# ROMA
# CANCELLATA

## Public Areas inaccessible to the Public

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## Aree Pubbliche inaccessibili al Pubblico

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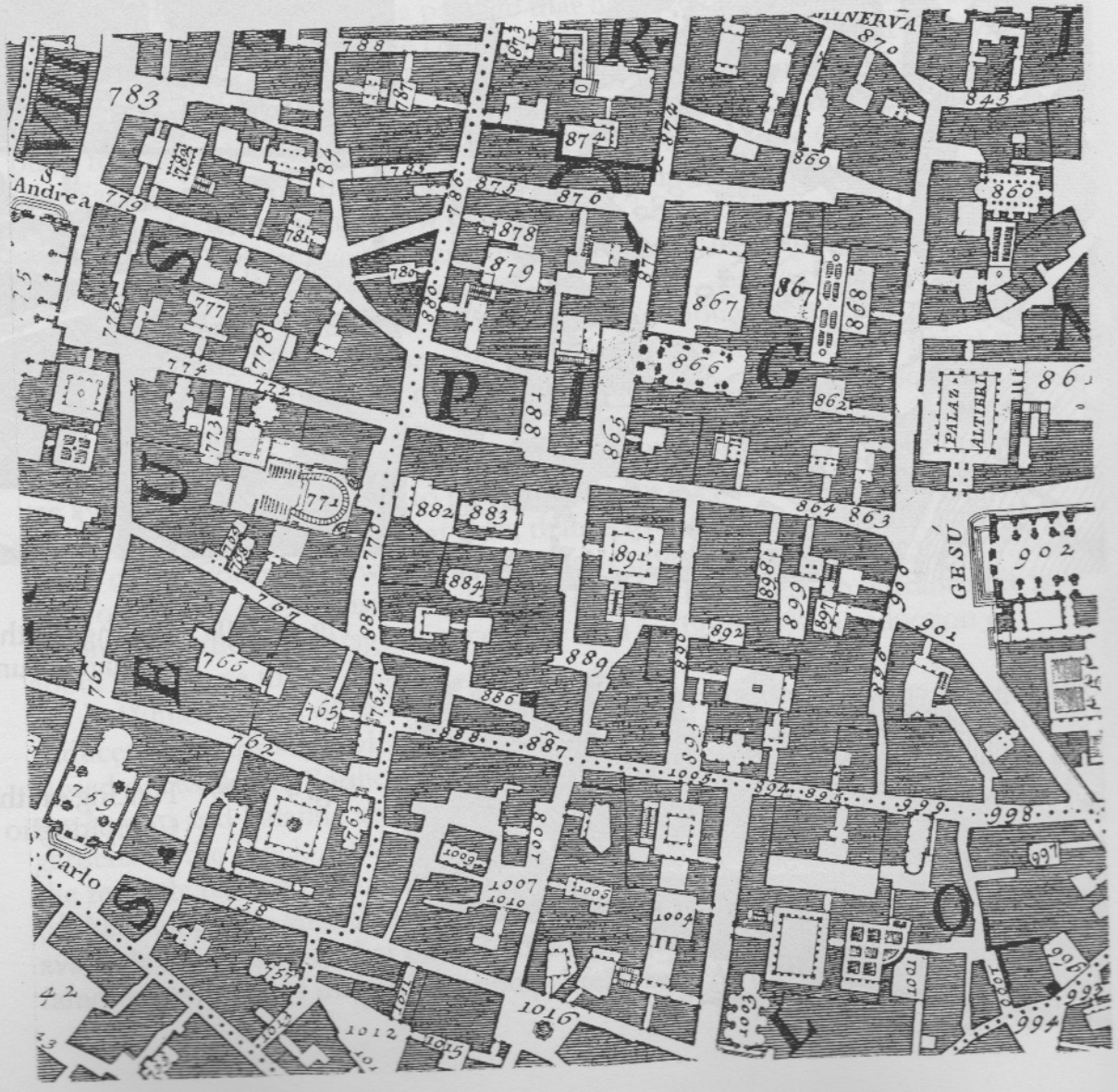
## PREFACE

A glance at the mid-18th century map of Rome by Giambattista Nolli (below) reveals a complex urban tissue dominated by interconnected streets, alleys and courtyards. These spaces, together with church interiors, are represented as white areas on the map. Rome was then a pedestrian's dream, with most spaces of the city being accessible to the visitor. This exhibition is aimed at pointing out the gradual diminution of that capillary connectivity since 1870, when Rome became the capital of unified Italy. It is hoped that by raising the public's awareness of lost public space, the process of its erosion may be reversed.

## PREMESSA

La pianta settecentesca di Roma disegnata da Giambattista Nolli rivela a colpo d'occhio un complesso tessuto urbano dominato da un intreccio di strade, di vicoli e di cortili. Questi spazi insieme agli interni delle chiese, sono individuati nella pianta da aree bianche. Roma a quei tempi era un vero paradiso per chi camminava a piedi, con la maggior parte dei suoi spazi cittadini accessibili a chi volesse visitarli. L'intento della presente mostra è mettere in evidenza la graduale diminuzione di tale capillare tessuto connettivo a partire dal 1870, quando Roma divenne capitale dell'Italia unita. La speranza è che, risvegliando nelle coscienze la consapevolezza di questa perdita di spazi pubblici, si possa verificare un'inversione di tendenza del processo di erosione.



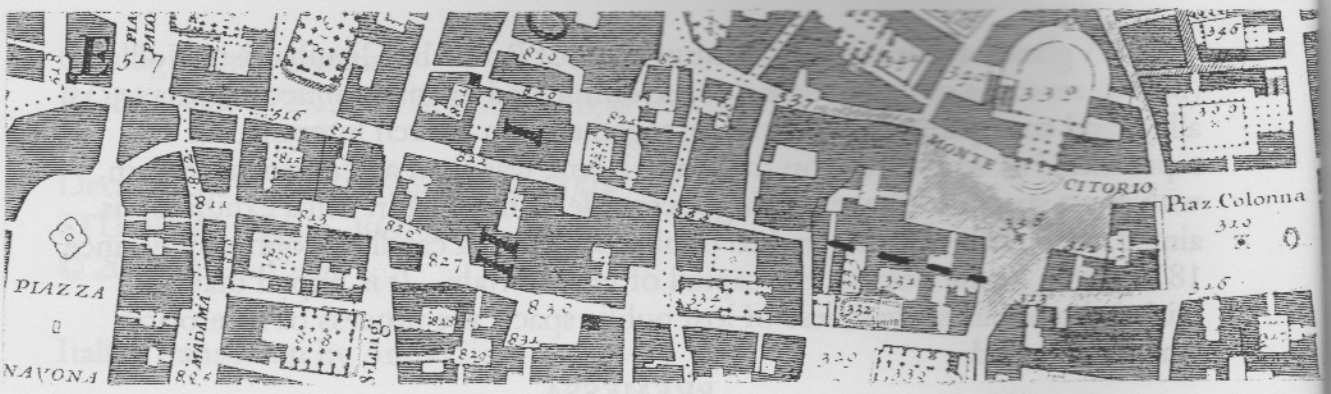
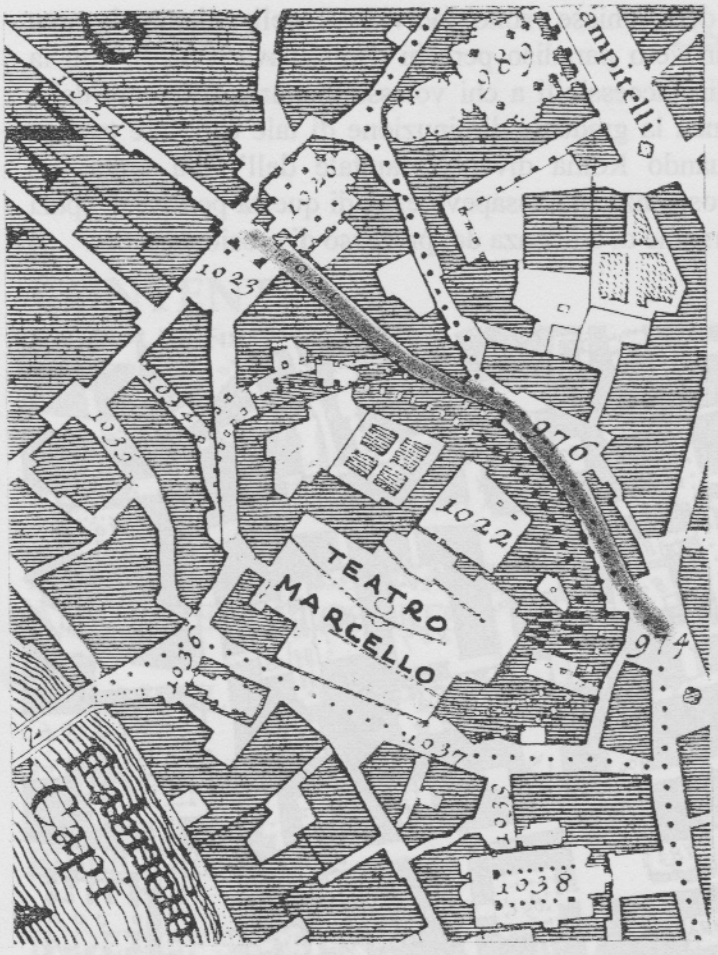



Fig. 1 Via Recta cut by Pal. Capranica




**1748 G.B. NOLLI**

Fig. 2 Ex-Via de' Sugherari curving around Teatro Marcello

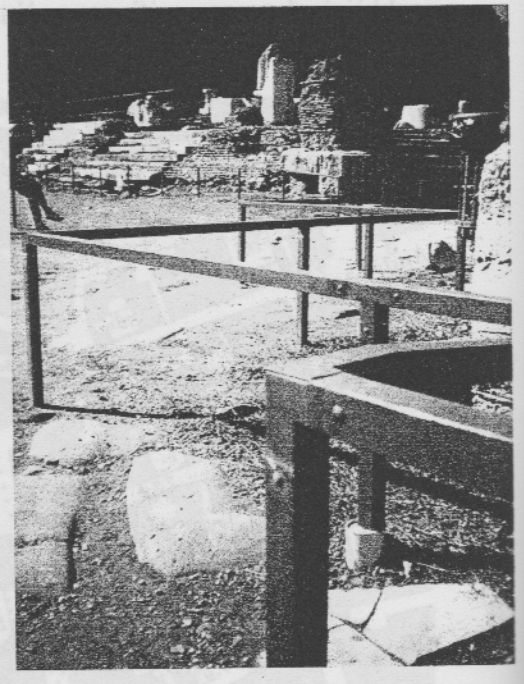


Fig. 3 2000 Railings in the Roman Forum

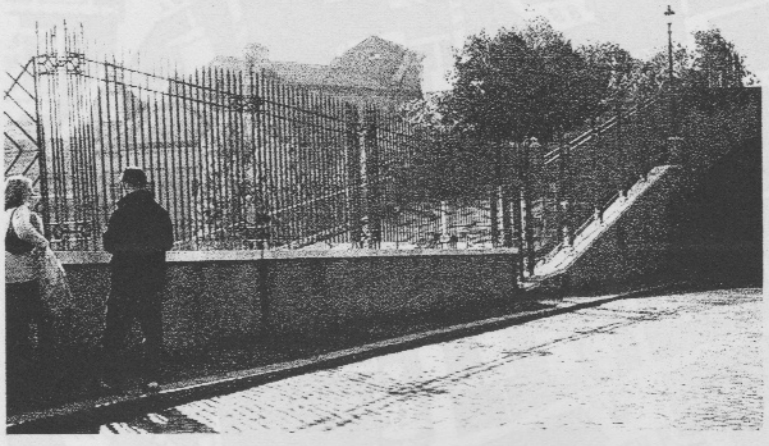


Fig. 4 1999 Fencing on the Campidoglio

# ROMA CANCELLATA

**CANCELLO**: *noun, masculine.* Railing; barred gate, gate.
**CANCELLATA**: *noun, feminine.* Railing (Iron or wood).
**CANCELLARE**: *verb, transitive.* To cancel, to cross out, to strike out, to delete, to erase.
[*past part.*: cancellato/**cancellata**]

There has always been a tendency in large cities toward the erosion of public space. Rome is no exception. In medieval times the lack of a strong city government and of urban statutes enabled the powerful nobility to build over streets, absorb parts of open spaces into their defensive perimeters and otherwise make free with public space. One example among many will suffice to illustrate (Fig.1): in the late Middle Ages the Capranica family extended their family holding across a section of a major street, the Via Recta (Via del Collegio Capranica). Pilgrims moving from the Via Lata (Via del Corso) toward the Borgo then had to detour around this obstruction at Piazza Capranica.

The phenomenon of blocking streets is not limited to the middle ages. In about 1988 the city closed a passage that had been in uninterrupted use for thousands of years (Fig. 2): the connection between the Porticus of Octavia and Via Teatro Marcello (ex-Via de'Sugherari), which, even when Mussolini demolished the area around Piazza Montanara in the 1930s, had been left in place for the pedestrian passing from the Ghetto area to the Capitoline area (see Cat.12). Last year that pedestrian link was finally reopened on a much reduced scale, with passage now limited to the hours between 9 am and 6 pm.

But in the past twenty years, fences and gates have sprung up at a relentless pace in a variety of places around the city. Large parts of the Capitoline hill (Fig. 4) have been fenced off, and though access through gates is permitted during daylight hours, the presence of this enclosure is a threat to public use because at a whim of a city official, the gates can be closed on a more permanent basis. The free access to the Roman Forum (Fig. 3) starting with the Jubilee year of 2000 was hailed as a great step forward, but not many are aware that when one had to pay an entrance fee, 30% more of the Forum area was visitable than after that date, thanks to the low railings now enclosing much of the Forum area which was formerly open to the public. Only 25% of the Forum area is now visitable. On the Palatine hill where an entrance fee is still in place, the percentage of accessible area is about 38%, a reduction of about 20% since the 1970s.

While reasons of safety and protection of archaeological sites may be adduced (perhaps somewhat hypocritically: why did the Basilica Julia need to be closed off while the Basilica of Maxentius was left open?) for the fencing in of the Forum and Palatine areas, the same cannot be used for such areas as the gardens of the Pincio. There a large area has been fenced off this year around the recently restored Casino Valadier (see p.4). This enclosure constitutes 18% of the total public area of the Pincio, and includes two tree-lined avenues once available to strollers in that park. It also isolates from view 24 of the busts of famous men, one of the park's principal features. At the diagonally opposite

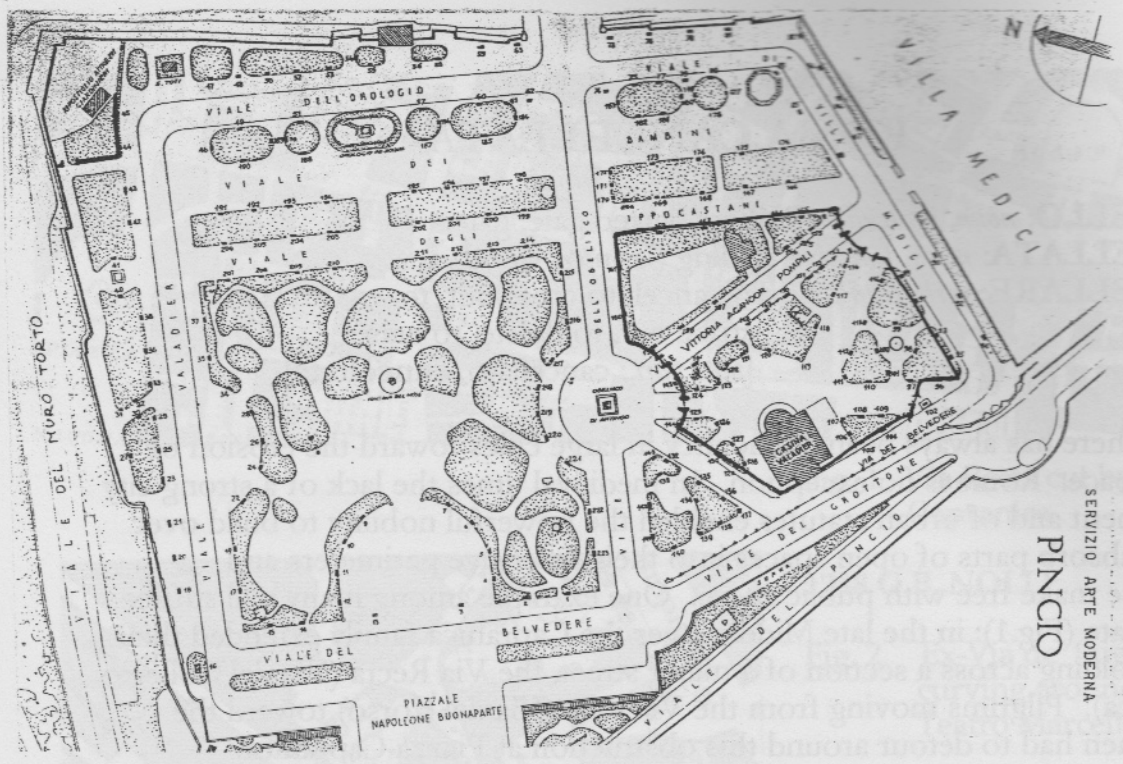



Fig. 5 Plan of the Giardini del Pincio with fenced areas (black lines)
Pianta dei Giardini del Pincio con aree recintate (in nero)

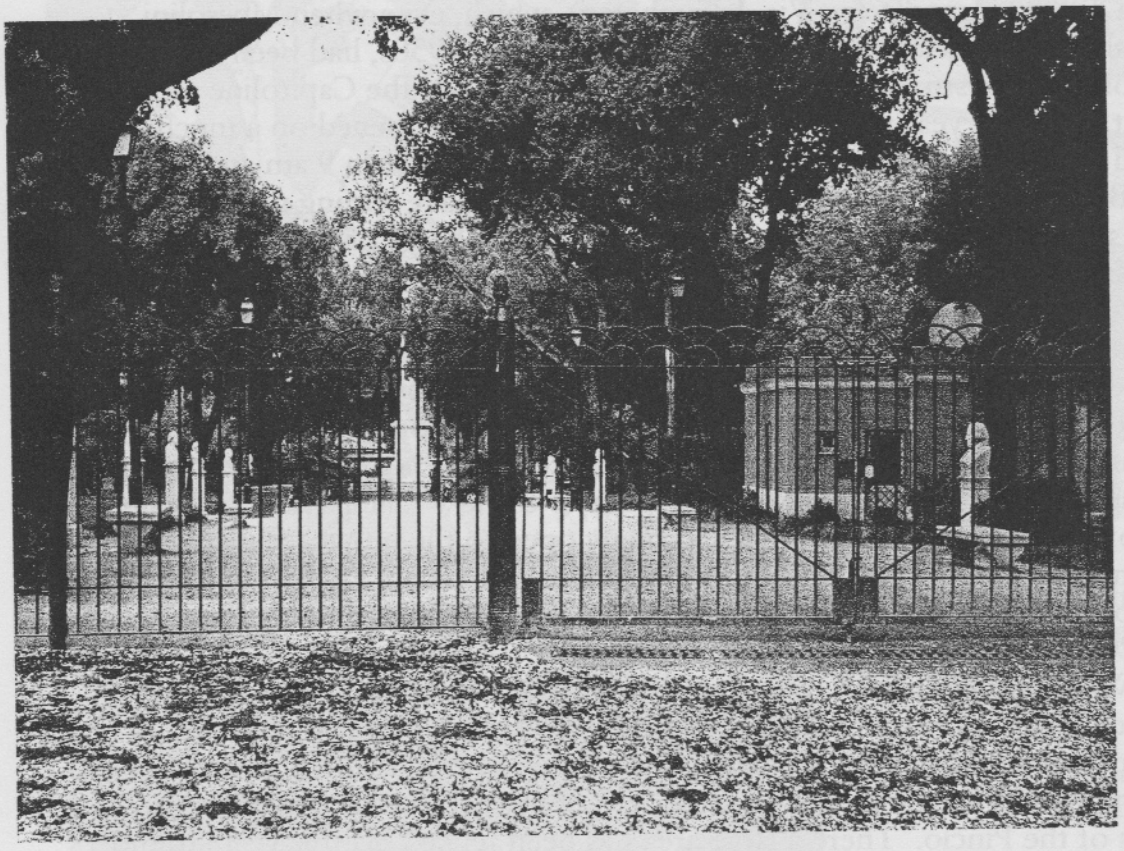


Fig. 6 2004 fencing across Viale Vittoria Aganoor Pompili
Recinzione del 2004 sul Viale Vittoria Aganoor Pompili

corner of the same park, the service enclosure for park maintenance was doubled in area some years ago at the expense of public space. Its position at the corner of the park, directly overlooking the Roman remains long known as the Muro Torto, make this a particularly unfortunate obstruction of a major site.

At the level of what may be defined as semi-public space, the courtyards of palazzi which, until the mid-1970s, were open to the public, have for reasons of "security" been gradually gated and closed off to all but the select few who possess a key or can talk their way past the guard or *portiere*. Thus the white areas on the Nolli map of Rome (dating from 1748), which denoted indifferently streets, courtyards and church interiors, and which were consequently public or at least semi-public, have now been drastically reduced. Citizens are made to feel thankful for the one day a year that the courtyards are opened to the public, and have little or no memory of the time when this "privilege" was taken as a matter of course, year round. This writer recalls with nostalgia the numerous short-cuts through courtyards available to him in his wanderings around Rome thirty years ago.

It is a rare fence that is built to keep out cars. More often it is built to keep out pedestrians (see Cat. 7). Some fences are built to keep out both. These could easily be modified to allow pedestrians to filter through while keeping out cars. The exclusion of cars but not walkers seems to be the intention of the barriers built in the late 1990s around the Camera dei Deputati at Piazza Montecitorio, and currently being built around the Senato (Palazzo Madama) on Via della Dogana Vecchia and Via dei Staderari. There the situation is further complicated by the fact that within the last six months moveable barriers, operated by Carabinieri, have been set up near both houses of Parliament (see Itinerant Street Names... below).

In Rome, the pedestrian is overwhelmed more and more by the invasive presence of motor vehicles, both moving and parked. This tendency has increased continuously from the 1950s up to present. Pedestrian "islands" set up by the city in the recent past are constantly invaded either unlawfully by ordinary drivers or officially by privileged permit-holders. The removal of the curb at Campo de' Fiori in 1999 has meant that vehicles now traverse an area once reserved for pedestrians. The city is currently contemplating a similar removal of the curb at Piazza Navona.

Of the vast sums spent by the city for the Jubilee of the year 2000, a tiny fraction was used to improve pedestrian circulation. Only the technical failure of a scheme to facilitate traffic on the Lungotevere in front of Castel S.Angelo caused that area to be turned over to pedestrians. The burying of the Lungotevere at Piazza della Rovere raised hopes of facilitating pedestrian circulation at that complex traffic intersection. On the contrary, the solution, which allows automobile traffic at both underground and surface levels, introduced a new surface traffic lane, thus making worse what was already a pedestrian nightmare.

The urban arrogance of the medieval nobles has been replaced by the bland invasiveness of modern government agencies and the rapaciousness of bars and restaurants. The latter, apparently encouraged by a city government which collects payments for the area occupied, are constantly invading more

and more of the public space in both piazza and street (see p.8). The pedestrian's space is therefore being squeezed by three forces: traffic, commercialism and "security" fencing. In terms of area, the last is perhaps the least of the three, but it is nonetheless indicative of the general negative attitude toward both city dweller and visitor. It is perhaps time for Roma Cancellata to become Roma Riaperta.

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## ROMA CANCELLATA

L'erosione dello spazio pubblico è sempre stata una tendenza delle grandi città e Roma non fa eccezione alla regola. Nel Medio Evo i potentati nobiliari potevano facilmente prevaricare su deboli governi locali e mancanti regolamenti urbani, costruendo su strade esistenti e includendo porzioni di aree pubbliche nel proprio terreno privato quale perimetro difensivo, o comunque abusando dello spazio pubblico. Un esempio fra i tanti può servire a illustrare il fenomeno (Fig. 1): la famiglia Capranica sul finire del Medio Evo estese la sua proprietà oltrepassando una via di primaria importanza come era la Via Recta (Via del Collegio Capranica). I pellegrini che da Via Lata (Via del Corso) intendevano dirigersi a Borgo furono obbligati a deviare il loro percorso aggirando questo sbarramento a piazza Capranica.

Il fenomeno dello sbarramento di strade non è limitato al Medio Evo. NEL 1988 è stato dal comune chiuso un passaggio usato ininterrottamente per migliaia di anni(Fig.2): trattasi del collegamento fra il Portico di Ottavia e Via del Teatro Marcello, che persino Mussolini negli anni 30 in occasione delle demolizioni nell'area in piazza Montanara lasciò in essere, come passaggio pedonale di collegamento tra il Ghetto e l'area del Campidoglio (cfr. Cat.12).Questo collegamento pedonale è stato finalmente riaperto l'anno scorso su scala molto ridotta e con apertura ad orario limitato dalle 9 alle 18.

Negli ultimi venti anni, sbarramenti, cancelli e cancellate sono spuntati a Roma per ogni dove senza sosta. Ampie parti del colle Capitolino (Fig. 4) sono state chiuse e, sebbene l'ingresso sia consentito attraverso cancelli nelle ore diurne, la presenza di questo sbarramento mette a rischio la fruibilità degli spazi pubblici da parte dei visitatori perché tutto dipende dalla decisione degli impiegati comunali, uno solo di loro po' decidere di estendere di molto la chiusura. Il libero ingresso al Foro Romano (Fig. 3) durante il 2000, anno del Giubileo, fu salutato come un grande passo avanti, ma non molti sanno che, quando l'ingresso era invece a pagamento, l'area del Foro Romano visitabile era superiore per il 30% rispetto a quella lasciata disponibile nel 2000, data la presenza di basse recinzioni, che attualmente sbarrano zone prima liberamente accessibili al pubblico. Oggi solamente 25% dell'area del Foro è visitabile. Sul Palatino, dove l'ingresso è ancora a pagamento, è accessibile ai visitatori il 38% dell'area: rispetto agli anni Settanta registriamo una diminuzione del 20%.

Se da un lato possono essere addotti motivi di sicurezza e protezione dei siti archeologici (non senza una qualche ipocrisia: perché la Basilica Giulia ha avuto bisogno di essere chiusa mentre quella di Massenzio è stata lasciata aperta?), lo stesso non può certo dirsi a proposito dei giardini del Pincio. Un'ampia zona è stata recintata quest'anno, tutto intorno al Casino Valadier di recente restaurato (cfr. p.4). Trattasi di un'area che costituisce il 18% di tutto lo spazio pubblico del Pincio e che ingloba due viali alberati, un tempo disponibili a chi passeggiava nel parco. Questa cancellata impedisce altresì la vista di 24 dei busti di uomini celebri, che costituiscono una delle principali caratteristiche del Pincio. All'angolo diagonalmente opposto di questa stessa area, la zona dedicata al servizio manutenzione del parco ha raddoppiato le sue dimensioni qualche anno fa, alle spese dello spazio pubblico e il fatto che essa si trovi proprio nel punto del