



The Official 'Borgate' in Rome: Public Spaces and Architectural Language

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The debate on the classical roots of modern architecture finds monumental, metaphysical and rhetoric declinations also in the interventions carried out for the urban villages (the 'borgate') built by the fascist regime in Rome from 1928 to 1940. The official 'borgate' were built in outlying areas to resettle the evacuees from demolitions in the historical centre that cleared ancient monuments.

The first 'borgate', built from 1928 to 1930 and now demolished (San Basilio, Presentina, Gordiani), had an elementary hierarchical structure (they were simple one-storey huts in autarchic masonry, lined up along a dirt road). In the later villages built since 1935 a monumental nucleus was superimposed on the simple orthogonal housing layout, and became the fulcrum of the settlement. The main buildings (i.e. the church, social services, commercial spaces, and the police station) were usually placed around a central square.

The paper will point out the declination of architectural languages in the urban layout. Rationalism adapts well to poverty and to the autarchy of residential constructions. Public buildings employ a more rhetoric language, representing the social order imposed by the regime. In both cases very suggestive metaphysical themes recur.

The examples presented are selected among the official 'borgate' built since 1935, now integrated in the urban fabric of Rome: Trullo, Primavalle, Tufello and Quarticciolo. These settlements have distinct architectural and environmental characters. Even if there is a strong typological variety, all buildings have a similar elementary volume, plastered facades and rectangular windows. Buildings are arranged according to an orthogonal layout, leaving ample spaces between them. Such spaces - even if poorly arranged - became common areas for the houses around them and their quality was gradually improved. Together with the central square they played an important role in promoting social life.