the critical mass of which would be nevertheless represented by the users of Rome (Rome municipality).

³Excluding the communes of the three districts (Civitavecchia, Anzio-Nettuno and Segni-Colleferro) which a correct delimitation of the spatial urban systems of Lazio should assign to the systems of North Lazio (Rieti-Viterbo) and South Lazio (Frosinone-

case of *Circoscrizione XIV* has it been considered opportune to divide it into two parts afferent to two sectors and gravitating on two centers.

The overall demographic summary of the catchment areas (inclusive of the population of the Roman circumscriptions and that of the communes of the metropolitan area that have been made afferent on the various catchment areas) is expressed in Table 2.

The criteria with which we have proceeded to formulate the proposed catchment area distribution are obviously territorial: postulating the best combination of the already existing gravitational areas, the maximum use of the operating infrastructures and finally the minimum access costs.

Latina).

Table 2 - *Catchment Areas of the Roman Metropolitan System (by thousands of inhabitants)*

Catchment Area	Rome Municipality	Gravitating Communes	Total
(Historic) Centre	450,00		450,00
North	329,00	131,00	460,00
East	959,00		959,00
South	597,00	40	637,00
West	505,00	41	546,00
"Latin"		481,00	481,00
Roman Metropolitan System	2840,00	693,00	3533,00
Communes outside System			163
Total for Province			3696,00

Source: Istat data

The results proposed are the following:

a) *A Southern Area (ROMA-SUD)*

The sector of this catchment area may be considered that of a vast South-West territorial cone, including the sea coast from Fiumicino to Castel Porziano (thus the so-called "marine" areas) and all the zones that with the sea lines of development (Portuense, Ostiense, Cristoforo Colombo) and those of the Pontina, Laurentina, and Ardeatina gravitate on the already well defined directional area of EUR which, with its outgrowths to the Magliana and to the Laurentina, would be configured as an actual Southern Business and Administrative System.

To this area, in fact, may be made to refer all the residential quarters of Portuense, Ostiense, Ardeatino, EUR, Giuliano-Dalmata and the areas in rapid expansion of "Circoscrizioni" XII and XIII (with an overall population of about 600 thousand people). This catchment area would include, moreover, (with not more than 40 thousand inhabitants) the users settled in the territory of some communes of the province of Rome to the

South of the city, to be precise Ardea and Pomezia (excluding therefore Anzio and Nettuno, which in a correct organization of the Lazio urban systems would be aggregated in the "Southern Lazio System" of Latina-Frosinone).

This catchment area should be made to gravitate on the above-mentioned southern business and administration system.

b) *An Eastern Area (ROMA-EST)*

Another catchment area would be represented by the strongly concentrated population represented by the *circoscrizioni* from the V to the X, with a cone to the East of the historic center which develops along the accesses represented to the North-East by the Tiburtina and Prenestina, and to the South-East by the Casilina, and Tuscolana as far as the Appia.

These are the quarters of Pietralata, Collatino, Ponte Mammolo, San Basilio, Prenestino, (Labicano and Centocelle), Tuscolano, Appio Latino, Alessandrino, Don Bosco, Appio Claudio, and numerous zones of the *Agro romano* such as: Tor Cervara, Settecamini, Torre Spaccata, Acqua Vergine, Lunghezza, S. Vittorino, Torre Angela, Borghesiana, Torre Maura, Torrenova, Torre Gaia, Capannelle, and Casal Morena.

In this area, which has a catchment area of almost 1 million inhabitants, and which is presented as the most important "city" of the new strategy, the SDO is supposed to constitute the fulcrum of the new centrality; but it would be much hoped for that it is strengthened and projected *even more to the East of the present "Pietralata-Centocelle axis"*, in order to baricentre better the great residential area which has been forming, and so that it is not compacted in an uncontrollable way with the old center which has in the meantime been expanding.

On the contrary very opportune would be - even if it is a bit late - a fundamental overturning of the locational choices implemented: with a radical revision of the Town Plan of 1962, it would be opportune to destine the still "free" areas reserved for the "equipped axis" to *areas of "equipped greenery"*, with the purpose of constituting, with all means, a strip of detachment and respite between the old center and the agglomeration of services of the new SDO. (It would even be better to shift the planned Line D of the metropolitan onto the axis of Via Togliatti rather than onto the present axis).

And the baricentre of the new SDO should be shifted towards the Cinecittà area *on the one side*, and towards the Tor Sapienza-Tor Cervara area *on the other*, with an attempt to link itself to the infrastructures of the ring road. The premises would be thus created of a future *splitting in two directional centers*, which the total of 1 million potential inhabitants of the area amply justifies (a Northern Eastern directional system and a Southern

one).

c) *A Northern Area (ROMA-NORD)*

But beyond the two catchment areas - the alternative centrality of which (with respect to the historic center of Rome) has been long since promoted and sought for by means of EUR and SDO - if we want to "liberate" the historic center from the vice that has gripped it, the necessity emerges of recognizing and preparing directional nucleations that can satisfy the demand for superior services on the part of other catchment areas to the *north* and to the *west* of the "metropolitan" city.

A catchment area to be served autonomously is that which weighs in a cone shape on Rome (and the historic center) with the consular roads of the Nomentana, Salaria, Flaminia, and Cassia. These are the imposing quarters of Montesacro and Tor di Quinto, but also of a large number of mainly "illegal" peripheral zones to the north of the city, which have reached important levels of population density (Tomba di Nerone, Grottarossa, Labaro, Prima Porta, La Giustiniana, Isola Farnese, Cesano, Polline Martignano, Val Melaina, Castel Giubileo, Marcigliana, Casal Boccone, Tor San Giovanni). But to this catchment area naturally belong a great quantity of communes of the Rome province and its metropolitan area which on this side fit into the commune territory (for example, Mentana, Monterotondo, Riano, Sacrofano, Formello), but also another numerous bunch of small communes of the province the demand for services of which is not otherwise satisfiable. On this side the population of communes adjacent to Rome that may constitute a catchment area of a new business and administration center is greater than in the other cases: if in the Rome commune the new business and administration center of the Northern sector may count on 330 thousand users, out of the Rome commune would gravitate other communes with 170 thousand inhabitants.

This is also the fact that would suggest "baricentering" the new business and administration nucleus and the sufficiently Northern services at the entrance of the motorway to Florence and also beyond (in a triangle Castel Giubileo-Marcigliana-Casal Boccone). The operation should be carried out bearing in mind the conservation of the Tiber Valley which presents delicate situations at this point. The entire Northern business and administration system would thus have a catchment area of not less than 500 thousand inhabitants, which is more than sufficient to justify it.

d) *A Western Area (ROMA-OVEST)*

There is a catchment area to the west of the city that has the potential for a new "Western" business and administration nucleus. It becomes

possible and necessary in order to complete the effective polycentrism about which we have spoken at length. Besides it is already emerging, although in a disordered, uncertain and confused form; because of which an urgent official definition has become necessary in order to face this confused emergency and to oppose all its negative aspects.

The catchment area of this nucleus would involve some peripheral quarters and suburbs to the West of Rome (the Gianicolense, Aurelio, Trionfale, and Primavalle) which presently gravitate only on the historic center and numerous urbanized zones of the Agro: Ottavia, Casalotti, S. Maria di Galeria, as far as Polidoro, Maccarese, and Fregene. It is a sector that only within the communal area or Rome has 520 thousand inhabitants. The lines of development of the Roman cone would be in essence the Aurelia, and also the Boccea and the Pisana.

And it is at the exit of the Aurelia, from the new Aurelia station at Malagrotta and adjacent areas that the best places are situated for the new business and administration location. The achieved "Roman Railway Belt" and the Maccarese-Aurelia Station link would exploit this strategic choice, and make another substantial contribution to the alleviation of the historic center.

e) The *Historic Centre* System

The historic center would remain an important catchment area: virtually 400 thousand inhabitants (all the "rioni" of *Circoscrizione* I and all those of *Circoscrizioni* II, III, and XVII: Flaminio, Parioli, Pinciano, Salario, Trieste, Nomentano, a large part of the Tiburtino, and Della Vittoria). It is probable that given the extremely unbalanced concentration of services in this area⁴, for a long time yet the actual (and not only "virtual") catchment area will go far beyond the borders assigned to it. This to the detriment of the other business and administration centers proposed, which for this reason will have difficulty in taking off. But with the long term tendency being inevitable, the realization terms of the planned re-equilibrium (and as a consequence the acquisition times of the social and economic benefits that will be had from the re-equilibrium for the entire population) will depend on the rigor with which the public choices (of the Council and also other entities operating on the sector) will follow a strategy of "depolarization" of the historic center, and - conversely - of "polarization" of the four to five new alternative centers designed by the strategy.

⁴The imbalance of services presently existent in this sector, with respect to the virtual catchment area assigned to it, is documented by the appendix prepared by Oreste Ferri.

f) The "*Eastern*" or "*Latin*" Centre

But the problem of Rome will not be resolved without a radical operation that must by now involve also the communes of the Eastern circle of the Province, above all the system of the Castelli Romani. The conurbation with these communes is by now a reality; and the same damaging effects are produced that have been produced with the conurbation of more or less scattered settlements of the Agro romano.

These small but historic towns (Tivoli and Castelli) in their growth induced by the conurbation, are losing all their historic-cultural character and identity: they too are becoming an anonymous, degraded, Roman outskirts, that is drugged by a sort of "development" which hides - behind an appearance of greater dynamism, and greater physical closeness to the city - more environmental degradation, more pollution, and thus a substantial socio-economic decline, with respect to the emerging opportunities. Such emerging opportunities are not opposable: they are the increase of consumption and the access to superior services, which now concerns all the citizens, even those in once small and not--served centers, which were thus excluded from their function.

The territorial function of "sustainable polycentrism" postulates the search for those thresholds, at which such services can be located as closely as possible to the user areas.

The Castelli Romani and Tivoli, taken together and with the adjacent communes of the province, reach this threshold: they reach 400 thousand inhabitants (and their tendency is towards an increase); and they can almost "do without Rome" for the rare services. A radical strategy of "polarization" is necessary on their part however, to avoid their continuing to slip towards Rome, leaving behind them a shapeless territory. It is necessary to put up some "barriers"; which will be valid and functional only if the strategy is implemented in "common": between the communes of the area, and between these and Rome. In fact, the benefit would be in common: the residents of the "Latin" system would above all benefit from actual non-dependence on Rome as far as the superior services are concerned, work opportunities, etc.; and those more properly Roman would not suffer the costs (in many cases the financial costs for services consumed by users that pay their taxes elsewhere, but also economic and social costs of various types) of a daily "presence" of users of the city that live elsewhere.

This strategy implies the design of a "Latin system" which gathers in a *single virtual catchment area* all the communes of the Castelli (and others around the area) in an "axis" equipped with services and a business and administration centrality that is conceived unitarily and is "tangential" to Rome. The motorway strip constructed between Fiano and S. Cesareo is a

modest contribution to this strategy, which could be reinforced with its semicircular lengthening, to the foot of the Colli Albani, from Colonna to Aprilia. But above all it is on the tertiary equipment and that of the urban services of this axis that the "environmental" safeguard of the Castelli is passed.

5.3 What decentralization of services for the new "urban centers"?

In short, the thus articulated catchment areas configure the possibility, the "feasibility" of a series of polyfunctional business and administration "Urban Centers" that are alternative to the historic center, the location of which is outlined in Map 2.

The Rome business and administration centers would become, in time, six. An SDO, an SDOC and an SDIS. But how much better it would be to begin by calling them an *East Rome*, a *South Rome*, a *North Rome* and a *West Rome*, plus a *Central Rome* and a "*Latin*" or "*Castelli*" Rome!

It is necessary to define however what is meant by the content of these "*business and administration or Service Centers*".

Let it be clear that we do not intend here to refer to a number of services that can be located functionally for catchment areas that fall much below the 500 thousand inhabitants threshold. For this type of services one can easily rely on spontaneity, or on "commercial" or "social" urbanism that chooses places and access modalities on the scale of the local area or of new building structures.

Here we are referring to those "operational units" that manage relations with a population of a million or more and which suffer from hyper congestion. Let us take an example that will suffice for all: the University.

There is no reason for concentrating those enrolled and the users of the "urban"⁵ University in a single unit, with perhaps over 100 thousand enrolled/users⁶, when it is well known that over certain thresholds (let us say 20-30 thousand enrolled), the University and its decision-making, administrative and didactic organs cannot function well, because of "laws"

⁵That is those Universities (which today are the only Universities growing in the world and considered suitable for what a University must do) which carry out a service for the urban residents, and do not contemplate a special "residentiality" (like the old campus universities which might also survive, but which have another function and by necessity serve an elitist population). (See on the subject: Berube, 1978).

For a wider analysis and for the planning practices in American Universities and in other countries, see my essay (Archibugi, 1984) in which many bibliographical references to the subject are collected.

⁶In Rome the La Sapienza University has reached the level of 170 thousand enrolled!

