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**On dissonance and fascist heritage in Italy.  
An analysis on the reuse of ex-Case del Fascio in three  
provinces**

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**By**

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## Abstract

In Italy the current debate over the reuse of fascist heritage is, on the one side, incapable of answering to contemporary needs and criticalities raised by international movements and on the other side, it is raising a growing academic interest. This research aims to introduce critical heritage studies in the Italian context and update the current debate over difficult heritage. Moreover, this research enriches the interdisciplinary approach of critical heritage studies by integrating a new perspective taken from organisation studies.

The research focuses on the concept of dissonance linked to difficult heritage by testing the dissonant heritage theory and proposing a new and productive concept of dissonance. Are the preservation of fascist heritage and the use of fascist architecture generating dissonance? The objective is to understand how fascist heritage is preserved and reused in Italy, how this approach has changed over time and how it should be approached now. The object of the research are the reuses of *case del fascio* (for their capillary diffusion, representativeness of the regime, and ordinary characteristic) in three Italian provinces (Latina, Livorno, Treviso). The issue of the reuse, demolition or neglect of fascist-built architectures is carried out on a twofold level: a material one, studying the construction, modifications and reuse of *case del fascio* through archival sources and on-site inspections; and a public discourse one, applying the economies of worth by Boltanski and Thevenot to debates over the preservation and reuse of fascist heritage in Italy.

The innovations of the research can be found in (1) testing the dissonant heritage theory to the Italian case, finding that the relationship between the remains and reuse of fascist-built architectures is not linear, is more complex and dependent on inertia and local dynamics. It outlines also (2) a new perspective for the critical reuse of fascist-built architectures based on a positive concept of dissonance. An (3) analysis of how dissonance works and how can be activated and silenced is paralleled with suggestions on how organising dissonance as a new way of taking decisions over the reuse of ex-fascist public buildings.

## **Abbreviations**

CDF	Casa del Fascio
PNF	Partito Nazionale Fascista
RSI	Repubblica Sociale Italiana
DC	Democrazia Cristiana
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano
ACS	Archivio Centrale di Stato
AS	Archivio di Stato



## 1. Introduction

The relationship between architecture and political power has always been quite direct, even if it has been left on a secondary level in the Italian scholastic education of the history of architecture, which is generally taught, similarly to art history, as a sequence of artistic movements and sensibilities in time. Indeed, the aesthetic and artistic dimensions have always been endorsed as the main perspectives for looking at a building. However, political power, which usually controlled also the economic<sup>1</sup> dimension of a city or a State, has always been central in artistic decisions regarding architecture. As Sudjic argues:

*Siamo abituati a esaminare l'architettura nel suo rapporto con la storia dell'arte o i mutamenti tecnologici, oppure come espressione dell'antropologia sociale. (...) Ma ci sentiamo a disagio quando ci misuriamo con il problema, più complesso, dei significati politici degli edifici, con il perché essi in realtà esistono piuttosto che con il come. È una circostanza sorprendente, visto lo stretto rapporto fra potere e architettura. Questa ha sempre dovuto dipendere dall'allocazione delle preziose risorse e dalla scarsità di manodopera. Di conseguenza, le sue creazioni sono sempre state controllate da chi manovra le leve del potere, più che dagli architetti<sup>2</sup>.*

If this is true for architecture in general, this power relation<sup>3</sup> has been even stronger in the case of totalitarian regimes and their architectures, where the architecture had to represent the State and its values. Sudjic studied and showed how the monumental

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<sup>1</sup> The economic dimension here stands for investments and financial availability, mainly public investments in architecture; and political power refers to the government of a State. In this case, as Sudjic means in his book, the government (either a democratic one but especially a totalitarian one) usually directs investments and decides over the artistic matter of architecture or monuments.

<sup>2</sup> Sudjic, D., 2005. *Architettura e potere. Come i ricchi e i potenti hanno dato forma al mondo*, Laterza, Roma, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> The power relation refers to the one between financial power-government and architecture, in which the first dictates the second, especially in the case of totalitarian regimes. This power relation is mainly driven by economic-financial resources (i.e., money, workforce, materials), but also by the necessity (or vanity) of architects that are willing to compromise their production in order to have recognition.



architectures they built were strictly related to the political aspirations of dictators in some of the regimes of the twentieth and twentieth-first centuries. It is quite straightforward, then, to assume a contemporary uneasiness to deal with those kinds of architectures once the regime has dissolved and the political values are not the same anymore – this is what gives the name of *difficult heritage* and of *dissonant heritage theory* to that kind of built legacy (see Chapter 1). However, are all the architectures built during the regimes equally difficult? Is there a difference between a monument with only a celebratory function and a building with a use and a function? The issues of the location of dissonance (if it is something intrinsic to the architecture or something perceived by the observer) and the existence of a recognisable fascist style in architecture will be addressed in Chapter 2. This research aims to investigate the ambiguity of ordinary buildings (not monumental) built during fascism, which usually had an additional function to that of representing the PNF. These kinds of architecture are here found in the building typology of the *casa del fascio*. The ordinary aspect of those buildings has not been deduced from an architectural characteristic but rather as a consequence of their capillary diffusion and political-social function. Indeed, it was common to find a *casa del fascio* even in a small town at the time, as it was to find a church or the town hall. In the aftermath of the Second World War and the regime's fall, it was exactly this ordinariness of diffusion and their multiple functions (representation of the regime, *but also dopolavoro*, cinema, offices etc.) that saved the *case del fascio* as buildings. However, a critical consideration over the reuse of *case del fascio* seems not to have been done. So, after studying the contemporary function of *case del fascio* (Chapter 4), the research focuses on analysing public discourses and arguments used to justify the decisions over the reuse or destruction of fascist heritage (Chapter 5). The starting point and the first objective of this research is to situate the discourse on the reuse of -difficult- architectures first and foremost in the political realm, which means looking at the political interests behind the building itself. The second objective of the research is to understand the ambiguous relationship between ordinary fascist-built architecture and its difficult legacy connected to its contemporary reuse, meaning testing the

difficult/dissonant heritage theory. In doing so, the overall research proposes a new perspective based on organisation studies and critical heritage studies while drawing a phenomenological analysis of difficult heritage.

### 1.1 *Problems of memory*

The resurgent interest in *difficult heritage* has been recently channelled by activist movements such as Black Lives Matter (founded in 2013 and gained international attention in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd) and by diverse and recent social debates on colonial and racial built legacies in urban and public spaces, like the one on the Confederate monuments in North America (2016-2017) or the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the University of Cape Town (2015). These issues and topics, however, are not new, in fact, post-colonial and memory studies have deeply analysed similar issues in other geographical contexts and different disciplines while also addressing different legacies (post-Soviet heritage, for instance)<sup>4</sup>. However, in Italy these topics have been re-introduced in public opinion in 2017 by a famous article<sup>5</sup> by Ruth Ben-Ghiat in *The New Yorker*, which addressed the difficult presence of so many fascist monuments in Italy<sup>6</sup>. It generated a huge public debate that, in 2019, led to the discussion over the constitution of a documentation centre on fascism in the *ex-casa del fascio* in Predappio. In this case, the major problem was the idea of a museum or a research centre on fascism rather than the reuse of a fascist building (the *casa del fascio* and the political representation of the regime at a local level), which was later addressed. The debate was strongly fueled by

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<sup>4</sup> Compared literatures, linguistics, art history, memory studies, feminist studies, philosophy, cultural studies, cinema studies, visual studies, music studies, anthropology, sociology, just to mention a few, have addressed in different ways and using different perspectives the colonial and racial past and their legacies.

<sup>5</sup> Ben-Ghiat, R., 2017. "Why are so many fascist monuments still standing in Italy?", *New Yorker*. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/why-are-so-many-fascist-monuments-still-standing-in-italy>

<sup>6</sup> The most used examples of difficult heritage in Italy are actually identified in fascist and colonial heritage but these do not represent the only possibilities. The definition of difficult heritage changes in time and according to the people who live in a specific context. Cfr. Chapter 1.

intellectuals, the academic community and the general public, but ultimately it ended in a deadlock.

This public uneasiness and incapacity of taking a definite or unified decision over that past has been understood as symptomatic of an unsolved situation. Historians have called it *afasia*, as the inability to speak about that past, and they have used the concept of *divided memory* to describe the Italian memorialization of the fascist period and of the Resistance.

A sort of *afasia* has been observed not only in the people who witnessed and lived during that period of time, but also on a public level in the lack of erection of monuments and in the lack of a strategic planning of the public space after 1945, as Isnenghi wrote:

*Si può dire che la grande scultura pubblica sia morta simbolicamente in Italia nei giorni immediatamente dopo il 25 luglio 1943 quando il "piccone liberatore", i martelli, le scale e le corde di improvvisati "commando" popolari danno l'assalto – liberatorio e postumo – ai fasci e alle lupe del passato Regime. (...) L'eliminazione dei segni di occupazione altrui e l'imposizione dei propri segni è del resto un linguaggio ampiamente praticato in natura dalle diverse specie animali. (...) Alla grandiosa e capillare occupazione ideologica delle strade e delle piazze dell'Era Fascista, non seguirà in positivo – dopo l'immediato intervento in negativo – nessun coordinato progetto di ridefinizione dello spazio nazionale. (...) non c'è paese di campagna appena un po' fuori dal giro della modernizzazione in cui almeno una casa non lasci trasparire ancora qualche vecchia scritta ruralista o incitamento epico degli anni Trenta. (...) Una rinuncia all'epica non ridicibile a una sola motivazione: pesa, su tutti, la catastrofe militare; le memorie sono divise, anzitutto tra fascisti e antifascisti, ma anche all'interno dei due campi; tabù e reticenze si intrecciano. Infine: chi ricorda e rende grazie e gloria a chi, e per chi? Nell'Italia del '45, non esiste una comunità nazionale, o una sicura egemonia all'interno di questa, in grado di riflettersi in una scelta univoca. L'astensione sarà quindi la forma*

*congruente di un rapporto con la guerra più bisogno di rimozioni che di forme di pietà dichiarata.*<sup>7</sup>

The lack of a strategy on the reuse of public spaces, apart from the superficial removal of *fasci* or fascist symbols from monuments, facades and toponomy, is still influencing and forcing public authorities not to take a specific direction and not to address the issue of difficult heritage directly as a political matter, but rather to look at it only through a technical and artistic lens. The author also highlighted that contrary to what happened after the First World War, which was capillary memorialised in the squares of every city and little village of Italy through the monuments to the fallen, the Second World War inspired so much historiographical production as it left an empty space in the public spaces:

*La seconda guerra mondiale non dispone, in Italia, di una sua messa in scena specifica sulle pubbliche piazze. Quanto è folta, concitata – e divisa – la memorialistica privata degli uni e degli altri, altrettanto è ritrosa e astensionista la memoria pubblica. (...) Libri, tanti; monumenti, ben pochi. Nessuna delle diverse memorie in campo è in condizione di conquistare per se stessa le piazze d'Italia e di imporre i propri simboli come un linguaggio nazionale comune. (...) Il flusso monumentale si raggela anche per motivazioni intrinseche. (...) Nell'ora del disincanto, non può essere che la piazza a mettere in scena l'assenza. Non c'è più nulla da celebrare in comune*<sup>8</sup>.

The lack of a common and physical memory scape of the Second World War and the conflict on what and who should be remembered strictly refers to the lack of a common agreement on what happened in Italy in 1943-1945, the so-called civil war which generated a divided memory, reinforced even more by the Cold War international context.

Even if very interesting, it is not relevant for the purposes of this research to dive deeply into the historiographical debates and

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<sup>7</sup> Isnenghi M., 2005. *Le guerre degli Italiani. Parole, immagini, ricordi 1848 – 1945*, Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 324-325.

<sup>8</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 349-350.

studies on the second *dopoguerra*; instead, it is important to understand how these memorialization problematics have shaped the public spaces, monuments and cities, and how the division between institutional-State memory and private memories of that period impacted the society and the built environment.

The term “divided memory”, as used in historical debates in Italy, can be traced to the 1990s. The term was developed in different researches dedicated to massacres in small towns, such as Pezzino and Paggi ones<sup>9</sup>, where the divided memory emerged in the dissonance created by conflicting remembering of past events based on the personal experiences and memories of local people. In those specific cases, the divided memory of a place was a complex matter resulting from a massacre in which the attribution of responsibilities was not clear or easy to attest. So, the presence of conflictual feelings against partisans (not against the Resistance) was not linked to a fascist support, but rather, it was a collective sense-giving strategy to the unspeakable events that took place. So, as clearly summed up by Foot:

*Divided memory is the tendency for divergent or contradictory narratives to emerge after events, and to be elaborated and interpreted in private stories as well as through forms of public commemoration and ritual. These memories are often incompatible, but survive in parallel.*<sup>10</sup>

However, divided memory depended not only on the doubtful interpretation of local massacres but was also influenced by many more variables derived, for instance, by the gap between what happened during the Liberation and the civil war and what has been memorialised. For instance, the bombings (and rapes of the Allies) were not adequately remembered since they were presented just as inconveniences made by the people who were liberating Italy. Plaques for the fallen of the bombings were erected almost everywhere, framed as a common remembering of

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<sup>9</sup> Contini G., Paggi S., 1996. *Storia e memoria di un massacro ordinario. La memoria divisa. Civitella della Chiana 29 giugno 1944-45*, Manifestolibri, Roma; Pezzino P., 2007. *Anatomia di un massacro. Controversia sopra una strage tedesca*, il Mulino, Bologna.

<sup>10</sup> Foot J., 2009. *Italy's divided memory*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, p. 10.

the fallen from the war; silence over the Allies' collateral damages was the most common attitude while displacing all the responsibility toward the Nazis, as in the case of San Miniato's bombing of the church<sup>11</sup>. Divided memory also depended on the geography of war, as Contini<sup>12</sup> argued. The links between partisans and nonpartisans were different above and below the Gothic Line. Two models of memory regarding massacres and resistance can be found: above the Gothic Line the links with the partisans were stronger, and below it, they were weaker and more likely to create forms of divided memory.

Moreover, the public memorialisation of the Resistance itself changed over time, according to political interests. Dogliani<sup>13</sup>, for instance, analysed the monuments dedicated to the Resistance and she found that the monuments built between 1949 and 1963 tended less to remember the Resistance than to be dedicated to the victims of war. Instead, from the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, new monuments and parks were inaugurated by partisan associations, and the monuments interpreted the Resistance as a united and Anti-fascist struggle. She argued that the stress on unity resulted from the *compromesso storico* between the Communist party and the Christian Democrats. Just as after the unity of Italy, the Risorgimento was presented as a national unitarian movement, hiding the tensions and different political opinions among its main protagonists (e.g. the tensions between Cavour and Mazzini). In the same way, in the second postwar period, the Resistance was presented as a unified national

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<sup>11</sup> In this case, the massacre was due to a bombing over the village church, where almost all the citizens gathered. Real responsibility over the bombing was never attributed, but the immediate interpretation of the massacre saw the Nazis as responsible for that action, as part of retaliation. Only decades later, the village priest started an investigation and found documents attributing the responsibility to the Allies, who accidentally exploded the bomb. The co-existence of two memories of what happened is testified in the double plaques in the square. Cfr. Foot, 2009, p. 103.

<sup>12</sup> Contini, G., 1997. *La memoria divisa*, Rizzoli, Segrate.

<sup>13</sup> Dogliani, P. "Constructing memory and anti-memory: the monumental representation of fascism and its denial in Republican Italy", in R.J.B. Bosworth and P. Dogliani (edited by), 1999. *Italian fascism. History, memory and representation*, MacMillan press, London, pp. 21-22

opposition to Nazi fascists, concealing internal divisions while privileging the reconciliatory aim of the newborn republic. The “missed epuration” and the so-called “continuity<sup>14</sup>” of the State also impacted the conflicts and tensions between antifascists and ex-fascists in the postwar period and on the memorialisation of the fascist period. For instance, the *amnistia* was awarded to prestigious fascists in the judiciary system, in the public administration and in the military corps<sup>15</sup>, whereas, as Franzinelli reports, the sentences by the Tribunale Speciale per la difesa dello Stato (a fascist institution) against the *disfattisti* (people who verbally criticised the choice of Mussolini to join the war) were confirmed in the 1950s also by the Republican tribunals:

*nel primo ventennio postbellico molti condannati per <<disfattismo politico>> chiederanno invano la revisione del processo e la cancellazione della sentenza. Queste vicende – escluse dalla storia e dalla memoria collettiva – costituiscono un esempio scandaloso della continuità dello Stato<sup>16</sup>.*

So, the divided memory and the continuity of the State nourished the ambiguity of a public stance against the fascist past. The incapacity of clearing (epuration) the administrative and judiciary

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<sup>14</sup> There is a huge bibliography on the missed epuration and the continuity of the State from fascism to the republic in Italy. To quote just a few: Franzinelli, M., 2022. *Il fascismo è finito il 25 aprile 1945*, Fact Checking; Pavone, C., 1995. *Alle origini della Repubblica. Scritti su fascismo, antifascismo e continuità dello Stato*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino; Franzinelli, M., 2016. *L'amnistia Togliatti. 1946. Colpo di spugna sui crimini fascisti*, Feltrinelli, Milano; Filippi F., 2020. *Ma perché siamo ancora fascisti? Un conto rimasto aperto*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino; Battini M., 2003. *Peccati di memoria: La mancata Norimberga*, Laterza, Bari.

<sup>15</sup> In particular, the Cassazione awarded amnesty to fascists who committed crimes of torture, rape, and beating while being part of the fascist military corps. The crime of *sevizie particolarmente efferate* needed to be demonstrated, with a purposely exculpatory aim that even group rape was not considered a violent crime: “È applicabile l'amnistia ad un capitano di brigate nere che, dopo avere interrogato una partigiana, l'abbandona in segno di sfregio morale al ludibrio dei brigatisti che la possedettero, bendata e con le mani legate, uno dopo l'altro, e poi la lasciarono in libertà; giacchè tale fatto bestiale (...) non costituisce sevizia e tanto meno sevizia particolarmente efferata, ma soltanto la massima offesa al pudore e all'onore di una donna.” In Franzinelli, 2022, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Franzinelli, 2022, p. 11.

system from ex-fascists, in addition to the unclear way in which the amnesty was written by the Ministry of Justice Togliatti<sup>17</sup>,

Some critics and historians have interpreted this lack of a unified memorialisation and consensus over the past as a social problem, which is nowadays at the basis of resurgent neofascist manifestations, of far-right wing political movements<sup>18</sup>, and of the revisionist wave of the fascist past that still nurture the myths of a better past and the myth of Mussolini as a good politician<sup>19</sup>. For these reasons, Italy was described as the “sick man of Europe<sup>20</sup>” or the country where a more general sense of the public good or mass loyalty has never been achieved<sup>21</sup>. If some of these interpretations can be convincing, it is also important not to reach quick conclusions. Indeed, these problems of memory are also common in other countries. For instance, just looking at Europe, France had the so-called Vichy syndrome, Spain did the famous pact of silence, and Germany had a period of silence (or *afasia*) which lasted at least two generations and its memorialisation process is still not finished<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> As Franzinelli writes, the loose way in which the amnesty was written was thought to leave room for the judges' interpretation so that partisans could also benefit from that. Moreover, it was a measure to rehabilitate ex-fascists with minor accusations and to attract the votes of leftist ex-fascist into the PCI. However, the implementation proceeded not in the way Togliatti planned, and the general aim of reconciliation and pacification ended up with the massive release of ex-fascists and the lack of a proper collective reflection. “i vertici non epurati di una magistratura chiamata a giudicare i responsabili del regime fascista e della guerra civile che aveva insanguinato l'Italia avrebbero infatti rifiutato di affrontare una dolorosa e non gradita riflessione, non solo sulla memoria collettiva del recente passato, ma anche sulla personale memoria del proprio passato e sulle proprie responsabilità”, Franzinelli 2016, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> Among the others: Arthurs J., 2010. “Fascism as ‘Heritage’ in contemporary Italy”, in Mammone A. and Veltri G., 2010. *Italy Today. The sick man of Europe*, Routledge, London; Carter N., Martin S., 2019. Dealing with difficult heritage: Italy and the material legacies of Fascism, *Modern Italy*, Vol. 24 n.2.

<sup>19</sup> Filippi F., 2019. *Mussolini ha fatto anche cose buone. Le idiozie che continuano a circolare sul fascismo*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino.

<sup>20</sup> Mammone A. and Veltri G., 2010. *Italy Today. The sick man of Europe*, Routledge, London.

<sup>21</sup> Foot, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> Speccher, T., 2022. *La Germania sì che ha fatto i conti con il nazismo*, FactChecking, Laterza, Bari.



Other historians claim that the fact that different memories of the (fascist) past exist, is not necessarily a problem. On the contrary, it can be seen as a healthy democratic mechanism:

*Different versions of “what happened” and how to remember the past are often seen as healthy, as democratic, and as preserving the idea of historical dialectic. (...) Paggi has argued that memory should remain divided, “in the sense that discussions over the origins of events should remain open” but that they should cease to be a “form of division at a personal level”. Divided memories are also a crucial part of free speech.<sup>23</sup>*

In particular, historians opposed the homogenising interpretation of the *memoria condivisa* (shared memory), which had a unifying and reconciliatory aim, levelling the opposite parts and historical differences in the equality of death and war. As also Luzzatto reminded:

*Il caso Vivarelli è un esempio perfetto della confusione che oggi si fa tra memoria condivisa e storia condivisa; più in generale, tra bisogno di memoria e bisogno di storia. Anzichè mantenere studiatamente l'equivoco, l'intelligenza italiana dovrebbe lavorare per scioglierlo, magari evocando categorie platoniche quali l'anamnesis e la mneme; in altri termini, contribuendo a distinguere – nel rapporto necessario di una comunità con la sua storia - quanto pertiene alla reminiscenza individuale e quanto alla memoria plurale. Senza farne un gioco di parole, occorrerebbe spiegare che la memoria collettiva sulla quale s'affaticava la mente geniale di uno studioso come Marc Bloch non equivale necessariamente alla memoria condivisa (...): perchè l'una rimanda a un unico passato, cui nessuno di noi può sottrarsi e che coincide appunto con la nostra storia; mentre l'altra sembra presumere un'operazione più o meno forzosa di azzeramento delle identità e di occultamento delle differenze. Il rischio di una memoria condivisa è una*

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<sup>23</sup> Foot, 2009, p. 19.

«smemoratezza patteggiata», la comunione nella dimenticanza<sup>24</sup>.

So, to claim for divided memories is not a rhetorical manoeuvre; on the contrary, it refers to the importance of preserving the difference between these memories. In this sense of open discussion and not of social conflict, the divided memories can be seen as the repositories of a historical complexity which otherwise would be difficult to transmit.

Divided memories generate dissonance, intended both in the psychological meaning of keeping together conflicting and incoherent behaviours, beliefs, and opinions about a situation, and in the *difficult heritage* meaning of awkwardness and uneasiness to accept and integrate a difficult past (and its material legacies), which conflicts with our contemporary values. In heritage studies, dissonance has always been associated with negative aspects because it referred to heritage of atrocities, war, or totalitarian regimes, which had a negative memory or impact on the society. However, this research aims to overturn this negative association by using dissonance as a productive force to create new meanings, critical approaches and definitions on the themes of heritage, collective memory and preservation.

### 1.2 Synopsis and research questions

The research starts from the problems delineated above by situating the work in the difficult heritage paradigm but twisting it with a new perspective from the organisation studies. The research aims to answer questions on the applicability of dissonant heritage theory in Italy, on the presence of dissonance regarding fascist heritage, how to re-think the preservation or reuse fascist heritage in Italy critically and how to interpret it in the present.

The research questions are the following:

1. Since fascist heritage is part of difficult heritage, how does dissonance work in this case? Is there dissonance emerging from fascist heritage in Italy? And if not, what are the reasons for that?

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<sup>24</sup> Luzzatto S., 2004. *La crisi dell'antifascismo*, Einaudi, Torino, p.23.

2. How is the Italian public discourse framed on issues of preservation and reuse of fascist heritage? What public discourse's dynamics make dissonance loud and which silence it?
3. Which criticalities emerge from the acritical preservation and reuse of fascist architectures? Who are and should be the actors entitled to decide upon their reuse and accessibility?

Question (1) locates the research in the discipline of critical heritage studies, focusing on the concept of dissonance and its dynamics. It investigates the application of dissonant heritage theory and the concept of difficult heritage in the Italian case. Complexities behind the decisions over the reuse, demolition and neglect of fascist heritage question the assumed straightforward relationship between the survival/reuse/destruction of difficult heritage and the fascination or appreciation of that past. This is especially important for cases of lack of dissonance and acritical reuse. Moreover, this part integrates the positive meaning of dissonance in Stark with a new application in heritage studies. It aims at giving an overview of how fascist architectures, in particular *case del fascio*, have been reused, neglected or destroyed in three Italian provinces. Some operational sub-questions are the following:

- How many CDF have been reused/destroyed/neglected in the three provinces? Which uses and functions do they have today?
- How their reuse/destruction/neglect impacted the local community and the city? Did the attention of the local community toward the CDF change over time?

The investigation is based on three levels of analysis: the material aspects of the building and its changes, the narrative around it that may have taken place during time or now, and the institutional documentation related to the decisions over the reuse and re-function of the building. The selection criteria used to choose the case studies is also strictly related to the test of the dissonant heritage theory above mentioned.

Question (2) focuses on the public discourses that justify the decision over fascist heritage. Indeed, as also remarked in the

beginning, the starting point of this research is to situate the problems of difficult heritage primarily in the political dimension, avoiding the traditional way of addressing them only as a technical preservation issue. So, it is important to visualize heritage not just as a building but as a public space and a catalyzer of narratives. For this reason, this research question opens to the application of Boltanski and Thevenot's framework on justification to common arguments used in framing public debates over these topics. It leads to the deconstruction of those common arguments and shows how the justification process is based on assumptions which derive from very different areas (cultural, political, economic) or orders of worth. This kind of analysis seems to have never been done before because approaches to the preservation of heritage in Italy have always come from single or technical disciplines such as archaeology, architecture, law or art history. Instead, an interdisciplinary approach based on Boltanski and Thevenot's paradigm of justification (organisation studies) and critical heritage studies gives a brand-new perspective on fascist heritage and its legacy. Question (3) opens the research to problematics originating in the heritage studies and intersecting other disciplines and topics, such as governance, management, urban studies, etc. The work leads to the identification of some problems arising from the ambiguity of architecture and its reuse, from the opaque way of framing preservation discourses, from the dynamics of dissonance, and from social inertia linked to acritical preservation. This research will try to suggest how the organization of dissonance can cope with some of the criticalities originating from the acritical reuse of fascist architectures. However, the work does not provide a manual on how to organize dissonance, rather it offers suggestions and general criteria that should be adapted on a case-by-case base and should be further developed in future research.

The structure of the research tries to answer the research questions by introducing the field of heritage studies and its development in critical heritage studies in Chapter 1. In this chapter, the main authors and references will be presented, according to the multidisciplinary aspect of heritage studies and the current research. Moreover, the concept of dissonance, which is central to

this investigation, will be introduced. In Chapter 2, the ambiguous relationship of fascism with architecture and the (im)possibility of defining a unique fascist architectural style is acknowledged through literature sources. Even if it is not strictly related to the research questions of the work, the matter of architecture and fascism is linked to the concept of dissonance and to difficult heritage because it opens up the issue of the location of dissonance (Is dissonance located in architectural features?). Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the research, situating it in relation to previous publications, and the selection of case studies. Chapter 4 describes the data on the reuses of the ex-CDF, providing a map for each province and aggregated data together with an extensive historical reconstruction of each CDF of the three provinces based on documents found in the archives and on field inspections. Chapter 5 focuses on the definition and description of the dynamics of dissonance in difficult heritage, linking it to the cases described previously. Moreover, the application of Boltanski and Thevenot's framework will help in understanding how debates over the reuse of fascist heritage have been framed and what kind of agreements have been made more frequently. In the conclusions (Chapter 6) the research, while trying not to impose a fixed structure for the reuse of fascist heritage, will suggest some steps and driving concepts that can guide a different way of thinking, reusing, and living fascist or difficult heritage.

## Chapter 1 – Dissonance and critical heritage studies

### 2.1 *The discipline of heritage studies*

The concept of heritage is linked to modernity and was introduced in Europe during -and sustaining- the creation of national identities, especially at the end of the nineteenth century. In reality, in Italy, the creation and use of heritage for identity-building was already common during the Renaissance, when it was mainly driven by social emancipation needs, but its definite development and systematic use took place at the end of the nineteenth century during the nation building process of European states, and it culminated now with the contemporary heritage boom. The definition of heritage was originally strictly linked to the concept of nation and it had the role of constructing and materially endorsing myths about national identity; later it supported the hegemony of European countries and cultures in the colonies, justifying the colonial and imperial discourse. From the end of the twentieth century the concept of heritage became more and more inclusive (integrating not only the built heritage but also the intangible one, for instance) and its relevance more and more central in contemporary society and academia<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> This huge growth of interest has been interpreted differently by authors: as a reaction to globalization, migration and transnationalism (Wright in R. Harrison 2013, p. 21) or as the creation of a heritage industry (R. Hewison, 1987) which produces a sanitized and commercial version of the past to capture a middle-class nostalgia for the past in contraposition to a contemporary context of decline. Smith (Smith 2006) links the emergence of heritage discourse to the development of 19th century nationalism and liberal modernity. Smith and Gentry (K. Gentry & L. Smith, 2019) argue that the post-1945 heritage boom is explained as a response to the scale of heritage destruction that occurred during World War II and the connecting urban renewal. This sense of rupture, displacement and crisis in the notion of identity produced an over-investment in the perceived redemptive aspect of heritage. The authors find that from this originates the liberal education movement which puts moral responsibility to educate the public about their civic and national duties and to promote social stability by fostering a sense of national community. Other authors (Benton 2010; Hewison 1987; D. Harvey 2001) have argued that the experience of postmodernity has impacted on our perception of time with a constant search for change. Indeed, they argue that modernity is characterized by the drive for progress, whereas postmodernity is moved by the pursuit of constant change. In this sense, the heritage boom can be motivated by a desperate search for stability in a world that continuously changes. Harvey underlines also the relation of heritage with conditions of post-modern economy: not only a strong and

Indeed, a peculiar characteristic of contemporary society is also the acceleration of the becoming-heritage: certain aspects of everyday life which relate to the present are almost immediately conceived in heritage terms. What is common in all these periods is that it has always been *the present* the temporal perspective from which people selected heritage from an imagined past for current uses<sup>26</sup>. The political use of history has always served present purposes<sup>27</sup>, challenging in this way the concept of history understood as a sort of authentic version of the past<sup>28</sup>. It is fundamental here to distinguish between the past, history and heritage: Tunbridge and Ashworth<sup>29</sup> defined *the past* as a series of events that have happened; *history* as a series of judgements and an interpretation on the past; *heritage* a selection, based on an interpretation, of what is worthy to preserve to future generations. So, both history and heritage are selective processes representative of contemporary instances. The basis upon which heritage studies lie, which has been repeated and assessed by different authors, is the acknowledgement that history is not an objective discipline but, on the contrary, is influenced and dictated by contemporary ideological and political interests. Even if history is the prerequisite of heritage, they serve different purposes: as Lowenthal<sup>30</sup> argues, history is made by what a historian selects as worth recording, whereas heritage includes what society decides to inherit and pass on. For this reason, the political impact and the potential for conflict are more evident in heritage.

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increasing link between heritage and marketplace cannot be denied, but also the increase pervasiveness of heritage as a post-modern form of leisure is more and more evident.

<sup>26</sup> Cfr. Tunbridge J. E., Ashworth G. J., 1996. *Dissonant Heritage: the management of the past as a resource in conflict*, Wiley, Hoboken

<sup>27</sup> Harvey D. C., 2001. Heritage pasts and heritage presents: temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 7 no. 4, p. 320 - 324

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. Hewinson R., 1987. *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline*, Methuen Publishing, London

<sup>29</sup> Tunbridge J.E., Ashworth G. J., 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Lowenthal, D., 2015. *The Past is a foreign country. Revisited*, Cambridge University Press

After the second world war, the necessity of reconstructing most of the European cities led to an increasing interest in the role of cultural heritage for its symbolic and identity value (see Chapter 5). As Guermandi<sup>31</sup> argues, the 1960s was the decade in which access to heritage was democratised from a welfare perspective, and the notion of cultural heritage itself (in Italian *beni culturali*) started to include all the artifacts, buildings, and sites which were testimony of human civilisation. The concept of heritage started to be loaded not only with an artistic value but also an anthropological one of constructing collective identities.

In the heritage field, the debate remained fixed on technical concerns over conservation, especially in Italy, rather than questioning its socio-political implications. It was only in the 1980s that the distinction between heritage, memory and history became a topic of interest<sup>32</sup>. The heritage scholarship followed two dominant routes: on the one side, the predominance of technical issues and case study work which neglected its political aspect; on the other side, the elitist idea of heritage as opposition to folkloristic forms of history that should be put under the control of professionals. From an academic perspective, in the 1980s, the debate on heritage took place mainly in two states: United Kingdom and France. In the United Kingdom, the fundamental book, which still is a milestone of heritage studies, *The past is a foreign country* by D. Lowenthal (1985) was published, and it influenced all the following publications on these topics. By situating the European interest in heritage in the late eighteenth century, Lowenthal showed that the use of the past started to validate the present in the forms of monuments as emblems of communal identity<sup>33</sup>. He defined heritage as a “conveniently ambiguous” concept<sup>34</sup> which was able to include social aspects and political influences in it. Another milestone in heritage studies

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<sup>31</sup> Guermandi, M., 2021. *Decolonizzare il patrimonio. L'Europa, l'Italia e un passato che non passa*, Antipatrimonio, Castelvechi Editore, Roma, pp. 18-30.

<sup>32</sup> Lowenthal D., 1985. *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press; Nora P., 1989. *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Representations, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, pp. 7-24

<sup>33</sup> Lowenthal 2015, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> Lowenthal in R. Harrison, 2013. *Heritage. Critical approaches*, Routledge, London, p. 14.



was the book *The invention of tradition* by E. Hobsbawm (1983) which reinforced the idea of cultural heritage, especially in the form of monuments, as key tools in building collective identity. Hobsbawm located the importance of tradition in the symbolic character of rituals that, even if they were recent, their origin needed to be situated in a remote past. In this creative act heritage played a significant role in legitimising a certain social class or nationalistic reading of the past. In his study, he distinguished between forms of tradition created by the state (political) and traditions developed by communities within society (social), anticipating what will later be understood as official and unofficial heritage. Other relevant publications addressing the political use of heritage were *On Living in an Old Country* (1985) by Wright and *The Heritage Industry* (1987) by Hewinson, which focused on Britain in the 80s and were strongly influenced by the context<sup>35</sup> in connecting heritage with Conservative interests. Thanks to these publications, the political use and abuse of the past and of cultural heritage were analysed and studied together with the social appropriation, reconstructions and falsification of the past. Cultural heritage was understood as a social and psychological phenomenon.

In France in the 1980s, Pierre Nora's publication *Les lieux de mémoire* (1997) insisted on the sociological aspects of historiography and the distinction between an institutionalised memory and a collective memory, both fundamental in the reconstruction of the past. As Guermandi stressed, the relevance of French post-structuralist thinking massively influenced the interpretation of cultural heritage, which not only included symbolic and social characteristics but also the representation of knowledge-power systems. In particular, the notion of discourse by M. Foucault<sup>36</sup> informed and structured the interpretations of power dynamics and the acknowledgement of heritage as a tool

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<sup>35</sup> In particular Hewinson was influenced by the politics of Margaret Thatcher: he argues that heritage legislation could be read as the revival of patriotism of Second World War, which is connected to the events of the Falklands conflict. Cfr. Harrison 2013, p. 98

<sup>36</sup> Foucault M., 1999. *L'archeologia del sapere. Una metodologia per la storia della cultura*, Rizzoli, Segrate

of control and governance. Also, P. Bourdieu<sup>37</sup> is a central reference not only in heritage studies but also in the application of institutional theory to the cultural sector in organisational studies. The notions of cultural capital and cultural consumption would - and still- strongly characterise the people's understanding and participation in culture and the dynamics of creative fields. Another important contribution to heritage studies came from museum studies, particularly from the *new museology* by P. Vergo<sup>38</sup>. The new museology theory was based on a critique of traditional museums solely focused on their collections and the hierarchical distribution of knowledge, arguing instead for a need to take into consideration the museum's social purposes, the public's demands and to develop new ways of communicating knowledge toward an enlargement of their audiences. This new approach led, in the 1990s, to tensions between academia and industry practitioners, who accused the first of producing pure critique and being not interested in understanding institutional practices and contexts. What happened in the museum studies discipline can be easily relatable to what can happen in heritage studies both on a discipline level inside academia and in the tension between academia and practitioners. Indeed, both derive from social history and cultural studies, but museum studies entered art history, literary theory and post-structuralism; whereas heritage studies were situated in archaeology, architecture and geography.

So, heritage studies as a discipline have always been interdisciplinary, even if initially, the debate on heritage was academically positioned in discrete disciplines, such as history and archaeology<sup>39</sup>. Nowadays, the increasing number of publications and conferences by archaeologists<sup>40</sup> contributes to the acknowledgement -also in that discipline- of the need to

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<sup>37</sup> Bourdieu P., 1993. *The field of cultural production. Essays on Art and Literature*, Columbia University Press, New York; Bourdieu P., 1987. *Distinction. A social critique of the judgement of taste*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA

<sup>38</sup> Vergo P. (edited by), 1989. *The New Museology*, Reaktion Books, University of Chicago

<sup>39</sup> Harrison, 2013, p. 96.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Hall (1984) on southern Africa, Neil Silberman (1989) on the Middle East, Hamilakis (2007), among others in Harrison, 2013, p. 97.

question heritage's social and political contexts from an interdisciplinary perspective. Moreover, also organisation studies are more and more addressing the "uses of the past" in organisations and for managerial purposes. In this stream of literature, there is the "historical consciousness" approach that takes history as constitutive in shaping how actors define their own self in time<sup>41</sup>. Other approaches involve the use of historical methods as ways for scholars to theorize about organising in the past<sup>42</sup>. This last approach is called "uses of the past", and it examines how organisational actors produce and use history for their purposes in the present. The notion of "rhetorical history", defined as "the strategic use of the past as a persuasive strategy to manage key stakeholders of the firm"<sup>43</sup>, has emerged from these kinds of studies. The emergence of these new perspectives represents the "historical turn"<sup>44</sup> in management thought, opening to new research directions in how history and historical reasoning are integrated into management and organisation studies and in how organisations play a critical role in the struggle for competing uses of the past. This approach was already used in the social constructivist tradition<sup>45</sup> by organisation scholars as a way of integrating history into organisation theory. The value of history is here attested as a knowledge resource available to organisations and managers to achieve goals in the present<sup>46</sup>, and the performativity of history has been analysed in how actors have interpreted the past to forge organisational identities<sup>47</sup>, to set

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<sup>41</sup> Seixas 2004, Suddaby 2016, Wadhvani & Bucheli 2014 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018. History as Organizing: uses of the past in Organization Studies, *Organization Studies*, vol. 39 (12), pp. 1663-1683.

<sup>42</sup> Kipping & Usdiken 2014, Rowlinson et al. 2014 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Suddaby et al. 2010, p. 157, cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Suddaby R. 2016. Toward a historical consciousness: following the historic turn in management thought, *Management*, 19, pp. 46-60.

<sup>45</sup> Berger & Luckmann 1967 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>46</sup> Suddaby et al. 2010 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Mordhorst 2014; Suddaby & Foster 2016 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

strategic decisions<sup>48</sup>, to forge social movements<sup>49</sup>, to manage the perception of change<sup>50</sup>, and to understand entrepreneurial opportunities<sup>51</sup>. So, even if this research area has been particularly closely aligned with memory studies, the research scope has remained tied to organisations and managers as actors in the field.

Another related reference working in a multidisciplinary way is Eglė Rindzevičiūtė<sup>52</sup>'s work on post-soviet Lithuanian museums, which integrates the organisational theory of "institutional entrepreneurs" by Paul DiMaggio with the theoretical perspective on public knowledge regimes by Michel Foucault. In this study, she understands national museums as institutionalised organisations of knowledge regimes and, more specifically, museums of a difficult past have a need to deal with conflicting stories and interpretations whose complexity is also reflected at an organisational level. In particular, she questions the assumption that museums are expressions of consensus attributed to the state or society, opting instead for a broader and less linear definition of "processes of production" with multiple actors with divergent views of the past.

## 2.2 *The decolonial option*

Together with the constitution of heritage studies, came also the development in the 1980s of postcolonial studies. Originating as literary and historical analysis in the ex-colonies, especially in South America during the process of nation-building, the postcolonial studies in the 1990s started to mingle with heritage studies and museum studies, giving an interpretation of cultural heritage as a tool of elaboration and manipulation of the past

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<sup>48</sup> Schultz & Hernes 2013 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Wadhvani 2018 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Dalpiaz & Di Stefano 2018, Suddaby & Foster 2017 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Popp & Holt 2013 cit. in Wadhvani R.D., Suddaby R., Mordhorst M., Popp A., 2018.

<sup>52</sup> E. Rindzevičiūtė 2013. Institutional entrepreneurs of difficult past: the organisation of knowledge regimes in post-Soviet Lithuanian museums, *European Studies*, vol. 30, pp. 63-95.

which serves present interests, alternative to the institutional one<sup>53</sup>. Postcolonial studies have nowadays developed into decolonial studies, which are having a huge impact on heritage studies as well. According to one of the most quoted author of decoloniality, W. Mignolo<sup>54</sup>, this theoretical framework is based on the distinction between *decolonisation* during the Cold War (i.e. the Indigenous struggle for independence and nation-building of states which have been colonised) and the concept of *decoloniality* today, which applies not only to ex-colonized countries but also to Western and coloniser countries. This distinction mirrors the one made by Anibal Quijano between *colonialism* (i.e. the historical moments of establishing colonies, linked to imperialism) and *coloniality*, which is “the complex structure of management and control of Western civilisation and of Eurocentrism<sup>55</sup>”. The process of decolonial thinking, in Mignolo’s words, means “to delink from the epistemic assumptions common to all the areas of knowledge established in the Western world<sup>56</sup>” that, in other words, it means to deconstruct and self-liberate from the assumptions at the basis of modernity<sup>57</sup>. The colonial matrix of power (based on the concept of “modernity / coloniality<sup>58</sup>”) is the

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<sup>53</sup> Guermandi M., 2021, p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> Mignolo W., Walsh, C. E, 2018. *On decoloniality. Concepts analytics praxis*, Duke University Press, Durham

<sup>55</sup> Mignolo W., Walsh, C. E, 2018, p. 125.

<sup>56</sup> Mignolo W., Walsh, C. E, 2018, p. 106.

<sup>57</sup> “Modernity was built as the imaginary of itself and of a world of which modernization and development were the engines. Modernity came to signify a horizon, the horizon toward which modernization and development were driving us. (...) [The concept of modernity] In its previous guises, it had other names: renaissance, progress, and the civilizing mission. The catch was to make believe that modernity is something beyond the narratives that invented the word and the imaginary the word invokes. It is a fiction, a construction made by actors, institutions, and languages that benefit those who built the imaginary and sustain it, through knowledge and war, military and financial means.” – Mignolo W., Walsh, C. E, 2018, p. 110.

<sup>58</sup> “There is an implied complexity in the expression modernity/coloniality. On the one hand, this is because it could be written imperialism/coloniality, assuming that modernity is the discourse of Western imperialisms since the sixteenth century. On the other hand, if modernity is a narrative (or a set of narratives), coloniality is what the narratives hide or disguise, because it cannot be said explicitly. (...) Slavery was justified via narratives that figured Africans

power system which was created by and during modernity<sup>59</sup> that still impact our knowledge, heritage, and collective identity. The decolonial option has been adopted by the contemporary artistic, academic and activist spheres in order to interpret contemporary movements (such as BLM) and new issues related to the representation of national past and history. Decolonial thinking, then, is not related anymore to colonialism but it can be applied by anyone who finds him/herself trapped into Eurocentric knowledge and epistemic:

*Patriarchy and racism are two pillars of Eurocentric knowing, sensing, and believing. These pillars sustain a structure of knowledge – Christian theology, secular philosophy (including aesthetics) and secular sciences. (...) It operates through making people feel inferior. When that happens, the decolonial wound is opened. Healing is the process of delinking, or regaining your pride, your dignity, assuming your entire humanity in front of an un-human being that makes you believe you were abnormal, lesser, that you lack something. (...) Once you realize that you have also been colonized, that your mind, your body, your senses, your sight, your hearing have been modeled by the colonial matrix of power, that is, by its institutions, languages, music, art, literature, etc. - or what is the same as Western Civilization - you begin to “heal.” The process of healing is that of becoming a decolonial subject, or “learning to be”<sup>60</sup>.*

Coloniality of knowledge is what persists from colonialism in institutions such as universities, museums, or monasteries. Decolonial thinking, according to Mignolo, has to delink from the

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as less than human so they could be treated like animals.”- Mignolo W., Walsh, C. E, 2018, p. 141.

<sup>59</sup> “The matrix (colonial) created by a minority of the human species rules the life of the majority of the human species. Power is that instance of the colonial matrix in which all of us, human beings, are being ruled, and the ruling includes of course the creators and gatekeepers of the rule: the ruler is ruled by its own desire and compulsion to rule.”- Mignolo W., Walsh, C. E, 2018, p. 114.

<sup>60</sup> W. D. Mignolo in Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, “Decolonial options and artistic/ aestheSic entanglements: an interview with Walter Mignolo”, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2014, pp. 196-212.

colonial matrix of power by recognising that Eurocentrism is not a geographical issue but an epistemic and aesthetic one. So, decolonial work means changing the terms of epistemic, ontological and economic conversation<sup>61</sup>. Mbembe<sup>62</sup> describes decoloniality as a process of self-ownership, of “re-centring” and of “seeing ourselves clearly<sup>63</sup>”, including relationality as central to the matter<sup>64</sup>. For Mbembe, the decolonisation process of knowledge has two steps: firstly, a critique of the dominant Eurocentric academic model to dismiss epistemic coloniality, and secondly, imagining the alternatives to that model. In Mignolo’s perspective, delinking follows two routes: decoloniality and dewesternization. The first means “conceiving of and creating institutional organisations that are at the service of life and do not put people at the service of institutions<sup>65</sup>”, explaining once again that putting life at the service of institutions is the basic principle of the colonial matrix of power. Dewesternization, instead, refers to the countries that after the Cold War developed “non-Western memories, languages, politics, religions, sensibilities and praxis of living that refuse to submit to neoliberal westernization<sup>66</sup>” (e.g. Russia, Iran, China, BRIC countries), but that nowadays are still fighting over the control of the colonial matrix of power both on a governance level and on a cultural one. The first big distinction between decoloniality and dewesternization is that the first one

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<sup>61</sup> “Economy, politics, and history become such only once a discourse that conceives of certain forms of doing and living gives meaning to a mix of interrelated activities within the praxis of living in conversation around taken-for-granted entities. Thus, it is through conversations (discourses, narratives, oral or written) that the amorphous activities of a people are distinguished, narrated, theorized, critiqued, and transformed into economics, politics, history, and so on.” - Mignolo, 2018, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> A. Mbembe, *Decolonizing knowledge and the question of the archive*, 2015, available at: <https://wiser.wits.ac.za/system/files/Achille%20Mbembe%20-%20Decolonizing%20Knowledge%20and%20the%20Question%20of%20the%20Archive.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> He quotes Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the mind. The Politics of language in African literature*, 1981

<sup>64</sup> “We are called upon to see ourselves clearly, not as an act of secession from the rest of the humanity, but in relation to ourselves and to other selves with whom we share the universe.” - Mbembe, 2015, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> W. Mignolo, 2018, p. 126.

<sup>66</sup> Ivi, p. 129.

operates in the political society, meaning the emerging global political organizations detached from institutions and state relations, whereas the second manoeuvres at the level of state-regulated institutions. The second difference between the two terms pertains to the aims: decoloniality's objective is "changing the terms of conversation", whereas dewesternization "disputes the content of the conversation and leaves the terms intact"<sup>67</sup> (for terms he means the moderns state as the form of governance, capitalism as the economic form).

This last distinction is also relevant when applied to the cultural heritage dimension. Indeed, it can be argued that a dewesternization process is what museums and cultural institutions are carrying on with acts of restitutions of artefacts, human remains and cultural heritage, or with policies aimed at including local communities (or "source communities"<sup>68</sup>) in the interpretation and resignification of their collections, or by rebranding the museums (especially in the case of ethnographic museums). Even if this effort started in the 1990s, the need for rethinking the role of the museum and its social responsibilities is still urgent but generally it does not tackle the *raison d'être* of the institutions or their hegemonic power in the cultural discourse. The terms remain intact, whereas decoloniality applied to cultural heritage would mean breaking the "terms of the conversation", meaning questioning the basic assumptions of preservation (what should be preserved? Who choose what to preserve? Why should we preserve heritage? For whom is that heritage relevant?) and actively showing and acknowledging the colonial roots of that discourse to change it. Decoloniality needs to be disruptive of the *status quo* and, for this reason, according to Mignolo, it cannot come from the institutions<sup>69</sup>. Delinking, in this case, means deconstructing the colonial legacy of cultural heritage and making visible the non-objectivity of the assumptions on preservation and highlighting its political and Eurocentric/Western hegemonic gaze. Guermandi, after demonstrating how the European Union and European identity is still rooted in the colonial matrix of

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<sup>67</sup> Ivi, p. 130.

<sup>68</sup> Cfr. Clifford, 1997.

<sup>69</sup> Mignolo (2018).



power, defines the practice of decolonization of cultural heritage as follows:

*Decolonizzare il patrimonio europeo significa dunque riconoscere la genesi e le eredità coloniali e razziste che vi operano e utilizzarlo, al contrario, come strumento di svelamento e decostruzione delle aporie e delle asimmetrie che da quelle eredità derivano. Significa ricollocare le storie e i patrimoni delle comunità a vario titolo ex coloniali al centro della storia e del patrimonio europei<sup>70</sup>.*

The decolonial framework is greatly influencing on the notion of cultural heritage, both for the interpretation of the colonial / fascist heritage in Italy and more generally on the Eurocentric positions on heritage making. An example of this interest in museum studies is represented by the quite recent Aronsson and Elgenius's publication<sup>71</sup> on national museums and nation-building in Europe, which understand museums at the centre of current debates on identity politics, communities, citizenship, imperialism, and cultural constructions.

### 2.3 Critical heritage studies

Inside the discipline of heritage studies, a particular category has developed since the 1990s: critical heritage studies, as a reflective approach to the general issues and practices of the field. The term critical heritage studies was first used by Harrison in 2010 to define an engagement with the heritage that goes beyond the technical concern and recognises that heritage has cultural, political and social consequences<sup>72</sup>. Gentry and Smith<sup>73</sup> define critical heritage studies as a field that seeks to move beyond the

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<sup>70</sup> M. Guermandi, *Decolonizzare il patrimonio. L'Europa, l'Italia e un passato che non passa*, Antipatrimonio, 2021, p. 124.

<sup>71</sup> Aronsson P. & Elgenius G., 2015. *National museums and nation-building in Europe 1750-2010*, Routledge.

<sup>72</sup> Smith L., 2012. Editorial: A Critical Heritage Studies?, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 18(6):533-40

<sup>73</sup> Gentry K., Smith L., 2019. Critical heritage studies and the legacies of the late-twentieth century heritage canon, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, published online

traditional focus of heritage studies on technical issues to one emphasising heritage as a political, cultural and social phenomenon. Even though the authors recognise that this claim is not new, it is fundamental to repeat that the discourses which frame our understanding of heritage are a performative and temporary interpretation of the meanings attributed to the past. From the 1990s, critical approaches to heritage started to be developed by many authors<sup>74</sup>. This turn from heritage studies to critical heritage studies was characterized by heritage scholars who cross-pollinate other disciplines and emphasise moral and ethical issues.

The need for a paradigm shift was also felt by G. F. Araoz<sup>75</sup>, who in 2011 as president of ICOMOS, wrote that the aim of heritage conservation should go beyond fabric, recognising also intangible aspects. Heritage was understood as a dynamic process that responds to evolving needs of society, and traditional heritage values no longer resided exclusively in the physical materiality of an object or place but in the intangible concepts that are constantly changing. For this reason, the author argued that heritage preservation should move from a perspective of freezing places in time to a consideration of the acceptable tolerance level of change that heritage can experience, the so-called preservation of the ability to change.

Another important moment for critical heritage studies was in 2011 with the publication of the Manifesto by the Association of Critical Heritage Studies<sup>76</sup> and the organisation of a dedicated conference in June 2012 at the University of Gothenburg. The manifesto acknowledged heritage as a political act and called for a major critique of old traditional and Eurocentric ways of understanding heritage. It was an effort to answer to the contraposition between the academic field and the practitioner

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<sup>74</sup> Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996), Smith (2007), Dicks (2000), Byrne (2014), Macdonald (2008), Harrison (2012), among others.

<sup>75</sup> Araoz G., 2011. Preserving heritage places under a new paradigm, *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, vol.1 issue 1

<sup>76</sup> More information on the Association of Critical Heritage Studies: <https://www.gu.se/en/critical-heritage-studies/cooperation-0/association-of-critical-heritage-studies-achs>

industry field<sup>77</sup>: on one side, there was a need felt by the academics to do a deep critique and re-structuration of the discipline; on the other side, the practitioners felt that these critiques generally lack any concern to be held accountable to issues concerning its implementation.

As Hall <sup>78</sup>wrote, the idea of heritage was going through two major challenges: the first referred to its democratisation process, which pushed for the inclusion of ordinary vernacular practices and objects and values alongside the hegemonic presence of artworks and traditional heritage. The second one was the critique of universal knowledge and cultural relativism which undermined Eurocentric narratives. These two dynamics marked a transformation in our relationship with heritage, what Hall calls the intellectual culture - driven by awareness of the marginalised linked to politics of recognition and equality, a decline in the authority of traditional subjects in authenticating the interpretative frameworks which define culture, a demand to reappropriate control over one's own history – or the process of decolonisation of the mind.

Lahdesmaki et al. describe critical heritage studies as the discipline that “questions and unravels the previous and still existing hegemonic power structure in heritage and scrutinises the workings of power in heritage from a broad interdisciplinary perspective<sup>79</sup>”. The authors introduce the concept of “politics of scale” to emphasise a plural and dynamic understanding of scale and its relationship with heritage. In particular, they analyse the power struggles during the processes of production, reconfiguration and contestation among scales of heritage. They propose a network, process-based and relational concept of scale in opposition to the hierarchical way it is usually thought of (local,

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<sup>77</sup> Witcomb & Buckley, 2013. Engaging with the future of critical heritage studies: Looking back in order to look forward, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 19:6, pp. 562 - 578

<sup>78</sup> Hall S., 1999. Un-settling ‘the heritage’, re-imaging the post-nation. Whose heritage?, *Third Text*, 13:49, pp. 7-8.

<sup>79</sup> Lähdesmäki T., Thomas S., Zhu Y. (edited by), 2019. Politics of scale. New directions in critical heritage studies, Berghahn Books, Oxford/New York.

national, international levels). Interestingly they link scale as a source of dissonance of heritage<sup>80</sup>.

The notion of difficult/dissonant heritage is central to critical heritage studies. Tunbridge and Ashworth first named it *dissonant heritage* (see Chapter 2.4), but other authors created other terminologies, such as *negative* heritage<sup>81</sup>, as a repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary, *difficult* or *undesirable* heritage<sup>82</sup>, *abject* heritage<sup>83</sup>. The common trait to all these terms is the negative threat to the traditional concept of heritage, associated with something beneficial and positive. Indeed, what these terms underline is the ambiguity of dealing with the material remains of an historical period that is today perceived as embarrassing or problematic. As Macdonald writes, undesirable heritage (or difficult heritage) is a subcategory of dissonant heritage because it sees history as a burden, in contrast to the value system of the present and it poses dilemmas on the destruction or alteration of heritage in order to remove that ugly past. The term more used and accepted<sup>84</sup> seems to be *difficult* heritage to describe a past that is meaningful in the present but awkward for a positive public image, because it troubles collective identities and opens up social differences. Carter and Martin<sup>85</sup> choose to use this terminology because it is more specific: “all heritage is dissonant but not all dissonant heritage is difficult<sup>86</sup>” meaning that dissonant heritage is a broader concept concerning how the past is presented and commodified, instead difficult heritage focuses on the legacy and reception and how the

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<sup>80</sup> “Heritage often includes an attribute of dissonance, not only in a sense of identity and meaning, but also in terms of scale”. Harvey 2015, cit. in Lähdesmäki T., Thomas S., Zhu Y. (edited by), 2019, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> Meskell 2002.

<sup>82</sup> Macdonald 2006.

<sup>83</sup> Herscher A., 2010. *Violence taking place. The architecture of the Kosovo conflict*, Stanford University Press, Redwood city.

<sup>84</sup> It is used also by Logan & Reeves (2009), Burstrom & Gelderblom (2011), Carter & Martin (2019), Bartolini (2020), in addition to Macdonald (2009).

<sup>85</sup> Carter & Martin, 2019. Introduction. Dealing with difficult heritage: Italy and the material legacies of Fascism, *Modern Italy*, vol. 24 no.2.

<sup>86</sup> Carter N., Martin S., 2019. Dealing with difficult heritage: Italy and the material legacies of Fascism, *Modern Italy*, Vol. 24 n.2, p.1

relationship between people and the physical remainders of the past changes over time.

A fundamental shift toward a critical approach to heritage studies was given also by the distinction between an Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) and marginalised/folkloristic/subaltern neglected not-yet-heritage. Smith<sup>87</sup> defined the AHD as the traditional top-down approach to heritage management, which is also the interpretative framework of international organisations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS. AHD is founded on a series of assumptions and ideas about heritage:

- Idea of the inheritance of heritage, by which preserving something for future generations undermines the ability of the present to change or alter heritage;
- Idea that heritage is innately valuable and for this reason it should be taken care by professionals and experts who have the ability to identify that innate value;
- Idea of the nation and of nationalizing discourses of heritage, by which heritage provides a sense of national community which ignore the diversity of sub-national socio-cultural experiences;
- Idea of heritage as hegemonic discourse which promotes experiences and values of elite social classes, limiting other communities' critiques by privileging the expert's over the non-expert's opinion;
- Idea of boundedness by which heritage is seen as a discrete site/object/building with identifiable boundaries;
- Idea of the passive consumers which should be instructed about heritage but who are not invited to engage with it actively;
- Idea of consumption of heritage which come from mass tourism, where heritage is transformed into a product or a theme park.

AHD is based on the concept of heritage as an object with inherent outstanding/monumental/aesthetically pleasing characteristics

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<sup>87</sup> Smith L., 2006. *Uses of Heritage*, Routledge, London

that represent contemporary values that must be preserved for future generations. As a discourse, AHD is a self-referential discourse<sup>88</sup> in which power relations identify those who have the authority to speak about heritage (experts such as archaeologists, architects, and art historians) and those who do not. In this way, the process limits any critique or debate that could challenge established social and cultural values presented as universal and innate. AHD constructs, then, not only a definition of heritage, but also an authorized mentality to deal with certain social problems centred on claims of identity – in this sense Smith writes that AHD becomes a form of social control. In this sense, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner<sup>89</sup> formulated a similar theory: the *dominant ideology thesis*, in which they stated that heritage interpretation is endowed with messages framed by an existing or aspirant power elite to legitimise their existing dominant regime or to overthrow a competitor.

However, heritage has the power of legitimising but also delegitimising discourses. In fact, contrary to the notion of AHD intended as a hegemonic discourse which influences the way we think about the past, Smith proposes a different starting point: “there is no such a thing as heritage<sup>90</sup>”. In this quotation, the author means that heritage is defined as a *cultural process* concerned with the legitimisation of the power of national and other cultural and social identities. The author questions the assumed objectivity of heritage contraposing it with its intangibility: defining all heritage intangible shifts the actual object of conservation from places and objects to *values and meaning*. By moving the attention from the materiality of heritage to its contemporary understanding, Smith suggests a critical

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<sup>88</sup> The author uses the term “discourse” signifying a group of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities. The term “discourse” refers to its understanding in critical realism: social relations (the way people talk about, discuss and understand heritage) are material and have material consequences. She uses Critical Discourse Analysis as theoretical platform and methodological approach to understand the links between discourse and practice. (Smith, 2006, pp. 3-6)

<sup>89</sup> Abercrombie N., Hill S., Turner B. S., 1980. *The dominant ideology thesis*, Routledge, London

<sup>90</sup> Smith 2006, p. 1

reading of heritage based not on intrinsic qualities of the object/place but on the notion of “collective memory” by Maurice Halbwachs<sup>91</sup>, which is socially constructed in the present and works to bind the collectivity and to give it a sense of stability and continuity. Halbwachs stresses the importance of the relationship between collective memory and space: by embodying memory and tradition into material items, heritage becomes a cultural tool and a part of a wider process of creating and recreating meaning through remembering. This distinction between a hegemonic and a subaltern type of heritage and preservation practices explicitly addresses the political character of heritage and opens to its potential for dissonance.

Kisić<sup>92</sup> articulates these two coexistent types of heritage (the authorised/hegemonic and the marginalised/subaltern) and their potential for silencing or activating dissonance in international regulations on heritage. She argues that the Athens Chart (1931), the Venice Chart (1964) and the UNESCO regulation (1972) support the AHD and are tools for neutralising dissonance<sup>93</sup>. These regulations were based on the inherent and immutable cultural values of heritage linked to concepts such as authenticity, aesthetics, monumentality, and historical value – all of them to be identified by experts<sup>94</sup>. So, this perspective reflects the AHD assumptions, of which the universal value of historical monuments and acritical preservation are the core. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972 envisioned the World Heritage List based on the “outstanding universal value” as the exceptional significance of a monument. As Kisić remarks:

*They articulate AHD and present democratization of heritage as a mono-cultural, top-down approach through which the State, with the help of intellectual elites and professionals, aim*

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<sup>91</sup> Halbwachs M., (Coser L. A. edited and translated by), 1992. *On Collective Memory*, Heritage of Sociology Series, University of Chicago Press, Chicago

<sup>92</sup> Kisić V., 2013. *Governing Heritage Dissonance. Promises and Realities of Selected Cultural Policies*, European Cultural Foundation

<sup>93</sup> Kisić 2013, pp. 59- 76.

<sup>94</sup> Its aim [ndr. of preservation] is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. (Venice Charter, 1964, art. 9)

*to disperse dominant views and understandings of the past to its citizens (...) while citizens, if mentioned, are treated as passive visitors, tourists and audiences. (...) In envisioning the passive role of non-experts, these conventions “create inertia effects and enable resistance of the AHD to outside pressures, such as conflicts of interests between actor-users or global political changes<sup>95</sup>” which would make dissonance visible and active.<sup>96</sup>*

A different route was undertaken for the UNESCO Declaration on Protection of Cultural Diversity (2001), the UNESCO Declaration on Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Faro Convention (2005). These policy texts challenge the AHD and introduce a discursive shift in linking heritage to concepts of cultural diversity, rights to culture, pluralism, participation, change, intangible values, sustainable development and reconciliation, opening up for dissonance. In particular, the Faro Convention defines heritage not as something intrinsically valuable but as a resource and a means for achieving larger cultural, social, human, and economic goals:

*Cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions<sup>97</sup>.*

The Faro Convention has introduced a new notion of heritage as an action, product and a process for society, stressing the importance of preservation not as an end in itself but at the centre of wider expectations of society. Moreover, the right to heritage is not delegated anymore only to experts but to “heritage communities” who can participate in a democratic way in the processes of identification, interpretation and conservation of

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<sup>95</sup> Lascoumes P., Le Galès P., 2007. Introduction: Understanding Public Policy through its instruments – From the Nature of Instruments to the Sociology of Public Policy Instrumentation, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, vol. 20, n. 1, pp. 1-21 cit. in Kisić, 2013.

<sup>96</sup> Kisić, 2013, p. 64.

<sup>97</sup> Faro Convention, 2005, art. 2.



heritage. So, Faro acknowledges the plurality of meanings, the conflictual aspect of heritage and its political use/abuse, as to say its potential dissonance. However, the overall aim of the convention is to reconcile all this multiplicity of meanings and conflictual values of heritage in a peaceful and mutually respectful coherence<sup>98</sup>. Another criticality of the Faro Convention is that, even if it was structured as a Charter, it was not legally binding, so practically it was never endorsed by the States. Colomer<sup>99</sup> studies two cases in which the Faro Convention was applied (Finland and Marseille) concluding, however, that the Convention does not define how heritage governance is to be implemented, keeping a vague notion of participation. She urged the creation of multidisciplinary teams of professionals with skills in intersectionality, cultural and social mediation, conflict resolution and diplomacy.

It is interesting to see how the concept of AHD, when applied to difficult heritage, has created some cases of dissonance. For instance, Sharon Macdonald<sup>100</sup> points out that totalitarian architecture has been a troubled category when happened to get in touch with the UNESCO World Heritage List. This concern emphasises the dissonance perceived in the purposes of such a list and the risks associated with the heritage effect. For instance, the inclusion of the concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau in the heritage list of 1979 was opposed by the US because it did not represent the great achievements of men since heritage was usually associated with admirable products of men. By including it in the list, the same concept of heritage and worth needed to be redefined and expanded: the stress was on the commemorating part as the positive outcome of the atrocity and on the symbolic representation of the atrocities of the twentieth century. However,

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<sup>98</sup> In this sense the common European heritage has been introduced, with all the problematics of creating a shared heritage that was not conflictual among different states' histories.

<sup>99</sup> Colomer L., 2021. Exploring participatory heritage governance after the EU Faro Convention, *Journal of Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development*, vol. ahead-of-print.

<sup>100</sup> Macdonald S., 2018. Endorsement effects and warning potentials: architecture from totalitarian eras as heritage, in Höckerberg H. (edited by), 2018. *Architecture as propaganda in twentieth-century totalitarian regimes. History and heritage*, Polistampa, Firenze, pp. 261 – 287

as she argues, the expansion of the concept of heritage has not gone as far as to be able to accommodate the awkward case of totalitarian architecture. This issue is also related to a possible overemphasis on the rhetorical and ideological dimensions of architecture. Even if, as Hökerberg argues<sup>101</sup>, totalitarian architecture is a definition that should be used with caution because it is based on the incorrect assumption that ideologies can be associated with a specific architectural style, yet it is indisputable that certain qualities (building location, typology, scale, building materials, colour) can contribute to foster political messages. In Macdonald<sup>102</sup>'s study of the failed UNESCO applications by the city of Nuremberg (the first including the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, and the second framing Nuremberg as “city of the Human Rights”), she highlights the difficulties and the embarrassment that this kind of totalitarian heritage continues to pose on an international basis, whereas on a national level, it was dealt with a more practical approach.

Another example is the case of Asmara, that in 2019 entered the UNESCO World Heritage List as “a Modernist African City” leveraging on the Italian colonial architecture built during the Fascist occupation. The criteria adopted to support its Outstanding Universal Value were criterion (ii) and criterion (iv), meaning that it was presented as an “example of the transposition and materialization of ideas about planning in an African context and were used for functional and segregation purposes” and that its “urban layout and character, (...), and picturesque elements integrating topographical features, (...), and using the principle of zoning for achieving racial segregation and functional organisation, bears exceptional witness to the development of the new discipline of urban planning at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its application in an African context, to serve the Italian colonial agenda”<sup>103</sup>. This changed position on behalf of

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<sup>101</sup> Hökerberg H., 2018. The past in the present – difficult heritage in the contemporary context, in Hökerberg H. (edited by), 2018. *Architecture as propaganda in twentieth-century totalitarian regimes. History and heritage*, Polistampa, Firenze pp. 311-336.

<sup>102</sup> Macdonald S., 2009. *Difficult Heritage. Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, Routledge, London

<sup>103</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1550/>

UNESCO of including totalitarian and colonial architecture is sure evidence of a commitment toward inclusion and a diversification of universal values.

#### 2.4 *Dissonant heritage theory and the concept of dissonance*

As part of critical heritage studies, Tunbridge and Ashworth defined dissonance - borrowing the concept from music and psychology - as the discordance or lack of agreement and consistency among elements. In applying this term to heritage, the dissonance is described as something intrinsic to the materiality of heritage because "all heritage is someone's heritage and not someone else's"<sup>104</sup>. According to their theory, dissonance can be found: (1) in a *place-products*, in which heritage is marketed as an object place-bound with contradictory elements at different spatial scales (e.g. regional/national/international); (2) in the *multi-use* of heritage, intended as the multi-buying and multi-selling involved in any place-product; (3) in the *content of the message*, when contradictions exist in the interpretation of heritage<sup>105</sup>. Even if their interpretation of dissonance is linked only to the concept of heritage as a marketed product, their research has been important in introducing the issue of conflict over heritage and delineating its use. Among the possible uses of heritage, they identified three main ones: (1) heritage as a cultural research; (2) heritage as a political resource; (3) heritage as an economic resource. The authors understand heritage as a political resource in the sense that all heritage is a political tool with whom national identities are constructed and forms of power justified. In this category, dissonance is found in an existing heritage which no longer conforms to society's present goals. As a political resource<sup>106</sup>, the authors identified a list of heritage dissonance's sources:

- Relocated heritage: artifacts moved in their rightful place in accordance with the history then being related, only to become misplaced when the interpretation changes (e.g.

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<sup>104</sup> Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, p. 21

<sup>105</sup> Cfr. Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996, Chapter 2.

<sup>106</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 50-59.

repatriation of objects and museum collections to the original communities);

- Human bodies: the different interpretation of human bodies as object of study of different disciplines (anthropology, science) or as sacred objects which should not be exhibited but instead should be buried;
- Abandoned heritage: it can be consequential to a migration of population which abandon their heritage sites and this can lead to a contraposition between ethnic occupations of space and national claims based on national territory (e.g. Palestinian towns, sacred to Christianity, Islam and Judaism, now governed and occupied by a Jewish state);
- Misused heritage: in addition to misplacement, heritage can also be misused, as to say used for a different purpose than the original one which may create conflict among different groups of people (e.g. Hagia Sophia in Istanbul);
- Deliberately concealed or destroyed heritage: the eradication or destruction of heritage of a defeated society by its conquering successor has been a common method of consolidating power and can lead to claims of the site by different groups of people (issue of ownership is particularly relevant, together with the intervention of international agencies);
- Spatially extended heritage: nationalizing heritage as a strategy to reduce dissonance between national ideology and interpreted history (e.g. Macedonian heritage in Greece).

It is relevant to note that the common feature of all these typologies is that the same heritage can be used by competing interpretations supporting different ideas. It appears, in opposition to what the authors stated before, that dissonance manifests itself in the *use* of heritage rather than being an inherent quality of it.

Indeed, other authors<sup>107</sup> suggest that dissonance should not be intended as an inalienable attribute of heritage but, instead, it

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<sup>107</sup>Smith, 2006; Samuels J., 2015. Difficult Heritage. Coming to terms with Sicily's Fascist Past, in Samuels K. L., Rico T. (edited by), 2015. *Heritage Keywords. Rhetoric*

should be found in the relationship between the visitor/citizen and heritage. So dissonance should be thought of as actively constructed. Samuels<sup>108</sup> in his study on Sicilian fascist *borghi*, writes that attention should be put on the process of dealing with problematic pasts, not on the site itself. If dissonance was inherent in the buildings of Fascist *borghi*, then people who inhabited them should have felt shameful or troubled in some way. Contrary to what he was assuming, people were happy to live there, and they perceived no dissonance. If the capacity to separate Fascism's material remains from the memory of the regime can be seen as an Italian way<sup>109</sup> of dealing with a difficult past, it anyways makes evident how the notion of dissonance is ascribed and even illegitimately assumed.

Another important contribution to the concept of dissonance comes from Sharon Macdonald, who, in her study of Nazi Rally Party ground in Nuremberg, described different phases of dealing with Nazi heritage<sup>110</sup> which reflects different attitudes and sensibilities of the city toward that past. In this sense, her research is very relevant because it addresses the mutability of dissonance in time: it emerges that heritage management is a complex interdisciplinary that reflects and evolves together with the socio-political and cultural context and that dissonance is not an immutable aspect of a building. This acknowledgement will also be the starting point of this research.

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*and Redescription in Cultural Heritage*, University Press of Colorado, Boulder; Macdonald 2006; Meskell L., 2002. *Negative Heritage and Past Mastering in Archaeology*, *Anthropological Quarterly* 75(3)

<sup>108</sup> Samuels, 2015

<sup>109</sup> The ability to separate Fascism's material remains from the regime has three main reasons: the construction of *borghi* was embedded in local networks of power and not only imposed from above, the idea of building *borghi* continued into the 1960s, and the utility of buildings superseded any historical burden. Cfr. Samuels 2015.

<sup>110</sup> Just after the war there was a willing to move on rather reflecting back. From the 1960s the generational critique started a historical consciousness process which culminated in a trivialization strategy and opening of the Documentation Centre. In Macdonald, 2009

In organisation studies, Stark also developed the concept of dissonance. Following the work of Boltanski and Thevenot<sup>111</sup>, he situated the study of dissonance in the valuation process and moments of disagreement inside organisations. In his analysis, dissonance emerges when different principles of worth compete. It is interesting to note that his concept of dissonance has a positive meaning, one that can lead to the production of new knowledge and foster reflexivity<sup>112</sup>. He stresses that this positive outcome is possible only if dissonance is organised; otherwise, it would lead only to a chaotic disagreement. Another author that studied dissonance in organisation studies is Fariás<sup>113</sup>, who focused on divergent evaluative criteria and dynamics of valuation in the context of dissonance, such as architectural studios. He distinguished between two types of dissonance: evaluative dissonance and epistemic dissonance. The first arises from disappointed normative expectations regarding what is a good choice for a particular actor; in this case, the initial expectations are maintained, and the discrepancy between them and the proposal creates dissonance. Epistemic dissonance, instead, is related to a learning process in which actors hold expectations, leading to a thorough revision of the knowledge the actor held up to then. He argues that alternatives emerge during anti-valuation moments in larger transvaluation processes characterised by epistemic dissonance. Both authors, Fariás and Stark, understand dissonance in a potentially positive way, and for this reason, this work tries, for the first time, to integrate and adapt this organisational concept in the debate on difficult heritage in critical heritage studies.

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<sup>111</sup> Boltanski L., Thevenot L., 2006. *On Justification. Economies of worth*, Princeton University Press, Princeton

<sup>112</sup> "But the dissonance of diverse evaluative frameworks does more than simply speed up the production of novelty. The coexistence of multiple, principled standpoints means that no standpoint can be taken for granted as the natural order of things. Creative friction yields an organizational reflexivity." - in Stark D., 2009. *The Sense of Dissonance. Accounts of worth in economic life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 18.

<sup>113</sup> Fariás I., 2015. Epistemic dissonance. Reconfiguring valuation in architectural practice, in Antal A.B., Hutter M., Stark D. (edited by), 2015. *Moments of valuation: exploring sites of dissonance*, Oxford Scholarship online

Also Rabbiosi<sup>114</sup> shares the effort of trying to solve difficult heritage issues with an interdisciplinary perspective, but from cultural geography. She proposes the concept of “frictional geography” which addresses the frictions and conflicts arising from open-ended and inclusive ways of conceiving cultural heritage, such as the application of the Faro Convention. She acknowledges the need for an approach that is better able to grapple with the contradictions of heritage-making and public engagement. Interestingly she uses a positive concept of friction, which is very similar to the concept of dissonance in this research: “frictions are productive - they are not aberrations or external shocks but parts of how value is made and captured<sup>115</sup>”. In acknowledging the positive aspect of friction in heritage-making, like this same research, she stresses the need to manage friction for it to be productive.

The frictional or dissonant characteristic of debates over difficult heritage is also at the centre of Ross’s publication<sup>116</sup>, which considers cultural heritage as society’s symbolic landscape. By analysing the symbolic landscape (visual images, sacred sites, physical objects, words, music, images, media, public celebrations), the publication aims to study contending groups’ narratives and how culture is a tool in conflicts to control public representations. Similar to the concept of dissonance, he uses the term “psychocultural dramas” meaning conflicts that arise over competing claims based on groups’ historical experiences and identities. Moreover, he analyses how intracultural differences and conflicts over meaning and identity take place and how particular meanings become authoritative. Framing the issue of difficult heritage also in terms of narratives (psychocultural narratives as reflectors, exacerbators or inhibitors of conflicts) and group conflicts-agreements is also the aim of the present work, especially in Chapter 5.

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<sup>114</sup> Rabbiosi C., 2019. The frictional geography of cultural heritage. Grounding the Faro Convention into Urban experience in Forlì, Italy, *Social & Cultural geography*, DOI:10.1080/14649365.2019.1698760

<sup>115</sup> *Ivi*, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Ross M. H. (edited by), 2009. *Culture and belonging in divided societies. Contestation and symbolic landscapes*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

To these interdisciplinary influences on critical heritage studies, this work proposes the integration of organisational studies, and especially of New Institutionalism. Moreover, this research can be part of an existing path of studies that applies socio-economic approach to different sectors of the cultural field<sup>117</sup>. So, following the research path delineated by Bourdieu and Becker, this work uses a socio-economic approach to understand how decisions on cultural heritage (fascist heritage) are taken. In particular, in order to understand how justifications for the preservation of fascist heritage are framed in the public space, I adopt the theoretical framework of Boltanski and Thevenot<sup>118</sup> on processes of justification as generative of new understandings in the field of cultural heritage as well. The work of the two French economic sociologists introduces the concept of worth, intended as the study of the ongoing process of valuation. The conventionalist theory sees human behaviour as both enabled and constrained by socially and historically constructed legitimating systems, labelled orders of worth. They found six orders of worth as constitutive value frameworks that guide individual behaviours and that can contrast each other in the public field (see Chapter 6). The Boltanski and Thevenot's framework is often used in empirical studies of organizations in situations of public disputes where actions are confronted with critique, and in situations of conflicting rationalities, which are similar to the debates over heritage, and in particular of fascist heritage. The situation is similar to the one where dissonance is activated in relation to cultural heritage. In particular, this research uses this framework to understand the different conflicting rationales (and their origin) in the public debate on the reuse of fascist heritage. The aim of the research is also to better visualize the different levels (or orders)

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<sup>117</sup> Bourdieu P., 1993. *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature*, Columbia University Press, New York; Becker H. S., 1982. *Art worlds*, University of California Press, Berkley, Los Angeles, London; Velthuis O., 2005. *Talking prices. Symbolic meaning of prices on the market for contemporary art*, Princeton University Press, Princeton; Brienza C., 2010. Producing comics culture: a sociological approach to the study of comics, *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 1:2, pp. 105-119; among others.

<sup>118</sup> Boltanski L., Thevenot L., 2006. *On Justification*, Princeton University Press, Princeton



of the discourse to propose a possible suggestion on how to overcome the impasse of the public debate.

This research will analyse the concept of dissonance as a way to deal with, interpret and organize conflict over heritage, adding to the actual interpretations a new one based on the conjunction of critical heritage studies and organisational studies, using in particular the economies of worth.

### *2.5 Fascist heritage as a difficult legacy in Italy*

It is a common opinion among scholars that historians have been surprisingly slow to examine the relationship between Italians and the fascist built legacy, even though fascist buildings, cities or monuments are widespread in every part of Italy. The reasons are different: some authors see the failure of Italy to confront with fascist heritage as an act of collective dishonesty and a sign of moral weakness<sup>119</sup>; others argue that the capillary diffusion of fascist remains rendered them almost invisible to the citizen's and historian's eye<sup>120</sup>; others think that the fascist remains can feed a resurgent right<sup>121</sup> and that heritagizing fascist remains without a critical legitimation and the lack of a national documentation centre for the history of fascism can foster the re-emergence of illiberal, xenophobic currents<sup>122</sup>. In particular, concerning the Italian case, Carter and Martin<sup>123</sup> argue against the risk of uncritical preservation, which means restoring the artefact while normalizing it.

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<sup>119</sup> Carter & Martin, 2019, p. 121

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>121</sup> Page M., "The Roman Architecture of Mussolini, still standing", *Boston Globe*, 13 July 2014

<sup>122</sup> Arthus J., 2010. Fascism as "Heritage" in Contemporary Italy, in Mammone A. and. Veltri G.A (edited by), 2010. *Italy Today: the Sick Man of Europe*, Routledge, London; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Why are so many Fascist monuments still standing in Italy?", *New Yorker*, 5 October 2017; Arangio S., 2020. Collecting Mussolini: the case of the Susmel-Bargellini collection", *EX NOVO Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 5, pp. 7-18.

<sup>123</sup> Carter N., S. Martin S., 2017. The management and memory of fascist monumental art in postwar and contemporary Italy: the case of Luigi Montanarini's Apotheosis of Fascism, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 22:3, p. 355.

This tendency has changed in the last years, and it cannot be said that fascist heritage is completely ignored today: since the 1980s research on the preservation and restoration of fascist art and architecture has increased, yet without a proper critical evaluation of the issue. Preservation was solely supported by the idea that fascist architectures are art or cultural heritage, as if their artistic or historical value could be separated from the political dimension. The preservation of modern architecture is studied by Do.co.mo.mo, a research group born in Italy in the 1990s and then transformed into a cultural association, aiming to preserve, restore, and study the architecture of the twentieth century in Italy.

Apart from that, interestingly enough, usually preservation efforts of fascist heritage were initiated by political parties (both left and right parties), which sparked public debate and sometimes harsh confrontation around the issue. Of course, the political forces have different motivations to fight for preservation, for instance, left-wing supports the preservation and restoration of fascist heritage for educational purposes, arguing that history cannot be “cancelled” (referring to the press term “cancel culture”) and that, with the right historical distance and the declared anti-fascist stand, it is possible to appreciate fascist art and architecture. Right-wing supporters, generally, use arguments concerning the exceptional artistic quality and the importance of fascist architecture / art as part of Italian history and heritage, with implicit political and legitimising interests in preserving it. As can be argued, the political debate has not reached a clear position on the use of such architectures. Instead, it continues to use them acritically.

However, this acritical reuse should not be trivialised but instead questioned. Lucaroni<sup>124</sup>, in an article on the genesis, evolution and crystallisation of the debate about fascism and architecture, warns how the outcry of media and politics that followed the article by Ruth Ben-Ghiat<sup>125</sup> in 2017 makes evident how difficult (and maybe

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<sup>124</sup> Lucaroni G., 2020. Fascismo e architettura. Considerazioni su genesi, evoluzione e cristallizzazione di un dibattito, *Italia Contemporanea*, n. 292

<sup>125</sup> Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Why are so many Fascist monuments still standing in Italy?”, *New Yorker*, 5 October 2017, available at:

incorrect) is trying to adapt interpretations and theoretical frameworks to different countries with different histories. Also Antonio Pennacchi, in an article on *Il Foglio*<sup>126</sup>, writes that there are specificities of the Italian case, such as the indifference of citizens and the continuity of institutions in the transition from fascism to the republic, that played a major role in the destruction, neglect or reuse of fascist buildings.

As Filippi writes in different publications<sup>127</sup>, it is not completely true that Italians and historians do not reflect on the relationship with their fascist past, in fact, there are plenty of publications on fascism and its memorialisation. However, they mostly refer to fascism from a historiographical perspective, or they focus on the body and persona of Mussolini<sup>128</sup>, or on the cultural study of fascism representation in media<sup>129</sup>, or on the Resistance<sup>130</sup> and the missed epuration<sup>131</sup>, or the contemporary revival of fascism and the death of antifascism<sup>132</sup>.

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<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/why-are-so-many-fascist-monuments-still-standing-in-italy>

<sup>126</sup> M. Stefanini, "Il Palazzo della Civiltà all'Eur è bellissimo! La risposta di Pennacchi al New Yorker", *Il Foglio*, 12 October 2017, available at: <https://www.ilfoglio.it/cultura/2017/10/12/news/il-palazzo-della-civiltà-al-leur-e-bellissimo-la-risposta-di-pennacchi-al-new-yorker-157269/>

<sup>127</sup> Cfr. Filippi F., 2019. *Mussolini ha fatto anche cose buone. Le idiozie che continuano a circolare sul fascismo*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino; Filippi F., 2020. *Ma perché siamo ancora fascisti? Un conto rimasto aperto*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino

<sup>128</sup> Luzzatto S., 2019. *Il corpo del duce*, Einaudi, Torino

<sup>129</sup> Ben-Ghiat R., 2015. *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington

<sup>130</sup> Pavone C., 2006. *Una guerra civile. Saggio storico sulla moralità nella Resistenza*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino; Rusconi G., 1995 *Resistenza e postfascismo*, il Mulino, Bologna; among others.

<sup>131</sup> Franzinelli M., 2016. *L'Amnistia Togliatti: 1946 colpo di spugna sui crimini fascisti*, Feltrinelli, Milano; Pavone C., 1975. *La continuità dello stato: istituzioni e uomini*, in AA. VV., 1975. *1945-48: le origini della Repubblica*, Giappichelli Editore, Torino

<sup>132</sup> Filippi F., 2020. *Ma perché siamo ancora fascisti? Un conto rimasto aperto*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino; Filippi, 2019; Zunino P. G., 1991. *Interpretazione e memoria del fascismo. Gli anni del regime*, Laterza, Bari; Luzzatto S., 2004. *La crisi dell'antifascismo*, Einaudi, Torino; Del Boca A., 2009. *La storia negata: il revisionismo e il suo uso politico*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza.

Among Italian scholars who studied specifically the fascist built environment, Emilio Gentile<sup>133</sup> is certainly one of the major references because he studied not only fascism and its rituals from a historic perspective but also its physical embodiment in the city of Rome. Cederna<sup>134</sup> is another central author in studying how fascism destroyed and built Rome during the *ventennio*. Interest in this topic is also testified by several contributions on the reuse of Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana by Fendi<sup>135</sup>. Moreover, Marcello<sup>136</sup> studied the Casa Madre dei Mutilati in Rome as a specific building typology, however, limited to the single city of Rome. Bartolini<sup>137</sup> published an article on a less-known heritage site in Rome - Villa Torlonia – which was the former house of Mussolini in Rome and now is a museum displaying the Torlonia collection and hosting the Roman School of Modern Art permanent collection. She proposes the use of *dictatorial heritage site* urging for a necessity for a conceptualisation of this particular type of heritage. She also participated as guest editor in a more recent publication<sup>138</sup> on difficult heritage, comparing the fascist and the nazi heritage and their contemporary reuse or readaptation. Belmonte<sup>139</sup> focuses on the relationship between fascist mural art and its restoration, censorship and protection at La Sapienza in Rome. Lucaroni<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Gentile E., 2007. *Fascismo di pietra*, Laterza, Bari

<sup>134</sup> Cederna A., 1981. *Mussolini urbanista. Lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso*, Laterza, Bari

<sup>135</sup> Somma P., 2020. *The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana: From fascism to fashion* and Loncar J., 2020. *F is for...fluctuating symbolism: The Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and its shifting meaning*, in Jones K.B., Pilat S. (edited by), 2020. *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy*, Routledge, London

<sup>136</sup> Marcello F., 2019. Between censure and celebration: the decorative plan of Casa Madre dei Mutilati in Rome (1926-1939), *Modern Italy*, vol. 24, no.2, pp. 179-198

<sup>137</sup> Bartolini F., 2018. "From Iconoclasm to Museum: Mussolini's Villa in Rome as a Dictatorial Heritage Site." *Martor*, 23: 163-173

<sup>138</sup> Gori M., Pintucci A., Revello Lami M. (edited by), 2020. *Heritage in the making. Dealing with the legacies of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany*, EX NOVO Journal of Archaeology, Vol. 5

<sup>139</sup> Belmonte C., 2020. *La Sapienza, il fascismo, una mostra. Snodi critici nella ricezione dell'arte del Ventennio negli anni Ottanta*, Studi di Memofonte, 24, pp. 208- 243

<sup>140</sup> Conference talk on "Spianata informe e sgobbata (Via dei Fori Imperiali)", *I luoghi del fascismo a Roma*, online conference organized by Istituto F. Parri, 27 October 2020

studies Italian architecture between the two World Wars and specifically the recurring public debate around *via dei Fori Imperiali*, which he argues must be confronted as a political issue rather than a conservation one. The fascist legacy in Rome is a topic largely addressed also by not Italian scholars<sup>141</sup>, for instance Arthurs<sup>142</sup> is a prominent author studying the relationship between fascism and heritage and its controversies concerning some of the most important heritage sites built during the *ventennio*. Aristotle Kallis<sup>143</sup> is another major reference on the making of the third Rome and how fascism transformed Rome in the name of *romanità*. Arthurs and Kallis understand architecture as a lens through which to examine the politics and culture of Italian fascism and its tensions.

In addition to Rome, another case study that draws a lot of academic attention is Predappio, clearly because it is the birthplace of Mussolini but also because of the recent proposal for the opening of a research centre on the study of fascism in the *ex-casa del fascio*. Nuaert<sup>144</sup> analysed the linguistic and cultural interpretation of dissonant heritage using the case of ATRIUM project; Battilani, Bernini and Mariotti<sup>145</sup> addressed the development of tourism linked to neofascism and fascist legacy in Predappio and Forlì ; Serenelli<sup>146</sup> reconstructed the collective memory of fascism based on interviews of people living in

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<sup>141</sup> Bodenschatz H., 2020. *Urbanism, architecture and dictatorship*, in Jones K.B., Pilat S. (edited by), 2020. *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy*, Routledge, London

<sup>142</sup> Arthurs J., 2010, on the Foro Italico in Rome; Arthurs J., 2012. *Excavating modernity: the Roman past in Fascist Italy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca

<sup>143</sup> Kallis A., 2014. *The Third Rome, 1922–43: The Making of the Fascist Capital*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke

<sup>144</sup> Nuaert S., 2017. The linguistic and cultural interpretation of dissonant heritage: the ATRIUM cultural route, *Journal of Tourism, Culture and Development*, n. 15

<sup>145</sup> Battilani P., Bernini C., Mariotti A., 2018. How to cope with dissonant heritage: a way towards sustainable tourism development, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26:8, pp. 1417-1436.

<sup>146</sup> Serenelli S., 2016. 'It was like something that you have at home which becomes so familiar that you don't even pay attention to it': memories of Mussolini and Fascism in Predappio, 1922–2010, *Modern Italy*, 18:2, pp. 157-175

Predappio; Storchi<sup>147</sup> studied the history of *casa del fascio* in Predappio from its conception to its possible reuse as a case of difficult heritage. The collective Wu Ming also paid a lot of attention to Predappio and wrote an extensive article<sup>148</sup> on the actual status of fascist-built legacy and neofascist pilgrimages. The project to reuse ex-CDF in Predappio captured a lot of press attention and academic debate on whether a museum (or research centre) on fascism should open in Italy or not<sup>149</sup>. The fact that it is still debatable is symptomatic of a certain resistance or uneasiness to deal with the topic on a public level.

Bolzano is also a very studied case<sup>150</sup>, because of its position at the border between Italy and Austria and because of its history of forced Italianization during fascism, which was common to all important cities on the borders (e.g. Trieste). However, Bolzano is important not only for Piacentini's Monument to Victory, where he adopted the *stile littorio* for the columns, but mainly for the notable examples of critical preservation and reuse. Indeed, both

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<sup>147</sup> Storchi S., 2019. The ex-casa del fascio in Predappio and the question of the difficult heritage of Fascism in contemporary Italy, *Modern Italy*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 139-157

<sup>148</sup> Wu Ming, *Predappio Toxic Waste Blues*, 2017 available on [wumingfoundation.com](http://wumingfoundation.com)

<sup>149</sup> Carrattieri M., "Predappio sì, Predappio no...il dibattito sulla ex Casa del fascio e dell'ospitalità di Predappio dal 2014 al 2017", *Rivista degli Istituti Storici dell'Emilia Romagna in rete*, available at: <https://e-review.it/carrattieri-predappio-si-predappio-no>; Sullman S. L., "Contro il Museo del fascismo", *Doppiozero*; Flores M., *Predappio sì perché?*, *Doppiozero*, available at: <https://www.doppiozero.com/category/concetti-astratti/museo-del-fascismo>; Ginzburg C., *Predappio no – il fascismo non è solo Mussolini*, Sole 24 ore Domenica, 6 March 2016.

<sup>150</sup> Favargiotti S., Busana A., Cappelletti D., 2020. Beyond Italianization: Conflicts, stories, and reactions of the afterlives of fascism in Bolzano; Sanza P., 2020. Transforming. The rebirth of Bolzano's former GIL; Schnapp J., 2020. Small victories: BZ '18-'45, all in Jones K.B., S. Pilat S. (edited by), 2020. *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy*; Wu Ming, *Fantasma sulle montagne*, *Internazionale*, 30 March 2015, available at: [intern.az/1vu6](http://intern.az/1vu6); Steinacher G., 2013. *Fascist Legacies: The Controversy over Mussolini's Monuments in South Tyrol*, Faculty Publications, Department of History, 144; Hokerberg H., 2017. The Monument to Victory in Bolzano: desacralization of a fascist relic, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 23:8, 759-774; conference "I luoghi della memoria fascista", organized by Istituto F. Parri, 24 November 2020.

the artistic addition to the façade of ex-CDF<sup>151</sup> and the installation of a permanent documentary exhibition under the Monument to Victory are considerable demonstrations that critical preservation and management are possible in Italy. However, these cases are exceptions rather than the rule.

In Italy, the Istituto Storico Parri plays a major role in organising and fostering the debate on the critical preservation of fascist legacy. In 2020 it organised a series of conferences (6 October – 24 November 2020) dedicated to fascist places in Italy (with a focus on Rome) and in Europe, with Italian and international contributions. In addition, the institute is currently developing a mapping project on fascist monuments, toponymy and memorials in Italy directed by Giulia Albanese<sup>152</sup>. The mapping project is the first phase of widespread work on the memory and legacy of Fascism in Italian cities – a signal that there is a need but also a willingness to reappropriate the discourse on fascist afterlives. The interest in toponymy is shared also by scholars and practitioners<sup>153</sup> who want to highlight how many known and unknown fascists still give the name to our streets – and how this seems not to bother anyone.

One of the most recent and extensive publications on the built legacy of fascism is *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture*<sup>154</sup>: an extensive collection of articles by more than forty authors on the built legacy of fascism in Italy and the colonies. The publication offers an overview of different issues related to fascist built environment: the urbanism of new towns,

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<sup>151</sup> In 2017 a neon sign was added over the bas-relief of Mussolini on a horse doing the Roman salute on the façade of Casa del Fascio of Bolzano. The writing is taken from A. Harendt and it is translated in the three main languages spoken in the region (Italian, German, Ladin): Nobody has the right to obey. The project by artists Arnold Holzknecht e Michele Bernardi is the outcome of a 2011 public contest organized and financed by the Province of Bolzano.

<sup>152</sup> Albanese G., Ceci L. (a cura di), 2022. *I luoghi del fascismo. Memoria, politica, rimozione*, Viella, Roma.

<sup>153</sup> Among the scholars A. Spinelli on the Fascist toponymy in Vicenza and among the practitioners the collective Wu Ming, who organised during Manifesta 12 in Palermo a sort of guerrilla intervention by putting a panel under the name of the street named after a Fascist, with the atrocities he committed.

<sup>154</sup> Jones K.B., Stephanie Pilat S. (edited by), 2020. *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy*, Routledge, London.

the changing in the memorialisation and shifting interpretations of the fascist legacy, the reuse of fascist buildings in the colonies (Asmara, Rhodes, Leros, Mogadishu) and in contested territories (Bolzano, Trieste, Guidonia, Agro Pontino) a focus on some building typologies (Casa della Madre e del Bambino, ossuaries, GIL, Post and Telegraph office), and a study on some architects (Libera, BBPR, Rava) and single building elements (linoleum). The publication of this extensive research on different aspects of fascist built legacy follows not only an academic interest but also a different awareness and sensitivity toward certain socio-cultural aspects (decolonization, inclusion and political recognition of marginalized communities, gender disparities, Native's and repatriation issues, etc.) that emerged on a global level in recent times, as previously written.

Other important contributions to the interpretation of fascist-built legacy are Mia Fuller<sup>155</sup>'s research on Italian colonies in Asmara and her study on Agro Pontino in Italy as the first city model for a colony. She investigates the contemporary reception and interpretation of fascist buildings in cities originally built and conceived by fascist ideologies (on the one side, ruralisation and land reclamation; on the other, the empire). It is interesting how in Asmara the Italian colonial traces are used as forms of political, cultural, social and financial capital. Indeed, the fascist past has served internal political ends since Eritrea's fight for independence from Ethiopia. Eritreans used the Italian colonial borders as a source of legitimation for their autonomy from Ethiopia, and their colonial history also provided them with a claim to a long-standing cosmopolitanism and a cultural superiority over Ethiopians, by evoking an association with Roman antiquities – the same as Fascists did.

Hannah Malone<sup>156</sup>'s research on fascist legacy in Italy, particularly the Ossuaries of the First World War, has been relevant for the

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<sup>155</sup> Fuller M., 2011. Italy's Colonial Futures: Colonial inertia and postcolonial capital in Asmara, *California Italian Studies*, 2 (1); Fuller M., 2020, Rural settlers and urban designs. Paradoxical civic identity in the Agro Pontino, in Jones K.B., Pilat S. (edited by), 2020. *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy*, Routledge, London

<sup>156</sup> Malone H., 2017. Legacies of Fascism: architecture, heritage and memory in contemporary Italy, *Modern Italy*, vol. 22 no. 4



theoretical development and contextualisation of architecture and difficult heritage in the Italian case. Acknowledging a lack of historical studies on the marks left by fascism on cities, she argues that much can be understood by studying the fascist legacy through architecture, especially because of the importance that the dictatorship put on urban spaces and buildings as tools to change the Italian mindset and to start the anthropological revolution. Architecture is here interpreted as a barometer for fluctuating approaches to the fascist past. Her main assumption – which is common to the dissonant heritage theory – is that the processes through which buildings were preserved, altered or destroyed after the fall of fascism are akin to how public memories were selected, revised or erased.

Finally, the work of Lucy Maulsby<sup>157</sup> is central to this research because she studied the CDF from a historical perspective in the city of Milan in the post-war period. Although in the 2014 publication<sup>158</sup> she focused only on the city of Milan and on the fascist period, her contribution is fundamental to establishing the CDF as a peculiar building typology (see Chapter 4) and understanding how the construction process took place. In a more recent article<sup>159</sup> on the history of some CDF in Italy in the post-war period, there is an important attempt to understand what happened in Italy to the regime's building after the fall of fascism. The author analyses a few cases<sup>160</sup> (mainly the CDF by Terragni in Como) looking at the physical changings (removal of fascist emblems, change of the name, ect.), at the actors who occupied it

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<sup>157</sup> Maulsby L., 2014a. *Fascism, Architecture and the Claiming of Modern Milan 1922-1943*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto; Maulsby L., 2015. Case del Fascio and the Making of Modern Italy, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 20:5, pp. 663-685; Maulsby L., 2019. Material Legacies: Italian modernism and the postwar history of case del fascio, *Modern Italy*, 24(2), pp. 159-177; Maulsby L., 2014b. Drinking from the River Lethe: Case del Fascio and the Legacy of Fascism in Postwar Italy, *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory and Criticism*, vol. 11 no.2, pp. 19-39.

<sup>158</sup> Maulsby L., 2014a

<sup>159</sup> Maulsby L., 2019

<sup>160</sup> There is no explicit assessment on the selection criteria used in choosing the CDF. Given the extension of the article, it seems to be based on the availability of information and existing bibliography. CDF included: Danieri's CDF in Sturla, Vietti's CDF in Verbania, CDF in Lissone, Terragni's CDF in Como.

(mainly political parties) and at the role played by the Allies. The article is an important reference for this research because it proposes a temporal repartition of the history of the buildings in two main periods: the aftermath of the collapse of the regime until the end of the Second World War and the Cold War. The article highlights the common dynamics in the reuse of CDF, without however – given the scope of the same - looking at the territorial's and communities specificities which may happen to influence the perception of the building and of its representation from 1945 until now. So, even if Mulsby's publication is the most similar to this one in terms of object of study and historical span, it is also true that there are differences in the case study's scope and depth of the analysis, in the selection criteria of the case studies, and in the approach and discipline in which these are situated (Mulsby is a research of architectural history, this is a critical heritage studies and organisation studies one).

The first and only (until now) attempt to systematically map the reuses of CDF of an Italian province, from 1945 until today, is the publication curated by Pietrogrande<sup>161</sup> on the province of Padova. His work is based on archival documentation on 34 CDF from their construction until recently, organised in individual in-depth information sheets. His contribution is an essential reference to this work because it uses the province as the unit of analysis to understand the relation of the territory with that building typology. However, his research does not propose any intervention for the preservation, critical reuse or management of CDF; the book has a cataloguing aim since it is mainly composed of technical sheets, one on each CDF.

As also Piero Roselli already highlighted in his introduction to *Fascismo e centri storici in Toscana*<sup>162</sup>, there is a necessity to systematically study the architectural and urban process that fascist buildings underwent in these years, focusing especially on the medium and small size town on which there is no research about. The need to study this process goes together with the need to census these architectures and their history, a work that the

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<sup>161</sup> Pietrogrande E. (a cura di), 2014. *Trentaquattro case del fascio settant'anni dopo*, Marsilio, Venezia

<sup>162</sup> Roselli P., 1984. *Fascismo e centri storici in Toscana*, Alinea Editrice, Firenze, pp. 10-11

author started with that publication, which produced a list of fascist interventions in the historical centres of Tuscany towns. However, his research focuses only on the foundation and construction of these architectures and not on their contemporary or post-fascist history.

Recently, Bartolini, in her analysis of fascist heritage and exhibitions, argued that:

*The fascist material legacies are still a strong source of fascination in contemporary Italy, and the fact that in the last ten years many work of art and architecture of the Ventennio have become heritage and have re-entered the public domain, reflects not just a national struggle in questioning and confronting the past, but possibly also a worrying sense of fascist pride*<sup>163</sup>.

So, this research has a double aim: on the content level, producing knowledge on the three case studies through archival research and fieldwork; on the methodological level, proposing a different approach to critical heritage studies that integrates organisational studies in the interpretation of public debates on the reuse of fascist heritage and offering a new operational concept of dissonance. Indeed, as it has been said by other authors, there still is a need for a different theoretical and practical approach to fascist heritage, since nowadays “behind ‘preservation’ and ‘knowledge’ can be easily hidden the political agendas of the far-right as they attempt to use cultural heritage as a political tool<sup>164</sup>”. In using an approach from sociology, history and organisational studies, this research also aims to dismantle and analyse the public discourses and justification arguments used in making decisions over fascist heritage (Chapter 5). Indeed, this research is based on the necessity to re-politicize and un-normalize fascist heritage, by bringing it out from the technical discourses on preservation -which usually defend the *status quo* in treating heritage as something apolitical. Re-inserting the political

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<sup>163</sup> Bartolini F., 2020. Fascism on display: the afterlife of material legacies of the dictatorship, *EX NOVO Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 5, p. 30.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibidem*.

dimension means understanding heritage-making as a political activity. Moreover, this research wants to address the dissonant heritage framework and test its applicability in the Italian case, proposing a different concept of dissonance.

## Chapter 2 - Fascist architecture?

### 3.1 Architects and fascism: the problem of a fascist style

To understand where dissonance originates (if in the object/building or the observer or in both), it is important to understand how architecture during the fascist time was conceived, how it was declined for propaganda reasons, and if there was a fascist architecture or a fascist style. Indeed, even if we now visually associate Rationalist architecture with the iconography of the Ventennio, the relation between architecture and the regime was not that straightforward.

The problem of the role of architecture in the Fascist state was central in the public debate already in 1931, when Bardi<sup>165</sup> wrote an article titled “Architettura, arte di stato” on *L’Ambrosiano* in January, arguing that the ideal value of architecture is to sustain and represent the victories of Fascism on an international basis. Bardi<sup>166</sup> infers that the style had to express a political content; so, architecture was judged on its capacity to represent the fascist idea. This article was symptomatic of a perceived need for fascism to get a visual representation and recognisability. Architecture and visual arts were the perfect tools to achieve this objective. The references to Mussolini’s speeches were frequent among architects; for instance, transparency became central because Mussolini said that Fascism was a “house of glass where everybody can watch inside”, and Terragni, in 1932, translated this motto architecturally into the CDF in Como<sup>167</sup>. Terragni wrote that the criteria he used to create the CDF was putting together art and politics. For this reason, in the Statute of the PNF he found the best guide for the distribution of spaces in the building<sup>168</sup>, linking together two crucial aspects of Fascism: administrative structure and buildings, as the two representations of political power. Mussolini seemed to appreciate and encourage Rationalist

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<sup>165</sup> Bardi P.M., “Architettura, arte di stato”, *L’Ambrosiano*, 3 gennaio 1931

<sup>166</sup> In Ciucci G., 2002. *Gli architetti e il fascismo. Architettura e città 1922-1944*, Einaudi, Torino, p. 109-110

<sup>167</sup> Quoting Terragni in an article on *Quadrante* 35/36: “quello di poter vedere ciò che accade dentro è il miglior distintivo di una Casa costruita per il popolo, in confronto di una reggia, di una caserma, di una banca.” in Terragni A., Libeskind D., Rosselli P., 2004. *Atlante Terragni. Architetture Costruite*, Skira, Losanna, p. 147

<sup>168</sup> *Ivi*, p. 153.

architecture: during a strong attack to modern architecture in 1932, he publicly applauded the architects of Florence's station and of Sabaudia; this endorsement translated immediately into the self-declared victory of Rationalists<sup>169</sup> and fostered the assumption that modern architecture equates fascist architecture. However, even if there is a diffused idea that rationalist architecture is the direct representation of Fascism, Ghirardo<sup>170</sup> argues that it is impossible to define one single predominant fascist style; indeed, the syncretism that characterised the ideology of Fascism seems to well apply to its architectural choices too. Indeed, during the *Ventennio*, critics and academics were divided and expressed harsh critiques of each other. Francesco Cianfrani<sup>171</sup> identifies three main styles in the architectural field of the *Ventennio*, whose common trait was the willingness to create a new language for Italian architecture:

- the **Accademici** (which included Cesare Bazzani, Armando Brasini, Carlo Broggi, Piero Portaluppi) who were promoted by the critic Ugo Ojetti on the magazine *Dedalo*. They were called Accademici because they were professors in prestigious universities, and their architectural taste referred to 19th-century eclectic style updated to the needs of modern buildings.
- The **moderates** could be divided into two major groups: the Novecento based in Milan (which included Finetti, Emilio Lancia, Paolo Mezzanotte, Giovanni Muzio, Giò Ponti) was endorsed by Margherita Sarfatti; and the Roman group with Pietro Aschieri was lead by Marcello Piacentini. Their style was a simplified neoclassicism, which synthesised characteristics of modern architecture (geometric compositions, abstract volumes, minimal ornaments) with elements of classicism (columns,

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<sup>169</sup> Pagano published an article titled "Mussolini salva l'architettura italiana" on *Casabella*, Piacentini published an article on Sabaudia on *Architettura* and critics of *Quadrante* invites Le Corbusier in Rome to introduce him to Mussolini. Cfr. G. Ciucci, 2002, p. 140

<sup>170</sup> Ghirardo D., in Cianfrani F., 2020. *The Fascist legacy in the built environment*, in Jones K.B., Pilat S. (edited by), 2020. *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy*, Routledge, London, p. 13.

<sup>171</sup> F. Cianfrani, 2020, in Jones K.B., Pilat S., 2020, Chapter 2

pilasters, strips, pediments). They sought to simplify and rationalise the academic style by combining modern and traditional.

- The **Rationalists** who came out of Gruppo 7, a group of architects from the Politecnico in Milan, which included Carlo Enrico Rava, Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco Silva, Gino Pollini, Giuseppe Terragni and Ubaldo Castignoli (who was replaced by Adalberto Libera), and of a southern wing composed by Adalberto Libera, Mario Ridolfi, Pietro Aschieri and Giuseppe Capponi. This group was highly critical of the other two and argued for a socially engaged architecture, updated to economic and technological logic from European modernism. In 1928 they expanded into a national association based in Rome and named the Italian Movement for Rationalist Architecture (MIAR). The movement was critically supported by Edoardo Persico and Giuseppe Pagano, director of *Casabella*, and by Massimo Bontempelli and Pietro Maria Bardi in the magazine *Quadrante*. They were the Italian avantgarde and, even if differences between them were visible, they commonly committed to the primacy of technical and functional architecture.

The fight over modern (or fascist) architecture was mainly carried out in three areas: in exhibitions (the Decennale exhibition, the various Triennale exhibitions), architectural competitions and specialised magazines. Without deepening the issue too much because it is not the object of this study, it is important to acknowledge how and which criteria and arguments these different groups of architects used to self-legitimate as the best representation of fascism. Generally, Rationalists used to exploit the revolutionary aspect of both the fascist revolution and the Rationalist architecture to get rid of traditional architecture<sup>172</sup>. In particular, Rationalists perceived the Academics as the result of the old demo-liberal Italy that was overcome by fascism; so, the Academics' position must be abandoned as also the old traditional

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<sup>172</sup> Ghirardo D., *Terragni e gli storici: vicende nella tipologia e nella politica della Casa del Fascio di Como*, in Ciucci G., 1996. *Giuseppe Terragni. Opera completa 1925 – 1943*, Electa, Milano, p.257

architecture. In addition, Pagano opposed the classical architecture with the material simplicity of the vernacular, emphasising the Mediterranean roots (*mediterraneità*) of Rationalism, which was instrumental in establishing MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale) as truly Italian. However, for Piacentini, *mediterraneità* meant reasoned architecture based on technical and spiritual necessities, closely linked to the Italian past. Conflicts also arose in the modern movement: Pagano on *Casabella* supported a position of mediation between modernity and tradition finding in the monumentality of Rationalism the only possible solution, whereas Bardi on *Quadrante* criticised mediation and homogenisation of languages, finding in the purity and rationality of forms the only condition of Italian architecture<sup>173</sup>. In particular, as David Rifkind suggests<sup>174</sup>, *Quadrante* was fundamental for the rise of Rationalism as the state's architecture. Pagano drew a continuum between Roman and Renaissance architectures trying to demonstrate how Rationalist architecture was the true descendent of that, whereas the neoclassical and eclectic styles were the negation of that spirit. Indeed, Pagano, between 1930 and 1931, published a series of articles which criticised the eclectic style of Academics and neoclassicism – and also of Piacentini – which, he argued, produced copies of ancient buildings creating a sort of fake architectures<sup>175</sup>. After these declarations, he was offered L. 26.000 to stay silent for three years on these topics<sup>176</sup>. In 1939 Bottai (Ministry of Education) proposed, in the new Restoration Chart, the prohibition of fabricating new buildings *in stile*, as to say architects could not build mimicking an ancient style because it would be a fake – outlawing, as a matter of fact, the architecture of arches and columns<sup>177</sup>.

Pagano was also central in providing a cultural justification to the ruralization policies of the regime: his rehabilitation and study of

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<sup>173</sup> Cfr. Ciucci G., 2002, Chapter 7

<sup>174</sup> Rifkind D., 2012. *The Battle for Modernism: Quadrante and the Politicization of Architectural Discourse in Fascist Italy*, Marsilio, Venezia

<sup>175</sup> Cfr. De Seta C. (a cura di), 1976. *Giuseppe Pagano. Architettura e città durante il Fascismo*, Laterza, Bari, p. XXX-XXXI

<sup>176</sup> Nicoloso P., 2011. *Architetture per un'identità italiana*, Gaspari, Udine, p. 212.

<sup>177</sup> *Ivi*, p. 214.



peasant architecture were instrumental, from a formal point of view, for the inclusion in the modern movement of a series of shapes, typologies and building systems typical of the agricultural heritage; and from a political point of view, to culturally address the land reclamation policies. So, Rationalist's support of fascism is undeniable, and their buildings should be thought of as expressions of ideas congenial to the regime. Indeed, many rationalist architects that embraced Mussolini were truly fascists (like Terragni), and they viewed themselves as revolutionary architects working in the service of the regime. However, fascism was not based on a monolithic ideology, and its success relied on its ability to appeal to diverse social groups.

An example of the ambiguous relationship of the regime with Rationalists is given by the first and the second MIAR (Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale) exhibitions. In 1928 Libera organised the first MIAR exhibition in Rome which was sponsored by the Fascist Union of Architects. In 1931 Pietro Maria Bardi hosted the second MIAR exhibition in his gallery in Rome, where he exhibited the *Table of Horrors*, a photo montage of the "old architects (...) emblems of an impotence that we reject"<sup>178</sup> where Piacentini also figured. The latter strongly reacted against MIAR by accusing them of pretending to be the real founders of fascist architectural style while instead being "intentionally internationalist and Bolshevik"<sup>179</sup>, consequently not Italian and enemies of *romanità*. After this harsh opposition, MIAR was dissolved by the Fascist Union of Architects. Though, in 1932, the Decennial celebration of the fascist revolution, the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*, was the perfect example of the celebration of both fascism and Rationalism since Rationalist architects curated major projects: the façade of Palazzo delle Esposizioni and the shrine were designed by Libera and De Renzi, while Terragni curated the *Sala del '22*. Zevi argued that this opening toward Rationalists was due to Piacentini trying to integrate - or buy off -

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<sup>178</sup> Ghirardo D.Y., 1980. Italian Architects and Fascist Politics: an Evaluation of the Rationalist's role in regime building, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 39 no.2, p.126

<sup>179</sup> Alici A., "Giuseppe Pagano and Casabella. In defence of modern Italian architecture", in Hökerberg H. (edited by), 2018, p. 42

Rationalists after the dissolution of MIAR<sup>180</sup>. In 1934 Mussolini even invited the architects of Sabaudia and of the Florence train station to express his personal support and appreciation of Rationalist architecture and to encourage them to be brave in addressing Italian architecture<sup>181</sup>.

Counter-arguing the issue of *mediterraneità*, Novecento and Accademici accused Rationalists of championing foreign models alien to the Italian tradition (e.g. Le Corbusier, Mies, etc.). Ojetti stressed the concept of *romanità* represented by arches and columns. The *archi e colonne* argument between Ojetti and Piacentini has been the dominating one in the debate over fascist architecture, since Ojetti portrayed them as the true marks of *italianità* and imperial domain. On the other side, Piacentini argued that architects must find “forms convenient for our era” and must abandon old features that “lacked life and meaning”<sup>182</sup>. It seems, as Ghirardo writes, that the real difference between the two was not of kind but of degree.

Yet, the *romanità* was equally used by Rationalists who described their new architecture as Roman, intended as utilitarian, industrial and rational. So, as can be seen, the polemics over *romanità* or *mediterraneità* lead to empty formalism. Either Rationalists, Academics and Piacentini tried to validate their style on historical grounds and to root their movement in the Italian past, advancing the same justifications repeatedly. As also Gregotti<sup>183</sup> pointed out, common elements between each group cannot be overlooked, although by “order and logic”, Rationalists meant function and use, whereas Novecento meant classicism and anti-avant-gardism. Indeed, all were concerned with an expressive approach, which could link elements from all

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<sup>180</sup> In Ghirardo D.Y., 1980, p. 113

<sup>181</sup> “Tengo a precisare in modo inequivocabile che io sono per l’architettura moderna, per quella del nostro tempo e mi sarebbe immensamente dispiaciuto se voi aveste pensato che le vostre opere non mi fossero piaciute. Sarebbe assurdo pensare che noi oggi non potessimo avere il nostro pensiero architettonico e assurdo il non volere un’architettura razionale e funzionale per il nostro tempo.” in Mariani R., 1976. *Fascismo e “città nuove”*, Feltrinelli, Milano, p. 91.

<sup>182</sup> *Ivi*, p. 116

<sup>183</sup> Gregotti V. (transl. by Giuseppina Salvadori), 1986. *New Directions in Italian Architecture*, George Braziller Inc., New York, p. 17.

movements. Instead of architectural ideas, as Cesare De Seta noted<sup>184</sup>, the most important aspect of Academics, which came into light after years of debate, was the fact that they represented the social group affiliated with the same economic interests of the regime, and maybe this was the main reason for their favour for Fascism.

In this debate, Mussolini's strategy was defined the "Scotch douche"<sup>185</sup>: blowing hot and cold alternatively, changing his ideas to appear both democrat and authoritarian, socialist and anti-socialist, radical and reactionary. So, Mussolini did not support modern architecture *per se* - seen as an international phenomenon - but only when it visually recalled Italian traditions and represented national values – which is why he always refused to meet Le Corbusier. As can be argued, the issue of architecture is not a stylistic matter but rather an instrumental one. Actually, he supported different styles for political purposes, and this contradictory way of proceeding truly characterised fascist architecture.

In addition, another historical condition that influenced the use of certain forms (such as arches and columns) and construction techniques (masonry) was the shortage of steel and other expensive materials due to the sanctions of the League of Nations in 1935 and the consequent implementation of autarky. The use of iron was limited, so instead of reinforced concrete structures, architects urged to use masonry structures, which also influenced the buildings' shape and volume.

For all these reasons, from a terminological point of view, it would be more appropriate to say "architecture built during fascism", rather than "fascist architecture" because it is impossible to define a predominant style, and it is also impossible to rescue any style (or architect) from the politics of Fascism. Ghirardo<sup>186</sup> concludes that even if there is no fascist style, the fact that the Fascist state commissioned a building makes it a testimony to that regime.

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<sup>184</sup> De Seta C., "Cultura e architettura in Italia tra le due guerre: continuità e discontinuità", in Danesi S., Patetta L. (a cura di), 1976. *Il razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il Fascismo*, Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, p. 11.

<sup>185</sup> Ghirardo D.Y., 1980, p. 113

<sup>186</sup> Ghirardo D.Y., 2013. *Italy. Modern architectures in history*, Reaktion books, London, p. 71.

Acknowledging that it allows researchers to step out from the vicious circle of assessing a building's values solely in terms of style or aesthetic perspective.

After the regime's fall, in 1945, Bruno Zevi<sup>187</sup> proposed a new interpretation of the architecture produced during fascism based on the distinction between democratic architecture and reactionary architecture. The first one comprehended modern and rationalist architecture, and the latter included neoclassical architecture and the work of Piacentini as *architetto ufficiale della burocrazia*. Zevi, in drawing this distinction, was not considering the declarations and explicit affiliations of architects as evidence of their political intentions, since he described Terragni, Pagano and Persico as intrinsically antifascists<sup>188</sup>. He also founded the Association for Organic Architecture<sup>189</sup> in Rome, which endorsed the tradition of the modern movement against academicism in the same period when Pope Pius XII asked Piacentini to complete the plan of Via della Conciliazione (1948-1950). There was a need, in the first historiographical period, for an aesthetic but also an ethical interpretation of architecture, which individuated in the modern movement the antifascist expression par excellence. As Gregotti<sup>190</sup> noted, especially in Milan, the Resistance was linked to a series of battles of modern architecture and this continuity also translated into the post-war reconstruction process. Also Mariani<sup>191</sup> defined rationalist architecture as a democratic work because it was done - from a functionalist perspective- for the masses. To Rationalism, he opposed traditionalist architecture since it was not intended to answer common people's needs. Moreover, as Ghirardo writes, the argument that architects had to "play fascist in order to do architecture<sup>192</sup>" is no longer tenable if

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<sup>187</sup> Zevi B., 2004. *Storia dell'architettura moderna*, Einaudi, Torino

<sup>188</sup> "Architettura", in De Grazia V., Luzzatto S., 2002. *Dizionario del Fascismo. Vol 1 A-K*, Einaudi, Torino

<sup>189</sup> Organic architecture aimed at creating the spaces for a new democratic civilization, so architecture was shaped for the human being following his psychological and contemporary needs, and therefore it was anti-monumental.

<sup>190</sup> Gregotti V., 1968, p. 38

<sup>191</sup> Mariani R., 1976, p. 124

<sup>192</sup> Ghirardo D. Y., 1980, p.109

the words of Terragni, Pagano and many others are to be taken into consideration. It can neither be sustained that these architects were blind, misled or young – this seems to be more an *a posteriori* justification. Later, researchers started to address the role of architects and the complexity of the relationship between rationalism and fascism<sup>193</sup>. Ghirardo<sup>194</sup> was among the first to recognise Rationalists' enthusiasm for fascism and to place modern Italian architecture in an environment driven by corruption. In an article evaluating the Rationalists' role in regime building, she argues<sup>195</sup> that even the most persistent argument (i.e. Rationalists were persecuted by the regime and received few commissions after 1936) is no longer tenable. Italy, after 1935, started overseas operations, and funds were redirected toward that objective; nonetheless, huge construction projects were carried on (e.g. the E42 with many Rationalist architects). So, she concludes that it has to be acknowledged that the Modern movement in Italy expressed specific fascist notions and even if those principles are repugnant today, there is no need to disengage Rationalists from their association with the regime<sup>196</sup>. If architects' attachment to political power can be explained with the Italian characteristic of *trasformismo*<sup>197</sup>, she finds in contextual factors the reasons why architecture flourished and produced a high quality design in Italy during the Ventennio: the first is the high number of commissions by the government who adopted many different languages; the second, refers to the fact that architects, as members of the upper middle class, were financially comfortable and willing to experiment; and thirdly, the strong

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<sup>193</sup> Cfr. Mariani R., 1989. *Razionalismo e architettura moderna. Storia di una polemica*, Edizioni di Comunità, Bologna

<sup>194</sup> Ghirardo D.Y., 2013; Fuller M., 2015. *Review. Fascist Italy: Architectural and Urban Histories*, in *Architectural Histories*, 3(1): 5, pp. 1-4

<sup>195</sup> D. Ghirardo, 1980

<sup>196</sup> *Ivi*, p. 127.

<sup>197</sup> "Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso (BBPR) remarked that just as architects moved *en masse* to support fascism by 1932, so too they shifted to the Communist Party in 1968, and he confidently anticipated that they would shift to follow the axis of power in the future – as indeed many did in the 1980s, aligning with the then-powerful Socialist Party, and in the 1990s, with Berlusconi's Forza Italia." In Ghirardo D.Y., 2013, pp. 75-76.

collaboration between architects and artists and designers among different cultural disciplines triggered creativity.

Cesare De Seta, in a publication in 1976<sup>198</sup>, proposed another distinction between fascist architects and artists (Terragni, Pagano, Bontempelli, Sironi) and fascist culture, arguing that their works were the product of fascist architects but not of fascist culture since they expressed opposite values. Indeed, there was a huge difference between a reactionary culture (fascist culture) based on an imperialistic vision and on the subjugation of the masses, and the rationalist architecture, whose values came from the progressive bourgeoisie. In his view, Rationalism was objectively a progressive movement unfortunately driven by a reactionary culture and, for this reason, it should not be entirely dismissed and condemned as mere celebratory rhetoric of the regime. On the contrary, Piacentini, while cynically accepting fascism, did produce fascist architectures since they were monumental, reactionary, imperialistic and celebratory.

Anyways, the interpretation of architecture's history remained anchored to an aesthetic and formalistic approach which was more interested in judging the works rather than contextualising them in broader political and cultural processes. However, this formalistic approach is refuted by the fact that state-funded buildings during fascist period served specific functions and were vehicles of ideology. History of architecture seems to proceed much more like art history, privileging an approach based on movements, figures and places which precludes researchers from investigating all the dimensions of architecture<sup>199</sup>.

### 3.2 *The function of architecture in the fascist regime*

Since the 1930s, Mussolini understood the importance of architecture as a tool to govern and educate the masses and maintain power. He saw architecture as the most important of the arts because of its comprehensive and monumental character - he had said "*a mio giudizio la massima tra tutte le arti è l'architettura*

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<sup>198</sup> De Seta C., *Cultura e architettura in Italia tra le due guerre: continuità e discontinuità*, in Danesi S., Patetta L. (a cura di), 1976. *Il razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il Fascismo*, Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia

<sup>199</sup> Lucaroni G., 2020, p. 15

*perchè comprende tutto*<sup>200</sup>. The role of architecture changed during the Ventennio; in fact, at the beginning of 1930s, architecture was used to build consensus, whereas, at the end of 1930s, architecture became a tool for the fascistization of masses in the totalitarian turn of the regime. So, architecture from being a means to create consensus around fascism became central to the anthropologic revolution of Mussolini to create the Italians by changing their character, their habits and their mentality. This change also translated into architectural style, which at the beginning of the decade equally comprehended rationalist and traditional architecture, whereas, at the end of 1930s, was associated only with modern architecture with a scent of cold classicism.

Even if different in style, architecture was the unifying symbol of the regime, with Mussolini travelling and inaugurating buildings in every region of Italy. Mussolini's inspections to oversee construction sites or visit new buildings were a ritual to build consensus and create the imaginary of a new Italy; to this end, architecture was the perfect tool. The invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and the declaration of the empire in 1936 played a significant role in this change of style; from then on architecture fostered the myth of imperial fascism and recalled elements from classicism, like arches and columns<sup>201</sup>.

The ambition of Mussolini with architecture was to build the future memory of the next generations of Italians, a sort of colonisation of future history through the built environment. As did think Hitler for Nazism that the cult of the ruin should preserve the ideology which built it, so fascism was willing to materially last in its architectures. In this perspective, the requirement of fascist architecture already in 1926 was to last (*durare*); in 1933 it was to dare (*osare*) and to represent the myths of fascism and the empire. In this period the two objectives of the regime were to build and to fight (*costruire e combattere*), since they were seen as complementary for the creation of ideology: to build

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<sup>200</sup> De Seta C., 1976, p. 8

<sup>201</sup> The use of a classical style for public buildings as a way to create a sense of national pride and to strengthen national identity is a common technique among conservative men in power and was also recently adopted by the ex-president D. Trump. Cfr. Small Z., "Trump Makes Classical Style the Default for Federal Buildings", *The New York Times*, 21 December 2020.

the empire through war and to build imaginaries through cities and eternal buildings; war and architecture became two educational tools at the service of the anthropological fascist revolution<sup>202</sup>. Mussolini thought that he could change the character of Italians by changing the form of their cities and their lifestyle: the importance of rituals stays exactly at the intersection between the architectural frame and the ceremony displayed inside of it. This is also why the regime, especially in the last part of 1930s, privileged monumental architecture (e.g. E42 in 1937) while ignoring a more urgent but less glamorous issue such as public housing<sup>203</sup>. In order to change people, it was necessary firstly to control them, also with architecture: the concept of hierarchy was applied to it, to regulate and control people's life through specific spaces such as Dopolavoro, the schools of Balilla and the Case del Fascio.

Notwithstanding the importance of architecture, Mussolini - opposite to Hitler with Speer - just did not proclaim a univocal architectural style and he did not have only one architect too<sup>204</sup>. It was an informed decision based on the assumption that the architecture of the regime should not be identifiable with the creativity of one single person, but it should be the outcome of a common national sentiment defined by a historical period. In addition, giving space to another personality was risky, because he could obfuscate Mussolini's image of *costruttore* (creator). This is why Mussolini wanted to control in detail and decide over every building project, acting as if he was a trained architect. However, even if unofficially, there was an architect with whom Mussolini was much more in contact and who directed the most

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<sup>202</sup> P. Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto. Propaganda e paesaggio urbano nell'Italia fascista*, Einaudi, 2011, Chapter 1.2. "To remodel (...) Italians as a pedagogical (...) campaign mediated through grand constructions" in P. Nicoloso, *Architetture per un'identità italiana: progetti e opere per fare gli Italiani fascisti*, Gaspari, 2012.

<sup>203</sup> This attitude toward monumental projects was conveniently shared also by Rationalists: "Little prestige occurred to designing low-cost housing. Government commissions for monumental edifices and private commissions for elegant bourgeois homes offered greater opportunities to attract attention and future clients, and if they were anything, Rationalists were bourgeois." In Ghirardo D., 1980, p. 116

<sup>204</sup> *Ivi*, Chapter 5



important projects of the Ventennio: Marcello Piacentini. He was the inventor of the “lictorian column” in the Victory Arch in Bolzano, where he used the symbol of a political party (the fasces) as an emblem of the State, eternalising the regime in a new architectural order. In 1937 he was the architect with the larger control over new buildings and town plans in Italy. His major success, though, can be found in his mediation and coordination of important construction projects, such as La Sapienza and E42 in Rome, where he put together the works and styles of different architects through more or less indiscrete interventions. Even if Piacentini was the closest architect to Mussolini<sup>205</sup>, it was not because he was a particularly fervent fascist, as many other architects, but because he was capable in the game of power: as a matter of fact, he remained one of the most powerful architects for all the Ventennio. As Nicoloso argues<sup>206</sup>, Mussolini moved on two levels: on the one side, he publicly visited the construction sites with the press, showing the transparency of his decisions to charm the masses; on the other side, he worked with secret meetings, changing projects and deceiving fascist architects who believed in the honesty of public competitions. He dictated the direction of architecture without giving the general impression of coercion but offering the false image of a common sentiment among architects, weakening the individual character of the architecture and strengthening its unitary and centralised aspect. Piacentini was excellent in coordinating different architects (without letting anyone prevail) and in reaching a unity of style - which should not be confused with uniformity.

After the fall of the regime and during the epuration, Piacentini denied his personal involvement with Mussolini, arguing he was just following the orders and proposing an autonomy of architecture separated from politics – a defensive strategy that many architects used. He continued working on projects that started under Fascism, integrating himself into the continuity of the Republican State. The architecture reflects better than other fields the continuity between the regime and the Republic: the

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<sup>205</sup> He met Mussolini a number of times not inferior than one of his Ministries, with the exception that Ministries changes during the government, whereas Piacentini stayed for all the Ventennio. Nicoloso, 2011, p. 161-185.

<sup>206</sup> *Ivi*, Chapter 7.

buildings had been mostly reused to host other functions and, with time, they had entered under the Italian preservation legislation as cultural heritage. Nicoloso<sup>207</sup> affirms that the continuity between the Republican state and the regime finds in architecture one of its best examples. In time fascist architecture began to be recognised as Italian heritage, and so the collective identity of Italians, formed around places of memory, started to include also fascist architecture. Every Italian citizen can recognise them because of their monumental and imposing aspect or for their functionalist aspect (e.g. train stations) and this acritical presence instils the idea that the fascist period was powerful and somehow better than today (e.g. trains arrived on time) – which was exactly the aim of Mussolini. He thinks these architectures are starting their demagogical function again after a period of silence, following a generic fascination for fascist cities and an absolving historical judgement. It can be said that the Republican state, by completing the architectural projects of the fascist era, finished the task of italianizing Italians - which opens up the question of the ability of architecture to hold political force also after the end of its historical reality.

### 3.3 *Fascism and urbanism*

Cities were central to fascist architecture and urban interventions. This importance was given by the necessity of the regime's image-building and consensus gathering but also the need of modernising Italy. For this reason, as Ghirardo writes<sup>208</sup>, the majority of funds went to hydroelectric, hydraulic and land reclamation projects, aqueducts, roads, highways and railways. However, also public buildings had great importance, given that by the late 1930s, their funding counted for one-sixth of all public works funds.

In his *Discorso dell'Ascensione* on 26 May 1927, Mussolini tackled three main issues: urbanisation, administrative structure and political developments. The building sector (urbanisation) and the territory's economy (administrative organisation) were part of a unique project of economic reorganisation. In 1928 an article on

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<sup>207</sup> Nicoloso, 2011, p. 272 – 273

<sup>208</sup> *Ivi*, p. 67-68.

*Popolo d'Italia*<sup>209</sup> titled “Sfollare le città” Mussolini grounded a series of economic problems and solutions in city planning (*urbanistica*), increasing the importance of the role of the architect not only as an *architetto integrale*<sup>210</sup> but also as a conductor (*direttore d'orchestra*). The control of the planning of the territory took the administrative shape of *piano regolatore* (urban plan), a plan drawn by architects which outlines the new image and extension of the city, and it gave birth to the development of *città corporativa*. The adherence to the principle of *gerarchia* was best seen in urban plans; indeed, *piani regolatori* were based on a zoning system which separated inhabitants based on their social class. In new towns, the division was between workers (*operai* and *impiegati*) and directors (*dirigenti*), whereas in the colonies, the division was between Italians and natives. For instance, in Agro Pontino, new towns were closed communities with defined borders (*circonvallazione*) inside whom the administrators and white collar lived, whereas farmers and lower classes resided in satellite *borghi*. In the colonies, the racial division pertained not only to residential districts but also to the access to the market and the traffic in the streets<sup>211</sup>. There was a willingness to impose urban order through *piani regolatori* to achieve social order. Corporatist urbanism<sup>212</sup>, as Rifkind writes<sup>213</sup>, was the Italian attempt to synthesise the programmatic concerns of CIAM (Congrès

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<sup>209</sup> Mussolini, “Sfollare le città”, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, 22 Novembre 1928

<sup>210</sup> In 1916 Gustavo Giovannoni stressed the necessity of a new figure for the architect, the *architetto integrale*, who basically needed to have both technical competencies and a humanistic culture. Cfr Ciucci, 2002, Chapter 1

<sup>211</sup> Fuller M., 1991. Edilizia e potere: l'urbanistica e l'architettura coloniale italiana, 1923-1940, *Studi Piacentini*, vol. 9, p. 145.

<sup>212</sup> Italian *corporativismo* is defined as an economic and political system in which all sectors of economy are organised into *corporazioni* (guilds) under the control of the state. It was a system thought primarily to contrast the unpredictability of capitalism and eliminate unemployment periods, but not less to organize also the social life of people. With corporativism, industries maintained private ownership while benefiting from public subsidies and prohibition of organised labour actions and strikes (Alfredo Rocco trade union organisation in 1920s). On corporativism Cfr. Rifkind, 2012; Gagliardi A., 2010. *Il corporativismo fascista*, Laterza, Bari.

<sup>213</sup> Rifkind D., 2012. “Everything in the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state”: corporatist urbanism and Rationist architecture in fascist Italy, *Planning Perspectives*, vol. 27, no.1, pp. 51-80.

Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) with the rhetoric of the fascist regime to rationalise industrial and agricultural production, promote hygienic and efficient living standards and foster in citizens a militant mass identity in the service of the state. *Corporazioni* were officially instituted by law in January 1934, even though they were present in the first fascist program of 1919. As seen, fascism selectively reappropriated characteristics of medieval cities, from architecture to administrative structure (*gilde*, *podestà*, corporations, etc.).

The magazine *Quadrante*, which was the principal vehicle of diffusion of corporativist urbanism, opposed the anti-urban policies of *Strapaese*, proposing, instead, urban projects that could help shape a fascist mass identity. The hybrid of corporativism and CIAM prerogatives was based on the efficient distribution and organisation of populations and industries gathered under a powerful central authority – whom *Quadrante* found in Mussolini. CIAM concern with promoting physical and mental health through architecture was interpreted in the Italian context with the fascist rhetorical promotion of masculinity and athleticism and their urban equivalent of parks and sports facilities. In the same way, CIAM positions on working-class districts were interpreted through the regime's lens of increasing the birth rate and lowering the spread of diseases. CIAM conferences (from 1928 to 1933) dealt with housing issues and the idea of a functional city, finding in city planning the most relevant concern of modern architecture. Attesting the attention of Italian architects to the international debate, the Italian architects (all Rationalists), who participated in these conferences, presented their project for five cities (Como, Genoa, Rome, Verona and Littoria) to represent specific urban typologies. In the issue of *Quadrante* no. 13 published in 1934, as Rifkind reports, there was an article by Banfi and Belgioioso titled "Urbanistica anno XII – le città corporative" that, while introducing the inauguration of Sabaudia, equated agriculture and architecture as human practices that bring order on the natural world. They also linked the gridiron plan of the city to the moral order brought by fascism on the masses, extending corporativism's power to the social and political sphere of domestication and education of people. Moreover, Bottoni, in his

exhibition catalogue *Urbanistica*<sup>214</sup>, among the tasks of urbanism common to CIAM – housing, production, recreation and circulation – also added “collective life”, stressing once again the importance of buildings as tools for controlling and guiding citizens.

After the battle of the wheat (*battaglia del grano*) in 1925, the imposition of *Quota 90* in 1926, the financial crisis of 1929, the injunction of the economic sanctions by the League of the Nations, and the declaration of autarky in 1936, the relationship with the territory also changed. The land intended as the place of agriculture, cities, industries and internal migrations due to unemployment had to be manipulated, altered, conquered, and put to use; in this perspective, town planning was the discipline called to answer all these political choices on a national basis. The need to plan the territory in its entirety emerged, starting from the land reclamation in 1928 to the development of a specific scientific discipline addressed in schools of architecture: urbanism. In 1930 the Istituto Nazionale dell'Urbanistica (National Institute of Urbanism) was founded, followed by in 1931 the magazine *Urbanistica* and in 1932 the book series *Collana di urbanistica* by Giovannoni. In 1933 a specialisation course in urbanism was launched at the University of Architecture in Rome to create a new figure of the architect who could embrace the regime's anti-urban policy by organising technical control over the city and the territory. The urbanistic law of 1942 (Legge 17 agosto 1942, n. 1150) was fundamental in structuring on a national level the predisposition of *piani regolatori territoriali* and *comunali* (territorial and local plans) as proper tools to plan cities. So, architects started to plan cities intended as urbanistic models<sup>215</sup>, which, though, were strongly influenced and managed by financial capital through banks and *Consorti*.

Mussolini blamed industrial urbanisation for being the cause of social problems such as unemployment and unhealthy living

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<sup>214</sup> Bottoni P., *Urbanistica*, 1938. Exhibition catalogue, Hoepli, Milano

<sup>215</sup> Piacentini in 1934 defined the city an urbanistic model and Bardi called Sabaudia the best Italian urban complex. Cfr G, Ciucci, *L'urbanista negli anni '30: un tecnico per l'organizzazione del consenso*, in S. Danesi, L. Patetta (a cura di) *Il razionalismo e l'architettura in Italia durante il Fascismo*, Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, 1976 p.29

conditions; whereas ruralisation and agriculture were perceived as the solution to several issues, providing employment (through land reclamation, *battaglia del grano*, public infrastructures), reverse internal migration (from cities and poor regions of Italy to new lands that needed to be redeemed) and a healthier lifestyle (small new towns instead of suburbs). These mechanisms of clearing the city centre from the poor paralleled those adopted in other countries in the nineteenth century, all linked to health, social unrest and crime<sup>216</sup>. The official decentralisation policy was based on clearing out squalid inner-city housing and moving people to low-density suburbs or *borgate*. So, decentralisation and de-urbanisation policies led to the creation of new working-class suburbs and to the foundation of new towns. Between 1932 and 1933, several new towns were founded in Agro Pontino (Sabaudia, Pontinia, Littoria and Aprilia), which became one of the major successes of fascist propaganda. As Pennacchi<sup>217</sup> notes, it is quite ironic to observe that a policy of ruralisation produced, instead, a huge number of new towns: according to his inventory, in the 1930s were founded 147 new cities only in Italy. Moreover, as Ghirardo argues<sup>218</sup>, the operations of land reclamation and slum clearance often masked more venal interests, such as speculation and acquiring property.

So, one of the major consequences of urban policy development was *sventramenti* of city centres. These operations entailed the demolition of old and unhealthy dwellings or entire blocks and isolating historical monuments or archaeological sites. Of course, *sventramenti* were not invented by fascism, they were already part of city plans and hygienic operations dating back to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, which aimed to eradicate or limit spreading diseases (e.g. the *risanamento* in Naples in 1885 against cholera). However, the difference between *risanamenti* and urban demolitions during fascism was that the latter were motivated by ideological reasons linked, for instance, to the myth of *romanità*, rather than urban necessities. Nevertheless, even if the cult of Rome was exalted,

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<sup>216</sup> Ghirardo, 2013, p. 48

<sup>217</sup> Pennacchi A., 2008. *Fascio e martello. Viaggio per le città del Duce*, Laterza, Bari, p. 287-293

<sup>218</sup> Ghirardo, 2013, p. 48

how they treated archaeological sites was completely insensitive to their conservation and extremely manipulative for ideological or pragmatic necessities. Rome has been and still is a large field of study on this issue<sup>219</sup> because here the extension of fascist demolition reached an unprecedented level.

Starting from 1934, the failure of fascist an urban policy began to manifest: the land reclamation work slowed down, internal migration toward big cities started again and the repatriation of veterans and civilians from AOI worsened the unemployment rate.

The public architectural competitions (*concorsi*) were the major tool used to define a project for a public building, but they also served as a propaganda tool to foster the imagination of people on the State as a building machine. In addition to these, it must be acknowledged the importance of public competitions, in the 1930s, as crucial places for the definition of a national style<sup>220</sup>. Indeed, the real objective of the members of jury was a much broader one than choosing the best project for a particular case: they aim at directing and influencing the language of Italian architecture on a national level; this is why the technical relations accompanying the winning projects were real critical essay and not just bureaucratic memorandum. In 1933 the general secretary of National Fascist Union of Architects (*Sindacato nazionale fascista degli architetti*), Alberto Calza Bini, stressed the importance of public competitions to gather the best ideas and energies, which were generally prevented by the incompetence of public offices and by local monopolies. This makes evident - a part from a legitimation of the *Sindacato* - on one side, the presence of corruption and inefficiency of the public offices, and on the other, the increasing centralized control over architectural productions through public competitions. The years 1933-1934 were the more prolific in terms of architectural competitions (40 in 1933 and 53

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<sup>219</sup> More on this subject: Cederna A., 1979. *Mussolini urbanista. Lo sventramento di Roma negli anni del consenso*, Laterza, Bari; P. Nicoloso, *Mussolini architetto Propaganda e paesaggio urbano nell'Italia fascista*, Einaudi, 2011; P. Nicoloso, *Architetture per un'identità italiana*, Gaspari, 2012; E. Gentile, *Fascismo di pietra*, Laterza, 2007; H. Höckerberg, *Architecture as propaganda in twentieth-century totalitarian regimes. History and heritage*, Polistampa, 2018; among others.

<sup>220</sup> *Ivi*, p. 130

in 1934), among which there were the ones for the Florence train station, Sabaudia, the postal offices and Palazzo Littorio in Rome. Even if Milan, Rome and Naples were the cities more interested by public competitions, their diffusion on the territory confirmed that as the principal public procedure: 129 cities used public competition, among which 50 for town plans and 27 for CDF<sup>221</sup>. The centralisation of control also came through the composition of the juries of public competitions, which were almost managed in a monopolistic manner: on 270 competitions, Piacentini was part of the jury 46 times, Giovannoni 43 times, Calza Bini 37 times – in total they supervised half of all the public architectural competitions. Piacentini was on the commission of all major national competitions<sup>222</sup>, as also Giovannoni and Calza Bini; so, a strategic axis between Piacentini and Calza Bini undeniably privileged their pupils and followers. At the end of 1930s, this trend peaked when more than one architect won the competitions (*premi ex equo*) and was obliged to work together, compromising their projects. Piacentini usually intervened in their drawings by correcting them to give a common unified style to the overall project. Sometimes the work was even assigned to architects who failed the competition and were directly appointed. This opened up to a system of favouritism and intercessions which became the rule during Fascism and somehow persists today.

In conclusion, on one hand, a coherent architectural fascist style is not identifiable; on the other hand, according to Tunbridge and Ashworth and other authors, dissonant heritage theory hypothesises that architecture has a dissonant characteristic which reflects the problematic relationship that people have with a certain past. If dissonance has to be detected in architecture itself

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<sup>221</sup> Cfr. Nicoloso P., 2000. I concorsi di architettura durante il fascismo, *Casabella*, vol. 64

<sup>222</sup> Piacentini is in the commission for: Palazzo di Giustizia in Milan, Florence station, Palazzo del Littorio in Rome, piazza Duomo in Milan, via Roma in Bologna, Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and Piazza Imperiale in E42, town plans of Milan, Brescia, Verona, Genova, Bologna. Giovannoni for: Postal office in Naples and in Rome, Palazzo del Littorio, town plans of Verona, Pisa, Cagliari, Catania, Palermo, Aprilia and Sabaudia. Calza Bini for: cathedral of La Spezia, Palazzo delle Finanze in Bari, postal offices in Rome, Palazzo Littorio, Piazza Imperiale in E42, 9 competitions in Naples, town plans of Catania and Verona. Read more in Nicoloso, 2000



or rather in the relationship between people and the building has been discussed in the previous chapters, in which it has been highlighted how it cannot be understood as an intrinsic element of the building but rather it changes according to the interpretations of people in time. However, the peculiarity of CDF as the representation of the fascist regime, and the use of architecture by Mussolini as a tool to shape the character of a nation, question in some way the supposed passivity of its built legacy.

### Chapter 3 – Methodology and selection of case studies

#### 4.1 The object of the study: *Casa del Fascio as a building typology*

Among all the institutions and related building typologies created by fascism, the CDF as PNF headquarter was the most ubiquitous and diffused on the territory. According to the Dictionary of fascism<sup>223</sup> the CDF was a sort of political religion temple created by Mussolini; they were called *chiese della nostra fede* (church of our faith) and *altari della religione della Patria* (altars of the religion of the Nation) on Popolo d'Italia in 1923. The CDF was intended as a sacral place devoted to the liturgy of fascism. This idea characterised CDF since the beginning: on 28 October 1923, Mussolini, during an inauguration speech, stressed the importance of CDF as sacral places for the veneration of the fallen of the First World War. In this sense, they were mystical spaces for the communion of life and death, highly central in the ritualisation of fascism.

Pietrogrande<sup>224</sup> stresses the relationship between CDF and the church in a twofold way: from an urbanistic perspective, the main elements of the city were the secular power (Town Hall), the religious power (church) and the fascist power (CDF). The fascist force and the church competed in the urban space through their representative buildings actively. This can be seen also on an architectural level; indeed, CDF aimed at becoming the churches of the new secular religion of fascism and so they replicated some building features of churches (such as the tower with the bell<sup>225</sup>, the sacrarium) and the central position in the city (generally in the major square). The CDFs were the refuge of the fascist community, as the churches were the refuge of Christians. The sacrarium was the religious chapel (which usually displayed relics of martyrs or *gagliardetti*) inside the palace of political power, while also embodying the founding myths of fascism (war,

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<sup>223</sup> "Casa del Fascio", in De Grazia V., Luzzatto S., 2002. *Dizionario del Fascismo. Vol 1 A-K*, Einaudi, Torino

<sup>224</sup> Pietrogrande, 2014, p. 30

<sup>225</sup> "Nel 1932 Achille Starace, segretario nazionale del PNF, decise che ogni CDF dove avere una torre littoria, con tanto di campane da suonare per annunciare i riti del regime." *Dizionario del Fascismo*, p. 255

death, virility, nation, heroism). Emilio Gentile<sup>226</sup> studied the religious character of fascism - the *culto del littorio* - which he described as based on an initial experience of faith and exaltation; so, the participation to *fasci* was lived as a consecration act. However, fascism was a syncretic religion that borrowed elements and symbols from different materials: from the cult of war and violence to the idea of *romanità*, together with Christian rituals and metaphors. Among these, the war on symbols affected mainly the buildings (e.g. the attack on *Avanti!* headquarter in 1919, and attacks and conquest of different town halls). The *squadristi* expeditions were symbolic acts of destruction of the enemy and liberation of cities, with the consequential purification of places and the exposition of the national flag. It is interesting to notice how these attacks that took place against socialist institutions and Case del Popolo during fascism, were replicated after the fall of the regime by communist and socialist parties against fascist places, endorsing the same symbolic reappropriation and conquest of public spaces. It was a war of symbols which became a war of occupation of spaces and buildings. For this same reason, many CDFs were installed in former Case del Popolo as a political act.

The building and concept of CDF had been influenced (if not, again, borrowed) from the Case del Popolo. De Michelis, who studied the diffusion of Case del Popolo from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the Second World War <sup>227</sup>, drew their evolution: from an informal initial phase in which people used to gather in *osterie* (where the sense of community and mutuality defined working-class tradition), then in *circoli* (where they started organising leisure activities), to *cooperative del lavoro* and finally to Case del Popolo (with a proper name, iconography and symbols). Cooperatives and Case del Popolo generally offered consume-related services such as goods and food (bakery, *spaccio*), services related to job offerings and working conditions, but also leisure activities like the theatre (*teatro operaio*). They were diffused mainly in Northern and Central Italy, but they were almost absent

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<sup>226</sup> Gentile E., 1993. *Il culto del Littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia Fascista*, Laterza, Bari, pp. 39 - 60

<sup>227</sup> De Michelis M. (a cura di), 1986. *Case del Popolo. Un'architettura monumentale del moderno*, Marsilio, Venezia

in the South. This type of institution and welfare services were provided not only by communists but also by Catholics (with a capillary diffusion in the territory) and by republicans (mainly in Romagna and Tuscany). At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Camere del lavoro* started to be opened, especially in Piedmont, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Liguria and Venice. In contrast, in Southern Italy, they were still absent (except for Naples and Palermo). Following a similar evolution, CDF borrowed the idea from Case del Popolo and Catholic welfare associations and tried to substitute them on the territory. Indeed, the functions of CDF were very similar -if not identical- to those of Case del Popolo and they included three major functions: hosting the headquarter of the PNF (offices, conference rooms, squares for *adunate*), providing leisure activities for the people and workers (*dopolavoro*), spreading physical and cultural education (gym, theatre, cinema, libraries).

As Pietrogrande<sup>228</sup> recalled in his study on Padua province, there were different phases of the increasing control by fascism through the construction of CDF: the first phase - from 1920s to the begin of 1930s- when there was not an official headquarter and Fascists gathered in taverns (*osterie*), as happened for Case del Popolo ; the second one -in mid-1930s- when the construction of CDF began, some as *ex novo* buildings some others as restoration of existing buildings; the third phase - from 1936 to 1940 - when the federal changed and he built new CDF; finally, from 1940 when the main interventions were maintenance of the built environment and no more CDFs were built. This path was clearly related to the historical evolution of fascism (from movement to regime and then to empire). It also suggested tension between local powers and federals and how personal relations of different federals could make a difference from an urbanistic point of view.

Flavio Mangione is the main historical and architectural reference concerning CDF; indeed his publications<sup>229</sup> are fundamental to establishing CDF as a building typology and classifying them. He

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<sup>228</sup> Pietrogrande, 2014, pp. 25- 28.

<sup>229</sup> Mangione F., Portoghesi P., Soffitta A. (a cura di), 2006. *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio*, Alinea, Firenze; Mangione F., *Le Case del Fascio in Italia e nelle terre d'Oltremare*, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Roma 2003

identifies some important dates which define the development of a clear typology of CDF: the year 1922 saw the transformation of informal *covi*<sup>230</sup> into the more structured CDF, based on the increasing number of subscriptions to fascism; the year 1932 when the magazine *L'Assalto* published a national competition to define the typology of CDF. This last point was linked to the transition of fascism from a movement to a political party, acquiring power with the March on Rome on 28 October 1922.

From a stylistic perspective, in the first decade (1922-1932), Arpinati (vice secretary of Partito Nazionale Fascista) defined CDF's style in opposition to Case del Popolo's, which were white barracks-like buildings. So, initially, CDF ought to be seen as more aristocratic, similar to 13<sup>th</sup> century *logge dei cavalieri* and municipal palaces, to inspire monumentality and please the aristocratic environment by offering a more refined and less violent face of fascism. In this period, it is frequent to find federal CDF headquarters in existing monumental buildings (as in the case of Livorno, see Chapter 5.2) because of this strategy of image-domestication. The style associated with this initial phase is called *storicismo eclettico*, because it was inspired by medieval municipal palaces without, however, sticking to a clear unified style (e.g. the stylistic *pastiche* of the CDF of Signa). The use of the tower as a symbol of power was consolidated long before fascism: from private families who used to compete with towers inside the same city (e.g. Bologna, San Gimignano), later substituted by municipal palaces, which prohibited the erection of towers higher than the civic one<sup>231</sup>. In general, the disposition around a central square and some typical architectural elements were taken from the medieval tradition of *comuni*. The CDF shared with the municipal palace the tower, the meeting room (*sala dell'assemblea*), which usually in the CDF hosted the theatre, and the *arengo*, which, however, in the CDF assumed a different purpose: for local administrators to

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<sup>230</sup> *Covi* were informal places where Fascists used to gather. It goes back to 1920 the first time that the term *covo* was used to designate Fascist meeting places. The most important one was the *Popolo d'Italia's* headquarter. See Mangione, 2003, p.21

<sup>231</sup> Ghirardo D.Y., Forster K., I modelli delle città di fondazione in epoca fascista, in De Seta C. 1985. (a cura di), *Storia d'Italia, Annali VIII. Insediamenti e territorio*, Einaudi, Torino, p. 643.

proclaim regime decisions' (*arringare*) to the people. As the use of ancient Rome was instrumental in creating a link between the Roman empire and the fascist state, in the same way, the reappropriation of medieval *comuni* suggested an unbroken continuity with that period. This visual continuity with the medieval typology was also intended to make it understandable, to illiterates too, that the CDF was a symbol of state power. It is not incidental that fascism readopted shapes and architectural elements typical of medieval cities, as Ghirardo and Forster argue<sup>232</sup>, since the objective – more or less intentional - was also to propose Mussolini as a sort of new Renaissance's strong man who used to personally rule cities while at the same time preserving institutional and architectural appearances. The readaptation of past medieval and Roman shapes aligned with fascist objectives operated a re-historicization of the same.

Even though CDFs were been built since 1927, it was in 1932 that the magazine *L'Assalto*<sup>233</sup> published a national architectural competition open to all universities to define the typology of future CDFs to renovate the architectural language, to make the building recognisable by people and also to give unity of style. There was a need to control people's leisure time, so CDFs were not only the administrative PNF headquarters but also tools to realise the totalitarian regime. The main aim was to make the CDF the only space for socialisation (*fascistizzazione del tempo libero*), so its central location in the city was fundamental. The competition included the design of three typologies of CDF: for small towns (5.000-10.000 residents), for medium (10.000-30.000 residents) and for big cities (more than 30.000 residents). The jury was composed of architects Arata, Aschieri, Legnani, Pagano and P. M. Bardi, who received more than forty proposals. The winner of the competition for the first type (small towns) was a group of architects from Politecnico di Milano: Gianluigi Banfi, Lodovico Belgioioso, Enrico Peressuti and Ernesto Nathan Rogers (later Gruppo BBPR); the winners of the second type (medium cities)

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<sup>232</sup> Ivi, p. 671 – 672.

<sup>233</sup> The competition was published on *L'Assalto*, on 14 April 1932. The open competition ended up in an exhibition organized at University of Bologna, on 24 May 1932. The jury was composed by architects Pagano, Arata, Aschieri, Legnani and Bardi.

were Luigi Banfi and Ludovico Belgiojoso also from the Politecnico di Milano; for the third type (big cities) the winner was Renzo Bianchi from the university of architecture of Turin. The winning projects were characterised by a Rationalist style and a building peculiarity: they could be divided into elementary modules (standardisation) that could be built at different moments to answer the need for financial flexibility. So, the projects tried to express both functionality in the modularity and the idealisation of fascism in educating the masses. The building typology's main reference was that of Medieval Italy municipal palaces with a conference room, a tower without windows, a balcony and offices. On an architectural and structural basis, Mangione<sup>234</sup> individuates four typologies of CDF: the first one, composed of a single volume building with the tower in different positions (stuck to the main building or detached); the second type, as an L-shape building with the tower in different positions; the third type assigning a function to each volume (e.g. theatre, offices, tower), which was generally chromatically differentiated from each other using different building materials; the fourth type was built one volume at a time (*progettata in lotti*) and it was the most heterogeneous category, for instance here can be found solutions with the entrance and the tower positioned on the angle or the short side of the building, or very simple rectangular buildings. The first typology is the more diffused on the Italian territory. So, essential architectural characteristics of CDF can be summarised as follows:

- *Torre littoria*, sometimes with a bell;
- *Arengario* (balcony) for the speeches of Duce or Federals;
- *Sacrario* (shrine) to honour the fallen of First World War and the mythology of fascism;
- Iconography and symbols of fascism on the facades, on the entrance and as decorations on the internal and external walls (fasces, eagles, Mussolini, Ancient Rome mythology, etc.);
- Mural writings with citations from Mussolini's speeches (in a later phase);

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<sup>234</sup> Mangione, Portoghesi, Soffitta (a cura di), 2006

- Central location in the city, generally in the main square, with space for gatherings in the front.

On a bureaucratic level, CDFs were officially structured in 1921 by the Central Committee<sup>235</sup> who approved the general statute of PNF. The peripheral structure of PNF was composed of *Fasci di Combattimento* (local level), *Federazioni Provinciali* (provincial level), *Delegazioni Regionali* (regional level). Usually, every *Fascio di Combattimento* (more than 20 people) had a CDF, which could alternatively be: a rented building, a newly built headquarter, or a building donated to the PNF. In provincial towns (*capoluoghi di provincia*) there was the Federal headquarter, which was more important in terms of architecture, functions and general appearance. All the party headquarters were called *Casa del Fascio* or *Casa Littorie* without particular distinction; however, some regional ones (*capoluoghi di regione*) were named *Palazzi del Littorio*, because of their parallelepiped form and administrative importance. Hierarchically, CDF could be divided in: federal CDF (*Federazioni*, provincial level), local CDF (*Fasci di Combattimento*) and rural CDF (*centri rurali dell'entroterra e di confine*).

The **federal CDF** was managed and controlled by the federal secretary, who was also in charge of the Provincial Directory<sup>236</sup>. In addition to the functions mentioned above, the federal CDF generally hosted also the archive, the register, the provincial library, the post office, the central phone, the bank, the newspaper and the tourist info points. It could also provide a hotel, a restaurant and a laundry, if the train station lacked them. Given the big dimensions of the federal headquarters, usually fascists organised a public competition to choose the architectural project and collect funds for its realization. Concerning stylistic decisions, the federal CDFs were mainly not modern; indeed projects by

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<sup>235</sup> The Central Committee (Comitato Centrale) was constituted in May 1920 in Milan together with an Executive Commission; it was composed by Farinacci, De Martino, Gorrieri, Bergamo, Sommovigo, De Vecchi, Marsich, Bresciani, Buttafava, Conforto, Zannoni. These two organisms remained active until the Congresso dell'Augusteo on November 1921, which deliberated the transformation of Fasci di Combattimento into a political party (PNF).

<sup>236</sup> The governing bodies of Federations were the Congresso Provinciale (Provincial Congress) and the Direttorio Provinciale (Provincial Directory). The Provincial Directory was composed by the federal secretary, the vice secretary, the administrative secretary and seven *gerarchi*.



architects of the modern movement were rejected - even though appreciated - especially in the second half of 1930s<sup>237</sup>. Architects followed a more classical tradition of square palaces without excessive ornaments. So, even if nowadays the most famous CDF is the Terragni one in Como, choosing Rationalist projects for federal commissions was, in fact, an exception rather than the rule.

On the contrary, for the construction of **local CDF** the modern movement was much more appreciated<sup>238</sup>. The reason resides in the fact that the decision on the project was up to the political secretary, so the diffusion of modern architecture was also subjected to the personal taste of local political secretaries. Generally, local CDFs were organised in single volumes, each dedicated to a specific function, linked by connecting elements; sometimes the volumes were differentiated by heights and building materials. Usually, CDF also had different entrances based on functions; for instance, the cinema theatre had a separate entrance because of its night service when the offices were closed. The most common cladding materials were white plaster, glass ceramics (*vetroceramica*), *litoceramica* and local stones such as travertine. In federal headquarters and local CDF, a recurring theme was the *fuoriscalda*, applied to the building itself or specific elements, such as fasces or the tower. Clearly, it was a strategy to communicate an overwhelming sense of the greatness of fascism and the unity of people as opposed to individual will.

At the end of the 1930s, PNF wanted to intensify its presence on the territory, and so a new architectural competition was launched for the **rural CDF** type. The main objective was to find a practical solution which could be implemented by small towns with a generally poor budget. The essential elements were still the same: one-floor building, the tower detached from the building, and the eagle and the fasces shrine. It was highly recommended to keep the surfaces and the decorations sober and low-cost, to use local

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<sup>237</sup> Portoghesi, Mangione, Soffitta (2006), p. 98. This ambivalent relationship with the modern movement can be seen also in the article of Carlo Belli on *Quadrante*, 28 October 1936, where he proposed to use the CDF of Como as the model for all offices in Italy; but then in the following years architects did exactly the opposite in their projects.

<sup>238</sup> *Ivi*, p. 129.

materials and eventually to build the tower later – depending on the financial availability of the local Fascio<sup>239</sup>.

So, CDFs are the best possible architectural example of the representation of the regime throughout Italy. They were the everyday meeting points between people and the administrative apparatus, but also the place where people got information (radio, newsreels) and jobs and passed their leisure time. They were control stations and, at the same time, representations of the fascist regime, embodying multiple public and everyday functions. Inscriptions, wall writings, and Mussolini's busts dominated the façade and interiors of CDF, so the buildings were highly connotated. Sanza<sup>240</sup> wrote that it is for this strong connection between CDF and their fascist origins that they struggled to find a new role in the post-war period; indeed, they were re-named just adding the prefix "ex" to CDF, keeping in some way their origin even after the fall of the regime. However, as the research will show, this uneasiness in the approach to such connotated buildings and their strong characterization and association with the past regime (as the prefix "ex" in the official documents shows) did not translate in a productive discussion but mainly in a-critical reuse by administrative organs of the State.

#### *4.2 Selection of case studies*

In order to address the architectural ambiguity mentioned before, the focus of this research intercept not the monumental or the exceptional fascist example (like for instance the Foro Italico, or the Colosseo quadrato in Rome), but rather the ordinary fascist-built buildings, such as the CDF in medium provinces. Indeed, the ambiguity of architecture between function/use and the representation of the regime is still intrinsic in the debate nowadays, as it was central in architects' decisions.

So, the selection of case studies has followed three main criteria:

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<sup>239</sup> Portoghesi, Mangione, Soffitta (2006), p. 161-162.

<sup>240</sup> P. Sanza, "TranFORMing. The rebirth of Bolzano's former GIL", in K. B. Jones, S. Pilat (edited by), *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture. Reception and Legacy*, 2020.

- *Ownership criteria.* Only **CDFs owned by the PNF** (meaning buildings acquired by or donated to PNF and new constructions) were included<sup>241</sup>. The ownership criteria, as Mangione remarks<sup>242</sup>, can be seen as a proxy to new constructions since the PNF used to acquire the land to build new CDF (or less frequently to acquire existing buildings to be readapted as CDF). New constructions followed the architectural directions of the regime and so they were supposed to express, more than others, the Fascist language. Moreover, as public property, the reuse embodies an institutional position over what that past represents nowadays, according to dissonant heritage theory.
- *Dimension criteria.* The territorial unit of analysis chosen is the **province** because its level of detail is neither too specific as in the city nor too homogeneous/simplified as in the region: differences can be noted but do not bias the totality of cases. Moreover, the provinces and cities selected are intentionally **medium size** (between 300.000 and 900.000 inhabitants); big metropolitan centres have been avoided because of their level of social complexity and urban specificity, which make them difficult to compare, and because of the extensive existing bibliography on cities like Milan and Rome.
- *Political criteria.* Three provinces have been selected according to their political and electoral history from 1946 until now. The **political maps and the electoral results** are here used as a proxy for the attitude toward the fascist past and heritage. Since the interpretation of local communities should influence the perceived dissonance of fascist buildings, different communities with different political orientations should express different dissonance levels –

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<sup>241</sup> On an esteemed total of circa 9.775 CDFs on the Italian territory, the CDFs owned by the PNF were circa 1.303 (data elaborated from Mangione. There are data missing for the provinces of Milan, Cuneo, Novara and Vicenza). The CDFs which have not been included were the ones in rented buildings and the ones in buildings “*in uso*” (for which the PNF did not pay the rent), whose ownership could rarely be attributed.

<sup>242</sup> Mangione, 2003, Nota metodologica, p. XX

this is the hypothesis that this research tests. Three provinces have been selected based on their affiliation with political parties and electoral history: **Livorno** and PCI (proxy to an attitude of opposition to fascist heritage), **Latina** and MSI (proxy to an attitude of continuity with fascist past), **Treviso** and DC (proxy to an attitude of neutrality and compromise with fascist legacy).

In the entry for the Treccani encyclopaedia on the electoral physiognomy of Italian regions, Corbetta and Passarelli<sup>243</sup> refer back to 1913 André Siegfried's publication<sup>244</sup> where he argued that political opinions are subjected to a geographical distribution based on parties' different domains. Concerning the Italian case, the authors refer to Robert Putnam's *Making democracy work*<sup>245</sup> where he highlighted that Italian history is made of regional histories and for this reason, it varies greatly between geographical areas. He individuates two macro-regions: the Centre-North where the experience of *comuni* helped nourish a sense of civic participation and autonomous government in citizens; and the South where the dynastic governments kept a strong division between rulers and ruled, which has fostered a sense of alienation from the public affairs. In the 1960s the Istituto Cattaneo published, in the series *Quaderni dell'Osservatorio Elettorale*<sup>246</sup>, researches on the behaviour of Italians in the elections from 1946 to 1963 and they found a very strong continuity between it and the territorial characterization. The Istituto detected six geopolitical areas in Italy based on electoral behaviour: the North-West characterised by the development of a working-class movement together with industrial development,

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<sup>243</sup> Corbetta P., Passarelli G., 2015. *Fisionomia elettorale delle regioni italiane*, in "L'Italia e le sue Regioni", Treccani. Available at: [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fisionomia-elettorale-delle-regioni-italiane\\_%28L%27Italia-e-le-sue-Regioni%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/fisionomia-elettorale-delle-regioni-italiane_%28L%27Italia-e-le-sue-Regioni%29/)

<sup>244</sup> Siegfried A., 1913. *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la troisième République*, in A. Colin, 2010. réimp. Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles

<sup>245</sup> Putnam R.D., Leonardi R., Nanetti R. Y., 1994. *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton

<sup>246</sup> *Quaderni dell'Osservatorio Elettorale*, Regione Toscana. Available at: <https://www.regione.toscana.it/-/quaderni-dell-osservatorio-elettorale-1>

the North-East strongly influenced by the clergy (*zona bianca*), the Centre which was anti-clerical and socialist (*zona rossa*), the South characterised by semi-feudal clientelism, and the islands which have autonomous peculiarities. Overall, Italy in the first twenty years of Republican history is divided into two areas of influence subjugated to the two major parties: the red zone with PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano) and the white zone with DC (Democrazia Cristiana). In addition to Istituto Cattaneo, also other recent studies<sup>247</sup> stress the importance of the territory as the only stable variable correlated to the vote, whereas other social variables (such as gender, social class, education, etc.) showed a weaker relation.

Diamanti<sup>248</sup> outlined political maps (based on provinces as a unit of analysis) of Italy based on the relationship between political parties and society from 1948 until the 2000s. He identifies three phases: the first one (from 1948 to the end of 1970s) characterized by mass parties - DC and PCI- which divided Italy into two major areas (DC/white: North-East, Piedmont and Lombardy; PCI/red: Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Centre). In this phase, the territory was central to the political rooting of parties within the population. In the second phase (from the 1980s to 1990s) the independence movements (*leghe autonomiste*) emerged as mass parties with an identity strongly linked to the territory (Lega-Padania). The Lega established its stronghold in the territories previously ruled by DC. In this context the territory was used against the politics: it was a source of a specific identity (Padania - which does not really exist) used in opposition to the South of Italy. The third phase (from the 1990s, the so-called Second Republic) saw the birth of Forza Italia as a personal party whose consensus was detached from the territory and driven by media coverage. Forza Italia was the first party for which the territorial rooting was not an issue, since it used television as the main tool to reach the electors. However, in the dissolution of mass parties, Diamanti noted a continuity of political sentiment from the old parties into the new ones, which also translates on the territory: PD (Partito

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<sup>247</sup> Corbetta, Passarelli, 2015, p. 3.

<sup>248</sup> Diamanti I., 2003. *Mappe dell'Italia politica. Bianco, rosso, verde, azzurro...e tricolore*, il Mulino, Bologna

Democratico) established its electoral base in the former red areas of PCI; PDL (Popolo della Libertà) was voted in central and southern regions; and Lega Nord occupied the north-eastern territories previously governed by DC. Also Piero Ignazi<sup>249</sup> identifies four categories of political parties in Italian republican history: the historical parties that virtually disappeared (PLI, PRI, PSI, PSDI)<sup>250</sup>, the historical but resilient parties (DC, PCI, MSI, Radicali), new parties (Verdi, Lega Nord, Rifondazione Comunista, Forza Italia and their aggregation into PD and PDL) and the newest political party par excellence (Movimento 5 Stelle). So, even if a territorial continuity of political sentiment can be traced, it cannot be said that politics and parties have not changed during Republican history. In general, mass parties relied on political and religious ideologies and were rooted in the territories. In contrast, the independent movements -such as Lega Nord- were moved by an anti-State and anti-parties sentiment that was quite new; lastly, personal parties situated their strength and ideas in the charisma of the leader.

Diamanti explained the relationship with the territory in three ways: (1) the territory as the area of action for parties, where they nurture their electoral base and participation was central; (2) the territory as the administrative unit of government through local leaders; and, finally, (3) the territory as a symbol constitutive for

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<sup>249</sup> Ignazi P., 2018. *I partiti in Italia dal 1945 al 2018*, il Mulino, Bologna.

<sup>250</sup> Partito Liberale Italiano, Partito Repubblicano Italiano, Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano, Partito Socialista Italiano. Cfr Ignazi (2018). This categorization is based on the accepted periodization of First and Second Republic: from 1948 until 1994 seven were the political parties which defined the political arena (DC, PCI, PSI, PSDI, PLI, PRI, MSI), whereas from 1994 the historical parties which survived (DC, PCI, MSI, Radicali) more or less radically changed and led to the formation of new parties. The turning point of the historicization of Italian political history between the so-called First and the Second Republic was determined by the judicial investigation and process "Mani Pulite" in 1992. It resulted in investigating more than 5.000 figures and put more than half of Parliament under indictment. The corruption system of parties was based on the payment of bribes by companies willing to obtain public works' contracts (estimated annual bribes of 6,5 trillion lire) and it was so extensive that it was referred to as "Tangentopoli" (Bribesville). Mani pulite led to the disappearance of several parties which were strongly implicated with corruption.

political identity. Furthermore, his analysis pushed him to identify two macro-areas: one (North-East and Centre) characterised by stability of electoral preferences, and the other one (North-West and South/Mezzogiorno) that witnessed a greater level of instability due to different reasons<sup>251</sup>. However, the election of 1948 clearly showed that the geographical rupture of the electoral basis of MSI followed the Linea Gotica: it gained more than two-thirds of its votes in the South, whereas in the North it provoked harsh reactions from anti-fascist forces, who still remembered the civil war. Its electoral basis was concentrated in the South and especially in Lazio (in the cities of Rome and Latina) and in Sicily, where it collected more than 10%.

Considering the most stable areas, Diamanti divides them on the basis of their political association: the *zona rossa*, which comprehended the Centre affiliated with PCI; and the *zona bianca*, which referred to the North-East ruled by DC. The differences between these two areas regarded the organisation and the presence of the party in the social structure. For instance, the relationship between PCI and society was more at an executive and active level; whereas in the white zones, the presence of DC was mediated by catholic associations and economic organisations such as Coldiretti. The importance of the Church was very relevant in dictating the social, ethical and political behaviour of society; in this sense, the party was used as a tool by the normative barycenter of religion. In white areas, the interest was mainly directed at the community and territorial institutions; indeed people showed adhesion to the party without affiliation. The author identified the provinces of Treviso, Vicenza, Padova, and Verona as the perfect models of this white area. On the contrary, in the red zones the PCI was part of the organisation and identity of the territory, creating a local political community centred around the party. The relationship with society was stronger and more governing, the party was the principal guide for people, who consequently felt more engaged toward political

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<sup>251</sup> North-West's electoral base is defined by high competition between parties, a developed economy and a weak link with ideologies together with a willingness to change vote from one election to the other. The South/Mezzogiorno is characterized by dynamics of clientelism in which local leaders control the votes. Cfr. Diamanti, 2003

issues. During the years, the relationships between parties and the territory changed, leading in the 1980s the PCI to basically replicate its original diffusion while adding to its adjacent regions; whereas the DC's extension changed more dramatically by losing consensus in the North-East while gaining new supporters in the Centre-South. This electoral change weakened the territoriality of white areas because the new regions did not have the same social preconditions as the Northeast. After the 1980s the autonomous movement (Lega) started to replace DC in its same territories.

So, the three provinces have been chosen for their relationship with three specific political parties (PCI, DC, MSI) as a proxy of their expected attitude toward the fascist-built legacy and past from 1946 until today. In addition, all the political parties selected had been fundamental in the postwar memorialisation of the fascist period and the development of the Italian Republic. During fascism, the PCI was the only political party that opposed fascism by resisting clandestinely – mainly under the leadership of Togliatti - during the *Ventennio*, and in 1944-1946 by organizing the Resistance in the North of Italy through the Brigade Garibaldi and the Gruppi d'Azione Patriottica – which consisted for 50% of Resistance groups, exercising the military and political leadership of Resistance<sup>252</sup>. After the armistice with the Allies on 8 September 1943, the PCI, together with other political parties<sup>253</sup> with a clear anti-fascist identity, took part in the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, which unified around the aim of fighting nazi-fascists and the Badoglio government. Togliatti was the first secretary of the

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<sup>252</sup> Galli reports that Brigate Garibaldi counted for two-thirds of total Resistance groups in 1944. Some historiographical sources emphasize the non-partisan (*apartitico*) character of Resistance, arguing that the majority of people who joined the armed groups at the beginning were not politicized. However, during the civil war parties tried to control and enter into the armed groups politicizing and rooting into Resistance their territorial presence (*partitizzazione*). In Galli G., 2021, *Storia del PCI. Il Partito comunista italiano: Livorno 1921, Rimini 1991, La scuola di Pitagora*, Napoli. Cfr. Ignazi, 2018; Filippetta G., 2018. *L'estate che imparammo a sparare. Storia partigiana della Costituzione*, Feltrinelli, Milano

<sup>253</sup> Since traditional parties were abolished in 1926, there was the necessity of reconstructing them in order to maintain a social and political structure. Two main parts emerged: the conservative one composed by monarchists and the popular and working-class one composed by communists, socialists and "Giustizia e libertà" movement. In 1943 they founded the Comitato d'Azione. In G. Galli, 2021, p. 269.270



PCI in the post-war period and had been an influential figure in the reconstruction process, reminded today for his role in the missed epuration of fascists (*amnistia Togliatti*<sup>254</sup>).

On the opposite side, the MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano) was a political party overtly inspired by fascism and was born just one year and a half after the end of the Second World War, in December 1946. It declared itself as the heir of fascism intended in its last version of RSI (Repubblica Sociale Italiana) and its phase of fascism-movement, meaning anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois (referring to the *Carta di Verona* which was published in 1944 as the result of the first Congress of the Republican Fascist Party)<sup>255</sup>. Another peculiar characteristic of MSI was that it nominated people of the ex-fascist regime without hiding it but flaunting it as a source of pride. In 1972, Almirante, the founding leader, regained the leadership of the party and restructured it both at a centralisation and ideological level: he rebranded it as MSI- Destra Nazionale (national right) to dilute the fascist identity, to broaden the consensus and to get accredited as a possible partner to DC. Another normalisation of the presence of the MSI took place in the 1980s from the academic work of Renzo De Felice, who proposed a revisited version of fascism that could be justified as ideological diversity. This changed context led to the possibility of integrating MSI into the political system and being accepted also by left-wing parties<sup>256</sup>. In 1994 MSI officially endorsed Forza Italia and it reached a 13,5% consensus, with the electoral basis mainly based on Lazio and Puglia (more than 25% of votes). However, the international astonishment at the presence of ex and neofascists in the government (like Alessandra Mussolini in MSI) led, in 1995,

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<sup>254</sup> Cfr Franzinelli, 2016

<sup>255</sup> "Si siamo fascisti; ma quei fascisti che si sono battuti per dare all'Italia una legislazione sociale e sindacale, siamo i fascisti dei contratti collettivi di lavoro riconosciuti come leggi, dei sindacati concepiti come libere associazioni di liberi lavoratori democraticamente organizzati (...) siamo i fascisti che si sono battuti per la partecipazione dei lavoratori alla gestione e agli utili delle imprese" from "Rivolta Ideale", August 1947 in Ignazi P., 1994. *Postfascisti? Dal Movimento sociale italiano ad Alleanza Nazionale*, il Mulino, Bologna, p. 12.

<sup>256</sup> Bettino Craxi (PSI) opened to MSI for possible coalitions. However, the coalition MSI-PSI never took place. Another sign of opportunistic political openness came from the visit of Almirante and Romualdi to the funeral chamber of communist Enrico Berlinguer in 1984.

to the end of MSI and to the constitution of Alleanza Nazionale, assimilating more than 90% of ex-MSI members<sup>257</sup>.

Finally, as the heir of Partito Popolare Italiano by Don Luigi Sturzo, DC was constituted in the postwar period, in 1943, on the values of Resistance and anti-fascism under the leadership of Alcide De Gasperi. It took part in the Resistance and the CLN<sup>258</sup> together with PCI and other parties. During the Cold War, it was the political stronghold against communism by conducting a compromise policy, sustaining the middle class and the private enterprise, following a predicament of Christian solidarity that rejected class struggle. The DC was in the government from 1944 to 1994 when it was dissolved due to the Bribesville process. DC's former politicians were divided mainly into two groups: the centre-left and the center-right ones, to whom referred different parties<sup>259</sup>. However, as already said, the majority of former DC's electoral base migrated toward the Lega Nord.

In conclusion, Italian political and electoral history had a strong relationship with the memorialisation of fascism and Resistance and with the reconstruction of post-war Italian identity, which of course, also influenced the management of the fascist-built legacy. Acknowledging the different political closeness of parties toward fascism, helped in selecting the three case studies that are representative of three major sentiments toward that past: continuity, reconciliation and opposition. As it has been described, Livorno is the city where the PCI was born and has been the stronghold of the communist party also in the postwar

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<sup>257</sup> Ignazi (1994) reports that AN was born on 23 January 1994, but in Ignazi (2018) it is reported 1995 as the foundation year.

<sup>258</sup> CLN was a political organization born on 9 September 1943 and lasted until 1947, its aim was organizing the Resistance and opposing Nazi-Fascism by supporting the Allies. It was an inter-parties national formation composed by PCI, DC, Partito d'Azione, Partito Liberale Italiano, Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria, Partito Democratico del Lavoro.

<sup>259</sup> Center-left parties: Partito Popolare Italiano and Centro Cristiano Democratico, which would later ally with PDL. In 2002 PPI suspended its activity and converged into the Margherita, together with other lay, socialist and liberal components. In 2007 it adhered to PD. Centre-right parties: Centro Cristiano Democratico (which would join Forza Italia) and Unione Democratica per la Repubblica (later UDEUR). In 2002 CCD became UDC. In 2014 UDC joins the centre-right (Nuovo Centro Destra). Cfr Ignazi, 2018.

period; it is the perfect representation of the electoral behaviour of the red zone. Treviso, as previously said, is the city model for the DC local administration and later also for its endorsement of Lega. Latina adds its origin of city of foundation - born during and by Fascism - to its electoral base, reflecting (and still reflecting) extreme right feelings. The aim of the research is to verify if those different sentiments are linked to effective different management of the architectural fascist legacy, as it ought to be according to the dissonant theory. The research in collecting data on the reuse, restoration or demolition of ex-CDF in those provinces, tries to verify and somehow measure dissonance, or eventually its lack of dissonance.

### 4.3 *The sample*

In order to select the sample, the first important data to collect was to understand the total number of CDFs in Italy and then the total number of PNF-owned CDFs and their distribution. As it is shown in Figure 1, the distribution of all the CDF (PNF-owned, rented and granted for free use) on the Italian territory is quite homogeneous between the north, the centre and the south of the country, amounting to an estimated total of circa 9.775<sup>260</sup>. However, if compared with Figure 2, which shows the distribution of the percentage of PNF-owned CDFs in the Italian provinces, some areas come up as the most populated. In particular, the Agro Pontino, with a totality of owned CDF, followed by Tuscany, the eastern part of Emilia Romagna and Veneto. This data were important to understand which provinces had the highest concentration of PNF-owned CDF, which is one of the main criteria used to select the sample.

Following the criteria mentioned before, the dataset of CDFs selected for the three case studies is composed of a total of 56 ex-CDF, respectively 20 in Livorno province, 10 in Latina province, and 20 in Treviso province. Indeed, on a total of 339 CDFs in Tuscany, of which 24 are in the province of Livorno, with 20 of them owned by the PNF. In Veneto, there were approximately 151

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<sup>260</sup> Data elaboration from Mangione 2003. In this total some provinces (Milan, Vicenza, Novara, Gorizia, Frosinone, Cuneo) have uncertain data and missing documentation. Colonies outside Italian territory (*Oltremare*) are not included in this total.

CDFs, of which 23 were in the province of Treviso, with 20 of them properties of the PNF. In Littoria/Latina all the CDFs were the property of the ONC and PNF, since they were new constructions derived from the land reclamation works, but I selected only the CDF of new towns, excluding the *borghi*.

Although *borghi* can be included in the category of new towns, they were meant to provide basic services to the workers, not become urban centers<sup>261</sup>. From 1931 to 1933 six *borghi* were built: Borgo Isonzo, Borgo Piave, Borgo Carso, Borgo Pasubio, Borgo Bainsizza and Borgo Faiti, all named after World War I battle locations. Then, from 1933 to 1935 another round<sup>262</sup> of *borghi* was built with this new function of minimal urban centres: San Donato, Littoria Scalo, Borgo Ermada, Borgo Vodice, Borgo Montenero. The new needs and the huge number of migrants from the North forced the ONC to change the function of these *borghi*: still functioning as service centres, they started to become small fractions of major cities. However, it is not possible to homologize the development and morphology of all the *borghi*, since each of them developed in a specific way. Still, for the purposes of this research, the *borghi* are not taken into consideration in a dedicated manner because, as said, they were not planned as urban/rural centres but just as service centres, and so many of them did not even have the CDF.

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<sup>261</sup> As Pennacchi remembers, they were not the result of town planning but instead, they were practical solutions found by hydraulic technicians, with no urbanistic competences, who needed to drain the water and build the roads. Indeed, it was necessary to move machineries and workers to the marshes in order to do their job, so they needed storage for the first and dormitories for the second. In this sense, the *borghi* were born even before roads, that is why they were positioned at the crossroads of the main streets, against every urbanistic suggestion of the time. So, they were not planned as urban nucleus at the beginning, some of them became so in the following decades, some others just were obliterated by major cities. Cfr. Pennacchi, 2008; Pennacchi A., Vittori M., 2001. I *borghi* dell'Agro Pontino, *Decimo quaderno del Novecento*, pp. 35 -67.

<sup>262</sup> Pennacchi proposes a classification of *borghi* divided in three generations: first generation which includes two subgroups, the ones made by Consorzio in rural-liberty style (1927-29) and the ones also made by Consorzio but in a rationalist style (1933-35). The second generation made by ONC from 1931 to 1933, and the third generation built by ONC from 1934-35. This last generation will become the model for all the following *borghi* di servizio in South Italy and in the African colonies. In Pennacchi, Vittori, 2001.

In the same way, both in the case of Littoria/Latina and of Livorno I excluded the islands for relevance and comparability reasons.

#### 4.4 Archives and data collection

The primary sources of the research are the documents of several archives: Archivio Centrale di Stato in Rome, Archivio di Stato in Livorno, Archivio della Prefettura in Livorno, Archivio del Demanio in Livorno, Archivio di Stato in Latina, Casa dell'Architettura in Latina, Archivio Comunale in Aprilia, Archivio di Stato in Treviso, Archivio Comunale in Treviso.

In particular, the archival funds for each case studies are:

##### 1) Latina/Littoria:

- a) Archivio Centrale di Stato di Roma, fondo PNF 3731 buste 1127, 1126, 1128; fondo ONC 3996 buste 54, 19, 51, 30, 25; fondo MRF 3707 busta 5;
- b) Archivio di Stato di Latina, fondo "Genio Civile. Ufficio di Latina", serie "Opere pubbliche già Comuni", fasc. 739/b, 741/a, 817/f, 982/a, 1069/c, 1137/c, 1210/f, 29/a, 34/p, 46/e, 331/g, 331/i, 682/a, 685/a, 638/a, 639/a, 640/a, 641/a, 641/b, 642/a, 643/a, 644/a, 645/a, 677/b, 688/b, 694/c, 722/c, 734/c; serie "Opere pubbliche già Varie", fasc. 8/b, 5/a, 15/i; fondo ONC, "Carteggio", busta 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 26, 29, 62, 81, 130, 128, 140, 141, 143, 145, 151, 153, 167, 172.
- c) Archivio del Comune di Sabaudia, Ufficio Tecnico, fondo ONC, b.1 f.1, b.1 f.2, b.1 f.3.
- d) Archivio Casa dell'Architettura, fondo Gino Cancellotti; fondo ONC (riproduzioni dell'ACS).

##### 2) Livorno:

- a) Archivio Centrale di Stato di Roma, fondo PNF 3731 buste 1616, 1134, 1136, 1137, 1138, 1139, 1140, 1142; fondo MRF 3707 busta 5;
- b) Archivio di Stato di Livorno: ASLi, Prefettura di Livorno, busta inv. n. 212, Gabinetto Case del Fascio (1953-1962), Fasc. 1, 4.3, Fasc. 2, 15.6.6, Fasc. 3, 15.6.6, Fasc. 4, 15.6.6, Fasc. 5, 15.6.6, Fasc. 6, 15.6.6, Fasc. 7, 15.6.6, Fasc. 8, 15.6.6, Fasc. 9, 15.6.6, Fasc. 10, 15.6.6, Fasc. 11, 15.6.6, Fasc. 12, 15.6.6, Fasc. 13, 15.6.6;

- c) Demanio archive: internal research on their database done by the staff.
- 3) Treviso:
- a) Archivio Centrale di Stato di Roma, fondo PNF 3730 buste 1624, 1621, 1622, 1623; fondo MRF 3707 busta 11;
  - b) Archivio di Stato di Treviso, fondo Prefettura di Treviso, II Versamento (1911-1947), serie 2, fascicoli 6, 8; fondo Prefettura di Treviso, Affari Speciali Comuni, serie III (1944-46), buste 1325, busta 1326 fascicolo 21, busta 1327 fascicolo 22, busta 1328 fascicolo 23, busta 1329 fascicolo 24, busta 1332 fascicolo 27, busta 1345 fascicolo 40, busta 1346 fascicolo 41, busta 1353 fascicolo 48, busta 1364 fascicolo 59, busta 1365 fascicolo 60; busta 1368 fascicolo 63, busta 1369 fascicolo 64, busta 1372 fascicolo 67, busta 1384 fascicolo 79, busta 1385 fascicolo 80, busta 1394 fascicolo 89, busta 1400 fascicolo 95, busta 1401 fascicolo 96, busta 1404 fascicolo 99, buste da 1405 a 1412, busta 1415 fascicolo 110, busta 1416 fascicolo 111, busta 1419 fascicolo 114, buste da 1421 a 1423; fondo Prefettura, II serie (1928-49), Affari Speciali dei Comuni, busta 1278 fascicolo 50, busta 1280 fascicolo 152, busta 1281 fascicolo 153, busta 1282 fascicolo 154, busta 1284 fascicolo 156, busta 1287 fascicolo 158, busta 1288 fascicolo 160, busta 1289 fascicolo 161, busta 1290 fascicolo 162, busta 1292 fascicolo 164, busta 1293 fascicolo 165, busta 1294 fascicolo 166, busta 1295 fascicolo 167, busta 1295 fascicolo 167, busta 1296 fascicolo 168, busta 1297 fascicolo 169, busta 1298 fascicolo 170, busta 1299 fascicolo 171; fondo CLN Sezione Conegliano, busta 1 (1945/1946) ex b. 50 PNF;
  - c) Archivio ISTRECO, fondo Caporizzi / Comando Militare, busta 001; fondo Provinciale di Treviso, buste 1, 11, 2;
  - d) Archivio storico del Comune: scattered documents (no catalogue).

Limitations to this research come from the lack or inaccessibility to some archival resources. Indeed, the Municipal archives of Sabaudia, Pomezia, Aprilia and Pontinia were under re-organization (Pomezia, Aprilia) or were lost (Sabaudia, Pontinia). Moreover, the availability and collaborative attitude of the Demanio and of the Prefettura were not the same in all of the three

provinces, so the case of Treviso is limited for this reason. Further research should include those archives and documents that have been forcibly left out on this occasion.

The types of documents in the archives analyzed are the following:

- documents coeval to the Fascist time, which comprehend PNF documents and correspondence between central bodies and local administrations; architectural projects, plans and public competitions; local newspaper reporting news about the construction of CDF. The purposes of this documentation are to identify the different CDF in cities and provinces; to acknowledge the aims of the architect and of PNF administrators regarding the architecture and location of the building; to understand the financing and fundraising of these construction projects; to detect the dynamics of power and control over cities between the central administration and the local branches.
- documents after the fall of the regime, which include documentation of the transition between the regime and the Republic (“Gestione Stralcio PNF”, mainly financial); correspondence between local administrators and other local groups of interest (political parties, the church, etc.) about the use or appropriation of the ex-CDF building; newspaper writing about reuses or restoration of ex-CDF; official documentation between the central administration and local mayors. The purpose of these documents is to understand which were the institutional motivations for the reuse, demolition or neglect of ex-CDF and how they changed from 1945 until now.

In total, approximately 3.935 papers<sup>263</sup> compose the archival documental basis of this research, respectively 1.124 papers for the Livorno case, 1.409 papers for the Littoria/Latina and 1.409 papers for the Treviso ones, including contracts, projects, drawings, and letters.

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<sup>263</sup> The number indicates the photographic reproductions of documents (one page per photo), not the exact number of documents, which may be composed of more than one page.

Concerning the archival documentation, the main secondary sources are the already mentioned publications by Flavio Mangione<sup>264</sup>, which are an attempt of organizing the archival material of Archivio Centrale di Stato. In relation to that specific publication, this research updated some information which were incorrect, especially regarding the property of the CDF of the three provinces taken as case studies. Indeed, the Mangione catalogue divided the CDFs according to their property, but the reference for that information was the national census of the real estate properties of the PNF, which was launched on a national level in 1937. This research instead, updated the information on the actual property of the CDFs after 1937 and until the end of the regime.

Moreover, the data found in the archives about the contemporary reuses of ex-CDF have been checked and updated through fieldwork composed of on-site and in-person inspections. When possible, the on-site identification of the ex-CDF was done starting from archival data (drawings, addresses, etc.), so the accuracy of the findings is very high. For instance, in the case of Livorno, the on-site inspections were done before the check on the contemporary reuses with the Demanio, resulting in the correct identification of the buildings and reuses in the totality of the cases.

#### 4.5 Methodology

The methods used in this research are qualitative and they address the institutional perspective on the reuse of public spaces and architectures. This choice reflects one of the main innovation points of this research: a shift in the analysis from the solely architectural and stylistic perspective in favour of a multi-perspective that includes the fundraising and ownership one, the historical reconstruction one, and the community-media one. It can be said that the overall methodology used in this research is a phenomenological one, including different perspectives to look at the phenomenon of the reuse of the CDFs from 1945 until now. In

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<sup>264</sup> F. Mangione, P. Portoghesi, A. Soffitta (a cura di), *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio*, Alinea, 2006; F. Mangione, *Le Case del Fascio in Italia e nelle terre d'Oltremare*, Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato, Roma 2003; F. Mangione, A. Soffitta, *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio nella Regione Lazio*, Alinea, 2004.



this sense, the importance of the context is central in the analysis of cultural heritage decisions.

As Bryman reminded:

*Most qualitative researchers when writing about their craft emphasize a preference for treating theory as something that emerges out of the collection and analysis of data. (...) practitioners of grounded theory—a frequently cited approach to the analysis of qualitative data—especially stress the importance of allowing theoretical ideas to emerge out of one’s data. But some qualitative researchers argue that qualitative data can and should have an important role in relation to the testing of theories as well.*<sup>265</sup>

In this case, the research aims at testing the dissonant heritage theory in the Italian case (presence or absence of dissonance, relationship between difficult heritage and reuse) by applying grounded theory to it. Indeed, the results will provide a theoretical outcome that can readdress the dissonant heritage theory and propose new theoretical frameworks, coming from the collection and interpretation of the data. Bryman continued: “qualitative research subsumes several diverse research methods that differ from each other considerably<sup>266</sup>”. So, a multi-methods approach is here used and, among the ones he mentioned, two are the methods used in this occasion: language-based approaches to the collection of qualitative data (discourse analysis, semiotic, hermeneutics), and the collection of texts and documents (historical research). Using historical research methods in studying the uses of the past in organisations, and using archival sources as a way to look at how representations become encoded within an organization are among the methodological innovations claimed by Wadhvani<sup>267</sup>. Moreover, he argues that the ethical use of the past connected with choices of identity, values and goals should be addressed: “are there moments when organizations should turn to the past to challenge and confront

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<sup>265</sup> Bryman A., 2012. *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 384.

<sup>266</sup> Bryman, 2012, p. 383.

<sup>267</sup> Wadhvani et al., 2018, p. 1675.

those values, self-identities, and ways of seeing the world rather than using the past to enforce them?"<sup>268</sup>. These methodological and thematical suggestions are very relevant to this research, even if it does not address traditional organisations but enlarge the perspective to the institutional dimension of the Republican administration,

In particular, following the steps of the qualitative research in Bryman<sup>269</sup>, for Step 2 (selection of the cases) a theoretical sampling – purposive sampling to be specific – has been adopted, as explained in the previous paragraphs. Purposive sampling means that the selection of the cases has a direct reference to the research questions and that “the goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed<sup>270</sup>”. So, starting from the research questions and the aim of testing the dissonant heritage theory, some criteria in order to choose the cases have been previously explained (property, size, province, electoral history) and the selection of the three units of analysis has followed accordingly.

Concerning Step 3 (collection of relevant data), as anticipated in the previous paragraphs, the collection of data is based on: archival research, field inspections, bibliographical research, and desktop research on newspaper articles. So, the typologies of documents used are official documents of the State to reconstruct the history of the decisions over the construction/reuse of CDF from the owner’s perspective; mass media documents (articles) to analyse the potential conflicts which aroused in the community for those decisions; and field inspections to witness and map the state of the building and the changes that occurred in time.

As for Steps 4 and 5 (Interpretation of data, Conceptual and theoretical work), the methods used are qualitative content analysis of documents (in particular critical discourse analysis), semiotics, and hermeneutics. Qualitative content analysis is here

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<sup>268</sup> Ivi, p. 1676.

<sup>269</sup> Step 1: General research questions; Step 2: Selection of relevant sites/ subjects; Step 3: Collection of relevant data; Step 4: Interpretation of data; Step 5: Conceptual and theoretical work; Step 6: Findings/ conclusions. In Bryman, 2012, pp. 384-387.

<sup>270</sup> Bryman, 2012, p.420.

adopted both for the official State documents in the archives to reconstruct the history of the decisions over the building and in the analysis of the newspaper articles that talk about conflicts over those decisions. The issue of the credibility of the documentary sources has been addressed, indeed what is interesting for this research to understand the reasons and arguments used to support a decision on the use/reuse of the CDF, so the bias and the political interests hidden in the documents are at the centre of the investigation. The political context has always been central in understanding the sources, both in the regime and in the republic, and documents are assumed as texts written with distinctive purposes, not simply as reflecting a supposed objective reality. In this sense, this research adopts a hermeneutic approach, as Bryman reminds: “Qualitative content analysis can be hermeneutic when it is sensitive to the context within which texts were produced<sup>271</sup>”. A semiotic approach has been adopted to read the facades of CDF, their changes, the removal of certain signs and the addition of others in the years. The building is here addressed and analysed as a palimpsest, bearing traces in the signs and symbols and also in their removal/absence.

Hermeneutics together with content analysis, and the adoption of the theoretical framework of Boltanski and Thevenot, concurred to develop (Step 5) a critical discourse analysis<sup>272</sup>. In organisation studies, usually critical discourse analysis seeks to understand how discourses are constructed and maintained concerning certain phenomena. In this specific case, the discourses adopted to justify decisions over the management of fascist heritage are analysed and deconstructed, also with the adoption of the theoretical framework of Boltanski and Thevenot (see Chapter 6). In particular, the analysis observes how: the discourse has changed and evolved from 1945 until now; how the discourse mingles or influences other discourses (or orders of worth); how

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<sup>271</sup> Bryman, 2012, p. 560.

<sup>272</sup> “Critical discourse analysis (CDA) emphasizes the role of language as a power resource that is related to ideology and socio-cultural change. It draws in particular on the theories and approaches of Foucault (e.g. 1977), who sought to uncover the representational properties of discourse as a vehicle for the exercise of power through the construction of disciplinary practices”. In Bryman, 2012, p. 564.

the discourse is constructed through documents (official documents, legislation, articles, etc.); how the discourse gives meaning to social life and makes certain decisions possible, desirable or inevitable; and finally, how actors draw on the discourse to legitimate their positions and actions<sup>273</sup>. The discourse analysis of specific CDF is put in connection with the discourses and justifications used for their use or preservation of other fascist heritage in order to look at it from a general and structural point of view.

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<sup>273</sup> The list of analytic devices in CDA is based on Phillips N., Hardy C., 2002. What is discourse analysis?, in *Discourse Analysis. Investigating processes of social construction*, SAGE University Press, Newbury Park

## Chapter 4.0 – Reuses of Case del fascio

### 5.1 Purchase and financing aspects

In order to give an overview of the three provinces and their specific situation, it is interesting to compare the date of construction or establishment of the CDF (see Figure 3). The term “establishment” here stands for the use of a certain building as a new PNF headquarter, and it includes both new constructions and the institution of the CDF in an existing building. It does not include the buildings rented or granted for free use to the PNF; it only considers the buildings owned and used by the PNF as CDF. So, as can be seen, in 1926, the Livorno province started to establish its CDFs, whereas Treviso started owning its CDFs in 1934, meaning that the institution of CDFs was mainly based on rented buildings before. Littoria’s evolution was coeval to the land reclamation works in the Pontine marshes, so the first establishment of a CDF was Littoria’s in 1933. The increase in the owned CDF from 1934 was due to the systematisation process made by the PNF administrative secretary G. Marinelli<sup>274</sup>, and by the public architectural competition for the definition of a typology of CDF of 1932, which tried to homogenise the style of newly constructed CDF and to provide a basic model for the rural CDF.

As can be seen, also the complexity of the typologies of contracts that the PNF stipulated to acquire buildings or lands where to build the CDF, was different in the three provinces. In Livorno (see Figure 5), a major diversity of acquisition contracts was

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<sup>274</sup> “un impiegato di origine polesana, «temperamento di burocrate sindacale e cooperativo», pignolo ed esigente. Nato ad Adria (Rovigo) il 18 ottobre 1879, Marinelli aveva militato fin da ragazzo nella sinistra rivoluzionaria, era stato anarchico e socialista. Fu fra i primi organizzatori del movimento sindacale e socialista nella provincia di Rovigo, dove rimase fino al 1911 quando si trasferì a Milano, lavorando come amministratore della Federazione delle cooperative e membro della direzione della Camera del lavoro. Nel 1914 aveva fatto parte del comitato d’azione della «settimana rossa» ma, dopo lo scoppio della guerra, aderì all’interventismo e seguì Mussolini quando fu espulso dal Partito socialista. Risale probabilmente a questo periodo lo stretto legame fra i due, che assicurò a Marinelli una posizione influente nel fascismo, nella funzione appartata ma potente di segretario amministrativo<sup>865</sup>. La sua maggior qualità, come dirigente fascista, fu probabilmente la sua ostentata fedeltà a Mussolini e l’onestà puramente quattrinaria e formale”, in Gentile E., 2021. *Storia del Partito fascista. Movimento e milizia 1919-1922*, Laterza, Bari, pp. 574-575.

present, with the purchase as the main option (60%), followed by donations (28%), rental with future sale, and transfer of property due to co-financing between PNF and Associazione Combattenti. This diversity of contracts can be understood in relation to the fact that the province of Livorno started to acquire and build new CDF before a national procedure for the acquisition was implemented. The situation of Treviso (see Figure 6), on the contrary, was more structured, with a division between purchase (71%) and donation (29%) as the only two possible options. Littoria (see Figure 4), in this regard, was an exception because it was entirely constructed by ONC on behalf of the State and PNF, so even if all of the CDF were new constructions, the division among them is more an administrative formality: the ones that were actually transferred to the PNF (new constructions) were the majority (54%), whereas the remaining ones were donated (8%) or granted for free use by the ONC (31%) to the PNF while awaiting its official transferal, or were buildings hosting more than one functions (OND, post office, CDF, food shops, especially in the *borghi*). Livorno offers an overview of a less bureaucratically structured situation, driven by local agreements between the PNF and industrial companies (Rosignano Solvay), banks (Monte dei Paschi), state institutions (Ferrovie dello Stato, Istituto Fascista Autonomo Case Popolari, Associazione Nazionale Combattenti), municipalities, associations (*circolo ricreativi*, Associazione di Pubblica Assistenza), local churches, and privates - especially nobles who donated their lands and buildings to the fascio. In Treviso, the contracts were mainly stipulated with private citizens, and secondly with public actors (the Province, the different municipalities, Ferrovie dello Stato), in a case with a theatrical society, and in another with a credit institution (Cassa di Risparmio della Marca). In Littoria, this contractual diversity was absent because of land reclamation works; the contracts of transfer of property were done between the PNF and the ONC, and in just one case with the *Demanio marittimo* (in Gaeta, not in the new cities).

Regarding the financing resources used for the construction of new CDF or for the purchase of the land or buildings to be turned into CDF, the situation is quite homogeneous in Livorno (see Figure 7) and Treviso (see Figure 9), whereas Littoria (see Figure 8) was a special case. Livorno's and Treviso's major source of

finances was the PNF itself (48% in Livorno; 57% in Treviso), followed in Treviso by private contributions (23%) and in Livorno by bank loans (16%). In addition, Livorno gained contributions by private citizens for 10%, by companies for 3%, and associations for 7%. Treviso got financial support from municipalities for 6%, companies for 8% and associations for 3%, introducing the fundraising technique of *pesca di beneficenza* during local festivities. In some cases, also the direct appeal to the Duce or important fascist *gerarchi* -such as Starace- was used by local federations to obtain the financial resources to proceed with the construction or purchase of CDF. Littoria's financing was partly inserted in the land reclamation works' budget and partly financed by the PNF, both the central federation and, in the case of Littoria, by all the other PNF local federations. In this case, all the Federations of Italy sent financial support according to their cash availability, starting from contributions of few thousand *Lire*<sup>275</sup>, to more consistent financial efforts<sup>276</sup> for a total of L.1.036.000. In addition, also administrative and syndical bodies participated in the fundraising: the Agricultural Confederation gave L. 25.000, the Industrial Confederation L. 10.000, the ONC L.300.000 and the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro L.100.000. The extensive fundraising made by Federations was possible because of the highly symbolic importance of Littoria and the epic narration of the Pontine marshes for the regime's image; so, it was more of an exception than the rule, as the other cases would prove. As reported by Gentile<sup>277</sup>, at the beginning of 1921, the financiers of PNF were mainly industrials, merchants, and banks in some

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<sup>275</sup> Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Asti, Brindisi, Sondrio, Teramo, Trapani, Zara, Derna, Bengasi, Gimma, Rodi, Pesaro, Cremona, Matera L. 1.000; Avellino, Aquila, Belluno, Benevento, Bergamo, Cagliari, Caltanissetta, Carrara, Chieti, Nuoro, Pistoia, Asmara L. 2.000; Parma, Pavia, Pola, Rieti, Enna L. 3.000; Agrigento, Alessandria, Arezzo, Bolzano, Campobasso, Catanzaro, Como, Ferrara, Forlì, Frosinone, Gorizia, Grosseto, Imperia, Lecce, Lucca, Mantova, Modena, Perugia, Piacenza, Pisa, Potenza, Ragusa, Ravenna, Reggio Calabria, Reggio Emilia, Sassari, Salerno, Savona, Siena, Siracusa, Spezia, Verona, Tripoli L. 5.000; Livorno, Vicenza L. 7.000; Addis Abeba L. 8.000; Terni, Venezia, Gondar, Rovigo, Palermo, Padova, Novara, Cuneo, Fiume, Foggia, Catania L. 10.000.

<sup>276</sup> Firenze, Messina L. 20.000; Bari, Brescia, Vercelli, Trieste L. 25.000; Varese L. 30.000; Bologna, Napoli L. 50.000; Roma, Torino, Genova, Milano L. 100.000.

<sup>277</sup> Gentile, 2021, p. 583

cities, whereas it was more frequent to find privates, industrials and merchants in smaller towns. These donations would decrease in time because the bourgeoisie that financed the fascio at the beginning for fear of the socialist revolution started to acknowledge the permanence of the new regime.

The fundraising system of the PNF<sup>278</sup> initially (until June 1921) was outsourced directly to the company *Mundus*, stepping over the local federations. The financial resources were then distributed by the central federation, not proportionally to the funds raised in a specific area, but according to the perceived needs of the local federations. This system was opposed by local fasci that wanted the sums locally collected to be distributed on the territory. With the expansion of fascism and the party, however, this system was not sustainable anymore, and a new self-sustaining system needed to be implemented. After the first phase of a lack of resources, the self-financing system created by Marinelli started to produce its results. The system was based on local providers who worked with local fasci to collect donations and contributions. The sum collected was then divided between the local fascio (40%) and the central fascio (60%) – of which 10% was given to the local provider. This new fundraising method, however, was highly centralized in the decision-making process, specifically in the person of Marinelli:

*Il segretario amministrativo assicurò l'impianto e la gestione di una proficua macchina di autofinanziamento, che egli organizzò e controllò «servendosi dell'autorità di fatto derivante dal maneggiare la cassa per imporre la sua volontà, la sua ambizioncella di eminenza grigia, i suoi interessi personali, i suoi rancori e le sue amicizie a coloro che ne dipendevano o lo circondavano», diventando in un certo senso «il vero padrone del partito»<sup>279</sup>.*

Indeed, all the decisions on the financing of CDF from the PNF were to be approved by Marinelli, who could decide how to proceed or suspend the operations. However, as it will be shown

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<sup>278</sup> Cfr., *Ivi*, pp. 583-586

<sup>279</sup> *Ivi*, p. 575.



by case studies, it was quite frequent to have local fasci behaving independently, and later asking for permission.

### 5.2 Contemporary reuses

In all three provinces, according to the data available, the number of CDF still in use nowadays is higher than the number of demolished or abandoned ones.

In particular, in Livorno (see Figure 11) the CDFs actually in use are almost the totality (15), whereas a minor part has been reconstructed (2) and just one demolished for traffic reasons (now there is a road). Among the currently used ones, 9 buildings were new constructions (Bambolo, S. Vincenzo, Castiglioncello, Montenero, Rosignano Solvay, Rosignano Marittimo, S. Pietro in Palazzi, Vada, Venturina) and 6 were already existing buildings. The principal contemporary function of the CDFs is as headquarters of law enforcement bodies (7), particularly the Carabinieri, the Guardia di Finanza, the Marina Militare and the Polizia. The second most frequent function is for municipal use (6), with their offices or housing other services (ballroom, Confraternita della Misericordia, music school). Two ex-CDF are used as *circoli* (S. Pietro in Palazzi) or by associations of public support (Piombino). Lastly, the CDF of Montenero was converted into a high school and the CDF of Vada has been turned into private houses owned by the local parish.

Also in Latina (see Figure 10) the main reuse was by the law enforcement forces (4), especially by Guardia di Finanza, Carabinieri and Polizia. Then, it is observed a diversity of reuses: from the case of Pontinia where the ex-CDF is now hosting different municipal services (library, archives, offices), to commercial activities (pizzeria in Borgo Montenero), private houses (Borgo Hermada) and a post-office (Maranola).

In Treviso (see Figure 12) the reuse of CDF by law enforcement forces (3) is paired by its reuse as municipal services (3) and as cultural spaces (3). In particular, in the law enforcement forces there are Carabinieri and Polizia, and the municipal services in this case include only the offices of the various municipalities. As for the cultural spaces, one is used as a Casa del Popolo (S. Polo di Piave), one has become a luxurious touristic accommodation (Cison di Valmarino), and one is a proper cultural space with a

library, a theatre and a congress hall (Cordignano). Lastly, one ex-CDF was turned into a school (Candelù).

Province	Status	CDF in use / new constructions	Contemporary functions
Livorno	In use: 15 Reconstructed: 2 Demolished: 1 N.A.: 2	9	Municipal services: 6 Law enforcement forces: 7 <i>Circoli</i> and associations: 2 Schools: 1 Private houses: 1
Littoria / Latina	In use: 7 Reconstructed: 1 Demolished: 1 N.A.: 3	6	Municipal services: 1 Law enforcement forces: 4 Commercial activity: 1 Private houses: 1 Post office: 1
Treviso	In use: 9 Reconstructed: 1 Demolished: 0 N.A.: 17	1	Municipal services: 3 Law enforcement forces: 3 Schools: 1 Cultural spaces: 3

*Table 1- Summary of CDF reuses.* (In use: original building has been restored or has little modifications; Reconstructed: the original building has been demolished/destroyed and reconstructed in a different way from the original one; N.A.: not available data)

As it can be seen, the reuses followed mainly the criteria of property: either the municipalities owned the building and used it for their services or for schools, or the State (*Demanio*) owned the buildings and these were reused to house law enforcement bodies. This similarity in the reuse in the three provinces can be explained by the law discipline on public assets, which distinguishes between *beni demaniali* and *beni patrimoniali*; this latter category divides the *patrimonio indisponibile* and *patrimonio disponibile*. The *patrimonio indisponibile* includes the public buildings destined for public use or to host public services. In this

sense, the property line dictated also the function (a public one) of the buildings.

However, the decision over the reuse based solely on the property of the building enabled a-critical reuses and created dissonance by visually connecting the fascist regime with the republican State bodies. In particular, concerning the law enforcement bodies Franzinelli argues that not only the secret police (OVRA) continued from the regime to the republican state, but also the members of the Police:

*(...) <<ritroviamo nei ruoli della pubblica sicurezza dal 1947 i nomi di questori e degli ispettori generali che avevano operato durante il regime fascista e anche quelli dei funzionari di pubblica sicurezza che avevano operato nella Repubblica sociale>> (Carucci, 1996). Anche l'arma dei Carabinieri conta dirigenti passata dal servizio della dittatura a quello della Repubblica. Stesso discorso per i servizi segreti militari. Il trasformismo dei funzionari garantisce e rafforza la continuità delle istituzioni<sup>280</sup>.*

The author adds that this strategy of continuity was instrumental to the anti-communist aim of De Gasperi governments during the Cold War<sup>281</sup>, and that the actual epuration of the Police was from elements coming from the Resistance:

*(...) 40 capitani, 50 tenenti, 60 sottotenenti, 720 brigadieri, 915 vicebrigadieri, 2200 appuntati e 11.145 agenti. Ebbene, il ministro offrirà loro una ricompensa qualora accettino di lasciare il Corpo (Carucci, 2019). Tanta determinazione epurativa (a sinistra) è funzionale al perfezionamento del*

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<sup>280</sup> Franzinelli M., 2022. *Il fascismo è finito il 25 aprile 1945*, Fact Checking, Laterza, Bari, p. 58.

<sup>281</sup> (...) questi <<ripescaggi>> rientrano in un progetto coerente, impostato e attuato dai governi centristi di De Gasperi: << il processo, governato da Scelba, di riorganizzazione e ricollocazione di un alto e scelto numero di funzionari già in forza agli apparati repressivi del fascismo in ruoli strategici per il controllo dell'ordine pubblico e delle misure di sorveglianza politico-sociale del Paese rappresentò la spia del continuo confronto dei rapporti di forza tra le classi, tra i partiti politici e delle dinamiche sociali>>. *Ivi*, pp. 58-59.

*modello scelbiano di polizia: una struttura per la guerra fredda interna*<sup>282</sup>.

So, institutional continuity was endorsed both in the members of law enforcement bodies and also in their buildings: the CDF from the fascist party to the Police station or Carabinieri station. The representation of the State, and especially of the power (or force) of the State, in ex-fascist building substituting the PNF is quite an uncanny continuity, which generates dissonance on a symbolical level.

The following paragraphs will highlight the stories behind some CDF reuses, how the reuses of some CDF have been debated in some periods, and for which reasons.

## **Chapter 4.1 – Case study: the province of Littoria (Latina)**

### *5.3 Historical introduction to the territory: the land reclamation*

The history of the province of Littoria has specific dates: it was founded on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1934, when Mussolini announced it in a speech during the ceremony of prize-giving to settlers, and it finished on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1945, when it changed its name in Latina. The province had always been characterised since its creation as *fascistissima*. It was called *la provincia del duce* (the Duce's province) to stress the importance that Mussolini put in the works in the Pontine marshes intended as the testbed of the fascist revolution. However, at the beginning of the land reclamation works, there was no idea of founding cities and less of a province. The idea to elevate Littoria from a municipality to a province was dictated by three main reasons: the suppression of *Istituto nazionale per il risanamento antimalarico della Regione Pontina*, the creation of Sabaudia, the institution of *Commissario speciale per i territori dei comuni di Littoria e Sabaudia*. The suppression of *Istituto antimalarico* was due to the lack of funds, and it entailed the municipality of Littoria directly managing the health system of its territory. The constitution of Sabaudia and of *Commissario Speciale* was undertaken in 1933, so the creation of the province of Littoria came out of an administrative need consequential to creating more new towns. In 1933 the province of Littoria was extended

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<sup>282</sup> Ivi, p. 57

and included the municipalities of Bassiano, Cisterna di Roma, Cori, Norma, Priverno, San Felice Circeo, Sermoneta, Sezze and Terracina. The province of Littoria had an extension of 201.170 hectares and was composed of 28 municipalities, taken from the provinces of Naples and Rome. Physically, the boundaries of the new province were marked by *cippi monumentali* (monumental blocks) with plaques commemorating the redemption of the Agro. The constitution of Littoria was a consequence of the project of ruralisation, which Mussolini presented as the ideological solution to many problems in Italy: hygienic problems in the big cities that caused health issues, the decrease in birth rate, the land reclamation of malarian areas, the creation of new Italians, the demographic rebalancing caused by urbanism and the long-standing issue of giving back the land to peasants ex-combatants. As Mariani outlined<sup>283</sup>, the lack of a consistent fascist ideology led Mussolini to decline his revolution as something opposite to what had been done by his opponents: if the previous government created a society based on urbanism and industry, then fascism should opt for rurality and anti-urbanism<sup>284</sup> (*stravillaggio*). Here it lied another ambiguity of Mussolini: he declared to privilege ruralisation and agriculture over urbanism and industry, but at the same time, he knew that only the city could keep the lasting traces of fascism (*"le città sono di pietra"*), and so he financed their foundation and redecoration hugely.

Ruralisation was also associated with the *battaglia del grano* and later with autarky: after the declaration of war to Ethiopia, in 1935, the Society of Nations issued economic sanctions against Italy, basically economically isolating the country. From that moment,

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<sup>283</sup> Mariani R., 1976. *Fascismo e "città nuove"*, Feltrinelli, Milano, p. 49.

<sup>284</sup> The main ideological reference in this field was O. Spengler (*Il tramonto dell'Occidente*, 1957) who, beside his theories on *cesarismo* and on the organization of people, also addressed the idea of the peasant as the most balanced and spiritual stage of the human being, in opposition to the city which created men without roots and spirituality, nomad intellectuals without a homeland. Moreover, he connected urbanism with the decadence of political and social life, which, in his vision, was translated in the masses who take the power together with the dominion of financial capital over politics. Ruralization was thought also to increase the birth rate of the population because it reinforced the patriarchal values of the peasant's family with numerous children and women with the principal role of mothers.

Italy needed to become self-sufficient, especially in producing raw materials, starting from the alimentary autarky. This effort explains the various attempts of the regime to force internal production, such as the *battaglia del grano* (battle of the wheat), or to find internal resources, such as the collection of scrap iron, the collection of gold (*giornata della fede*<sup>285</sup>), the reduction to the essentials of the use of iron in new constructions, and so on.

The famous motif of the “land to farmers” (“*la terra ai contadini*”) had been a big contestation issue in Italy since centuries<sup>286</sup>, and it was also used to convince peasants to fight during World War I, claiming that at the end they would have received a piece of land. So, in 1917, Mussolini from *Popolo d’Italia* started his campaign in solidarity with peasants, whom he saw as a social group not contaminated by urban working-class ideologies. In the same year the government established the ONC<sup>287</sup> (Opera Nazionale

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<sup>285</sup> In order to collect gold, on 18 December 1935 people donated their wedding rings and other golden object to the country.

<sup>286</sup> In 1916 the king himself said that at the end of the war the land should be given to peasants as an acknowledgement of their sacrifices for the homeland. Indeed, World War I was the first occasion for huge masses of workers and farmers to get together and confront each other in the trenches, and this created a social force and political pressure which frightened traditional powers. In the same year the Federazione Italiana dei lavoratori della terra (Italian Federation of farmers) demanded a decree for the concession of land to peasants and the Partito Democratico Costituzionale (PDCI) reaffirmed the need of internal colonization as a way to remunerate ex-combatants.

<sup>287</sup> The ONC from its constitution to its dismissal in 1943 had more power than the Ministero dei Lavori Pubblici (Department of Public Works) and had been the reference for many other Departments concerning internal migration, agriculture, public works, and land reclamation, for instance. Once at the government, Mussolini commissioned the entire ONC and reformed it into the biggest State structure dedicated to the agricultural transformation of the country. Before Mussolini, the main objectives of ONC, according to its founder Nitti, were to facilitate the reintegration of ex-fighters into the job market, in particular the organisation of peasants in the agricultural field. The political dimension of ONC, therefore, originated in left parties and in Catholics leagues of Partito Popolare, the appropriation by fascists came only later. (Cfr. R. Mariani (1976), pp. 12-13). After Mussolini, the new objectives were the foundation of agricultural colonies and new towns, to redistribute the land to ex-fighters farmers and reduce unemployment. However, even though public works had the objective to decrease unemployment, this rate was still very high in 1923-26 and, instead, increased up to 1.300.000 people unemployed in 1933. In 1933 people employed in the land reclamation works were only 71.586, compared to

Combattenti) intended as an association for economic, social and technical support for ex-combatants returning from the war.

As in all colonisation processes and even in this case, before the fascist land reclamation, the Pontine marshes, even though malarial and unhealthy, were already inhabited by people living in *lestre* (huts) and by doctors and geographers from *Istituto antimalarico* who were trying to treat malaria and reclaim the land. The population was composed by *butteri* (cowboys) who grazed livestock, nomads who used to live in *lestre* for some months a year and the people living on Mounts Lepini. As said, common to all colonisation processes was the *tabula rasa* imposed on the actual territories as if they were “virgin” and not touched before<sup>288</sup>. This also impacted the living communities which were displaced on the mountains. The *Consorzio di Bonifica* in 1926 took over the land reclamation work and the village of the *Quadrato*, previously built by Società Leone Caetani, adding barracks for workers, technical and mechanical offices, a church, an infirmary

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679.279 unemployed people in the agricultural and construction sectors. So, if we look at data and do not consider propaganda, it can be noticed that the impact of land reclamation works on employment was very marginal. (Cfr. Mariani, 1976, p. 58-59).

<sup>288</sup> The fascist intervention was not the first land reclamation attempt, indeed different Popes, governments and private companies tried to drain the land of the Pontine marshes, but without success. In 1917 the family Caetani (dukes of Sermoneta) proposed a Special Consortium to reclaim the area of Piscinara. Indeed, the Pontine marshes were divided in two zones (left and right) from the river Sisto, which defined also the two areas of competence for land reclamation works: the Consortium of Piscinara was located in the territories of Cisterna and Sermoneta, whereas the Società Anonima per le Bonifiche Pontine purchased the land of Caetani family in the Quadrato area. This is why in 1926 on the Quadrato area (where later would be founded Littoria) there were already some buildings by Società Leone Caetani, a private company owned by family Caetani which had the objective of reclaiming land, but it almost immediately went into bankruptcy and ceased any activity. The buildings passed to Società Anonima per le Bonifiche Pontine (Spb) managed by Clerici (and still owned as major shareholders by Caetani), which took over the Società Caetani. The Spb, even though it had the same objective of Società Leone Caetani of reclaiming the lands, it instead tried to illegitimately sell the land - as if it was drained - to buyers, until it was closed by Carabinieri - it was called the “scandalo delle Pontine” (see Pennacchi A., 2019. *Topografia antica e città moderna. Dal Cancellò del Quadrato a Latina già Littoria, Limes*, n. 5, p. 7).

and a *dopolavoro*. From 1927 to 1931, the Consortium drained land through canals and built five villages.

With the 24 December 1928 law - also called legge Mussolini and legge della Bonifica integrale- the regime started intensive land reclamation works, which it also hugely publicly financed<sup>289</sup>. The law was a brief document concerning more the funds (L. 185.000.000) provided for the reclamation works than other technical specificities; indeed, from a technological and methodological aspect, it did not vary that much from the Legge Baccarini of 1880<sup>290</sup>. Mussolini put Arrigo Serpieri at the head of the land reclamation works, and in 1928 the *Consorzio di bonifica* started the land reclamation works in Agro Pontino. The choice of Serpieri for such a delicate position was a strategy widely used by Mussolini to credit fascism as a revolutionary movement. He exploited the public image of Serpieri - a technician who came from a socialist background and who used to work with rural classes even before fascism - and his connection with farmers to build consensus around fascism and to strengthen the idea that fascism was giving back the land to peasants<sup>291</sup>.

Following the *bonifica integrale* law, in 1931 the ONC, headed by Orsolini Cencelli<sup>292</sup>, was assigned the task of speeding up the land

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<sup>289</sup> For public works of national interest, the public funding reached 75%, for public works of local importance summoned to 30-50%. Cfr. Mariani, 1976, p. 58.

<sup>290</sup> The draining systems, the use of mechanical means to reclaim the areas, the settlement of colonists on that lands, and the work done by Consortia were already mentioned in the Baccarini law. Cfr. Muntoni A., 1990. The urbanistic history, in *Latina. Atlante storico delle città italiane*, Multigrafica, Roma, p. 25.

<sup>291</sup> This instrumentalisation of people is evident because in the moment he did not need them anymore he just dismissed them without warning, as it happened in the case of Serpieri who knew about his substitution on the newspaper. This was also part of a monitoring system Mussolini created was based on the idea that nobody could be trusted, so all *gerarchi* were put under control and observations and Mussolini used to have files on everybody, so that he can fire/use them under the threat of using compromising documents. Clearly this system reinforced and attracted even more the opportunistic behavior of people. In Mariani, 1976, pp. 96-97.

<sup>292</sup> Valentino Orsolini Cencelli was an ex-combatant of World War I and a faithful fascist who did the March on Rome, for this reason he was put by Mussolini at the head of ONC and this is also why he changed the names of the *borghi* with designations of battles of the World War. In 1935 he was substituted by Araldo Di Crollanza, previous minister of Public Works.



reclamation, which until that moment was in the hands of the Consortium. While the Consortium had to complete the primary networks and main roads, the ONC had the mission of setting up the secondary networks and roads, constructing villages and organising farmers' settlements. However, the real main difference between the Consortium and the ONC in this process was the property of the land. Indeed, as Pennacchi explains<sup>293</sup>, the Consortium included the landowners interested in draining their land to create agricultural estates<sup>294</sup>. In this perspective, the villages that the Consortium was constructing were intended as workers' villages that, in the end, could be readapted into farmers' houses. So, there was no intention on behalf of the Consortium to give the land to peasants or ex-fighters, on the contrary, it was intended to remain private property. However, since the financing of land reclamation was mainly public<sup>295</sup>, Mussolini decided to expropriate the land from the owners and use it to build consensus by giving the land back to peasants. The land was then divided between ONC (81,14% of the entire Pontine marshes), a small percentage of private owners and the Agrarian Colleges of Bassiano, Cisterna and Sermoneta, who provided for the construction of *poderi* for local people. This enormous propaganda operation gave the peasants the land using a

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<sup>293</sup> Cfr. A. Pennacchi, *Fascio e martello. Viaggio per le città del Duce*, Laterza, 2008; A. Pennacchi, M. Vittori, *I borghi dell'Agro Pontino*, Decimo quaderno del Novecento, 2001, pp. 35 -67.

<sup>294</sup> <<l'idea di modernizzare il Mezzogiorno attraverso la sua capitalistizzazione: "Se i ricchi del sud non sono capaci, andiamo noi al posto loro". Ma con i soldi dello Stato. È così che nasce l'"esproprio" nella testa di Serpieri (*ndr* tecnico a capo del Consorzio di Bonifica): non per dare la terra ai contadini, ma per levarla ai proprietari inefficienti del sud e darla alle società capitalistiche del nord, alla banca Commerciale. Sono loro che dovranno fare le bonifiche, le grandi aziende agrarie capitalistiche e meccanizzate, le dighe e l'elettrificazione del paese: "è così che si modernizza l'Italia">>. A. Pennacchi (2001), p. 43.

<sup>295</sup> The hydraulic works were paid for 5/6 by the State and 1/6 by the Province; the private works (farms) were paid 75% by the State, 12,5% by the Province and 12,5% by the private owner. In A. Pennacchi (2001), p. 44; "Bonifica" in S. Luzzatto, V. De Grazia, *Dizionario del fascismo A-K*, Einaudi, 2002; A. Pennacchi, *Topografia antica e città moderna. Dal Cancellò del Quadrato a Latina giù Littoria*, Limes, n. 8, 2019, pp. 2-5.

sharecropping contract<sup>296</sup>, with the promise of becoming owners of their *podere* (house and land) in the following years. Despite the importance of the role of ONC in the land reclamation works and the regime's public image as *costruttore*, the ONC was always kept in a condition of the financial crisis. The financial support to ONC was supposed to be covered by *Consorzio di Credito per le Opere Pubbliche* and by the revenues coming from agricultural work. However, *Opere Pubbliche* was not responding promptly with any bond, so the ONC needed to apply for loans to Monte dei Paschi. Between the end of 1933 and the beginning of 1934, the bank account of ONC remained completely empty because of the increased spending needs of ONC due to the need for Duce to speed up works in the Pontine marshes. After a loan by Monte dei Paschi of L. 68.000.000 in 1934, in September of the same year, Orsolini Cencelli was writing again to the Council Presidency about the gravity of their financial situation and how the delays in the payment from the Ministry of Finance were impacting the works in Agro Pontino; indeed, the ONC was a creditor to the State for the land reclamation works. When the *Consorzio delle Opere Pubbliche* granted the first loan but stopped the second one, the ONC was in a dramatic situation in which the reclamation works risked being suspended<sup>297</sup>. The situation of being a central institute of the regime without, however, the necessary financial tools to carry on its function and the duty to face any insurgent reaction was a common situation of all administrative bodies of the regime. The costs sustained by ONC for the construction of new towns were instead refunded by the government's *Commissione interministeriale*, after that the

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<sup>296</sup> This sharecropping contract provided settlers with capital livestock free of charge and an initial supply of hay, while the tools and agricultural machinery were debited against settlers' account to ONC, with whom also the harvest was equally divided. Contrary to the usual sharecropping contract was the introduction of a guaranteed minimum in case of calamity not attributable to the settler. This term became very important especially when the land reclamation works finished and they started realising that the land was not very fertile because it had been deforested. When Mussolini found out that agricultural production was a failure, he was forced on the one side to grant settlers a minimum wage, and on the other side, to fire Cencelli as the scapegoat.

<sup>297</sup> Cfr. Folchi, 1992, pp. 234 -241.

Ministry of Agriculture, Giacomo Acerbo, did not recognise them as land reclamation works<sup>298</sup>.

#### 5.4 *New towns as fascist cities*

One of the major contradictions of fascism was that to enforce ruralisation and contrast urbanism, it instead built new cities. In the beginning, Mussolini did not even want to do the ritual of the foundational stone because it stressed too much the urban character of something not intended as a city<sup>299</sup>. Indeed, the original need for a new town in the Pontine marshes was an administrative one: when settlers and workers started to arrive, they needed an administrative centre to keep track of registry issues. As Fagiolo and Madonna stated<sup>300</sup>, also for the foundation of Mussolinia in 1928 in Sardinia, the Duce did not want to give his name to it, as he refused to give his name to the major square of Arsaia. So, originally there was no idea of building new towns, but as soon as Mussolini understood that the foundation of cities brought a large – and also international<sup>301</sup> – consensus, he changed his mind and used it for propaganda. It can be said, then, that the foundation of new towns was instrumental to the propaganda of the regime rather than serving the community of settlers. From then on, the motto of the regime – which was also written on the

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<sup>298</sup> A. Folchi, “Dalla Casa del Fascio alla Guardia di Finanza”, in Diebner S., D’Onofrio De Meo G., Folchi A., Reccia G., 2014. *La Guardia di Finanza e Palazzo M a Latina*, edizioni per 80° anniversario della Guardia di Finanza a Latina, p. 116.

<sup>299</sup> “tutta la retorica a proposito di Littoria – semplice comune e niente affatto città – est in assoluto contrasto colla politica antiurbanistica del Regime, stop anche la cerimonia della posa della prima pietra est un reliquato di altri tempi stop non tornare più su l’argomento – Mussolini” telegram sent to Orsolini Cencelli on 29 June 1930, in Mariani R., 2006. *Città nuove pontine, ArchitetturaCittà*, vol. 14, p. 19.

<sup>300</sup> Fagiolo M., Madonna M. L., 1994. “Le città nuove del fascismo”, in *Studi in onore di Giulio Carlo Argan*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, p. 339.

<sup>301</sup> The Pontine marshes were a phenomenon also observed by the international press, from Scandinavia to the US, which described the land reclamation works in Italy as the epic redemption of Italian people and their Duce. So, the focal point of the press was not the technological aspect of the land reclamation nor the architecture of new towns, but what was celebrated was the political model of the regime in opposition to the Soviet one. Cfr Mariani, 1976

walls and the road from Rome to Littoria – was “*si redimono le terre, si fondano città*” (we drain lands, we found cities).

Apart from terminology, Mariani<sup>302</sup> questioned the possibility of defining a fascist city, and he argued that it is impossible because the cities did not have a specific and unique model, nor a theoretical reference structure. On a stylistic and urban level, the fascist city was the direct representation of the (fascist) State, and so, in a kind of tautological way, any type of city built in that period was right because it was fascist. As with all fascist ideology, new towns were defined in opposition to something else (urbanism, megacities, etc.), through vague declarations by the Duce. Hence, if the style was not definitive, what was clear was, instead, the *role* of the fascist city: to contrast urbanism and to rebalance the relationship between the countryside and the urban environment – even if Mariani proposed an interpretation of the economic policy of Mussolini as adopting more moderate positions against capitalism<sup>303</sup>. New town and land reclamation became the embodiment of the modernization of fascism, which was linked to Futurism and the myth of modernity and speed: they were the synthesis of the modern and the antique, tradition and revolution. Concerning Futurism, the presence of Marinetti at the inauguration of Littoria and Sabaudia was well documented<sup>304</sup>, as it was the relation between the Futurist movement and Angiolo Mazzoni, the architect who built the Post Office and the train station of Littoria and the Post Office of Sabaudia. In addition to Futurism, it is important to acknowledge the influence of De Chirico’s *Metafisica* in interpreting new towns. Especially the squares of towns, the porticos, the arches, the

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<sup>302</sup> Mariani, 1976, pp. 187 – 189.

<sup>303</sup> The contradictions between cities and countryside and between industry and ruralisation was declined more as the necessity of not founding metropolis (or generally big cities). Indeed, Mussolini did not think of a society entirely based on agriculture, but rather a mixed economy in which agriculture was the main sector but not the only one. Cfr Mariani, 1976

<sup>304</sup> Cfr Carli C. F., 2002. La koinè metafisica. Novecentismo, Razionalismo, Futurismo nelle città nuove pontine, in *Metafisica Costruita*, exhibition catalogue, Touring Editore, p. 33

buildings, and the towers painted by De Chirico<sup>305</sup> seemed to acquire a three-dimensional presence in the actual squares of new towns. Although some scholars<sup>306</sup> have raised a question over the actual knowledge of architects about De Chirico's paintings, or on their actual awareness of recalling *metafisica* (Muntoni called it "*metafisica involontaria*"<sup>307</sup>), its influence in their visual interpretation is today undeniable – which is also the reason why the label "metaphysical" is the most used in order to rebrand the cities of new foundation.

Lastly, the city assumed a sacral meaning through the ritual of the foundation of towns, which had a political function linked to monumentality and sacredness. It symbolised the celebration of the regime, the centrality of the state, the mythologisation of rural work, and modernity. As seen, cities became central in the regime as a political tool to build consensus, as a symbolic way to legitimise the grandiosity of fascism and as a monumental legacy of fascism up to the present times.

The new towns of Agro Pontino were not intended as cities but as rural centres. The experience of the Agro Pontino was fundamental to develop a model for new towns later adopted in colonial settings in Porto Lago and Africa but also to build *borghi* in Sicily, Sardinia and Puglia. The overall number of new towns in Italy is debatable<sup>308</sup>, instead, the new towns planned for the Pontine marshes were for sure five: Littoria, Sabaudia, Pontinia,

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<sup>305</sup> Referring in particular to G. De Chirico, *Studio per Piazza con Monumento*, 1913; *L'énigme d'une journée*, 1914; *La Récompense du dévin*, 1913; *Torre rossa*, 1913; *Piazza d'Italia*, 1915; *La matinée angoissante*, 1912.

<sup>306</sup> Guzzi D. in Carli C. F., 2002, p.36.

<sup>307</sup> Muntoni A., 2006. "Urbanistica e architettura nelle città dell'Agro Pontino", *Città Pontine, ArchitetturaCittà*, vol. 14, 2 p. 27.

<sup>308</sup> According to Mariani, the new towns were twelve, adding to the Pontine ones also Guidonia, Mussolinia, Carbonia, Fertilia, Torviscosa, Arsia, Pozzo Littorio. On the contrary, Antonio Pennacchi questions that number proposing a different categorization and a more coherent definition of new towns, arriving to a total number of seventy-four. Cfr. Pennacchi A., 2008. *Fascio e martello. Viaggio per le città del Duce*, Laterza, Bari; Pennacchi A., 2002. *Città nuove: questioni di metodo*, in *Metafisica Costruita*, exhibition catalogue, Touring Editore, p. 162-163; Pennacchi A., Vittori M., 2001. *I borghi dell'Agro Pontino, Decimo quaderno del Novecento*, pp. 35 -67

Aprilia and Pomezia, which were founded and built in this order from 1932 to 1939.

On an administrative and budgetary level, new towns were built and funded directly by ONC, as part of the land reclamation works. However, the ONC was not working as a charity institution; indeed the transfer of the areas dedicated to public spaces to the municipality came after the payment of L. 10.000 per hectare and half of the capital gain in case of its selling.

From an urbanistic perspective, the main reference was the scheme of Roman *castrum* in addition to a late medieval taste for the urban profile. For instance, the dispute over the major height of Sabaudia's town hall tower over Littoria's (see Chapter 5.1 Littoria) was emblematic of how hierarchy was imposed through symbolic elements of architecture. Moreover, the urbanistic scheme of the city was strictly hierarchical, indeed a zoning scheme which separated urban workers from rural ones was used - and later re-adopted in the African colonies. Fagiolo and Madonna<sup>309</sup> found some other common symbolic features to all the new towns of the Agro Pontino: firstly, the name of the city was highly symbolic and usually referred to fascism (Littoria) or the king (Sabaudia) or the genius loci (Pontinia, Pomezia) or the birth of Rome (Aprilia). Secondly, the series of new cities symbolically represented the milestones of fascism and connected it to the ancient Roman ritual of founding cities (the rite of the furrow). Thirdly, the elements of water and earth assumed here a special meaning: the water represented the Pontine marshes, the land the heroic reclamation work, and the earth (or the globe, as it appeared in some fountains) surrounded by water referred to the Agro Pontino. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the tower was a highly symbolical element, which the Duce addressed as the symbol of *potenza fascista*<sup>310</sup> and is still on the coat of arms of Latina (the civic tower surrounded by ears of wheat).

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<sup>309</sup> Fagiolo M., Madonna M. L., 1994. Le città nuove del fascismo, in *Studi in onore di Giulio Carlo Argan*, La Nuova Italia, p. 358 – 362

<sup>310</sup> "Io dico ai contadini e ai rurali che debbono guardare a questa Torre che domina la pianura e che è un simbolo di potenza fascista: convergendo verso di essa troveranno, quando occorra, aiuto e giustizia." Mussolini in Fagiolo M., Madonna M. L., 1994, p. 362.

Concerning urbanism and social dynamics, the selection of settlers was not instrumental to the creation of a new community but had been carried on by *Unioni Provinciali dei Sindacati dell'Agricoltura* (Local Syndicates for Agriculture) and by the *Commissariato per le migrazioni interne* (Commissariat for internal migration) as a way to ward undesirable or politically dangerous subjects; indeed, many new settlers were not family groups but individuals, sometimes even without any knowledge of agricultural work<sup>311</sup>. This artificial formation of communities was based in reality on the epuration of excessively not qualified workforce, which created problems related to the lack of competencies in the agricultural field<sup>312</sup>. On the urbanistic level, Ghirardo and Forster<sup>313</sup> argue that new towns and *borghi* were intended to be closed communities because of the absence of *osterie* and their distribution *a case sparse* that would impede gatherings of peasants. Other scholars, such as Pennacchi and Mioni<sup>314</sup>, argue, instead, that a sense of community was sought in different ways: from the patriarchal farm structure that replicated Veneto's and Ferrara's models to the agricultural work that was intended to be carried on collectively, to the actual presence of *osterie* which were also visited by the Duce, to social practices and religious habits which were imported from migrants' original regions<sup>315</sup>.

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<sup>311</sup> Mariani, 1976, p. 137- 152.

<sup>312</sup> From the relation of Orsolini Cencelli on the land reclamation works: "Si è ottenuto attraverso la colonizzazione dell'Agro Pontino di epurare in modo meraviglioso le province d'origine inviando nell'Agro non gli elementi più preparati dal punto di vista tecnico agricolo, ma solo quanto finiva con il pesare sulla bilancia della disoccupazione provinciale spesso per incapacità. (...) tutte le possibilità di mano d'opera sono largamente rappresentate con una particolare deficienza proprio dell'elemento fondamentale che è quello agricolo." In Mariani, 1976, p. 149-150.

<sup>313</sup> D. Ghirardo, K. Forster, "I modelli delle città di fondazione in epoca fascista", in C. De Seta (a cura di), *Storia d'Italia, Annali VIII. Insediamenti e territorio*, Einaudi, 1985, p. 658-659; R.Mariani, (1976), p. 158 – 159.

<sup>314</sup> A. Pennacchi, *Fascio e martello. Viaggio per le città del Duce*, Laterza, 2008, pp. 126-155; A. Mioni, *Le trasformazioni territoriali in Italia nella prima età industriale*, Marsilio, p. 246.

<sup>315</sup> The *podere* had an agricultural function connected to the production system but also a sociological one aimed at recreating the same settlements patterns of the migrants, in order for them to settle down more easily. The migration

In conclusion, the new towns and the reclamation works were strongly related to the regime but especially to the figure of Mussolini. Indeed, his visits to the Agro Pontino were frequent, and so were the images he offered while threshing the wheat, eating with farmers, and founding cities. These images created during fascist times through propaganda (newsreels and newspapers) remained in people's collective memory long after the regime's fall. The symbols of the land reclamation, such as the ear of wheat, also remained in the code of arms of the city of Latina and on different urban decorations, for instance, on the fountain in the principal square of Latina and on fences of private houses.

## 5.5 *The Case del Fascio of the province of Littoria*

### 5.5.1 *Littoria. The foundation of the city*

Even if the creation of Littoria was established on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1932 when Mussolini was visiting the first phase of the land reclamation works, its foundation was not thought of as that of a city, indeed, Mussolini, the day before the inauguration, sent a telegram to the press office remembering that Littoria must be addressed as *semplice comune* and not as a city. However, things

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procedure was carefully organized: from the selection of migrants by local PNF secretaries in order to guarantee homogeneity, to the welcome at the train station by Fascio Femminile with polenta and coffee, and the arrival to the farm where everything was arranged to be ready to use for the work and life there. So, this ritual was intended to create a sense of community. Moreover, some agricultural works were intended to be done collectively (such as the harvest) and farmers used to work together from one field to another. Pennacchi also reminds that people did not really need an osteria in order to gather, indeed the Veneto's tradition of *filò* or the *ballo sull'aia* (during which farmers and their families used to meet together in one *podere* to dance or chat) were imported immediately also in the Agro Pontino. In response to Ghirardo and Forster, the author also remarks that there was plenty of osterie in the *borghi* where people played bowls; there is also a photograph which testimonies Mussolini during one of his visits to the new towns eating in an osteria with Starace, Di Crollanza and other settlers. Not only taverns but also artisans' shops and bars were present, indeed there is another photograph with Mussolini at the inauguration of the ONC diner and bar in 1933 at Molella. The author also stresses the importance of religion in the creation of a sense of community: even if people were not religious in their original place, at their arrival in Agro Pontino they adopted this religious sentiment and rituals in order to be part of the community and to reframe their family identity; as to say, it was an occasion to start from zero and to reshape their past. In Pennacchi, 2008, p. 139.



already changed on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1932 when Orsolini Cencelli, the head of ONC, laid the foundation stone and on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1932, the city was officially inaugurated. Furthermore, during the inauguration speech of Littoria, the Duce announced its expansion:

*Finché tutte le battaglie non siano vinte, non si può dire che tutta la guerra sia vittoriosa. Solo quando accanto alle 500 case oggi costruite, ne siano sorte altre 4500, quando accanto ai 10 mila abitanti attuali vi siano i 40-50 mila che noi ci ripromettiamo di fare vivere in quelle che furono le paludi pontine, solo allora potremo lanciare alla Nazione il bollettino della vittoria definitiva. (...) È qui che noi abbiamo conquistato una nuova provincia. È qui che abbiamo condotto e condurremo delle vere e proprie operazioni di guerra. È questa la guerra che noi preferiamo*<sup>316</sup>.

The metaphor used to talk about the land reclamation was that of the war against nature (*battaglie, guerra vittoriosa, vittoria definitiva, conquista*). It was not by chance that the official magazine (1929-1943) of ONC was titled *La conquista della terra*, which aimed to celebrate the land reclamation. This was presented as a heroic mission, a virile one, for Italian soldiers who needed to reclaim their land back to productivity – the parallelism with the later African war and the Empire is quite strong. After the inauguration of Littoria, the national press described the regime's work as a war against a demoniac nature, which fascism defeated, unlike previous governments, portrayed as inefficient. The Pontine's new towns also became the objects of internal touristic attraction<sup>317</sup>, indeed in 1939, the *Guida breve, vol. Italia Centrale* by

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<sup>316</sup> *Scritti e Discorsi di Benito Mussolini*, Edizione Definitiva, VIII. Scritti e discorsi dal 1932 al 1933, Ulrico Hoepli editore Milano, 1934-XII

<sup>317</sup> Other media which documented the new cities were the Touring Club Italiano photo archives and its touristic guides and, of course, the Istituto Luce. The Touring Club Italiano photographs were mainly documentary and described the territory before and after the drainage and the construction of cities; whereas the touristic guides encourage tourism in these new lands as a sort of new Grand Tour. From 1927 the Istituto Luce started to document the regime actions through newsreels, which were distributed in all Italy. Luce paid a great attention to the land reclamation and in the 1930s produced also two movies

Touring Club Italiano was published, and the Agro Pontino was described as a pilgrimage site that everyone should visit because it expressed the creative power and strength of fascism. Another important passage of the speech was the mention of the possession of the *podere*:

*La nuova vita di Littoria comincia. Sono sicuro che i coloni qui giunti saranno lieti di mettersi al lavoro anche perché hanno in vista, fra 15 o 20 anni, il possesso definitivo del loro podere*<sup>318</sup>.

Also in this case, the announcement came before the actual realisation or organisation of the program. Indeed, the selling and the prices were not clearly established but discretionary to ONC evaluations; and it was only at the end of 1941 that the ONC introduced three typologies of acquisition contract: a commitment to sell with the immediate amortisation after 5 years, a commitment to sell with a deferred amortisation after 5 years, and a betterment contract with the subsequent obligation to sell. If, at the beginning, he did not want new towns, in the discourse, he even proclaimed the foundation and the exact date of inauguration of the other two towns:

*Non saremmo fascisti se già sin da questo momento non precisassimo con l'esattezza che è nel nostro costume, con l'energia che è nel nostro temperamento, quelle che saranno le tappe future e cioè: il 28 ottobre 1933 s'inaugureranno altre 981 case coloniche; il 21 aprile 1934 s'inaugurerà il nuovo comune di Sabaudia. Vi prego di notare queste date. Il 28 ottobre 1935 si inaugurerà il terzo comune: Pontinia. A quell'epoca, per quella data, noi probabilmente avremo toccato la mèta e realizzato tutto il nostro piano di lavoro.*

The media who attended the inauguration used to stress the speed of the construction and the political ideology behind it, such as the

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(Dall'aquitrino alle giornate di Littoria, 1934; Sabaudia, 1934) which celebrated in a propagandistic way the heroic mission of the workers in draining the territory and the speed of construction of new towns.

<sup>318</sup> *Scritti e Discorsi di Benito Mussolini*, Edizione Definitiva, VIII. Scritti e discorsi dal 1932 al 1933, Ulrico Hoepli editore Milano, 1934-XII

issue of the land to peasants or its *romanità*, while generally neglecting its aesthetic and architectural characteristics. Littoria was the topic of a long article on *Vie d'Italia* in 1933, where a long historical introduction to the area and land reclamation was provided, without any mention of its architecture. Littoria also figured as a tourist destination to visit in the Touring Club *Vie d'Italia* of 1934<sup>319</sup>, where a *gita domenicale* (Sunday trip) was strongly recommended to the city, and it was featured also in the *Guida per Roma e dintorni* in 1938.

In order to maintain an administrative hierarchy after the construction of other new towns, Littoria, which was constituted as a municipality only in 1932, was elevated to province in 1934. There was no public competition for the plan of the city and the architect directly appointed to design Littoria was Oriolo Frezzotti, who mirrored the specific intent of the regime of choosing a marginal architect in order not to overshadow the rural and land reclamation works. The city was organized around a major square (Piazza del Littorio, now Piazza del Popolo) with administrative functions, a second square (Piazza del Quadrato) which was the original nucleus of the city (Quadrato) with the ONC offices and which was the agricultural center, and a third square (Piazza Savoia, now Piazza S. Marco) as the religious center with the church. Oriolo Frezzotti designed all the major public buildings (the town hall, ONC headquarter, the MVSN, the Direction of Agricultural works, the Monte dei Paschi, ONB, the hotel, the church, the cinema, the hospital and later also the CDF) leaving to Angiolo Mazzoni only the Post Office and the train station. The city followed a ring scheme (see Figure 13) departing from the central square, where the external ring delimited the boundaries of the city distinguishing it from the agricultural fields. The city was not intended for the new settlers, who would reside instead in the farms in the fields and come to the city only for public ceremonies, but for the regime's officials. Ghirardo and Forster<sup>320</sup> argue that the ring scheme, although not in line with the contemporary urbanistic debate, referred to the particular Italian

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<sup>319</sup> *Vie d'Italia*, 1934, p. 75, available online at [digitouring.it](http://digitouring.it)

<sup>320</sup> Ghirardo, Forster, 1985, p. 652-653.

tradition of ideal cities (such as Palamanova or Sforzinda). According to them, Littoria was intended to represent the power and status of the new leader – Mussolini – in the same way rich families used to do in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in northern Italy. However other authors<sup>321</sup> dismiss this parallelism, opposing it with the functionalist scheme of the agricultural colony.

As previously written, the town hall with the tower, the porticos and the arengario recalled the medieval Italian *comuni*. Indeed, the tower and the *arengario* merely had symbolic functions: the tower was inserted into a ritual in which it theatrically presented the Duce and reinforced his authority over people, who conversely showed their faith to him with the fascist salute. The image of the crowds glorifying and screaming to the *arengario* and the link between Mussolini and people had strongly fixed itself into Italians' collective and visual memory. Another remnant of medieval times is the clock on the tower with the fasces beneath, which in this case, symbolised the march toward the future of fascism.

Not everybody liked Littoria, for instance, Le Corbusier defined it as the most significant example of confusion, mess, incapacity and misery of contemporary architecture<sup>322</sup>. Marcello Piacentini in his magazine *Architettura* published a photo reportage of the land reclamation works but did not mention Frezzotti in the article; the only two projects in Littoria that he described were the ones by Angiolo Mazzoni (the Post office and the train station). Also Pasolini, in the 1960s, disdained Latina, preferring, instead, Sabaudia<sup>323</sup>. Generally, this contraposition would persist in the critics' position after the end of fascism: Latina was ugly because it was fascist; instead, Sabaudia was rationalist and antifascist. As

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<sup>321</sup> Prisco L., 2002. *Un itinerario moderno*, in *Metafisica Costruita*, exhibition catalogue, Touring Editore, p. 40.

<sup>322</sup> "Littoria est le témoin le plus significatif de la confusion, du désordre, de l'incapacité des professionnels, devant de tâches profondes, et de la misère de l'architecture contemporaine." Le Corbusier in Pennacchi A., 2019. *Topografia antica e città moderna. Dal Cancellò del Quadrato a Latina già Littoria*, Limes, n. 9, pp. 1-2.

<sup>323</sup> "Sabaudia è bella perché non è fascista, è democratica" Pasolini in Pennacchi, 2019, p. 2.

already said, Bruno Zevi was the first to propose the interpretation of rationalism linked to democracy, contraposed to monumental architecture representing the regime. Pennacchi<sup>324</sup> proposed a slightly different interpretation of why Zevi liked Sabaudia and not Latina, which went beyond stylistic reasons: Piccinato – one of the architects of Sabaudia - apart from being part of MIAR, after the fall of fascism became an antifascist, he was even municipal councilor in the socialist party and was also friend of Zevi, with whom he founded the APAO (Associazione per l'architettura organica). Instead, Frezzotti, even after the Liberation remained a fascist: he was a municipal councillor in the MSI in Latina. So, Pennacchi suggested that the interpretation of architecture - and its eventual revision - was maybe more linked to the personal political position of critics and architects rather than the aesthetic of their architecture.

#### 5.5.1.1. *The construction of Casa del Fascio*

Generally, the CDF of small towns hosted more functions than just representing and being the headquarter of the regime: it also provided services related to entertainment (*dopolavoro*), healthcare (first aid, clinic for women) and education (agricultural courses, gym, movie theatre with *cinegiornali*). The typology of services varied accordingly to the dimension of the centre (cities, rural centres), the demographic composition of the community (working class people, bourgeois, farmers) and the specific qualities of the place (if it was a touristic city the CDF usually hosted information centres).

In Littoria, the CDF was not originally planned, so it was initially hosted in some rooms on the ground floor in the west wing of the town hall in Piazza del Littorio (see Figure 14), which was an unconventional choice given the fact that the other new towns were built with their own CDF independent from the town hall. The CDF had a lateral entrance, and for official occasions they used the conference room of OND, which was in the same building but had a central entrance from the square. The headquarter of the party was signaled by three metallic letters "P.N.F." put on the lateral entrance in 1934, but apart from the

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<sup>324</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 1-5

offices, the other common spaces (gym, conference rooms, library, recreational rooms) were part of the OND (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro). As previously said, this mixed solution with OND was generally present in small towns or rural areas without enough funds to have a proper PNF headquarter. This lack of a proper CDF could align with Mussolini's initial decision not to call Littoria a city but a rural town so as not to stress the representative characteristics of an urban place too much. However, from 1934 with the elevation of Littoria to province, this position was no longer tenable. The first project was proposed by Frezzotti in 1937, reusing and modifying an existing building on the major square with the town hall. However, the necessities of the PNF were different in 1937-38, and the party did not need only a functional space from where to administer the province; still they needed a more representative palace which could show the prestige and power of the regime.

So, even if Littoria was inaugurated in 1933, it was only in 1938 that a need for a *sede degna e decorosa* was felt by the Province and the Rettorato, lamenting the fact that Littoria was elevated to Province without a proper representation of PNF offices. As mentioned, to show a feeling of fascist solidarity, all the PNF Federations of Italy and the colonies participated in a fundraising campaign to construct Littoria's CDF, concurring in an unprecedented fundraising operation. In addition, contributions were also asked the Industrial Confederation and the Agricultural Confederation, as it is attested by the correspondence in 1937 between Marinelli (National Secretary of PNF), the Littoria Federal Secretary of PNF and the Unione Industriali, who agreed to pay for Federation's radiators after some discussions. The land (8.535 square meters) where the CDF was meant to be located was sold by the municipality of Littoria at the symbolic price of L.1, and, in addition, the *podestà* to show his solidarity to this project, even donated L.30.000 for its construction. The Province also committed to paying L.250.000 in five years to support the construction of the CDF.

The architect of the new CDF was Frezzotti, who posed some problems since the beginning: the first conflict regarded his compensation (L. 24.000 for the project and L. 19.000 for the

artistic collaboration, in total L. 43.000), which, according to him, was inadequate. After the first dismissal of his request by Zander (head of Genio Civile in Littoria), the architect wrote directly to Marinelli arguing that the compensation for such a monumental project needed to be adequate to the work or at least equivalent to what the Ministry of Public work (LL. PP.) used to pay for other projects in Littoria (2% of the total cost of the building). Marinelli asked the LL. PP. if they could integrate the compensation of Frezzotti and they reached an agreement on the compensation of L. 50.000. Another conflict regarded the description of Frezzotti's work: in the contract, he wanted his work to be addressed as "artistic direction" instead of "artistic collaboration" (*consulenza ed assistenza artistica*), threatening not to deliver the drawings of the details and causing some troubles with the construction company. After some resistance from LL. PP., the Federal decided to accommodate the architect's request, justifying his decision to protect and enhance the artistic value of the building.

The CDF was planned as a part of a more general symbolic area, which was never completed with the exception of the GIL and the gym (now hosting Palacultura). In this project, the CDF was intended to be the most monumental building of the city and was called *Palazzo M* for its peculiar M-shape in honour of Mussolini. Inserted in a major project which comprehended a square with porticos in front and the GIL building next to them, the huge dimensions of Palazzo M were justified or at least contextualised in this monumental project. Palazzo M had been defined as the "highest iconographic representation of the *stile littorio*<sup>325</sup>", whatever it may stylistically signify, to stress the monumental effort of the architect and his intention to represent fascism. Contrary to the usual, the CDF was not facing the political square near the town hall, but it was located on an ideological axe which connected the central square and the religious one. This isolation strategy was thought to enhance the importance of the building, together with the imponent dimensions of the same (depth 90m x width 87m). The four floors palace had two monumental stairs at

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<sup>325</sup> Sylvia Diebner, *Le sedi del Partito Nazionale Fascista a Littoria (1932-1943)*, in Diebner S., D'Onorio De Meo G., Folchi A., Reccia G., 2014. *La Guardia di Finanza a Palazzo M a Latina*, edizione in onore del 80° anniversario della Guardia di Finanza a Latina, p.68

the front and a central tower, 40 m. high, decorated on the top with a 3,5m statue of an imperial eagle (see Figure 15). The frontal courtyard, inserted inside the M, was thought for the *adunate*, with a capacity of 200 standing people, and the pavement was decorated with a huge tricolour *fascio* (never realized). The overall decoration was essential, as the fascist direction on monumentality and authority imposed. It included two sculptural reliefs (10m x 5,5m) for the frontal arms of the M (see Figure 16): the theme should have been the heroism of fascism with iconographic parallelisms with ancient Rome and the usual symbology of fasces and eagles. However, they were never realized. Also the *sacrario*'s decorations were designed as highly symbolical: thematic sculptural marble reliefs of 6 m. addressing the issues of heroism, sacrifice and victory and with the inscriptions of the names of the martyrs, the pavement covered in marble (green, red and white), the walls decorated with a blue mosaic and the ceiling covered with a golden mosaic and eagles with the words *credere obbedire combattere* (see Figure 17) – but also this project was never realized. Apart from a symbolic function, the tower was also the place of the *arengario* facing the main courtyard. The decorations of the tower (never realised) were composed by the word *duce* and *M* repeating three times. Between these there should have been the statue of the Victory holding the fasces – a recurring image on public buildings at that time. To conclude, the CDF was also equipped with private parking and an air-raid shelter to upfront the necessities of the war.

In 1939 the construction works were contracted out to Giulio Laudisa Company for a total amount of L.4.140.000 with the supervision of the Genio Civile. The construction works exceeded the due time of 24 months because of the difficulties caused by the war (shortage of materials, higher prices of materials, difficulties in transportation) and because of the delay in the delivery of the technical drawings of the details by the architect; so, when in 1943 the federal transferred the offices there; the building was not completely finished. In addition to these problems, in 1939, the lack of iron due to war necessities hugely impacted the construction work: at the beginning of November Laudisa suspended its activity due to a shortage of it. Sometime later, the



Genio Civile found 120 quintals of iron and asked the LL. PP. to make an exception and let them use it for the tower's reinforced concrete. However, in March 1940, the engineer Zander from Genio Civile reported to Frezzotti that the tower had to be done in masonry and not in reinforced concrete because of limitations on the use of iron; this decision changed the original plans and added other slowdowns to the process. In addition to the tower, some other parts of the project and some decorations were altered to contain the costs: the two monumental porticos were not built, the façade covered in travertine and by bas-reliefs was substituted with a covering in bricks and painted plaster, the mosaic covering the *sacrario* was substituted with painted plaster, and the tower decoration was done in painted plaster as well. This change in the materials was due to economic reasons (cutting overall costs, autarky, war necessities of iron) and was favored by the law 9 gennaio 1939 n. 189, which required to use local sources as building materials. In this difficult situation the Laudisa Company offered to pay for the travertine covering of the façade (2.500 square meters) in order to respect the monumentality of the building:

*Eccellenza, quando nel 1939 presi l'appalto della Casa dei Fasci fui spinto solo dal desiderio di fare nella città cara al regime un'opera grandiosa e degna di Littoria. A conferma di questo sono gli innumerevoli sacrifici economici da me sopportati fin'ora. Oggi pertanto Vi prego di accettare il mio impegno di sostituire senza alcun aggravio economico, da parte del Partito, il rivestimento a cortina di mattoni con quello di travertino di 4cm di spessore per tutta la facciata principale<sup>326</sup>.*

The overall saving, which amounted to L.1.027.568, was not sufficient to limit the rise of costs which continued to increase because of slowdowns. The transportation of materials also impacted the delays of the construction works: the lack of *nafta* or the need for train wagons were frequent topics of discussion among suppliers, the Genio and the Laudisa company.

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<sup>326</sup> Letter of arch. Laudisa to PNF secretary Adelchi Serena, 24 June 1941, ACS, fondo PNF, busta 328; Casa dell'Architettura, documentazione Palazzo M.

According to a regulation wanted by Bottai (and after the war also introduced in the Italian legislation as law 29 luglio 1949 n. 717<sup>327</sup>), every new or restored public building needed to dedicate 2% of the total costs to its artistic decorations. So, numerous were the artistic interventions in the CDF of Littoria, for a total of L. 153.725: the *arengario* was sculpted in polished porphyry marble by Giuseppe Tonnini, the decorative panel in the assembly hall was made in red porphyry marble by Antonio Biggi, the Roya green marble stele of the *sacrario* by Nicola Rubino, the monumental statue of the eagle on the top of the tower was done by Francesco Saverio Palozzi, and the balustrade of the main staircase was produced by Giovanni Mattioli marble company. For the statue of the eagle, the Genio Civile and the architect asked for two quotations: one in travertine (L. 60.000) and one in iron and aluminium (L. 65.000); the federal chose the travertine one for a final price of L. 52.000.

Economic difficulties characterised the end of 1942, indeed, the requests of sculptors or suppliers to get paid were common, but the PNF tried to postpone every payment and even the maintenance works on building and streets. Also frequent were the inspections by PNF technicians who came to oversee the advancement of works, and to whom followed requests from the central secretary to speed up the process. However, in March

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<sup>327</sup> Legge 29 luglio 1949 n 717. Norme per l'arte negli edifici pubblici. Art 1. Le amministrazioni dello stato che provvedono all'esecuzione di nuove costruzioni di edifici pubblici ed alla ricostruzione di edifici pubblici distrutti per cause di guerra, devono destinare al loro abbellimento mediante opere d'arte una quota non inferiore al 2% del loro costo totale. Sono escluse le costruzioni ad uso industriale o di alloggi popolari, nonché tutti gli edifici che importino una spesa non superiore a 50 milioni.

Art 2. Qualunque sia l'entità delle costruzioni e ricostruzioni, la scelta degli artisti per l'esecuzione delle opere d'arte sarà fatta dall'Amministrazione sul cui bilancio grava la spesa, con la partecipazione del progettista e di un rappresentante dei lavoratori delle Arti figurative. Le Amministrazioni provvederanno all'assegnazione delle opere d'arte mediante concorso qualora il valore dell'opera superi 500.000L. Non meno della metà dei componenti la commissione giudicatrice sarà così formata: 1 rappresentante dell'Accademia di Belle Arti, dai rappresentanti dei lavoratori delle Arti figurative eletti dai sindacati.

1943, the construction company Laudisa asked for another extension for the finish of the works due to the state of emergency and war, which inevitably impacted the construction works, together with the lack of materials and labour shortage. Already in May of the same year, the offices were moved there, even if electricity was still missing. Indeed, in the same month, requests for materials were sent to other companies, most of which declined the offer because they were involved in military supply. The contract with Laudisa terminated on 25 July 1943 with the government's fall. The stay of PNF in the building lasted very little, indeed on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1943, the ONC was urgently ceding to the Intendenza di Finanza the buildings of the dissolved PNF, which in Littoria were the CDF, Caserma MVSN, Caserma Gil, Casa del Combattente, Casa OND; in Sabaudia the CDF, Caserma MVSN, Sede Gil, Casa del Combattente; in Pontinia the CDF, locali Gil, casa OND, casa OND of Borgo Vodice; in Terracina the CDF and OND in Borgo Hermada; in San Felice in Circeo the CDF and the OND di Borgo Montenero; in Aprilia the CDF and Casa Gil.

#### *5.5.1.2 The fall of the regime*

As said, the CDF's actual use was minimal. With the suppression of the PNF, the management and the property of all PNF goods and buildings passed to the Ufficio Stralcio of the Ministry of Finance, who administered the residual payments to suppliers and limited restorations to the buildings. It was frequent that companies and suppliers who worked for PNF, after its suppression, asked the payments twice: one to the PNF and another one to the democratic state; for this reason, it became even more frequent the request of written documents to get paid, extending the control and bureaucracy over this process indefinitely. The actual property of the ex-PNF buildings, given their peculiar construction linked to the land reclamation works carried on by ONC and by the Consortium, was unclear to the Intendenza. In a letter dated 17 September 1944 the Consortium wrote to the Intendenza that the ex-PNF buildings, until their official consignment -which presupposed their completion- to the specific public authorities, remained under the temporary disposition of the Consortium. The correct procedure to pass these

buildings to the State should have been the following: (1) the ONC or the Consortium construct the buildings for a specific public function or authority, (2) the Prefect notifies the official passage of the finished building to the Intendenza di Finanza, (3) the Intendenza gives the building to the specific public authority (local federations, Carabinieri, ONB, etc.) for which it was built. However, during fascism, this procedure was not strictly followed, and generally fascist authorities just unofficially occupied the buildings. So, after the fall of the regime, the administrative bodies needed to run a census of the state-owned buildings and their condition after the bombings to decide on their reuse and restoration. The situation of Littoria's buildings' property reflected the general confusion and bureaucratic *empasse* on the administrative level: indeed, in a letter dated 22 February 1945, the Alto Commissario Aggiunto per la Liquidazione dei beni fascisti wrote to the Intendenza di Finanza arguing that was the Consorzio di Bonifica the body who should regularise the property of the buildings because even if the buildings were public (property of the State), they never officially entered in possession of PNF, so they could not be treated according to *decreto legislativo luogotenenziale* 27 luglio 1944 n. 159<sup>328</sup>. In the following months, the situation was still uncertain and evolved slowly: in a letter dated 11 May 1945 the Ragioniere Generale wrote to the Ministry of Finance clarifying that was the *Alto Commissariato* the institutional body that should deal with property clarifications because it had the documentation on the property and construction of PNF buildings<sup>329</sup>. Only at the end of May 1945 a solution seemed to come up when the Alto Commissario wrote to the Intendenza di Finanza that the CDF was built using exclusively PNF funds and so, for this reason, it had to be considered property of the State according to the law mentioned above 27 luglio 1944 n. 159. Littoria was no exception

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<sup>328</sup> *Sanzioni contro il fascismo*. Art. 38. I beni del cessato partito nazionale fascista e delle organizzazioni soppresse dal regio decreto-legge 2 agosto 1943, n. 704, sono devoluti allo Stato.

<sup>329</sup> ACS, Fondo PNF, *Gestione Stralcio*, letter dated 22/2/1945 from Alto Commissario Aggiunto per la Liquidazione dei beni fascisti to the Intendenza di Finanza, letter dated 11/5/1945 from Ragioniere Generale to Ministry of Finance.

to the ordinary bureaucratic mess that followed the fall of the regime and the constitution of a new republican system; this already slow process was even slowed down more by the lack or destruction of documentation due to war damages.

After a brief occupation (from October 1943 to January 1944) of Palazzo M by local representative of Repubblica Sociale, on January 1944, the Allies landed in Nettuno and started to bomb the province of Littoria heavily, and in particular Palazzo M and its huge tower with the eagle. In its brief local government of the city, the Repubblica Sociale did not officially approve any reconstruction project for Littoria, even if the technical reports on war damages were dramatic. On 25<sup>th</sup> May 1944, the Allies entered Littoria and found a city hugely devastated: first esteem on the works needed to secure buildings and roads amounted to L.26 million, with an additional L.23 million to remove debris from canals<sup>330</sup>.

As also in other parts of Italy, the situation was dramatic: people protested for the lack of food or for the insufficient portion of food administered by local governments that forced them to use the black market; a huge number of evacuees (55.000 people presented a request for compensation for war damages) started to occupy public buildings and generally any building which has survived the bombs; all buildings did not have rooftops nor windows because the vibrations of the bombs made the window glass explode and then the price of glass became prohibitive; malaria started to take off again because sanitary hotspots were difficult to organise in a state of war. Moreover, they could not provide antilarval treatment to the lands because the Allies and Germans turned them into minefields; roads were destroyed and bridges were bombed, so people voluntarily had to restore them with makeshift materials because the State could not provide for it. In addition, the epuration process began also in the province of Littoria without the necessary zeal. Indeed, the situation of the province of Littoria, which witnessed the permanence in public administrative positions, was even brought to the attention of Minister Togliatti 332. This same public sluggishness in dealing

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<sup>330</sup> Folchi, 2014, p. 137.

with the end of the regime and the change in the political situation also manifested in the relationship between people and the symbols of fascism in public buildings in Littoria. After the 25 July 1943, in all cities of Italy, architectonic epuration started from the buildings<sup>331</sup>: the *fascio littorio* was deprived of the axe, symbols such as eagles, fasci, busts of Mussolini and writings were chiselled away from every wall, statues were demolished, plaques were removed. Few other cities were more characterised by fascist symbols than Littoria and the new towns. Nonetheless, Littoria's province hesitated even to pay the workers for their removal of fascist symbols; indeed, in the first moment, the Angella company was refused its due payment from the Intendenza di Finanza.

The province was still bearing the name of Littoria, which changed in Latina in 1945 (decreto luogotenenziale del 9 aprile 1945, n. 270). The decision over the change of the name was discussed in 1944 and 1945 because even if all the political parties agreed on the need to erase the fascist origin of the city also in the toponomy, the name Latina still sounded fascist<sup>332</sup>. Yet, the name Latina was justified by the previous history, which was the specific part of Italy inhabited by Latins. Even more disputed was the decision over preserving or modifying the province of Littoria/Latina. The arguments for its suppression were mainly two: the fact that it was created by fascism and the revindication of Caserta to become the capital of the province. On the contrary, Leone Zeppieri, president of *Deputazione provinciale*, argued that erasing the province of Littoria was an error because it was well connected with all other municipalities and the least damaged by war among all municipalities of Lazio. In addition, he said that the majority of people preferred to keep the province in Littoria. However, when the CLN in 1945 invited the municipalities to vote on the preservation or suppression of the province, the participation was quite tepid; indeed, on a total of 30

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<sup>331</sup> Regio Decreto legge 28 dicembre 1943, n.29 - Defascistizzazione delle amministrazioni dello stato, degli enti locali e parastatali, degli enti comunque sottoposti a vigilanza o tutela dello Stato e delle aziende private esercenti servizi pubblici.

<sup>332</sup> "Anche la Deputazione non l'accettò perché la sua desinenza finale richiamava alla mente il fascismo 'che allo stato si vuole eliminare poiché costituisce il ricordo di un periodo di infausta memoria'". In Folchi, 1992, p. 379.

municipalities, only 21 showed up, and among them, 9 voted for the suppression, 5 for its preservation and 7 abstained.

On the contrary, the toponymy of the city changed quite immediately, indeed in 7<sup>th</sup> September 1944 the Municipality of Littoria issued a document (delibera n.2) modifying the name of major squares and streets (Piazza Predappio changed into Piazza del Mercato, Piazza Littorio in Piazza d'Italia, Piazza 23 Marzo in Piazza 25 Luglio, Largo 28 Ottobre in Piazza delle Medaglie d'oro, Via delle Camicie Nere in via Giosuè Carducci, Via dei Martiri Fascisti in Via delle Forze Armate, Via Michele Bianchi in Via Fratelli Bandiera, Viale Luigi Razza in Viale Indipendenza) arguing:

*(...) perché i nomi di varie strade non hanno più motivo di esistere in quanto costituiscono l'espressione di un regime che per un ventennio ha oppresso in ogni cittadino una più adeguata concezione della libertà personale*<sup>333</sup>.

It is important to highlight that apart from the names of the cities and *borghi*, and some other places which directly recall the fascist land reclamation (such as Canale Mussolini, Canale delle Acque alte, etc.), the toponymy of the territory referred also to other periods of the area, such as the Pope's management of the land (river Sisto), the ancient presences of people living there (Via Polusca), the presence of the Romans (Via Appia), the lumber industry of the area (Carboniere, Farneto Nascosto, Segheria), the buffalo activity (Bufalara, Strada del Bufalotto), the ponds and vast woods existing before the land reclamation (Macchia Grande, Piscinara, Sterpara, Fosso di Centopiscine, Piscina della Mortella, etc.) or the *lestre* (Lestra della Vergine, Lestra della Porcareccia, etc.)<sup>334</sup>. Toponymy is here very relevant because it makes evident that not everything that pertains to the Pontine marshes refers exclusively to fascism, even if during that period the propaganda needed to elide any reference to previous occupations and present

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<sup>333</sup> Delibera n. 2 del 7 settembre 1944, in Folchi, 1992, p. 132

<sup>334</sup> Cfr. Muntoni A. (a cura di), 1990. "Latina" in *Atlante Storico delle Città Italiane*, Multigrafica Editore, Roma, p. 54-55.

the land reclamation and the foundation of cities as something created from nothing.

Apart from toponomy, another important use of the language by the regime in urban matters and in particular in buildings took shape in the form of *scritture esposte* or *scritture d'apparato*, which were writings on walls (on lasting supports or with just painting on wall) with a commemorative or celebratory aim. In the Agro Pontino a lot of ephemeral exposed writings were done for propaganda reasons, such as the temporary billboard with the writing *Si redime la terra si fondano città* positioned in the building site of Sabaudia or the writings *Dux docet docuit* on the barracks of workers<sup>335</sup> captured in photographs and diffused by the press. However, these writings were not only temporary, but they were also inserted permanently in architectural projects of public buildings in order to stress their monumental and political function, for instance a marble epigraphy narrating the foundation of the city by Mussolini was put on the tower of the city hall of Sabaudia. Indeed, extrapolating phrases from Mussolini's speeches and using them to decorate facades and buildings became another common habit of the regime, up to the point that, in 1936, Starace disposed that the walls of every city and rural town should be covered with Mussolini's phrases in an effort to "fascistize the monument"<sup>336</sup> and turn every wall in a monument at the service of the regime. For this purpose, Ettore Muti, the new PNF secretary, in 1939 disposed that every PNF provincial section should paint on the internal walls of their headquarters some phrases by Mussolini; and in order to support this, he sent an official list of 56 phrases divided by theme and by party organization (CDF, GIL, Fasci Femminili, etc.)<sup>337</sup> to source from. After the announcement of the Italian entry into war of 10 June 1940, the most spread motto became *vincere*, which started to

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<sup>335</sup> Cfr. Ciammaruconi C., 2009. Tra estetica del potere ed esigenze identitarie, iconografie, "scritture d'apparato" e "scritture esposte" fasciste nell'Agro Pontino, *Studi Storici*, 50:1, pp. 15-56.

<sup>336</sup> "E' l'ora delle esigenze etiche anche per i monumenti. Si demoliscano tutti quelli vanesi, inutili, utilitari, frivoli. Trionfi solo quello fascista. Fascistizziamo il monumento", Farinata on *Il Popolo d'Italia*, in C. Ciammaruconi, 2009, p. 36.

<sup>337</sup> *Ivi*, p. 39.



appear in every official letter and on every wall of new towns, as it was the new password of the regime.

After the fall of the regime and after the first phase of spontaneous removal of writings and symbols, on 28 August 1943, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the new Badoglio government issued a document for the prefects with instructions to eliminate any surviving PNF emblem, monument or commemorative plaque – except for the aforementioned plaques on the economic sanctions since Badoglio played a major role in the conquest of Addis Abeba. However, the removal of writings in the new towns was slow, given that they were still bearing a strong value in the identity of the cities. On 30 July 1945 the prefect issued another document to stress with more emphasis the necessity to remove any testimony of the past regime:

*È stato rilevato che in molti comuni non si è ancora provveduto alla cancellazione delle scritte murali fasciste. Esse, com'è ovvio, rappresentano una tipica sopravvivenza delle manifestazioni esteriori della megalomania di cui il cessato regime usava far pompa per accattivarsi l'ammirazione delle masse. Oggi che l'Italia, per sua fortuna, si è liberata dalla pesante bardatura fascista che l'ha oppressa e mortificata per oltre un ventennio, s'impone l'eliminazione, anche nelle apparenze esteriori, di ogni falso orpello che ha nell'animo degli italiani la triste risonanza di un'amara e dolorosa esperienza.*<sup>338</sup>

After the removal of the fascist symbols, with the referendum and the establishment of the Republic, the monarchic emblems were removed, leaving the new towns of the Pontine area in an identity void.

### 5.5.1.3 *The reuse of the CDF*

In an effort to defascistise public buildings, the CDF was mutilated by workers of Angella company who, by order of the

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<sup>338</sup> *Scritte murali fasciste – Toponomastica stradale*, in Bollettino della R. Prefettura di Latina, n. 14, 31 luglio 1945, p. 234, in Ciammaruconi, 2009, p. 46.

Province, chiselled away all fascist symbols from the building<sup>339</sup>; the rest of the demolition of the building and especially of the tower was done by the bombings of the Allies during the battle of Anzio (see Figures 18-19).

So, after the first phase of official and unofficial dismantling of the fascist regime and after the bombings of the Allies and Germans, the CDF followed a path common to almost all public buildings in the immediate post-war period: it was occupied by evacuees who did not have a place to stay. The construction of private houses was insufficient even before the war, the bombings exacerbated the situation pushing homeless people to move toward the city to look for a refuge creating problems of overpopulation. The evacuees in Latina in 1945 were around 1.500 and still increasing. The assistance to refugees was a major issue in all Italy in the post-war period, so much so that a specific ministry was instituted, the Ministero dell'Assistenza Post Bellica. The problem was so stratified that the Ufficio dell'Assistenza classified the typologies of the people needing a house in: evacuees (*sfollati*), homeless (*senzatetto*), *sinistrati*, deportees, war prisoners, refugees, and political refugees. The function of the Office was to firstly guarantee basic needs such as food, clothes and a place to stay, and in second moment to facilitate the return to normality of people, assuring them a house and a job<sup>340</sup>. In such a situation, other buildings (ex Gil, 82° Fanteria) were first used to host evacuees; the reuse of Palazzo M came later, after some uncertainties on the opportunity to keep it or destroy it and on the maintenance or epuration of signs of its original creation – also because its restoration was financially consistent (esteemed cost L. 200 million).

The left wing of Palazzo M was occupied by refugees, the same happened for the CDF of Pontinia and Sabaudia. In a technical

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<sup>339</sup> Folchi, 1992, p. 361

<sup>340</sup> The housing problem got even worse when in 1947 the Province nominated Latina as *città dell'accoglienza* (city of hospitality) welcoming refugees from Dalmatia and Friulia Venezia Giulia, providing for their needs. The presence of this new community would later bring to the construction of Villaggio Trieste. Again in 1956, after the revolt of Hungary, Latina was repropose as *città dell'accoglienza* welcoming refugees. Later again in 1979 for Latina welcomed the refugees from South-East Asia escaping from war.

relation on the partial reconstruction works of CDF made by Genio Civile on 24 October 1944<sup>341</sup> there was the necessity to turn the building into an accommodation for evacuees. The reconstruction works were contracted to Cooperativa Concordia in September 1945 for a total of L.605.640 and pertained just the securing of the first floor of the left wing of the building. The reconstruction was very basic and essential, answering to primary needs of people living there: they closed grenade holes in the walls, applied glass to windows, and built some kitchens. The reconstruction works were delayed not only by the lack of materials (such as glass) but also by the presence of evacuees who did not left the building; indeed people were afraid to lose their space since places to stay were not available and leaving them could mean losing them. In mid-September 1945 the works by Cooperativa Concordia finished and the left wing of Palazzo M was handed over to LL. PP. There were also big problems with toilets, which were often out of order and this caused several health problems. Moreover, in June 1945 some parts (300 square meters) of the external covering collapsed, urging the Genio Civile to do a technical report for an intervention to secure the building. In the meantime, also the right wing of Palazzo M was occupied by evacuees, despite the precarious conditions. Again in 1949 other walls collapsed leaving a lot of debris in the courtyard and concrete pieces attached to the iron structure hanging from the walls. The state of degradation was a threaten for people living there and also for people walking by, so the Genio Civile commissioned another technical report, asking for immediate public intervention. The Intendenza di Finanza agreed as well on the necessity of an intervention in order to stop the damage and stealing of materials from the right wing of the palace. In 1946 some maintenance and restoration works were done in the right wing of the building as well to services, such as electricity (contracted to Azienda Ciofi) and reparation of the toilettes (contracted to ditta Masi). In 1947 the works of conversion of the left wing into evacuees' refuges were still ongoing, as it is attested

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<sup>341</sup> ACS, Fondo PNF, *Opere dipendenti da danni bellici. Relazione sui Lavori di riparazione e di adattamento dell'ala sinistra della ex nuova cdf da adibirsi ad alloggio di famiglie di sfollati.*

by the Verbale di ripresa lavori of SIC company dated 10 November 1947.

In August 1949 the Intendente assigned to the Municipality the left wing of Palazzo M to turn it into the Liceo Ginnasio and the right wing for the elementary schools. The agreement included that for the use of Palazzo M as a school the Municipality would have paid a rent and in addition, the municipality should have also paid the arrears to the refugees actually occupying the spaces. The 1949 new technical report by Genio Civile highlighted the most urgent works to be done in the palace, such as demolition of crumbling parts for an esteemed cost of L. 272.000, which were contracted to Impresa Di Zoppa in October of the same year. In November the Municipality confirmed its intention to rent the spaces of Palazzo M and to turn them into schools; in addition, the municipality argued that since the squatters of the palace were not citizen of Latina but refugees, the payment for their arrears should be provided by the Ente per l'Assistenza Post Bellica. In January 1950 the Giunta Comunale officially issued the Delibera n. 42 in which it officialized the rent of Palazzo M and involved the Genio Civile for the reconstruction works. The technical report of March 1950 by Genio Civile for the reconstruction works was finalized to the reuse of the building and its conversion as a school, using the right wing for the High School (liceo ginnasio) and the left wing for the Middle School, while keeping the lecture hall (aula magna) in the central back part (once the conference room). The works included all the five floors for a total of 2.900 square meters; they were divided in two tranches. One of the main decisions concerned the eventual reconstruction of the tower: architect Frezzotti decided to contribute to the matter with a note to Genio Civile in which he stated that the tower had no longer any purpose and so it should not be reconstructed; instead, the central part should be remodeled as a connecting structure between the two lateral parts, according to its new function.

In 1950 the primary phases of the reconstruction work started and consisted of the removal of debris, demolition of several parts of walls, demolition of the roof, removal of windows, construction of new walls, reconstruction of the roof, restoration of windows, reparation of hydraulic and heating system, reconstruction of floors, restoration of facades and repair of lighting system. In 1951

the first tranche of works was contracted to Impresa Tenaglia (L. 150 million) and it included the left wing and part of the central part of the palace to be turned into the High School. Later in the same year, some modifications were made according to an increased population: some administrative spaces were added in the central part, baths were increased and also the number of classes (30 classes for Middle School, 17 for the High School, 5 for Istituto Magistrale). For this reason, a supplementary survey (perizia suppletiva) was required in order to assess the need for more funds to finish the works. In 1953 the Municipality started to pressure the Genio Civile for the disposal of the building, asking for the High School to be located there in time for the school year of 1953-54. After the suspension of the works by Impresa Tenaglia, also the press put pressure for the ultimatum of the works: *Il Messaggero di Frosinone e Latina* in August 1953 titled an article on this topic "Sollecitare la ripresa dei lavori di Palazzo M" asking for the immediate use of the building which was already finished. However, this article did not raise any public reaction but just pushed the Impresa Tenaglia to finish the works without waiting for the formal approval of the supplementary survey. In October 1953 there was the official passing of competence over the building from Genio Civile to Intendenza di Finanza, and then from the latter to the Municipality – while the property remained of the State.

In 1954 in Palazzo M were still living 37 families composed of 158 individuals; this permanence in the building clearly caused some delays, up until 1955, when all families were provided with a new place to stay and left the building. In 1955 the second tranche of works (L. 70.096.000) began, following a public procurement procedure which was won by S.I.T.E company in 1957. In February 1956 the mayor wrote to the Province that the reconstruction of the right wing is going on and that the end of the works is imminent, probably in time for the Liceo to move in for the next school year 1956-57. However, in 1957 the damages to the building (detachment of plaster from ceilings and collapses of parts of walls) due to heavy rain prevented the schools to be fully operational. The same sort of problems recurred also in the school year 1961-62 when a part of the bricks covering the wall fell down on the sidewalks. In 1958 the S.I.T.E. was contracted for other

works in the Palazzo M concerning the overall structure of the palace and the roof, which were finished by the end of the year. Concerning the art decorations and the furniture of the palace, after the fall of fascism, most of them were scarred and the remaining were stolen. In the following years, a marble plaque was positioned on the palace to remember its reconstruction with the contribution of the Ministry of Public Works. The new decorations for the palace were in line with its new use as a school: Domenico Mastroianni (Roman sculptor) provided the new building with 41 *terracotte* dedicated to the *Promessi Sposi* and a wooden bust of Alessandro Manzoni, while Giovanni Di Lucia was commissioned two bronze busts of Dante Alighieri.

So, after more than 10 years after the fall of the regime, Palazzo M was converted into a scholastic building, and it remained so until the 1980s. According to the new expanding needs of the Guardia di Finanza, in the mid-80s Palazzo M was chosen as their new headquarter. The Direzione Generale del Demanio in Rome issued the passing of the building from a scholastic use to the Guardia di Finanza with the foglio n. 92499 on 13 January 1985<sup>342</sup>, but it was only in 1989 that the *Istituto Statale per geometri* left part of the palace. Restoration works interested initially the backyard and the four floors in the right wing of the building. The official acquisition of the building by the Guardia di Finanza was in January 1992, when Palazzo M was titled to the memory of Vice Brigadiere Michele Savarese<sup>343</sup> with the application of a commemorative plaque in the *ex-sacrario*. Finally, in May 2001 the two upper floors of the left wing of the palace were transferred to the Guardia as well. The passage in time of different parts of the buildings permitted different phases of restoration, which included also the underground burrows and the front square of Palazzo M (see Figure 20). In 1996 the *piazzale* was dedicated to Crollalanza and three statues were here positioned: the *Madre*

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<sup>342</sup> Reccia G., 2014. Palazzo M in uso alla Guardia di Finanza, in Diebner, D'onorio De Meo, Folchi, Reccia, 2014. *La Guardia di Finanza e Palazzo M a Latina*, edizioni in occasione del 80° anniversario della Guardia di Finanza a Latina, p. 192.

<sup>343</sup> "Vice Brigadiere Michele Savarese, medaglia d'argento al valore di Marina, per aver tratto in salvo un individuo in imminente pericolo di annegare nelle acque calabresi nell'agosto 1891". *Ibidem*.

*rurale* and the *Portatrice di pane* taken from Casa del Contadino (demolished in 1939), and a contemporary statue commemorating Giuseppe Giuliano (see Figure 21) a student killed in 1971 by a prison breaker<sup>344</sup>. How this relates to the overall project of the ex-CDF now Guardia di Finanza is not explained.

The Guardia di Finanza also hosts inside Palazzo M two statues by Duilio Cambellotti: the *Monumento ai caduti di Priverno* in the *ex-sacrario* and *L'Aquila* in the central hall of the palace. Together with *L'Aquila*, there is also a marble plaque with the *Dichiarazione dei Diritti dell'Uomo* (declaration of human rights). The juxtaposition of statues coeval to fascism with more contemporary ones dedicated to democratic values seems more incidental than a reasoned choice, given the fact that the publication<sup>345</sup> by Guardia di Finanza does not explain any curatorial choice or thinking behind that decision.

Some recent operations on the heritage of Latina testify the political closeness of mayors and their willingness to re-link the city to its original foundation. As Mia Fuller writes<sup>346</sup>, in 1999 a plaque, in the same style as the fascist ones (see Figures 22), has been added on the balcony where Mussolini did the speech of inauguration of the city, quoting a part of that speech:

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<sup>344</sup> Giuseppe Giuliano era un ragazzo di 14 anni, figlio di una guardia carceraria. Venne ucciso per strada durante la cattura di un evaso dal carcere cittadino trovandosi nel mezzo del conflitto a fuoco. Dopo il suo gesto eroico gli venne conferita la medaglia d'oro al valor civile con la seguente motivazione: "Riconosciuto un pericoloso criminale, evaso dalle carceri giudiziarie, si precipitava – profondamente compreso, nonostante la giovane età, del dovere civico di assicurare il malvivente alla giustizia – ad avvertire il proprio genitore, Appuntato del Corpo degli Agenti di Custodia e, benché consapevole della particolare pericolosità del delinquente, non esitava, con coraggiosa determinazione, a seguire il padre, slanciandosi all'inseguimento del latitante. Nella violenta azione, seguita al tentativo di cattura, il ragazzo, che era voluto rimanere costantemente al fianco del padre, rimaneva ferito mortalmente. Fulgido esempio di generoso coraggio e di amore filiale, spinti fino all'estremo sacrificio. Latina, 6 maggio 1971." Source: <https://www.icgiuliano.edu.it/giuseppe-giuliano/>

<sup>345</sup> Diebner, D'onorio De Meo, Folchi, Reccia, 2014

<sup>346</sup> Fuller M., 2020. Rural settlers and urban designs. Paradoxical civic identity in the Agro Pontino, in Jones K.B., Pilat S., 2020. *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture: Reception and Legacy*, Routledge, London

I CONTADINI ED I RURALI / DEBBONO GUARDARE /  
A QUESTA TORRE CHE DOMINA LA PIANURA / E  
CHE E' UN SIMBOLO DELLA POTENZA FASCISTA /  
CONVERGENDO VERSO DI ESSA / TROVERANNO  
QUANDO OCCORRA / AIUTO E GIUSTIZIA.  
MUSSOLINI

So, this plaque is faking its origin by mimicking the style of the fascist plaques on the economic sanctions, and it quotes the Mussolini speech without a real reason except the foundation of the city. Fuller said that this plaque reminds of the day of the inauguration creating a “trans-chronological link<sup>347</sup>” and keeping his memory alive in the community. When I visited the city, the tower was under restoration (see Figure 23) and I was not able to check if the plaque was still there, however the marble eagle, once holding the fascio, was present and close to the European flag, creating an uncanny proximity. Fuller drove the attention not only to the operation itself but also to the profile of the mayor Ajmone Finestra who oversaw the entire process:

*A pro-Mussolini fighter in the Civil War of 1943–45 and an especially active member of the postwar extreme-right party the Movimento Sociale Italiano, later on, Finestra was a public figure outside the Agro Pontino for a time, as a senator. He also served as mayor of Latina from 1993 to 2002; by the time I interviewed him in 2009, he had gone on to establish the city’s unique Centro Studi della Repubblica Sociale Italiana, or Study Center concerning Mussolini’s losing side in 1943–45<sup>348</sup>.*

Another restoration authorized by Finestra was the monumental fountain in Piazza della Libertà, to whom he added again the stone blades to the sculptures of wheat. Doing this, meant to restore the original meaning of the battle of the wheat in which agriculture and productivity were linked to violence and fascism.

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<sup>347</sup> *Ivi*, p.233

<sup>348</sup> *Ivi*, p.234



More recently, in August 2021, the Lega local politician Claudio Durigon proposed to rename the park, which has been dedicated only in 2017 to Falcone and Borsellino, to Arnaldo Mussolini, as it was originally done. The proposal did not have any practical follow-up, but it raised again the *querelle* of the local identity of the city linked to fascism.

Moreover, the symbols and public buildings of the city have been reused by Alleanza Nazionale and MSI in their political manifestos and electoral communication, as highlighted by Mia Fuller<sup>349</sup>, creating an uncanny visual and political link between fascism and new democratic political right-wing forces and the city of Latina.

### 5.5.2 Sabaudia. The foundation of the city

As previously said, the construction and inauguration of Sabaudia was declared by Mussolini during the inauguration of Littoria, to be on 21 April 1934. Given the criticism of the architects for the construction of Littoria and for the choice of Frezzotti, in this case, it was considered necessary to have a public competition. The foundational stone was posed on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1933<sup>350</sup> and just after 253 days of frenetic work, the city was inaugurated, five days in advance, on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1934. The inauguration took place at the presence of 20.000 people, Mussolini and king Vittorio Emanuele III, after whom the city was named. At its inauguration, the city was not exactly terminated but the crowds were disposed in a way as to hide it. In order to sustain such a quick construction process, two contractors were working on two different lots at the same time and two working shifts (day shift and night shift) were organized for the workers. The first lot was contracted to Tudini & Talenti and included the city hall with the tower, the CDF, the ONC building, the ONB building, the Associazione Combattenti, the cinema-theatre, the hotel, the M.V.S.N. barracks, the school, the market, the fountain,

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<sup>349</sup> Fuller M., 2017. Modelli urbani per i rurali: la paradossale identità civica dell'Agro Pontino, in Corsani G., Porfyriou H. (a cura di), 2017. *Borghi rurali e borgate. La tradizione del disegno urbano in Italia negli anni Trenta*, Palombi, Roma

<sup>350</sup> The constitution of the municipality of Sabaudia was approved with a R.D.L. on 4 August 1933. Cfr. Muntoni A., 1988. "Sabaudia" in *Atlante Storico delle Città Italiane*, Multigrafica Editrice, Roma

the sports centre, the dwelling units A, E, O, the *villini*, the electrical network, the streets and the squares of the centre, the sewers and the aqueduct. The second lot was contracted to G. Perrucchetti and pertained to the Maternità and Infanzia building, the cemetery, the R.R.C.C. barracks, the hospital, the aqueduct, the reservoir, the dwelling units F, C, the church, the abattoir and the external ring roads<sup>351</sup>. The only building not constructed by ONC was the Post Office which was under the direction of the Ministry of Communications.

On 21 April 1933, a public competition for the planning of the new city was published and in the requirements for the new city, it specified that:

*“(...) purchè il piano regolatore corrisponda alle esigenze pratiche di un centro eminentemente rurale ed a quelle dell’igiene, dell’economia, del traffico, della lottizzazione, dell’edilizia e dell’estetica, tenendo presente che la popolazione dell’intero Comune è prevista in 20.000 abitanti di cui 5.000 nel centro. In detto piano regolatore devono essere previsti tutti i servizi pubblici necessari al funzionamento del nuovo centro agricolo, le istituzioni tipiche del Regime Fascista e, in particolare, i seguenti fabbricati che dovranno essere costruiti per primi: Comune, con torre, Fascio, Dopolavoro, Caserme della Milizia, dei C.C.R.R. e della P.S., Casa del Balilla, Chiesa con campanile e casa parrocchiale, asilo di infanzia, scuole elementari, ospedale, Opera Maternità e Infanzia, Associazioni Combattentistiche, Direzione Aziendale dell’ONC, Poste e Telegrafo, campo sportivo, mercato coperto, albergo, cinematografo, mattatoio, fabbricati di civile abitazione con 60 appartamenti e 30 negozi e cimitero<sup>352</sup>.”*

The directions of the ONC were pretty clear and structured, with a list of all the buildings required by the party and intended as the administrative centre of the territory. A group of Rationalist

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<sup>351</sup> Muntoni A. (a cura di), 1988. “Sabaudia” in *Atlante Storico delle Città Italiane*, Mutigrafica Editrice, Roma, p. 25.

<sup>352</sup> *Ivi*, p. 58.

architects, Luigi Piccinato, Alfredo Scalzelli, Eugenio Montuori, Gino Cancellotti, won the competition.

The city is at the centre of the connection of two roads: one in the direction of the Roma-Littoria axe and the other one in the direction of Terracina. Its urbanistic scheme is based on an orthogonal grid with at its centre the Piazza della Rivoluzione (Revolution square), upon which the main public buildings are facing. In the square there is the L-shaped town hall with the tower, the ONC, the CDF (see Figure 24 - 25) with the cinema-theatre— everything designed by the four architects who won the competition - and at the opposite side of the piazza there was the religious centre with the church. The town hall and the CDF were isolated from other buildings to reinforce their symbolic importance. The rest of town was characterised by low-rise buildings, painted in light colours, with porticos, which expressed, as Piacentini said, the *Italianness* of architecture by stressing its Mediterranean origin. This apparent imbalance between the majority of public buildings compared to the residential houses was stressed by Piccinato on *Urbanistica*<sup>353</sup> in 1934 as intentional: Sabaudia had to be intended in its context of a decentralized system depending on agricultural *borghi* and *poderi*. The rural character of the centre was also reflected in the zoning system, which in comparison to that of a city was very simple. The design of pretty much all the public and private buildings were assigned to Cancellotti, Montuori, Piccinato and Scalzelli; whereas the schools, the sports field, the water tank (designed by Frezzotti), the hospital, the cemetery (designed by Vicario) and the post office (designed by Mazzoni) were left to the other finalists.

Sabaudia offers also an interesting example of the level of involvement of the Duce in the architectural discourse of the time and of the symbolic and political function of architecture. In 1934 a debate started around the height of the municipal tower of Sabaudia and it involved the ONC, Mussolini and the architects who planned the city. The problem was that the Sabaudia's tower was higher than the Littoria's one, which according to Mussolini was not coherent with the status of the capital of the province of

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<sup>353</sup> *Ivi*, p. 59.

the latter – even if he previously approved all the plans. Cencelli immediately replied that the plan would have been modified, keeping Sabaudia's tower lower than Littoria's. However, after the architects explained the aesthetic and economic reasons for keeping the tower unaltered, Mussolini changed his mind again and approved the tower's original height.

The appreciation of the press of the city was very enthusiastic, indeed, unlike Littoria, Piacentini also applauded Sabaudia in his magazine *Architettura* where he said that Mussolinian architecture was finally taking shape, formally linking rationalism with state architecture. Unlike Littoria, then, Sabaudia was praised for its architecture, indeed in the Guida d'Italia dedicated to Lazio region in 1935 Sabaudia was described as *attraente e graziosissima città di architettura razionale*. To the foundation of Sabaudia and to the creation of the National Park of Circeo was dedicated an entire article on *Vie d'Italia* in 1934 where the foundation is presented as an epic event soaked in militaristic language:

*Giacchè il non esser riusciti né Romani né Papi a liberare quella terra dalla sua lussureggiante ma tenebrosa e mortifera cappa a sgargianti colori, la palude, per farne una feconda terra di pingui frutti, non significa che così in eterno questa bella contrada dovesse rimanere (...). Poteva però risorgere solamente, quando si fossero verificate molte circostanze eccezionali. È stata l'opera di bonifica intrapresa dal Duce una grande guerra, e di essa Sabaudia, dopo Littoria, è battaglia vittoriosa che ci ha portato avanti nel cuore stesso del nemico, per sgominarlo e volgerlo in fuga<sup>354</sup>.*

The metaphor of the war and the battle was again used to enhance the heroism of the regime and to sustain the parallelism between the land reclamation and the creation of the empire. Some lines after Sabaudia was presented as a touristic destination:

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<sup>354</sup> *Vie d'Italia*, 1934, pp. 254-255, available online: [digitouring.it](http://digitouring.it)

*Essa, se non sarà più bella di Littoria, sarà certo più pittoresca, più suggestiva ed interessante per i turisti nostrani e stranieri in cerca di impressioni*<sup>355</sup>.

So, if it was essential to present the new towns as rural and agricultural centres, it was also true that Sabaudia had an additional touristic aim from the beginning, given the spectacular location of the city inserted in the national park of Circeo and surrounded by a lake and separated from the Mediterranean Sea by a strip of land.

Sabaudia is today the town most appreciated from an architectural point of view, even though it was not born to be more than a rural town. Indeed, clear indications of the status of Sabaudia as a rural centre and not as a city can be found both in the architectural competition by ONC and in the declarations of Piccinato<sup>356</sup>. However, the Pontine towns, particularly Sabaudia, would become the model of new towns for the Italian colonies in Africa and other countries struggling with similar urbanistic issues. Sabaudia became the city of rationalism and together with the train station of Florence, they were addressed as examples of modernity. Indeed, as previously said, Mussolini himself personally praised and defended these two projects in 1934, ending the *querelle* about it. It is ironic that in the post-war period, Bruno Zevi addressed Sabaudia as a project overcoming rationalism and being an example of organic urbanism<sup>357</sup>.

Today the city is preserved as it was originally designed, with labels explaining the history of the territory and of the city on the columns of buildings in the centre (see Figure 34). It is easy to find references on the buildings to fascism, for example, the Caserma Piave still have bas-relief, and the indication of the fascist era on the façade (see Figure 31), but also on manholes the axed fascio is

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<sup>355</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>356</sup> From the ONC competition: "(...) è lasciata ai concorrenti ampia libertà di iniziativa purché il piano regolatore corrisponda alle esigenze pratiche di un centro eminentemente rurale". From Piccinato: "Parlare di città è un non senso: né Sabaudia né Littoria sono due città nel significato urbanistico comune della parola. La città suppone qualche cosa di murato, di chiuso, qualche cosa di contrapposto alla campagna", in Mariani, 1976, pp. 82-84.

<sup>357</sup> Fagiolo, Madonna, 1994, p. 356.

still readable (see Figure 32). The image of the modern architecture is used in order to identify the city, for instance, the icon of the town hall tower can be found also on napkins in bars (see Figure 33). The lettering also is not random, it recalls the typical fascist-looking font used everywhere, from palaces to manholes. So, a certain kind of aesthetics is here recalled and preserved.

The only addition that was done is the inscription on one side of the town hall's tower which states the fidelity to the Republic and democracy (see Figure 30):

SANDRO PERTINI CAPO DELLO STATO /  
SABAUDIA FRUTTO DEL LAVORO E DEL  
SACRIFICIO DEL POPOLO / CELEBRA IL SUO 50  
ANNO DI VITA / PROCLAMA ALTA LA SUA  
FEDELTA' ALLA REPUBBLICA FONDATA SUL  
LAVORO. 15 APRILE 1986

During Pertini's government as President of the Republic, this inscription was posed to pair and answer to the one positioned on the opposite side of the same tower, which instead is dedicated to Mussolini and to the king (see Figure 29):

REGNANDO VITTORIO EMANUELE III / BENITO  
MUSSOLINI CAPO DEL GOVERNO / QUESTA TERRA  
VOLLE REDENTA / DAL MILLENARIO LETARGO DI  
MORTIFERA STERILITA' / E PRESSO LE VESTIGIA DI  
REMOTE CIVILTA' / DIEDE VITA A / SABAUDIA /  
CHE PORTA NEL NOME GLI AUSPICI  
DELL'AUGUSTA DINASTIA REGNANTE. /  
EDIFICATA IN 253 GIORNI DALL'OPERA  
NAZIONALE PER I COMBATTENTI PRESIDUTA DA  
VALENTINO ORSOLINI CENCELLI INIZIO' LA SUA  
MISSIONE CIVICA IL XV APRILE MCMXXXIV ANNO  
XII EF

The parallel is direct, not only because it reports the same date (birthday of Sabaudia) but also because it addresses, one the one side, the land reclamation works in a violent and fascist way (the

rhetoric of sterility, power), while on the other they are addressed as the work and sacrifice of the people. Then, on the one hand, the foundation of Sabaudia is linked to Mussolini and the king; on the other hand, the city promises its fidelity to the democratic Republic founded on work. In this operation of contraposition, the continuity of Italian history between the fascist past and the present is questioned.

#### 5.5.2.1 *The construction and reuse of Casa del Fascio*

In 1935, in the correspondence between Cencelli (ONC) and the Direzione Lavori Agro Pontino, it was stated the necessity to build not only the CDF of Sabaudia but also the ones of other *borghi* (Borgo Piave, Borgo Faiti, Borgo Carso, Borgo Isonzo, Borgo Montello, Borgo Bainsizza, Borgo Vodice). However, in 1938 in the list for the official act of consigning public buildings from the ONC to the municipality and the Intendenza, the only CDFs indicated were those of Sabaudia and Pontinia, meaning that the others had not been built or at the time were under construction. It was a common strategy of fascism to plan more than it could afford to build to keep the image of a powerful, never stopping State.

The CDF of Sabaudia had different functions divided into different parts of the building (see Figure 24), which was situated in front of the city hall in Piazza della Rivoluzione. In addition to CDF's offices, the building also included a cinema theatre (see Figure 25), a conference hall, a series of shops at the ground level, the OND, a library and a pool room. It was also provided with a tower covered in bricks, even though squarer and shorter than the city hall. On the front side facing the city hall, next to the tower, on the first floor, there was a balcony with the function of *arengario*. It was decorated with three flagpoles and at the basement with an anchor from the Ansaldo. The tower of the CDF nowadays is pretty much the same (see Figure 27), only the fascio on the door (see Figure 28) has been removed.

Only in 1943 the transfer of public buildings from ONC to the Municipality happened. It included the city hall, the R.R.C.C. barracks, M.V.S.N., Associazioni Combattentistiche, the CDF and Dopolavoro, the school, the GIL, the sports field, the Opera Maternità e Infanzia. These buildings had then to pass to the State

through the Intendenza di Finanza. In this case, the transferal process of propriety was inverted (from ONC to Municipality to Intendenza, rather than from ONC to Intendenza to Municipality/institution) because there still was pretty much confusion. Hence, the ONC temporarily gave the buildings to the Municipality. Indeed, in 1946 the ONC formally took back the buildings from the Municipality to consign them as they were (meaning after the bombings) to the State (Demanio), who again passed them to the Municipality.

In the correspondence<sup>358</sup> in 1957 between the Ispettorato Agro Pontino and the Intendenza di Finanza over the property of the internal courtyard of the building, the ex-CDF is mentioned as the new headquarter of the Guardia di Finanza, use that still has nowadays. The Guardia di Finanza restored, under the supervision of the Soprintendenza, the cinema- theatre used now as a conference room and in the evening for free public spectacles, maintaining the same function it had initially. Likewise, the bar of the theatre is still under restoration. Unfortunately, the municipal archive had lost its catalogue at the time of this research, and no more documents on the CDF could be found.

### 5.5.3 Pontinia. The foundation of the city

Mussolini declared in 1934:

*Il comune di Pontinia sarà inaugurato il 27 ottobre dell'anno XIII; nello stesso giorno saranno poste le fondazioni del quarto comune che si chiamerà Aprilia; e ad un anno di distanza sarà fondato il quinto comune che si chiamerà Pomezia*<sup>359</sup>.

Pontinia was the third new town of the Pontine marshes and was founded on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1934 and inaugurated on 27 October 1935. For its construction, no public competition was done, and this reflected the political ambiguity of the regime, which on one side endorsed rationalist architecture, while on the other side, it needed to please other *gerarchi* and their favouritisms<sup>360</sup>. For this

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<sup>358</sup> Archivio Centrale di Stato di Roma, fondo ONC, busta 35.

<sup>359</sup> Mussolini speech of the foundation of Pontinia, 19 December 1934.

<sup>360</sup> Mariani, 1976, p. 94.



reason, there are letters sent to Cencelli asking him to opt for architects and engineers who were also ex-combatants. According to Cencelli, the decision not to organise a public competition for the planning of Pontinia was taken by Mussolini himself. In 1934 even Le Corbusier proposed a plan for Pontinia, with which he thought to astonish Mussolini with a new construction technique which permitted to speed up, even more, the building process. However, what was not clear to the Swiss architect was that the ONC's first objective was to give people work through the construction of new towns, not to speed up the process per se. In the end, his plan was not considered.

In September 1934, once the ONC had chosen the location, the mandate to draw the city's masterplan was assigned to the engineer Pappalardo with the artistic collaboration of Frezzotti, the same architect of Littoria. The idea was to build a rural town much less critical than Littoria and Sabaudia, so the urbanistic scheme and the residential buildings are very simple. Pontinia was intended to be the quintessence of rurality; indeed, Pappalardo argued about the choices of materials:

*l'architettura dei singoli fabbricati è ispirata alla ruralità dell'ambiente, facendo predominare il motivo che giuoca sul contrasto del paramento a cortina di mattoni con varie tinte su intonaco e limitatissimi rivestimenti in travertino o finto travertino...*<sup>361</sup>

and Orsolini Cencelli on the simplicity of the project:

*In Pontinia tutto il superfluo è stato sacrificato: rimane il puro necessario per soddisfare a quelli che sono i bisogni essenziali e fondamentali della vita (...) tutto respirerà un'aria prettamente agreste, fatta di semplicità e di salute.*<sup>362</sup>

The choice of poor and local materials and the lack of ornaments were considered characteristic of rurality. Pontinia was disposed

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<sup>361</sup> Relazione generale al progetto del centro comunale di Pontinia, in Mariani, 1976, p. 254.

<sup>362</sup> *La Conquista della Terra*, dicembre 1934, *ibidem*.

on three axes which meet in the Piazza 28 Ottobre (28<sup>th</sup> October square), where the town hall had large tower and a clock. The tower of the town hall on the square was covered in bricks, with a quotation from Mussolini (see Figure 35) running over the top of it (*E' l'aratro che traccia il solco, ma è la spada che lo difende. E il vomere e la spada sono entrambi di acciaio temperato come la fede dei nostri cuori. Mussolini*) and a plaque (see Figure 36) over the entrance which reminded the heroic action of land reclamation linking it with the heroic mission of Italian people in the conquest of Africa (*Regnando Vittorio Emanuele III / Duce Benito Mussolini / il XVIII dicembre dell'anno XIV E. F. XXXI giorno / dell'assedio economico – Pontinia – III città fondata / nell'Agro redento inizia la sua vita consacrando / la vittoria dell'Italia fascista – sulla ribelle mortifera palude – mentre le legioni di Roma – sorrette dalla volontà indomabile del popolo italiano / conquistano alla patria – nel continente africano / con la spada con l'aratro ed il piccone – una nuova / provincia<sup>363</sup>*). There was also another smaller plaque on the façade of the town hall remembering the *assedio economico* by Society of Nations (18 Novembre 1935. *A ricordo dell'assedio perchè resti documentata nei secoli l'enorme ingiustizia consumata contro l'Italia alla quale tanto deve la civiltà di tutti i continenti*. See Figure 37). This kind of plaque was part of a propaganda strategy of fascistisation to spread a sense of national pride (*molti nemici, molto onore*) and opposition to the “international conspiracy”. To foster these ideas, it was decided to put a plaque on the *inique sanzioni* on the façade of every city hall of Italy. As Ciammaruconi wrote:

*La stessa apposizione di lapidi commemorative dell'«*assedio economico*» può essere considerata anche parte integrante dei rituali di massa ad alta intensità emotiva che caratterizzarono la mobilitazione antisanzionistica nel paese, accompagnando le operazioni belliche in Africa orientale.* <sup>364</sup>

This decision was not only a propaganda motive but was also meant to economically support the marble sector and the category

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<sup>363</sup> Ciammaruconi C., 2009. Tra estetica del potere ed esigenze identitarie. Iconografie, “scritture d'apparato” e “scritture esposte” fasciste nell'Agro Pontino, *Studi Storici*, p. 25

<sup>364</sup> Ivi, p. 36.

of stonemasons which suffered greatly during public works policy<sup>365</sup>.

The link between the economic sanctions and the justification of the colonial war were used together to build an internal consensus. This was also done through the decorations and the public use of buildings. Moreover, the proclamation of the new municipality of Pontinia coincided with the *giornata della fede* (18 December 1935), during which Italian couples were asked to donate their wedding rings to the State to collect gold, as a reaction to the economic sanctions. This event gave the name to the city's elementary school to educate children and add another date to the fascist calendar.

Public buildings were disposed not only in the central square but also along the orthogonal axes, reusing an Italian urbanistic scheme of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The plan and the architectural style of Pontinia was highly criticised by Pagano, who pointed out how extravagant scenography is not synonym with modernity:

*La povertà della presuntuosa 'invenzione' del colonnato cieco, l'assurda impostazione della torre, la pesante cornice denunciano non ruralità ma penosa incompetenza artistica (...) Il confondere l'architettura moderna con simili balorde scenografie, il credere che arte moderna significhi bizzarria o non-senso, il pretendere l'originalità ad ogni costo là dove è sufficiente l'onestà e la buona educazione, il volersi travestire da genii mentre abbiamo bisogno di costruttori attenti, diligenti e modesti: questi sono i pericoli contro i quali sta per naufragare l'architettura moderna italiana. Il caso di Pontinia*

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<sup>365</sup> "La prova è nella lettera che Giovanni Eliseo, presidente della Federazione nazionale fascista degli artigiani, scrisse al duce il 18 marzo 1936, per informarlo che 'le categorie artigiane, non avendo potuto beneficiare, per le note ragioni, che in minima parte della politica dei lavori pubblici, attuata dal governo, versano nella maggior parte in condizioni economiche alquanto precarie; fra le aziende più gravemente colpite risultano quelle dei marmisti e degli scalpellini le quali in seguito al provvedimento ministeriale che ha limitato le costruzioni edili, si sono vedute precludere ogni possibilità di lavoro.'" in A. Folchi (1992), p. 148 - 149.

*serva almeno a dimostrare come non si deve fare un piano regolatore e come non si deve costruire.*<sup>366</sup>

Marcello Piacentini, instead, defined Pontinia as the typical *città di bonifica*, in opposition to Sabaudia, which had a touristic vocation and Littoria, which was becoming the institutional centre with the offices of all PNF hierarchies.

The municipality of Pontinia is still very characterised by fascist decorations: it still has the Mussolini quote on the tower, all the plaques and even the decorative *fasci* on the windows (see Figure 38). However, there is no explicit explanation for the choice of this restoration.

#### 5.5.3.1 *The construction and reuse of Casa del Fascio*

The CDF did not face the square but it was located on the adjacent street. The preponderance of the artistic collaboration of Frezzotti in the masterplan can also be seen in the visual expedient of designing the plan of the building in a lictor fasces shape: the principal part of the building represented the bunch of rods, while the projecting part was the axe. It is the same figurative strategy used in Littoria for Palazzo M, but in this case, the architect recreated the most familiar symbol of the regime - the fasces – which became a symbol widely used in any sort of decoration, from buildings to manholes. The two parts of the fasces were also highlighted in different materials: the tower and the basement were in bricks, whereas the axe was in travertine with frames. The original building was planned to host not only the CDF offices but also the M.V.S.N. barracks, for this reason, it had two independent entrances. Giuseppe Pagano did not spare criticism also for the CDF of Pontinia, as can be read on *Casabella* in 1935:

*La Casa del Fascio della agreste città di Pontinia si risolve in un'altra esplosione rettorica, culminante nei due grandi fasci rovesci che fan da paraocchi all'ingresso. Eppure, di questo edificio un cronista adulatore scrive: "La Casa del Fascio e la caserma della Milizia saranno abbinata e, se abbiamo ben compreso, riprodurranno nella loro unica struttura il profilo*

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<sup>366</sup> *Casabella*, gennaio 1935, n. 85, in Mariani, 1976, p. 255.

*del fascio littorio: il fabbricato principale avrà, nella forma rettangolare allungata, le linee del gruppo di verghe, e la scure sarà il corpo aggiunto ed avanzato". Con questi simbolismi rocamboleschi è stata studiata la "rurale" architettura di Pontinia<sup>367</sup>.*

Pagano denounced the character of false rurality of Frezzotti and Pappalardo's architecture, arguing that the rocamboic symbolisms were just oddities and not modern architecture.

Concerning the property of the building, as all the other buildings of the area, it was built by ONC, and later passed into the possession of PNF with the R.D.L. 8/6/36 n.1203<sup>368</sup>, and later to the State.

After the fall of the regime and the bombings and the occupation of the area by the Germans and Allies, the CDF should had been very damaged. However, it was only in 1974 the major Fernando Petrone asked the Ministry of Public Works funds (L. 154.000.000) for the restoration of the ex-CDF and its adaptation for public offices. According to the technical relation, the conditions of the CDF were extremely worn, and the works needed the reinforcement of the structure, the ceiling had to be demolished and rebuilt, floors and windows had to be replaced, as well as the electric and sewage system. To ask for funds and to start the reconstruction works, the property of the building had to pass to

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<sup>367</sup> Pagano G., 1935, "Architettura nazionale", *Casabella*, n. 85, gennaio 1935, in Ciammaruconi, 2009, p. 33.

<sup>368</sup> R.D.L. 8 giugno 1936 n.1203. Provvedimenti per la costruzione dei Centri urbani dell'Agro Pontino contributi a favore dell'Opera Nazionale Combattenti per le opere di bonificazione agrario nell'Agro medesimo. Art. 1 - I limiti d'impegno stabiliti all'art. 2 del R. decreto-legge 30 giugno 1934, n. 1431 e successive modificazioni, per le opere di competenza statale a pagamento differito interessanti la bonifica integrale, sono aumentati di un importo che non potrà in ogni caso superare L. 4.500.000 per la sistemazione, finanziaria dei rapporti con l'Opera nazionale combattenti in dipendenza dei lavori e delle costruzioni eseguite e da eseguire nei centri di Littoria, Pontinia e Sabaudia, e relative frazioni, nonché nei nuovi centri di Aprilia e Pomezia e frazioni dipendenti. Le spese da imputarsi sul detto fondo saranno determinate con decreti Ministeriali da emanare dal Ministro per l'agricoltura e le foreste, di concerto con quello per le finanze, per la dichiarazione della competenza statale delle opere, e coi quali sarà anche fissata la quota da portarsi in aumento del limite di impegno per ciascun esercizio finanziario.

the Municipality; so the major had to buy the building from the Intendenza di Finanza before asking for funds. However, in 1976 the works seemed not to have started yet, nor did the passage of property to the municipality; indeed, another technical relation was commissioned, which was identical to the previous one. The situation did not change in 1974, since the Genio Civile remarked, in a letter, the same issues on the property of the building. Unfortunately, all documents after 1946 seem to be temporarily lost in the reorganisation of the municipal archive.

Today the CDF building is called Palazzo della Cultura (see Figure 39-40) and hosts different functions: it is the headquarter of the Polizia Municipale, of the Assessorato alla Cultura e Servizi Sociali and of the library. All the fascist emblems had been removed; it only remains the structure of the building, recalling its original shape.

#### 5.5.4 *Aprilia. The foundation of the city*

The foundation of Aprilia was declared by Mussolini during the foundation of Pontinia in 1934. Aprilia should have been the fifth new town after Ausonia, but after the removal of Orsolini Cencelli from ONC the city of Ausonia was not built. So, Aprilia – the fourth new town- was founded on April 1936, taking its name from the month of its creation, and was inaugurated on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1937. For the creation of Aprilia, in 1935, the ONC published a public competition which focused its attention on the reinforcement of the town's rural character and the use of local materials due to the limitations of autarky. The winning project was by Petrucci, Paolini, Tufaroli and Silenzi (so-called 2PST), who conceived the city as a closed entity. The decision over the winning project raised some criticisms from the competitors who tried to negotiate for their project, and from Piacentini, who wrote in his magazine *Architettura*<sup>369</sup> that in general all the projects were quite superficial regarding some issues (traffic, the lack of a general plan which considered all the new towns) and addressed the winning project as a harmonic and balanced one, which however did not add anything new in comparison to Sabaudia and Pontinia; preferring, then, other proposals. Similarly, this

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<sup>369</sup> *Architettura*, maggio 1936.

argument is nowadays endorsed by Ghirardo and Forster<sup>370</sup>, according to whom Aprilia was, from an architectural point of view, one of the most banal of all the new towns. However, in a later article in 1938, Piacentini revalued Aprilia for its ability to be neither astounding nor repetitive and for the right use of materials and colours.

The urbanistic scheme is based on two orthogonal axes which meet in the square in a staggered way simulating, from above, a bayonet shape (so-called *decumano interrotto*<sup>371</sup>). This urbanistic expedient aimed to accentuate the view of the municipal tower, which was visible from the street entering the square. Pennacchi<sup>372</sup> reported that the decision to have only one square in Aprilia was dictated by Mussolini himself. On the square, there are the main public buildings such as the town hall, the civic tower, the CDF and the church. In particular, the CDF had an important scenographic role by defining the side of the square. On the city hall tower, under the *arengario*, was positioned a plaque reporting the foundational speech of Mussolini<sup>373</sup>. The two towers, which

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<sup>370</sup> Ghirardo, Forster, 1985, p. 661.

<sup>371</sup> The *decumano* (main axe) meeting the square was not straight but slightly offset, deforming the square in a bayonet-like shape if seen from above. "L'asse principale, quindi ad Aprilia non attraversa dritto per dritto la piazza e questa, ossia il "foro", non nasce come nel castrum all'incrocio tra assi. C'è invece un asse principale – un decumano – che attraversa tutta la città e a un certo punto ha un "ginocchio", un diverticolo, una baionetta: gira a sinistra e riprende subito a destra. La piazza – in cui troneggia la torre littoria – nasce qua, alla "baionetta". Pennacchi A., 2003. *Guidonia Pomezia. Città di fondazione*, Novecento, p. 18.

<sup>372</sup> "Secondo una testimonianza di Pino Romualdi (fondatore MSI e vicesegretario Pnf, nonché forse figlio illegittimo di Mussolini) fu Mussolini che dichiarò espressamente che Aprilia l'aveva voluta così lui ordinando direttamente a Di Crollalanza: con una piazza sola, adesso m'avete stufato con tutte 'ste piazze. Questa circostanza è confermata da Ajmone Finestra sindaco di Latina e segretario provinciale MSI." Pennacchi, 2001, p. 58.

<sup>373</sup> "Il solco di fondazione di Aprilia, quarto comune dell'agro redento, viene tracciato nel tempo vittorioso dell'impresa africana, nel XIV anno dell'Era fascista, nel 160° giorno dell'assedio economico, obbrobrioso perché aumenta il disordine e la miseria del mondo. La fondazione di oggi è ancora la prova che la nostra volontà è metodica, tenace, indomabile. Aprilia sarà inaugurata il 29 Ottobre 1937. Il 22 Aprile 1938 sarà fondata Pomezia. Pomezia sarà inaugurata il 29 Ottobre 1939. Solo allora la nostra opera potrà qui dirsi compiuta e una nuova vittoria si aggiungerà alle altre che il popolo italiano in questi anni ha

defined the square, were the municipal and the church's bell tower: one more squared with a bas-relief on the balcony, and the other one with windows and the bell covered by a conic roof. In 1938 the ONC defined the consignment of the public buildings as follows: the town hall, the school, the kindergarten and public facilities to the municipality; the Carabinieri barracks to the Province; the CDF, dopolavoro and GIL to the PNF. At the time, this process was still uncertain; indeed, the consignment happened without the fiscal technician (*tecnico erariale*) and so the process had to be redone in the following years.

The declaration of war and the landing of Anzio were the first steps of a series of battles and conquests of the city by the Allies and the Germans, until the final liberation of the city on 28 May 1944, which, however, left the city completely demolished. The situation was so tragic that it was even proposed by the local pharmacist, Cleto Nencini, to transform the city area into a theatre of war, as a warning for future generations and to rebuild the city from zero in another place<sup>374</sup>. The only testimony of the war that still remains today is the statue in front of the church with bullet holes and bombs' shrapnel. The reconstruction of the city proceeded with the clearance of land fields, under the supervision of the Allied Military Government, following common-sense criteria: demolishing the irrecoverable buildings and restoring what survived. The only buildings that survived were the CDF and the church's sacristy. Overall, the city had been reconstructed as before the war -except for the towers- using poorer materials, such as plaster instead of travertine, or reusing existing materials, including the barbed wire as iron. The piano Marshall provided important financial support to Italy, but the economic breakthrough was the law 10 August 1950 n. 646 that constituted the *Cassa per opera straordinarie di pubblico interesse nell'Italia Meridionale (Cassa per il Mezzogiorno)*, which interested also the province of Latina. This led in the 50s and 60s to the industrialisation of the area with companies such as Simmenthal,

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fermamente voluto e pienamente meritato. Mussolini". Text on the plaque on the civic tower of Aprilia.

<sup>374</sup> Compagno G., 1997. Aprilia. 60 anni, storia e cronaca, in Papi G. (a cura di), 1997. *L'Impresa: civiltà e memorie storiche*, Aprilia, p. 129.



Cooperativa Enotria, Vallelata, Siam, Denis-Nastro that had a huge impact on the territory. In the 70s Aprilia became the most important industrial city of the province and one of the most relevant in the region.

#### 5.5.4.1 *The construction and demolition of Casa del Fascio*

The master plan by 2PTS designed the organisation of the major square (Piazza Roma) considering the necessities of a small municipality of 3.000 inhabitants, so the planned buildings on the square were the church, the city hall, the CDF, the OND offices, a *portico* with shops, a bar, an *osteria* and a *locanda* (guesthouse). The CDF had two facades: the one on Piazza Roma, which was more ordinary with two series of windows, two entrances (one for PNF, and another for M.V.S.N.) and the arch connecting it with the town hall (see Figure 41-42). The second one was on the backside (see Figure 43), overlooking the Piazza delle Adunate, and had a much more modern intake with a semi-circular projecting element which served as a tower and *arengario*. It had three entrances mirroring the different associations hosted there: one from the ground floor, one from the mezzanine floor, both on the main façade and another entrance at the mezzanine level in the backside. As in other cases, the tower of the CDF paired with the one of the town hall and of the church. The CDF kept its original function of PNF offices for less than seven years: from the city's inauguration on 29 October 1937 to the liberation from Germans on 28 May 1944. In the 1938 consignment of public buildings from the ONC to the municipality of Aprilia the CDF did not appear; instead, the CDF and the GIL were acquired by the State only in 1951.

The journalist Gianfranco Compagno published an extensive article<sup>375</sup> on the history of Aprilia's CDF from 1936 to 1972. He described the war period as very dramatic for Aprilia: after the landing of the Allies in Anzio in 1944, the city was evacuated and then destroyed. The city's liberation, on 28 May 1944, signalled the coming back to the ordinary life of people in the city, with the

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<sup>375</sup> Compagno G., "La casa del fascio di Aprilia dalla progettazione alla demolizione, 1936-1972", *Il Giornale del Lazio*, 17 Dicembre 2020 – 13 Gennaio 2021, pp. 4-12.

Allied Military Government approving the nomination of Sperotti as the new mayor of Aprilia. Sperotti sent the first report to the prefect stating that Aprilia, like its surrounding territory, was completely destroyed, with debris everywhere. The only building that was still standing was the CDF (see Figure 44), as Compagno reported:

*La città era praticamente distrutta, degli edifici pubblici più importanti erano in piedi soltanto le mura perimetrali. Il fascismo aveva creato Aprilia, ma fu anche la causa della sua distruzione. Ironia della sorte, soltanto la Casa del fascio rimase in piedi, tetto compreso, come si può osservare dalle foto aeree e dalle cronache. Era praticamente l'unico edificio "agibile"<sup>376</sup>.*

After the war, some reconstruction works also interested the CDF to re-adapt it for offices and the post office on the first floor. The works were contracted to Schiavo Amelio company, who, by November 1945, reconstructed part of the roof, the pavement, the windows, and adjusted the hydraulic system. In December of the same year, the priest asked for some rooms of the building to be used as a temporary church and a room as his house. Also the Genio Civile occupied some rooms of the ex-CDF for their offices. After some heavy rains that damaged the roof, in 1950, other repair works were contracted to Cooperativa Edile Corana for L. 3.002.097. It was a real polyfunctional centre: the church was moved in some of its rooms, together with the house of the priest; the school occupied other parts of the building; the pharmacy and the public clinic (*ambulatorio*) were also there, whereas the municipality offices occupied the first floor. In addition, also a photographic studio, the DC headquarters, a food cooperative, an osteria (managed by a socialist) and some evacuee families stayed there.

To start the works and to regularise the situation of the inhabitants, in 1951, the Ministry of Public Works asked urgently

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<sup>376</sup> Compagno G., "La casa del fascio di Aprilia dalla progettazione alla demolizione, 1936-1972", *Il Giornale del Lazio*, 17 Dicembre 2020 – 13 Gennaio 2021, pp. 4-12.

that the property of the CDF and its adjacent area be passed to the State, with the mediation of the Intendenza di Finanza. Some refugees and families were living in the gym inside the CDF, in very precarious conditions. However, they did not want to move, either to allow the reconstruction works to take place. As said, the occupation of public buildings by refugees was common; usually, to clear the building, the municipality should find another accommodation for the refugees and provide for their survival. The strong occupation and non-cooperation of the families occupying the CDF of Aprilia, who lived there in extreme conditions (in unstable structures with broken roofs and windows), clearly exemplified their dramatic situation and the distrust of people toward public institutions. The Intendenza asked the mayor to clear the building and to move refugees into the accommodations for homeless people which had already been built. Some years passed, but the situation did not evolve. In 1951, finally, the property of the building passed to the State, in 1953 the works were finished, but in 1957 there were still people living there – not anymore in the gym because the school back then used it. The Genio Civile closed the gym because of its precarious conditions and also to allow reparation works. However, the Intendenza asked the Genio only to secure the structure with props and to give the building in that condition to the municipality. In 1960, the Genio was interested again by the municipality to repair the roof damaged by water infiltrations. It was since 1957 that they had to do reparations works, but the building was never cleared, and now the responsibility over people living there was not theirs but of the municipality. The municipality invited the occupants to abandon the building to permit reconstruction works and that their stay was solely their responsibility. The Prefect intervened in the discussion ordering the Genio to carry on maintenance works and reminding the mayor that he needed to find another accommodation for the inhabitants – indeed, according to the law, he could not clear the building. Moreover, he asked why, if the building was in such a dangerous condition, the municipality was cashing in the rents; so, he proposed to carry on the works without clearing the building. The municipality followed the proposal of the prefect and started the reinforcing procedures to the structure. However,

the engineer Rendina (Genio Civile) raised an issue about wasting money on reparation works when the municipality had already signed an acquisition contract with the Intendenza di Finanza to demolish the ex-CDF. In the end, in 1960, part of the building (first floor) was closed to the public, and the school moved to another place; whereas the families stayed there because that solution, rather than their transfer, constituted a minor cost to the municipality.

Regarding the acquisition of the ex-CDF, in 1951, as previously said, the CDF property passed to the State and in the same year the mayor Andreoni (MSI) proposed the acquisition of the building<sup>377</sup> to turn it into schools and gyms - starting what would become a twenty-year negotiations process. In 1957, the new mayor Rossetti (socio-communist) discussed again the acquisition of the CDF with the Intendenza di Finanza, who offered it for a price of L. 40.800.000. However, the real value of the building amounted to L. 20.704.000, and considering the fact that the municipality needed, according to the new master plan, to acquire the building to demolish it and enlarge the square, they would not pay more than L. 10.000.000<sup>378</sup>. In 1959 the Intendenza answered with a new offer: they would concede the ex-CDF with the adjacent area of 1.900 sm. and the ex-GIL with the adjacent area of 825 sm. for a total price of L. 26.950.000; adding to it a restriction of destination of twenty years as schools and gyms. The municipality accepted the offer but not the restriction of destination, remarking the demolishing necessity stated by the master plan. In that period, some building speculation operations were underway, for instance a new residential area (zona Salini) was planned, so these financial reasons -more than any ideological input- had impacted the decision over the demolition of the CDF, as Compagno suggested<sup>379</sup>.

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<sup>377</sup> Delibera n. 44 C.C., 6 agosto 1951.

<sup>378</sup> Delibera n. 195 C. C., 20 ottobre 1957.

<sup>379</sup> "Allora sfatiamo una volta per tutte, anzi voglio ribadire un concetto espresso anche alla delegazione dell'Università Trier, l'abbattimento della Casa del fascio non fu motivato da ideologia, ma semplicemente da interessi economici." G. Compagno, "La casa del fascio di Aprilia dalla progettazione alla demolizione, 1936-1972", *Il Giornale del Lazio*, 17 Dicembre 2020 – 13 Gennaio 2021, p.9.

In 1963 the Intendenza di Finanza reconsidered the value of the buildings to L. 32.500.000 (ex CDF L. 23.500.000 and ex GIL L. 9.000.000), and following that also the loan varied in duration (from 20 to 15 years) and in interest (from 6,75% to 7,50%). The loan was not subscribed, and the mayor changed again, leaving Rossetti and then Calissoni (centre-right) with the open issue of the CDF. In 1965, the CDF was discussed again in the municipal meeting: the willingness to acquire the CDF was re-stated<sup>380</sup>, except the PCI councillors who refrained. In 1966 the municipality issued a resolution for a loan of L. 32.500.000 with Cassa di Risparmio di Roma but did not follow up; so in 1967, the Intendenza made another offer at a higher price (L. 84.150.000) which, strangely enough, the municipality accepted. In 1969, the new *commissario straordinario* Ribaudò was notified by the Intendenza that the CDF was in a dangerous state of neglect, with ceilings and parts of walls risking falling apart. Ribaudò immediately issued an eviction order to the families living there, the photographic laboratory, the *circolo* and the DC, which used the building. Ribaudò wanted to solve the issue of the ex-CDF, so in 1970 he issued a document stating the willingness to acquire the ex-CDF and the ex-GIL for a total price of L. 42.500.000, supported with a loan by Cassa di Risparmio di Roma. In July 1970, the new mayor Vescovi had to follow up the instruction left by his predecessor: executing the clearance of the building and signing the loan – which would happen in November of the same year. In January 1971, the building was cleared and, on 15 March 1972, the acquisition of the same was published on a manifesto hung in the streets of Aprilia. On 29 March 1972, the city council issued a *delibera*<sup>381</sup> for a public competition for the demolition works of the ex-CDF, which Stradioli Augusto company won. Demolition works started on 20 October and ended on 8 November 1972. The new space created by its demolition was instrumental to the enlargement of the main square, which, however, took some years to complete. Indeed, after some plans were approved and then discharged, the final plan for the new square by engineers Luciano Giovannini, Francesco Sanzone and

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<sup>380</sup> Delibera n. 64 C.C., 3 giugno 1964.

<sup>381</sup> Verbale del Consiglio Comunale n. 21, del 29.3.1972.

architect Roberto Nardinocchi was approved<sup>382</sup>. The new plan for the square filled the empty space with a fountain, some benches and some trees, with the aim of giving back to the citizens a space otherwise used as a parking lot. Still, nowadays the lateral part of the square is used as a parking lot and the fountain is not always functioning.

On the reasons behind the demolition of the CDF, in a telephonic interview and in an article<sup>383</sup>, architect Nardinocchi said that the decision over the demolition of the CDF was an historical error, reflecting the feeling of that period in which such decisions were taken only by politicians not competent in urbanistic matters and sometimes driven by ideological issues. In that period (the 60s and 70s), he argued, also the Palazzo della Civiltà in the EUR district, which is now considered a masterpiece, was to be demolished. Nardinocchi was later addressed as the “wrecker architect” because of his new plan for the square, even though the demolition of the CDF was decided by the master plan of 1969 drawn by the architect Piero Maria Lugli and confirmed by various city council decrees<sup>384</sup>. The city council minutes did not mention any other motivation than the enlargement of the square to sustain the need for the demolition of the CDF. This ambiguity led to different interpretation of the demolition, which will be addressed in Chapter 5.

So, in the 1970s the CDF was demolished, and the town hall was rebuilt from zero according to the architectural style of that period which is in strong visual contrast with the surrounding square. The only building which was restored as in the original plan or similar to it, is the church and the bell tower (see Figure 45), with the statue in front of them. On the bell tower, Pennacchi<sup>385</sup> wrote extensively, explaining how this operation was financed by the citizens through a public fundraising, but it did not match the

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<sup>382</sup> Verbale del Consiglio Comunale n. 96, del 23.7.1976.

<sup>383</sup> Nardinocchi R., “Ecco tutta la verità su Piazza Roma”, *Il Pontino*, Cronaca di Aprilia, 22 Settembre 2018.

<sup>384</sup> Verbale del Consiglio Comunale n. 21, del 29.3.1972; verbale della Giunta Municipale n. 368, del 3/7/1972; Verbale della Giunta Municipale n. 194, del 8/4/1972.

<sup>385</sup> Pennacchi A., “Aprilia: il campanile e altre amenità”, in “Viaggio per le città del Duce”, *Limes*, n.2, 1999

expected results, since the upper part and the windows were not as in the original one.

#### *5.5.5 Pomezia. The foundation of the city*

Even if Pomezia is not part of the Agro Pontino but of the Agro Romano, it is usually included in the new towns because its foundation was strictly linked to the others; indeed, it was announced during the inauguration of Aprilia. It was presented as a sign of the extension of the land reclamation work which extended for 134.000 hectares from Rome to Circeo. Pomezia was founded on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1938 and later inaugurated by Mussolini as the final step of the redemption works in the Agro on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1939. It took its name from Suessa Pometia, an ancient Volscia city, reinforcing the identity of the territory and of its history. Its inauguration was linked also to the universal exposition plan (E42) which was initially planned to start in 1941, then postponed to 1942 and, after the Italian entry into World War II, it never took place. However, the public competition for the new Roman suburb and exhibition venues were published already in 1937, so Pomezia was planned from the beginning in connection with this major event, at least for its geographical proximity.

Pomezia was the result of the public competition published by ONC in October 1937, which demanded again a plan based on the criteria of rurality, sobriety and modesty. Members of the jury were Marcello Piacentini from Istituto nazionale di urbanistica, Pietro Aschieri from National Union of architects, Scipione Tadolini from the National Union of engineers and the director of Public Health. On seventeen projects presented, only three entered the final selection, also thanks to some recommendation letters which favoured specific candidates – this became a sort of standard procedure. Since none of the finalists' project was perfectly fulfilling the requirements, the ONC asked the three groups (Calza Bini and Niccolini; Civico, Granelli, Ortensi and Roisecco; 2PST) to submit another proposal. Finally, after a strong debate with Piacentini who preferred Calza Bini's project, the ONC assigned the planning of Pomezia to Petrucci, Paolini, Silenzi and Tufaroli (2PST), confirming a relationship which would continue also for other new towns.

The winning group – the same of Aprilia – based the urbanistic scheme of Pomezia on a single main axe upon which the square developed. This time the model was the medieval city, indeed, with the municipal tower at the centre of the square, self-standing and detached from the city hall. From a stylistic point of view, the square of Pomezia was designed from Romanic reminiscences adapted to the rural modesty of fascist aesthetic<sup>386</sup> but also to the changed economic possibilities of the regime: the architects had more or less the same budget as for other new towns, but the prices of construction materials were much higher than before:

*Nel predisporre lo studio di questi edifici (avendo presente quanto è stato da noi progettato ed eseguito per il centro comunale di Aprilia) ci siamo trovati di fronte al problema di dover rispondere alle identiche richieste, con la stessa previsione di spesa totale, ma con una tariffa di prezzi sensibilmente maggiorati in diverse voci. Abbiamo dovuto ricercare l'economia fin dove era possibile e ridurre quindi fino al limite, guidati dalla recente esperienza, la cubatura degli edifici, evitando spazi sprecati ed altezze superflue<sup>387</sup>.*

Given this situation, some authors<sup>388</sup> question the use of Rationalist architecture for ideological purposes in public buildings such as the GIL, the Carabinieri barracks and the cinema-theatre, arguing, instead, that its use was instrumental for economic reasons.

The city hall was a rectangular two-floor building connected to the tower by a portico. It was covered in bricks and the windows were marked in travertine, and the portico had the main function of providing a balcony accessible from the meeting room of the

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<sup>386</sup> “A tutta evidenza lo stile costruttivo di questi ultimi (*ndr* gli edifici pubblici, laici e religiosi) deriva da una ricognizione estetico-formale compiuta dai quattro progettisti sull'architettura romanica. Ciò doveva ovviamente accordarsi alla natura rurale della borgata, dove la 'modestia' dimensionale ed estetica la faceva da padrona insieme alla chiarezza ed alla disciplina del disegno e dell'architettura.” Barbato C., “Pomezia comune rurale” in Pennacchi A. (a cura di), 2003, *Guidonia Pomezia. Città di fondazione*, Novecento, pp. 89 – 90.

<sup>387</sup> ACS, fondo ONC, Progetti Agro Pontino, “Pomezia relazione”, pp. 8-9. Cfr. Barbato, in Pennacchi, 2003.

<sup>388</sup> Barbato, in Pennacchi, 2003, p. 90.



city hall. The tower, which was also a water tank, was the fundamental symbol of the square, since it was the only vertical element (25 m. tall) of the entire city centre, since the bell tower was much lower. It was later destroyed by the Allies and, in the post-war period, was reconstructed following the original project. The church facing the square, together with the CDF and the Post Office, had a hut shape bearing reference to the Romanic churches, with the addition of four rows of single-lancet windows on the facade.

During the war, the Allies bombed the civic tower, but the rest of the city did not suffer the damages of Aprilia. In the 1950s, the city was not very different or bigger than the historical centre. However, things changed after 1965 when Pomezia entered in the area of intervention of Cassa per il Mezzogiorno, which switched its agricultural area of interest toward the industrial one. It soon became an industrial area attracting new inhabitants and consequently needing urbanistic expansion. When the funds from Cassa per il Mezzogiorno ended, Pomezia needed a redefinition of its socio-cultural identity, which led to a philological study and restoration of the original historical centre.

#### 5.5.5.1 *The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

The construction of the CDF was inserted in the first phase of the works since it was part of the essential buildings of the city, for a cost of L. 12.000.000. The CDF building (see Figure 46), facing the square in front of the city hall, was also connected to other adjacent shops and houses. It was an essential two-floor building covered in bricks with a decentralised travertine entrance. It had semi-circular doorsteps and two big travertine fascias with axes as lateral columns holding the semi-circular *arengario*. Under the balcony, the date was carved on a travertine block: XVII E.F. – meaning 1939 in the fascist calendar. The CDF was meant to host, in addition to PNF offices, also the *dopolavoro*, the *fasci femminili*, the military association of war victims and the unions.

Unfortunately, the documents of the municipal archive were not available at the time of the research because they were under reorganization. Nowadays the CDF is the headquarter of Polizia Municipale (see Figure 47-48). The outside of the building is preserved exactly as it was originally designed, and a plexiglass

plaque (see Figure 49) explaining the history of the building for touristic purposes is positioned on the wall near the entrance. In 2007 the entire city center had undergone a restoration process based on a philological study on the color of buildings and on materials as part of a series of urban regeneration's operations. This restoration process had the main aim of preserving the identity of the place on an architectural, landscape, artistic and socio-cultural level, and to support the community of its citizens. The effort to restore the original color of the buildings ended up in an in-depth research based on archival research and technical surveys. The result is a perfectly preserved historic center, with labels on every building explaining their original use, giving an overall musealization effect of the city center. The philological restoration interested not only the CDF, but also the church (see Figure 51), the town hall (see Figure 50) and the GIL (see Figure 52) – all maintaining their original function, creating a sort of temporal short-circuit especially in the case of the ex-GIL now hosting the primary schools.

Pomezia is the only Pontine new town with a city museum opened in 2019 - Museo Città di Pomezia- narrating the history of the city through documentation, supporting research activity and publications. The museum's exhibition is divided in five sections: the construction of Pomezia (1937-38); the municipality and the territory (1939); the newsreel of Istituto Luce dedicated to the city; the diverse people who lived in the area; industrialization and development (1950s-1960s). The museum experience continues in the open air with the Nucleo Architettonico Aulico di Fondazione – Museo a Cielo Aperto di Architettura e Progettazione Urbanistica Moderna which refers to the city center with labels on the buildings. In this case, the restoration went hand in hand with philological conservation, as happened also in other few cases in Italy, which managed to preserve also the direct fascist symbology, such as the fasces on public and civic buildings. The musealization creates in the visitor a theatrical effect, where the citizens living there becomes part of the choreography in an uncanny continuity with the past.

### 5.5.6 *S. Felice in Circeo. The reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

S. Felice in Circeo is not a new town but it is administratively part of the province of Latina. In this case the CDF was not a new construction, but it was hosted in a part of the Acquet's castle inside the walls of the town, in a really central position.

Just after the war, the CDF was occupied by evacuees, as also in all the other cases. Already in 1949, the ex-CDF was meant to be turned into a Carabinieri station, with also the house of the commander and the prisons. As said, the space was part of the Acquet's castle and was composed of the ground floor and the first floor, accessible by an internal stair in the court. Some works were needed in order to adapt it for the new use. In November 1949, the owner of another building in S. Felice solicited the works for the new Carabinieri headquarter, because at the time the Carabinieri were occupying his property, whom he needed. He proceeded also through legal procedures by requesting the eviction of his property from the Carabinieri. In April 1950, finally the Provveditorato communicated that the reparation works to the CDF were adaptation works and not attributable to war damages, which was an important detail in determining the financing subject of the adaptation works. In this case, the Province, even if it should not pay for the maintenance of State-owned buildings used for law enforcement bodies, given the little cost, asked for the technical report in order to pay for the works.

In March 1952 the works were contracted out to Maiolati Domenico for L. 15.661. Later in the same month, the Soprintendenza ai Monumenti del Lazio wrote that the works should immediately be suspended because they were tampering the old walls, which were protected by the law<sup>389</sup>. Indeed, the new openings in the old walls - that were included in the adaptation works' plan - did not had the approval of the Soprintendenza and so they could not be done. However, by the time that the Genio Civile sent the official warning not to operate the new openings in the walls, they were already been done. In May 1952, the Carabinieri asked the reason why the works had been suspended but already in June the construction company Maiolati was

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<sup>389</sup> Legge 1 Giugno 1939, N.1089, "Tutela delle cose d'interesse Artistico o Storico", pubblicata sulla Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 184 dell'8 agosto 1939.

handing off the building since the adaptation works were finished. The new adaptations raised many problems: the Municipality lamented that the new stairs for the Commander's house could not occupy the pavement and should be removed; the Soprintendenza complained that it had noticed several tampering of the original building and walls which were under historical-artistic restriction, including the windows on the tower and walls and the newly planned windows of the female prisons at street level, whose sight would add to the artistic damage also a *grave danno morale* (moral damage). In addition to other considerations on some of the internal restoration works, the Soprintendenza stated that the overall restoration was inadmissible given the law on the protection of cultural heritage and that the Carabinieri should be moved elsewhere. The works were, then, suspended for the rest of the year, since in November 1952 the Carabinieri were still lamenting the fact that their headquarters was insufficient and indecorous. Finally, in March 1953, the Ministry of Public Education – which was the one also coordinating the cultural heritage – wrote to the Provveditorato alle OO. PP. that it regretted how the works had been carried on without considering the artistic importance of the building and it demanded that some works should be done to compensate for the mistakes, such as changing the typology of stairs for the Commander's house and changing the colour of the walls. These new works were contracted out again to Maiolati company in March 1954. This case is a classic example of the problematic relationship between the Ministry of Public Education, competent in the preservation of cultural heritage, and the Ministry of Public Works, which owned the financing resources dedicated to the reconstruction for war damages.

Nowadays, the ex-CDF is the Carabinieri station (see Figure 53), maintaining the same use from the post-war period.

#### 5.5.7 *Maranola. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

The CDF of Maranola was a newly constructed building, inaugurated in 1932 by Podestà Tonetti, positioned in the sharp curve of the road to the town. It was a one-floor building, with an external stair connecting the two parts of the road and with a terrace on the top of it. The financing of the CDF was collected

among the citizens of Maranola, who provided either money or free manual work.

After the war, a new use of the building was decided and in 1950 the adaptation works to turn the ex-CDF into a school were finished. Unfortunately, no more historical documentation on this CDF could be found.

Recently, after a period as a gathering place for older people (*centro anziani*), the Municipality closed the ex-CDF for water infiltration damages. Nowadays, the ex-CDF is hosting the Poste (see Figure 54) and has started a public debate for the restoration of the external stair -temporarily closed to the public - which connects the terrace with the below street and post office (see Figure 55). The instance for the restoration of the stairs was strongly endorsed by Forza Italia and generally the right wing, probably in opposition to the actual local government. Indeed, on the local newspapers<sup>390</sup>, there is no mention of any ideological or political position linked to the fact that it was a CDF.

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<sup>390</sup> Some articles available at:

<https://www.temporeale.info/94454/argomenti/politica/formia-scala-ex-casa-del-fascio-e-struttura-geodetica-a-maranola-interrogazioni-di-forza-italia-e-lega.html> <https://www.temporeale.info/94454/argomenti/politica/formia-scala-ex-casa-del-fascio-e-struttura-geodetica-a-maranola-interrogazioni-di-forza-italia-e-lega.html> <https://www.ilfaroonline.it/2019/08/05/maranola-la-scala-collegamento-piazza-ricca-via-forte-scatta-linterrogazione-forza-italia/287715/>

## Chapter 4.2 – Case study: the province of Livorno

### 5.6 Historical introduction to the province

The identity of Livorno is historically connected to its harbour and naval trades and also to its industrial area, which was partly the result of a transformation that happened during the fascist regime. Livorno had been a maritime and commercial city since the XVII century, when it was a free port (*porto franco*) under the *granducato mediceo*, and it enlarged its influence and commercial importance after the unity of Italy in 1861, becoming one of the major industrial centres of Tuscany. It was Luigi Orlando and his sons who positioned the harbour of Livorno on the national map by obtaining work commissions from the State; in particular, this aspect made the Orlando family the reference point of the noble class of the city – bringing Rosolino Orlando to be elected mayor in 1914. In addition and opposition to this, Livorno was characterised by strong working classes which showed anarchist and revolutionary tendencies:

*Livorno è al tempo stesso una realtà popolare contraddistinta da un vivace 'ribellismo' che è conseguenza di un processo di trasformazione industriale e una caratteristica di una città gelosa della propria autonomia, insofferente verso ogni forma di autoritarismo e abituata a vivere sul mare dispensatore casuale di rischi, rovine e fortune<sup>391</sup>.*

So, in the first post-war period, the social tensions exacerbated the growing political opposition between liberals, nationalists and socialists. Workers' unions acquired institutional recognition and constantly grew, aligning the masses toward socialist positions. In 1919 political elections, the socialists reached the 52%, in a region where the PSI gained the 43,8% on a national base of 32,3%. At the 1920 administrative elections, the PSI gained the 47% in the province and the 48,47% in the municipality of Livorno. These elections signed the turning point during which the liberal governing class endorsed the fascists against the new socialist force and the working class. So, in 1920 the fascist movement was

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<sup>391</sup> Mazzoni M., 2009. *Livorno all'ombra del fascio*, Leo S. Olschki Editore, Firenze, p. X.

founded also in Livorno, as a response to this situation. This process brought to the fore the figure of Costanzo Ciano, who had a central role both in the fascist national government and in the fascistization of Livorno. His presence in the local fascio helped isolate the extremists and the most violent members and give fascism a more disciplined image which could please the conservative forces. Locally, fascism gained the support of industrials through the Unione degli Industriali Fascisti, merchants and tradespeople through the Camera degli esercenti, and financial power with the endorsement of the major banks, such as Monte dei Paschi di Siena and Cassa di Risparmio of Livorno. The presence of fascists and ex-combatants in managerial positions of banks and industries helped fascism to set, on a local level, and to sustain the party's activities. The ultimate support came from the newspaper industry, in particular by *Il Telegrafo* and the *Gazzetta di Livorno*, which Ciano owned.

The relationship between politics and the financial interests of the industrials had been central to fascism and also impacted the city, which became the object of the narrative of "the great Livorno". This idea of the "great Livorno" was implemented on three levels: the first was the enlargement of the province, which was considered historical recrimination since 1849 when the grand duke gave part of Livorno territory to Pisa to punish the revolutionary city. The issue of the disputed province remained central not only for identity matters but, more importantly, for economic reasons, indeed the new province included the Elba mines, the ILVA steel plant, the steelworks near Piombino, the shipyard and the metallurgical company in Livorno, and the chemical industry of Rosignano Solvay. Increasing the province's size meant developing the industrial sector and providing an agricultural activity that could sustain the city. The decision on the enlargement of the province was voted by the city council in 1924 as a matter of historical reparations and as part of Mussolini policies of national utility. In 1925 the Council of Ministers, after some pressing, issued the official enlargement of the province of Livorno<sup>392</sup>.

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<sup>392</sup> Cfr. L. Bortolotti, "Livorno e la sua provincia dalla Restaurazione ad oggi: la formazione del territorio provinciale", *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, vol. V, 1997.

The second level was the political and financial support of the shipyard in the delicate phase of post-war reconversion. Ciano intervened directly in this issue, assuring the interests of the Orlando family by building a small harbour for nautical sports, providing public funds for the enlargement of the port, and concluding commissions. As can be seen, the relationship between political and economic power during fascism was an alliance based on fulfilling mutual interests.

The third level was the intervention in the urbanistic organisation of the city, building new palaces and restoring the city centre by demolishing the unhealthy neighbourhoods. In addition to a need of general hygiene, the policies of urbanistic reorganisation were dictated by the interests of big real estate companies (INI) and banks (Banco di Napoli, Cassa di Risparmio, Monte dei Paschi). Usually, the banks acquired the lands, which increased in value after demolishing dilapidated buildings (*sventramenti*), to build their own headquarters. This transformation of the city centre, from a grassroot dimension to the place of financial power, became the model for all cities of Italy, which still bear that urbanistic organisation nowadays.

Another important action that Ciano undertook was the institution of the industrial zone in Livorno, which, according to the law<sup>393</sup>, extended tax advantages to the whole industrial area. The law granted the port and all the industries (new and old ones) that resided in the industrial area tax advantages such as the exemption on custom duties, the exemption of income tax and property tax. This strategy of supporting depressed territories through special legislation was typical of the Italian state and was applied to several areas. The constitution of the industrial zone was a major achievement for local development, which drove the constitution of new industries such as Motofides, Genepesca, Anic, SA Manifatture Toscane, SA Montecatini, Tubi Bonna, Richard Ginori, Società del Litopone which added to the existing ones (Metallurgica, Cementeria Italiana, SA Materiali Refrattari, Balzaretti e Modigliani, Cantiere Orlando<sup>394</sup>). Thanks to these

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<sup>393</sup> Legge n. 1012 del 20 giugno 1929. Istituzione di una zona industriale e portuale nel comune di Livorno.

<sup>394</sup> Nesti, in Tognarini, 2005, p. 429.



reforms, the importance of Ciano grew consistently since his support translated into financial aid and grants. The structure of the industrial sector that this reform created, based on big companies relying on public contracts, would strongly impact Livorno's economy in the post-war period, privileging big industrial groups of semi-finished products rather than middle and small companies oriented to the consumer goods market. In Livorno, the sectors more influenced by the choices of the regime were the energetic one with the Società Livornese Agglomerati Combustibili (later Industria Nazionale Agglomerazione Carboni), the Società Anonima Lavorazioni Autartiche Catrami, the Carboni Autarchici Industriali; the chemical one dedicated to tyres (Società Anonima Gommificio Italiano) and industrial oil (Raffineria Olii Livorno); and finally, the war one with the Cantiere Orlando and Motofides.

The importance of the figure of Costanzo Ciano for Livorno was well documented, so it is useful to briefly recall here his political career: in addition to being a war hero after World War I, he participated to the March on Rome, gaining in this way the title of founding father of the PNF. In 1922 he was appointed Undersecretary of the State for the Royal Navy, later in 1924, he was elected member of the Chamber of Deputies and was also nominated Minister of Post and Telegraphs and Communications, under which he had also jurisdiction on transports and railway. In 1934 he was elected President of the Chamber of Deputies (later Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni), whom he remained until he died in 1939. His son, Galeazzo Ciano, in 1930 married Edda Mussolini, daughter of the Duce, becoming not only a member of the Mussolini family but also the most important political figure after Mussolini, indeed, he was meant to become his successor. In 1933 he became Head of Press Office of Mussolini, and in 1935, he was Minister of Press and Propaganda (what later would become the MinCulPop). He took part in the war of Ethiopia as a volunteer and when he came back, in 1936, he was elected Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was a central figure in the decision on the Italian entry into the second world war, which he opposed and tried to postpone, contrasting the position of Mussolini. On 25 July 1943, during the reunion of the Gran Consiglio del Fascismo, he

voted in favour of Grandi's agenda of dismissing Mussolini and giving the nation and the army back to the King. Mussolini saw Ciano's vote as a sign of betrayal, which would later cost him his life<sup>395</sup>. So, the political history of the Ciano family and their strong relationship with fascism and Mussolini cannot be disregarded while studying the city of Livorno. The municipality planned the lasting memory of Costanzo Ciano with a public fundraising commission for a monumental mausoleum on the hills of Livorno, in Montenero, which, however, was never finished and still stands there as a ruin (see Figure 58). The choice of the location was due to the devotion that Costanzo Ciano nurtured for the Madonna di Montenero and the local celebrations, which celebrated his image among people<sup>396</sup>.

However, in addition to this strong fascist presence, it should not be forgotten that Livorno was the only Italian city where the communist and anarchic actions of resistance and opposition to the regime continued during the Ventennio. So, Livorno embodied this complexity of fascist prominence through the Ciano family and resistance to it thanks to the presence of PCI.

## 5.7 The Case del Fascio of the province of Livorno

### 5.7.1 Livorno. The fascist regime in the city

The fascist seizure of power in Livorno in 1920 was violent: the socialist mayor Umberto Mondolfi was forced to resign under the threats of the Tuscanian *ras* Perrone Compagni, who organised the violent expeditions of *squadracce* in the whole region.

*Dopo il tramonto non avremo più alcun sentimentalismo  
verso nessuno come voi*<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> After the armistice of Cassibile, Ciano tried to escape from Italy looking for asylum in Spain, but while he was in Munich in 1943 he was extradited on request of the new Fascist Republican Party based in Salò. The trial of traitors (*processo di Verona*) considered the vote of 25 July as high treason and it ended in 1944 with the execution by shooting of five *ex-gerarchi* including Galeazzo Ciano.

<sup>396</sup> Mazzoni, 2009, pp. 115-116.

<sup>397</sup> Telephonic conversation between Perrone Compagni and Mondolfi, according to *Il Telegrafo*, 4 August 1940, in Mazzoni, 2009, p. 3.

was the telephonic threat that Compagni addressed to Mondolfi, as the ultimate part of a series of attacks to the city of Livorno in the previous days. On the occasion of the national strike called by Alleanza del Lavoro against fascist violence, and with the public consent of Costanzo Ciano<sup>398</sup>, the ras organised all the fascists coming from the region for punitive expeditions against socialist families to devastate the Camera del Lavoro and to hoist the tricolour flag on the city hall. These series of actions were part of a symbolic strategy of fascists trying to conquer the cities managed by socialist and left-wing parties, as was also the case of Bologna and Ferrara. With 18 wounded people and 4 dead, the fascists occupied the city and officially took the power.

The newborn fascio in Livorno was a small group of mainly employees and middle-class people but, as also in other parts of Italy, it became the place of aggregation of ex-combatants and young *irridentisti*, forming a group of opposers to socialism. In the spring of 1921, the fascio of Livorno counted 520 members, representing the biggest fascio of the region (20% of Tuscany); however, in the spring 1922, fascism grew more on a national level and the Livorno federation, while counting 2.502 members, was the smallest of the region (5% of Tuscany<sup>399</sup>). The slow growth of the local fascio was partly because Livorno was not a rural reality and could not count on agrarians, which usually nurtured the *squadrista* force. In addition, Livorno was also considered the red stronghold because of the strong rootedness of working-class movements and the political importance of PSI and communists, who organised their congresses and founded their political party in that same city. The turning point in the rise to power of fascism was its adherence by some prominent figures of the city, such as Costanzo Ciano, who cleansed the image of the party from the most violent and radical fringes. Indeed, for the designation of the first *podestà* the choice fell on aristocrats, rich and well-known people, ex-combatants who could offer a reassuring face of the new fascist force. Later, during the '30s, the party switched from noble and respected men to rely on the bourgeois and people

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<sup>398</sup> Costanzo Ciano put up some posters in the city stating his full consent to fascist action against the subversives who betrayed the Nation.

<sup>399</sup> M. Mazzoni, 2009, p. 12-13.

linked to the financial and productive sectors. Costanzo Ciano was a war hero who was also admired by D'Annunzio and was a well-respected Livornese citizen. In addition, he was publicly endorsed also by the Orlando family and had the support of the noble class of Livorno, making him win the election in 1921 in the Blocco Nazionale with the 36,7% of votes. The support of the industrials was gained thanks to his intervention in reopening some metallurgic industries employing ex-combatants and to his mediation in a dispute between the Marine Ministry and the Orlando family leading to the reopening of the shipyard. In that period, with the support of the liberals, the Livorno *fascio* got more structured with the creation of local *fasci*, the *fasci femminili* and youth associations. Indeed, in 1932 the new enrollments to the PNF opened again and it saw an increase in the number of members; in particular the Livorno *fascio* was subdivided into 9 sectors (composed of 45 cores), to which the peripheral *fasci* should be added (Ardenza, Antignano, Montenero, Valle Benedetta, Quercianella, composed of 34 cores) and the numerous *gruppi rionali*, for a total of 2.000 fascists.

A constant phenomenon in the fascist management of the cities was the chronic lack of funds available in the city treasure, to which it should also be added the economic crisis of 1929. To overcome this critical situation and reduce unemployment, the municipality of Livorno commissioned several public works, such as the construction and maintenance of streets and the construction of the hospital and of the stadium. In 1935 a plan for the rehabilitation of the city center was presented, and after some rejections from the Technical Office, finally in 1938, thanks to the mediation of Costanzo Ciano and to the collaboration of Marcello Piacentini, the plan was approved. It included a huge *piazza della adunate* next to the town hall, which was thought to be built between the hospital and the sea, a new CDF with towers and a balcony, and a new main street (*corso*). The project, which was approved by the municipality and by the Ministry of Public Works, was re-elaborated in 1940; but after the bombings by the Allies, which destroyed the city, the fascist urban plan was abandoned.

Another aspect worth mentioning, concerning the fascist modification of the city, was the toponomy intervention<sup>400</sup>. As already written, in a strategy of creating a fascist religion, the party needed to create some foundational myths, and initially, it founded them in the Risorgimento and the martyrs of World War I. So, the first to be impacted by this operation of rewriting the past was the toponomy of streets and squares: frequent were the renominations of streets after Risorgimento heroes (Attilio e Emilio Bandera, Nino Bixio, Ippolito Nievo, Vittorio Alfieri, Giovanni Berchet) and World War I memory (Francesco Baracca, Enrico Toti, Montello, Giovanni Randaccio, Riccardo Cipriani); some names were cancelled (Giordano Bruno, Galileo Galilei) and restored to their previous denominations (via della Madonna, S. Francesco); fascist dates were used frequently (XXVIII Ottobre) or symbols (largo Littorio). In the second half of 1930s, new street's names were taken from the Ethiopian campaign (viale Mogadiscio, viale Massaua) and to its fallen (Dino Remediotti, Reginaldo Giuliani, Giovanni Gamerra); then, from 1938, the anti-Semitic policy entered also the toponomy by cancelling and substituting Jewish names.

#### 5.7.1.1 *The fall of the regime and the Liberation*

The social situation in 1941 and 1942 in Livorno was agitated due to the economic crisis, the lack of resources and raw materials, and the food issue that was the breaking point between people and the fascist party – indeed, numerous were the acts of disobedience by merchants and workers but also by the general population<sup>401</sup>. On 28 May 1943, the Allies started to bomb Livorno heavily, causing the destruction of 180 buildings and 249 dead. After the bombing, the functioning of the aqueduct and of the electrical system was promptly adjusted, and the city tried to get back to normal even in a situation of uncertainty and danger. However, the second

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<sup>400</sup> Cfr. Mazzoni, 2009, pp.182-184.

<sup>401</sup> Merchants did not follow the regulation on the *annonaria* (alimentary card), black market was ruling, workers stopped going to work, people started writing anti-fascist writings on the walls, they did not respect the required darkening (*oscuramento*). In I. Tognarini (a cura di), *Livorno nel XX secolo. Gli anni cruciali di una città tra fascismo, resistenza e ricostruzione*, Edizioni Polistampa, 2005, pp.225-229.

bombing on 28 June devastated the city, destroying other 180 buildings and causing 209 deaths. The city was no longer livable; the party and public institutions left the city, marking the definitive failure and default of the municipality.

After the armistice of 8 September 1943, starting from 9 September, Livorno was occupied by Germans who authoritatively ruled the city. They first disarmed all the police forces and arrested the commanders, the same happened to the Guardia di Finanza. On 19 September, after chaotic days of pillaging and disorder, the Nazis decided to put back on service the police forces to re-establish public order. Secondly, they evacuated a great part of the city, particularly the area near the sea - because of possible naval attacks - and the industries, creating a black zone inaccessible to people. Amid the complete disintegration of the social life of citizens, who were forced to move out of their homes with little warning and had no place to go because the area around the city was already occupied, and amid the distrust and opposition that people were starting to feel against Germans, the Repubblica Sociale's authorities tried to install its power between the population and the Nazis. People's anger increased even more with Social Republic forces endorsing Nazi orders, making evident the failure of RSI and its detachment from the population. The situation became exasperated after all the bombings, the municipality in constant lack of resources, the intolerance of RSI and Nazis by the local population, the consequent violence of Nazis and fascists to impose their power, and the rise of anti-fascist consciousness among locals, which manifested through boycott and passive resistance actions. The evacuation of suburban districts such as Antignano, Quercianella and Montenero instilled hope in people of an imminent arrival of the Allies, who, indeed, finally liberated the city, together with partisans, on 19 July 1944. At the time, Livorno was in a state of such destruction that the American commander, Mark Clark, defined it as the most mined area of Italy.

With the liberation from the Nazis, the new occupation of the city by the Allies started and it followed also a series of tensions linked mainly to the occupation of buildings, the use of industries for war purposes and the high rate of unemployment. As Fantozzi 403 highlights, Livorno suffered from a double occupation: by

Germans before and by the Allies later, and the presence of the latter did not change nor improve the quality of life of Livorno people. Indeed, the Allies maintained the black zone and so the housing problem for the 70.000 evacuees returning home was very pressing, in addition to the fact that the American soldiers - as the Germans before them - used to loot the empty houses. Moreover, the administration over local crimes (mainly consisting of burglaries, trespassing in black zone, curfew violation) was unclear and continued to change from the Allied Military Government to the Italian judiciary system. At the local level, there were two main targets of violence: the military and the police forces, and women. Black American soldiers were accused of crimes more frequently than white American soldiers, finding a stronger link with Italian people in the racial factor of whiteness, rather than sharing the same nationality with their black compatriots. Women, instead, suffered a double humiliation: prostitution was accused by Italians as immoral, while at the same time, sexual violence remained widely unpunished, reinforcing the traditional system of power based on gender.

However, the relationship between the Allied Military Government and the local CLN made the Allies a more tolerable presence for the population, accepting the communist Furio Diaz as the new mayor. He, aged only 28 years old at the time, was the first mayor after the Liberation nominated by the Allied Military Government after the proposal of CLN, and he would have been re-elected at the elections of November 1946. Given the dramatic situation of the city after the Liberation, the relationship with the AMG became fundamental because the administrative government did not have any money, the central government could not provide for it, and so the first two annual budgets were financially supported by the Allies, providing L. 13,1 million for 1944 and another L. 120,3 for 1945 as part of war reparations. The Americans had their interests in staying in Livorno, first of all, an economic and logistic interest in using the port (the creation of Livorno 10<sup>th</sup> Port) and, secondly, political control over the communist government of the city. On a social level, their presence produced, on the one side, employment and better working conditions for local people who preferred working for them than for the Italian employers; on the other side, the

nourishing of an illegal economy based on the black market, illegal trafficking and prostitution.

The new city council, on the one side, started a reconstruction plan for the city centre, and on the other side, urged for epuration measures of ex-fascists from public offices. On this last topic, the local newspaper *Il Tirreno* put particular attention and pressure as a way to recognise local memories and to look for justice in the legal dimension. The newspaper played an important role in educating the citizens about the new democratic system, after twenty years of dictatorship, by rejecting the use of violence, building trust in the law, focusing on Resistance and always looking for the public utility<sup>402</sup>.

Concerning the reconstruction of the city centre, the war damages were caused by the Allies' bombings, by the Nazi occupation after the 8 September 1943 and again by the occupation of the Allies. According to the technical reports of the municipality, in the city center only the 8,38% of the buildings were uninjured<sup>403</sup>, whereas the 33,38% were completely destroyed<sup>404</sup>, reaching a 92% destruction overall. Even if the central area remained under requisition until 1947, already in 1945 Furio Diaz launched a commission for the reconstruction plan of the city centre as part of a larger initiative of moral and material recovery of the city. The commission included architects, a *soprintendente*, professors and the technical engineer of the municipality. The plan of the Technical Office was strongly opposed by the *soprintendente*, arguing that it would have destroyed the old town. In a situation like this they preferred to go back to the last plan for the city, which was the Marcello Piacentini plan of 1937 and 1943. The new plan was based on Piacentini's one with some modifications due to war damages, and also recalled some instances of the pre-fascist

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<sup>402</sup> M. Mazzoni, in I. Tognarini, 2005, pp. 415- 417.

<sup>403</sup> According to Massimo Sanacore the numbers of destroyed buildings were overestimated in order to have more funds available for reconstruction. This practice was not only peculiar of Livorno but was common in all cities, and it was also instrumental to the government ruled by DC that insisted on the necessity of house property for working classes. Cfr Sanacore M., 2012. "Dal Risanamento alla Ricostruzione, la storia negli archivi di Livorno", *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, vol. XIX, pp. 139 – 160.

<sup>404</sup> Uliveri D., 2013. "La ricostruzione del centro di Livorno nei ricordi di Furio Diaz", *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, vol. XX, p. 181.



plan of *risanamento* of unhealthy central districts (Progetto 1926<sup>405</sup>). The new plan was signed by Concezio Petrucci and approved by the municipality in December 1945. However, the Office of Public Works rejected Petrucci's plan and the new project by engineer Roccatelli was finally approved in 1947. The reconstruction plan was still based on Piacentini's overall design with the principal axe on via Grande with porticos and Piazza Grande, adding some partial modifications. A dedicated commission was created for the definition of Piazza Grande to find a solution that could divide the religious area (piazza Duomo) from the civic one, a solution strongly wanted also by Sogene - a real estate company controlled by Santa Sede. The plan was strongly discussed in the city council, and only in 1949, it was approved, and in 1951 the palace was built by Iniziative edilizie livornesi (a subsidiary company of Sogene), dividing Piazza Grande. The real estate also took over the parcels of buildings around the new palace before the Municipality started to confiscate them, so the architectural asset of the square was mainly decided by the private real estate company<sup>406</sup>. Indeed, Sogene participated in the call with two projects: the realised one with the palace in the middle of the square dividing it, the second one with the building lifted on pilotis leaving the ground floor empty to create a covered square. However, this second plan did not offer profits from shops on the ground floor, and so the real

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<sup>405</sup> The Progetto 1926 was based on a two-fold *risanamento* plan: the first phase was the land reclamation of the southern area of the Duomo, the second phase concerned *sventramenti* and the destruction of districts in the northern part of the Duomo (zona quattro mori, via S. Giovanni, S. Giulia, S. Francesco). This latter part of the plan was justified by the need for hygiene dictated by the epidemics of cholera of 1893 and 1911. After the destruction phase, the reconstruction phase was planned to address the whole Duomo area: the Progetto 1926 planned the creation of porticos around the cathedral, the construction of three block (S. Francesco, S. Giulia, S. Sebastiano) and the CDF. Cfr. Osanna, Fantozzi, Micali, 1984. "Interventi nelle città toscane", in *Fascismo e centri storici in Toscana*, Alinea editrice, Firenze, p. 70.

<sup>406</sup> Mentre si avviava il cantiere di Piazza Grande, la Generale Immobiliare (ndr. Sogene è la società costruttrice dipendente dalla Generale Immobiliare) riusciva a rilevare, nel giugno 1949, le quote di 68 condomini dell'isolato che fiancheggiava l'edificio in costruzione, battendo sul tempo le procedure di esproprio che il Comune aveva iniziato." In Falco G.C., 2013. "Le giunte Diaz e la ricostruzione di Livorno", *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, vol. XX, p. 98.

estate opted for the first one for economic purposes<sup>407</sup>. As in other cities, the reconstruction of Livorno was not free from speculation issues, indeed, Bortolotti<sup>408</sup> argued that it was between 1947 and 1950 that the new figure of the developer (a hybrid between the landowner and the capitalist entrepreneur) emerged. So, in general, the common characteristics of the reconstruction period were the urgency to rebuild the city, the problem of evacuees and the need for more housing, the structural lack of public funds – still, the reconstruction was used by Diaz as the symbol of the Labronic renaissance.

#### 5.7.1.2 *The Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

According to *Liburni Civitas*<sup>409</sup>, a local magazine of 1932, the first headquarter of the PNF (from 1920 to 1922) was hosted by Garibaldini veterans in a building in Via Reale (already piazza Benamozegh) n. 5, a humble solution which however stated a clear link between fascism and Risorgimento. The second “house of the PNF” was a much bigger building and was identified in the ex-stables of Count Rodocanacchi in piazza Goldoni, nearby the theatre where the PCI split from the socialists in 1921. Since the owner of the building was not very convinced to give it to the fascists, they forcibly occupied the ex-stables during the night. The new occupants set up the space with offices and conference rooms since the growth of the fascist party and its members required a more structured administration. After the march on Rome and the rise to power of Fascism in the government, the party needed to transform into a more structured organisation, reflecting the national importance of fascism, and for this reason, the building in piazza Goldoni was not enough. There was the need to find or build a monumental house for the party, while in the meantime, the PNF was renting a temporary apartment in Piazza Cavour. In the Piano per la Sistemazione Edilizia del

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<sup>407</sup> L. Bortolotti, “Il centro di Livorno nel secondo dopoguerra”, in A. Merlo (a cura di), *La ricostruzione del centro storico di Livorno nel secondo dopoguerra*, Alinea editrice, 2001.

<sup>408</sup> Bortolotti L., 1970. *Livorno dal 1748 al 1958. Profilo storico-urbanistico*, Leo S. Olschki Editore, Firenze, pp. 314-403.

<sup>409</sup> Oreti F., 1932. “Le sedi del fascio”, in *Liburni Civitas*, fasc. V, anno V, pp. 299-308.

Centro di Livorno in 1926 (the Progetto 1926) by Gino Cipriani, a new building hosting the CDF was planned to be built next to S. Francesco palace, but actually, it was never realised.

After some years, in 1930, the new CDF was finally instituted in Piazza Cavour, a central square of the city, where the party bought a palace on the corner with Via Ricasoli and Via Ernesto Rossi from Monte dei Paschi bank. The act of purchase of the building from Monte dei Paschi was dated 1930 and the price, paid through a loan to the same bank, amounted to L. 1.000.000. Before that, the bank acquired the building from two families, putting together more than one property. The negotiations on the interests on the loan would continue until 1938 when Monte dei Paschi and the Federazione agreed on the invariability. Later in 1941, the head of administrative services communicated to the federal that the National Directory had issued a deposit at Banca Nazionale del Lavoro to pay the debts of the local Federations.

The building was the typical Livornese three-floor palace, with a balcony on the first floor, shops at the ground floor and an internal courtyard. It was renovated by the engineers Macchia and Mazzoncini, who designed the conference room as an elegant *salone* with a marble floor decorated with a big central *fascio*, big windows and the *cattedra per gli oratori* (desk speech) with the Mussolini motto *credere obbedire combattere* on the wall and as a background the wall decoration of Mussolini on a horse doing the fascist salute. There was also the *sacrario* dedicated to the Livornese martyrs, whose names were remembered on the walls. The organisation of the *sacrario* reminded a church, with the altar and the gothic window behind it decorated with images of crying mothers, replicating the Christian iconography, and the kneelers. On the first floor, were the offices and the *sala del direttorio* (boardroom) with a Mussolini mask by Adolfo Wildt, the headquarters of social services (Opere assistenziali) and the Fasci Giovanili. On the second floor, were the Fasci Femminili, the Dopolavoro, and all the fascist associations related to job offerings, schools and post office. On the third floor, the fascist magazine *Sentinella fascista* had its headquarters together with the Guf (Gruppi Universitari Fascisti).

In 1942 some modification works were needed for the CDF, in particular, the PNF urged to recover the barber shop and the

pharmacy's warehouse at ground level to expand the offices. In February 1943, the Federal Ajello urged the National Directory to collect some funds (L. 253.000) for the construction of air-raided shelters for the CDFs of the territory. In June of the same year, the Head of Administrative Services, Montefusco, wrote to the Genio Civile that, because of the American bombings, the CDF was destroyed and all the archival documents were lost. On 19 August 1943, the local Head of Finance wrote to the Ministry of Finances to have information on what to do with the funds of the dissolved PNF, given that the Federal accounting was negative since all the money were transferred to the Ufficio Assistenza Sinistrati. On 15 March 1945, all the financial accounting of the Federal Fascio was communicated to the central Ministry of Treasury in accordance with the national regulation.

Ten years later, in 1955, the Minister of Finance disposed the eviction of the bar Edison from the building of the ex-CDF in via Ricasoli to assign the space to the Intendenza di Finanza. The bar Edison was part of the Cinema Edison (see Figure 57), which used to be next to it in the same building but closed some time before. The place needed serious restoration works, indeed, the owner of the bar rented the place from the previous private tenant, who lied about the conditions of the place, making him spend all his resources on that activity. In 1956 the Intendenza wrote to the Prefettura that the space once used for the cinema could be turned into offices, but this would require serious investments. Otherwise – they suggested- it could be transferred to the Municipality for use as a school gym. The following year the Municipality directly manifested its interest in the ex-Edison for its conversion as a gym, and the Ministry of Finance agreed to rent the place for nine years to the Municipality, who also had the duty of restoration works. In 1960 the Municipality finalised the loan of L. 78.000.000 with Cassa di Risparmio for the works of adaptation of the ex-Sala Edison into a gym for schools (*delibera* dated 29/04/1960).

Today the building hosts, on the upper floors, the offices of the Ministry of the Defense (see Figure 56) and, in particular, the territorial office of the naval armaments, the Maritime Military

Technical Office, and on the ground floor the pharmacy and shops.

### 5.7.2 *Montenero. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

Montenero is a small town on the hills, part of the municipality of Livorno, famous for the sanctuary dedicated to the cult of the Madonna di Montenero, patron of Tuscany. As mentioned, Costanzo Ciano was a strong supporter of the Madonna di Montenero and was always present at the religious folk festivals dedicated to it. That is why the mausoleum in honour of Ciano was planned there, where it still stands unfinished (see Figure 58). In 1936 the local administrative secretary, Salvini, lamented to the national administrative director, Marinelli, the absence of a proper headquarter for the local fascio in Montenero. Salvini proposed a building owned by S. A. Immobiliare as a possible solution for the new headquarter: the national Federation would acquire the building, and the local federation would pay it back with annual deposits of L. 4.000. Marinelli, though, was dubious on the capacity of the local Fascio to pay back the entire sum without any cash availability and any secure source of revenues, so he rejected the offer also because the place was part of the same building of S.A. Immobiliare offices, which would give the impression of a jointly-owned building or a condo – image strongly opposed by the National Directory. It was a common habit for local federations quite exclusively to depend on central funding. Two years later, in 1938, a new solution emerged: the Istituto Fascista Autonomo per le Case Popolari would acquire the land (L. 10.000) on which the new CDF would be built (esteemed cost L. 166.000). The land acquired was a private property owned by sisters Tonini, it was 1.500 sm big and on the side of the new road to Montenero. The plan for the new CDF was to have the bar, the pool room, offices, storage rooms on the ground floor; and a small theatre on the first floor. After the construction started, the Istituto Autonomo per le Case Popolari signalled increased construction costs for a total of L. 260.000 due to problems linked to steeply slope terrain. For this reason, the Istituto asked the Fascio to reimburse the acquisition cost of the land. So, the contract between the Fascio and Istituto Autonomo per le Case

Popolari was changed as follows: the Istituto, financed by Cassa di Risparmio di Livorno, build the CDF in a future sale agreement with the Fascio on land acquired by the Fascio; the construction was contracted to Società Edile Il Tirreno; the fascio reimbursed the acquisition of land to the Istituto. With the contract of future sale, the Fascio would have to pay an annual rent to the Istituto, which amounted to a 25-years amortisation of the investment plus interests; only after the entire payment of the investment the Fascio could become the owner of the building. On February 1939, the construction works started and in September of the same year, the three floors CDF with a tower was finished and handed off to the party, who occupied it in November after the installation of furniture. In 1942, in a communication between the local administrative secretary and the general administrative secretary, the funding issue emerged again, indeed the local fascio had to pay a monthly rent of L. 2.146, but it could not afford it, so the financial issue had to be taken over by the National Directory.

The building was intended to be modern and austere. According to the drawings, it meant a two-floor building on sloping terrain, with a pitched roof, two lines of regular windows, a terrace at the second floor and a balcony on the top of the main entrance. There was no tower in the original plan. In realising the building, though, the tower (see Figure 60) had been added as a turning element with glass-cement (*vetrocemento*), pairing with another turning part on the other side of the main block. These turning elements reinforced the modern aspect of the building, putting it in relation to the architectural language of that time.

After the regime's fall, in 1945, the place was rented by ENAL (Ente Nazionale Associazione Lavoratori), who turned it into a *Casa del popolo*, maintaining a unionist and *dopolavoro* function. In 1948 the Intendenza di Finanza claimed ownership of the building, according to the law on the suppression of PNF, which stated that all fascist belongings should pass to the State. In 1950 the issue over the property of the building was addressed by the legal office of the State treasure, who had to find a financial compromise with the Istituto Case Popolari, the effective owner of the building. However, in 1956 the problem was not solved because the Istituto, in answer to the Prefect asking to turn the Casa del Popolo into houses, wrote that the property of the ex-

CDF was still an unresolved matter and so the building could not be turned into houses. In 1960, after the change of the director and of the president of Intendenza, the financial problem over the property of the building was still not at a conclusion: the re-evaluation of L. 2 million of the payments done by PNF was contested by the Istituto claiming it was too high and also questioning the validity of the reclamation over the building. Indeed, the Istituto argued that according to law<sup>410</sup> the succession of the State in the property of PNF included only the building whose payment was effectively settled and not rented buildings. So, the ex-CDF in Montenero could not become the property of the State because, at the time, the PNF was paying the rent with an agreement of future selling, and then the renter was dissolved before the conclusion of the contract. Moreover, the 20-years rental contract stated that in case of non-payment, the deal was to be considered terminated. After the PNF, the ENAL took over the rental contract until October 1947, when it stopped paying the rent. So, the contract had to be considered at all effects terminated and the property remained of the Istituto, as reported in the article on *Mensile di Avvocatura Generale dello Stato*<sup>411</sup>:

*La Corte di Appello in sede di decisione sulla questione “se lo stato in virtù dei decreti 1943 e 1944 sia da considerarsi successore a titolo universale della federazione o piuttosto liquidatore delle attività, senza alcun riferimento al principio della rappresentanza successoria” osservò: “con i decreti fu affermata l’illiceità degli scopi che erano perseguiti dal PNF. Per il trapasso dei beni fu stabilita la devoluzione di questi allo stato e nei limiti delle attività e essendosi verificata la disgregazione del complesso degli elementi costitutivi dell’ente soppresso deve rigettarsi il concetto di successione a titolo universale di subentro dello Stato nella stessa situazione della federazione. (...) Ritenuto ancora una volta che*

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<sup>410</sup> Decreto Legislativo Luogotenenziale 27 luglio 1944 n.159. Sanzioni contro il fascismo

<sup>411</sup> “Soppressione del PNF, Successione dello Stato, Insussistenza, etc. sull’interpretazione delle disposizioni di cui art. 10 del RDL 2 agosto 1943 n 704, art. 38 e 39 del DLL 27 luglio 1944 n 159”, *Mensile Avvocatura Generale dello Stato* – anno XII n 3-4, 1959, pp. 52-53.

*L'amministrazione del Demanio non abbiano alcuna ragione creditoria da vantare nei confronti dell'Istituto, si comunica che la pratica in trattazione viene considerata esaurita.*

After the declaration of Corte d'Appello, the building remained under the property of Istituto at least until 1960s; however, sometime after the building passed to the Municipality or the Province and now it hosts the high school Micali (see Figure 59 - 61). The building nowadays has been cleaned up of fascist symbols and only the structure, with the semicircular tower, recalls its original function.

### 5.7.3 *Antignano. The reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

Antignano, originally a rural town, in the twentieth century had been included in the limits of Livorno and now constitutes the southern part of the city. The CDF was installed in a 1902 building of the Società di Mutuo Soccorso Umbero I, which was occupied by fascists. There are no other documents on the CDF during fascism; indeed, the first written trace about it dates 1955: it is a letter by the general director of the Ministry of Finance to the local Intendenza di Finanza stating the need for a public destination of the ex-CDF and the consequential eviction of illegal occupants. The Intendenza proceeded with the communication of the eviction due to the new destination of the building as school. The following day, Carabinieri reported a vandalic act occurred in the night of 27 March 1955 when someone wrote on the walls in the street *Via il governo che toglie il circolo CRAL agli antignanesi*.

So, also in this case, the ex-CDF after the fall of the regime, in 1945 was turned into a Casa del Popolo and a CRAL (Circolo Ricreativo Assitenziale Lavoratori), a cultural association dedicated to workers, similar to *dopolavoro*. Indeed, the president of ENAL wrote to the Intendente asking for a renovation of his rental contract, highlighting how the *circolo* restored and maintained the building that was in a terrible state after the end of the war, and stressing the fact that they run the movie theatre, which was the only leisure place in the neighborhood. Nonetheless, the Intendente ordered the eviction of the building. The news about the closing of the *circolo* provoked some troubles among the locals because the police Commissioner lamented the fact that some



flyers were distributed, and they were looking for the responsible persons. Also the mayor and the director of ENAL intervened in the public debate opposing the decision to close the cinema. The problem was addressed also by the DC provincial secretary who, in a letter to the prefect, warned about the risk of taking away the cinema from the people because it could create social tensions and hardship, turning into political negative effects. For this reason, he proposed to suspend the eviction while starting to find alternative solutions for a local not political party-related cinema. The prefect agreed with the DC secretary, adding that the local PCI headquarter was organizing a projection room, and so the closing of the ENAL's cinema could bring all the citizens near the PCI. Several were the demands to keep the Circolo CRAL there or at least to keep the cinema opened and managed by ENAL, but in July 1955 the eviction of the ex-CDF building was executed, with the possibility to ENAL to manage the cinema. In September a reunion of PCI, PSI, ENAL and CRAL was organized in order to defend the cinema and start a petition for the revocation of the eviction, which collected 300 signatures in a single day. After the petition and the press attention, the prefect asked the Intendente to reconsider his decision and to reopen the cinema theatre. In October, the Intendenza allowed *a titolo precario ed eccezionale* (in a temporary and exceptional way) the reopening of the cinema in the ex-CDF on behalf of ENAL. In 1957 the general director of the Ministry of Finance formally revoked the decree 17/1/1957, which stated that the building was to be used as a school and declared, instead, its use as cinema through a three-year concession to ENAL.

Nowadays, the building hosts a dance school; the building is anonymous and does not have any recognisable sign of its past function.

#### 5.7.4 *Bambolo (later Donoratico). The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

The construction of the new CDF of Bambolo began in December 1933 when the PNF political secretary presented its financial plan. The list of financial contributors for its construction included the Croce Rossa Italiana central headquarter (L. 25.000), the local Fascio (L. 4.000), local private fascists (L.7.000), the local Croce

Rossa (L. 1.000), conte Gaddo della Gherardesca (L. 3.500), conti Giuseppe and Ugolino della Gherardesca in Bolgheri (L. 2.000), Mr. Piccioli in Piombino (L. 2.000), the Alti Forni e Acciaierie d'Italia in Piombino (L. 2.000), the Società Solvay & C. in Rosignano Solvay (L. 2.000), Cav. Giagnoni in Bambolo (L. 2.000), Comando 350° Legione A.G.F. (L. 500), private donations from Bambolo, Castagneto Carducci, Rosignano Solvay and S. Vincenzo (L. 3.000), for a total of L. 54.000. However, the total needed was L. 65.000, and so they asked the remaining part of funding (L. 11.000) to be covered by the central directory. On March 1934, Marinelli, the administrative director of PNF, approved the plan and urged the secretary of the Fascio of Livorno, Ajello, to start the construction, since the Duce agreed to praise the fundraising effort of the local federation conceding L. 10.000 by the central PNF. However, this promise would not be met because in November of the same year, the Fascio of Bambolo asked the undersecretary of Internal Affairs to provide for the remaining L. 11.000.

As it can be seen from the projects (see Figure 62), the CDF had a modern design defined by flat roofs, the turning element with fasci decorations, rooftops and balconies on the façade, three rectangular symmetrical windows dividing the main square element. According to the plan, on the first floor there should have been the O.N.D., the Carabinieri, some offices of the Fascio, and the M.V.S.N., grouping military and police functions with *dopolavoro*.

On February 1935, Ajello updated Marinelli that the new esteemed total cost for the construction of the CDF increased to L. 93.880, including the furniture, even if it could vary because some bills were still missing. In addition, the local Fascio was discussing the acquisition (L. 16.000) of land currently owned by Ferrovie dello Stato. Indeed, in April 1934, the Fascio of Bambolo started contacting the Ferrovie to acquire a piece of land (552,25 sm) under the municipality of Castagneto facing the main road Aurelia and next to the train station of Castagneto Carducci. The FF SS land was a strip of land adjacent to the new CDF, which was inaugurated in 1935, and it served to extend the little square of the CDF. Marinelli did not approve how things had evolved without his authorisation, especially regarding the land acquisition, for

which the central Fascio would later be asked to provide financially - as was frequent during Fascism. For this reason, he also asked the financial report of the construction works and the motive for acquiring that additional land. A year later, in February 1936, the local federal communicated to Marinelli that the acquisition contract with FF SS was ready and that the Fascio needed to make an initial payment of L. 1.060, which they did not have since they had liabilities for L.19.000. So, they asked the permission to proceed with a loan to Cassa di Risparmio di Livorno of L. 20.000. Marinelli approved to take out the mortgage and in 1938 the local Fascio sent all the contracts and documentation of acquisition. In 1938 the place changed its name from Bambolo to Donoratico, taking it from the nearby medieval castle.

In December 1960, the Ministry of Finance communicated to the prefect that the ex-CDF building was given to the Prefecture to be turned into a Caserma dei Carabinieri. To do so, they liquidated the Croce Rossa (L. 2.060.000), which was still using some parts of the building. The destination of Caserma dei Carabinieri still is the actual use and the structure of the building is also pretty much the same (see Figure 63), the only modifications are the two windows instead of three, the balcony, which has been substituted with a canopy on the entrance, the terrace which has different railings making it more similar to a domestic space and of course the absence of *fasci* on the façade. What has not really changed is a fascist-era plaque on the building, facing the nearby square, dedicated to the fallen for the nation with a list of names (see Figure 64). It is interesting that the plaque was kept as it was; they just chiselled out the words *fascista* and the indication of the Era Fascista, obtaining the phrase: *I combattenti di Bambolo (fascista) posero il 24.5.1935 (anno XIII E. F.)*. Next to it there is another plaque dedicated to the fallen of the Second World War positioned in 1975, as it continued with the first plaque. Beneath them, there is another small plaque by ANPI dedicated to the partisans deceased during the liberation (see Chapter 6).

### 5.7.5 *Castiglioncello. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

In September 1928, the local fascists were collecting funds for the construction of the CDF. Also in this case, the financial issue was discussed with the central PNF, indeed Marinelli explicitly said that the construction of the CDF should be addressed together with the problem of loans to local federations. The central PNF could not take all the loans of local Fasci and so their request was rejected. However, he added, the sum of L. 60.000 needed by the local Fascio can be easily found in some local banks, who, knowing the motive of the loan, would apply favourable interest rates. The CDF was then financed through private and public contributions for a total of L. 273.000, of which L. 182.554 by private contributions and a L. 97.500 loan to Monte dei Paschi. In 1929 the municipality of Rosignano Marittimo donated some land for the construction of the CDF in Vada and Castiglioncello, particularly in Vada it was 260sm in the square next to the church, and in Castiglioncello it was 1.600sm, including a building and land, neighbouring the Raggianti property. The Castiglioncello CDF was located in the pine forest near the sea.

Costanzo Ciano also attended the inauguration on 21 July 1929 of the new CDF and the newspaper *Il Telegrafo*<sup>412</sup> narrated it. The CDF (see Figure 65-66), designed by Livornese architect Fosco Cioni, had a Greek-Roman style with columns and classical pediment and a Parco della Rimembranza decorated by artist Mario Cerri on the back of it. In the park, there was an arena (*Arena Littorio*) made of bleachers with 500 seats intended for cinematographic representations, with decorations of *fasci* on the enclosure. Indeed, the arena was used for summer open-air cinema and theatrical representations organised by Corrado Pavolini during the '30s and '40s.

In 1945, after the Liberation, the ex-CDF was turned into a Casa del Popolo after the proposal of the CLN to the municipality. The CLN, in April 1945, formally asked the mayor to temporarily give the concession to use the ex-CDF as Casa del Popolo, after the Allied forces left the building. The CLN would base their offices

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<sup>412</sup> "La casa del Littorio a Castiglioncello solennemente inaugurata dal Ministro Ciano", *Il Telegrafo*, 22 luglio 1929.

there together with that of the other political parties to constitute the Casa del Popolo. Mayor Dardini answered that the Intendenza di Finanza was the actual owner of the building, so the question should be addressed to them; however, he suggested the CLN occupying as soon as possible the ex-CDF in order to avoid destruction or improper occupations, and then ask for the official concession. This preoccupation suggests that the occupation or destruction of fascist buildings and symbols was relevant and frequent matter then.

Today it is occupied by the Carabinieri (see Figure 67) and the backside arena is in a state of neglect and seems abandoned and still closed to the public. The marble enclosure of the park is still there, but the columns made of fasci are severed (see Figure 68-69).

#### 5.7.6 Piombino. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio

It dates June 1930 the act of donation between the Fascio and the Associazione di Pubblica Assistenza of the building in piazza Umberto I composed of 16 compartments divided on two floors. In this building, the CDF was installed together with the GIL. In July 1932, the Fascio accepted another donation from Arturo Piccioli of land (1.531sm) and a group of buildings in via Fiume to be used for patriotic associations. This latter donation would be hosted the ONMI (Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia), the *fasci femminili* and the headquarter of the E.O.A. (Ente Opere Assistenziali). In 1943 some maintenance works were to be done to the CDF, especially to the basement, for which a public announcement was published.

There is a source<sup>413</sup> that narrated the assault to the CDF in Piombino by ILVA and Magona workers on 27 July 1943 after the fall of Mussolini. The reactions to the announcement of the destitution of Mussolini were mainly two: a joyful one linked to patriotic and filo-monarchic sentiment and an iconoclastic force against the symbols of fascism, which was not regulated but was the result of spontaneous acts. In Piombino, the quaestor communicated a message of maintained public order:

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<sup>413</sup> Caponi M., 2015. *Una manifestazione operaia contro il fascismo: Rosignano Solvay 27 luglio 1943*, La Bancarella, Piombino

*Stamane comune Piombino circa 700 persone inscenavano manifestazione inneggiante nuovo Governo Maresciallo Badoglio et caduta Regime fascista. Pomeriggio analoga manifestazione veniva inscenata at Rosignano Solvai. Entrambi comuni pronto intervento forza pubblica riusciva disperdere dimostranti. Ordine pubblico tranquillo<sup>414</sup>.*

However, the manifestations of 26 and 27 July culminated with a worker being arrested and the police forces trying to disperse the masses, even using machine guns to fire in the air. There had been also an assault to the city hall and to the CDF, where fascists were hiding. People and workers destroyed several buildings and took possession of guns and bombs. So, the reactions to the regime's fall had been much more impetuous than the telegram reported, expressing the feelings of the workers of the area. Nowadays, the Pubblica Assistenza regained control over the building in piazza Umberto I (see Figure 70), on which they put a plaque (see Figure 71) with the following writing:

*QUESTA SEDE COSTRUITA NEL 1924 COL GENEROSO  
CONTRIBUTO DEI CITTADINI DI PIOMBINO PER  
ALLEVIARE LE SOFFERENZE ALTRUI FU SOTTRATTA  
DA INIQUÉ FORZE ALLA ASSOCIAZIONE DI  
PUBBLICA ASSISTENZA CHE LA RICONQUISTÒ CON  
OSTINATA VOLONTÀ NEL 1968. QUESTA LAPIDE A  
PERENNE RICORDO DEL CONTRIBUTO OFFERTO DA  
TUTTI COLORO CHE NE VOLLERO IL RISCATTO  
PERCHÉ VI SI CONTINUI L'AMMIRATA ED  
APPREZZATA OPERA DI ASSISTENZA. 25/6/1972*

So, it seems that the CDF has turned to its original use and function - the medical and assistance one - after being re-acquired by a group of citizens who then donated it to the Pubblica Assistenza in the '70s.

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<sup>414</sup> ACS, MI, Dgps, Agr, A5G (seconda guerra mondiale), b. 143 fasc. 214, copia del telegramma di Romualdi alla Dgps, 20 Luglio 1943, in Caponi, 2015, p. 86.

### 5.7.7 *Parrana S. Martino. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

In 1933, the Circolo di Cultura e Rinnovamento Sociale deliberated its merger with the local Fascio and transferred to it all its property, including a two-floor building in Parrana S. Martino, next to the schools, to turn it into a CDF. In 1937 the remaining part of the property of the building was also transferred to the Fascio by Mr. Bertini, who died in 1869 but the succession issue regarding the building was never addressed. Also in this case, the CDF was not a newly constructed building but an existing one.

After the regime's fall in 1954, the CDF was occupied by the CRAL on the ground floor. Given that the building was adjacent to the schools and needed more rooms, the Carabinieri proposed using the ex-CDF as new classrooms. This idea had circulated among the Prefect and the Provveditorato because in November of the same year, the Ministry of Finance wrote to the Intendenza that using the ex-CDF as accommodation for the teachers could not be approved because a private use of the building was not allowed by law<sup>415</sup>. Then, the Provveditore proposed using the place as new classroom, which the Intendenza approved. In a municipal meeting in January 1955, the city councillor Cerrai argued that those who requested the use of the ex-CDF as school did not represent the citizens' feelings. On the contrary, he continued, this was just an attempt to remove the ex-CDF from workers, as it already happened in the past, but now they used eviction in an indiscriminate manner against workers' recreative centres. He accused the local government, particularly the Christian Democrats "*capeggiati da preti*", of raising the price of the rent by auctioning it, and he lamented the existence of a double standard for recreative organisations, especially communist ones, which were much more controlled than the others. Indeed, he reminded that local authorities withdrew the firearms license for hunting only to communists. Moreover, he argued that 80% of the local population wanted to keep the recreative centre there. He added that the decision to close the *circolo*, in reality, came from America's interest in limiting communist organisations. Another

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<sup>415</sup> Art 38, DLL27/7/1944 n 159 on the use of buildings for public utility.

city councillor, Ciurli, confirmed the tighter control over the *circolo*, which was even accused of serving beverages with an alcoholic content over 21° (which was illegal), when in reality, on the bottles the alcoholic content was reported lower. All these were examples of conflict and stricter control over places managed by communists or political organisations, which were frequent not only in Parrana. However, one month later, the Intendenza confirmed using the entire building as a school.

In August 1956, the Minister of Finance informed the Prefect of the necessity to use the ex-CDF for public purposes, as stated in the decree signed by the Prime Minister, and urged the Prefect to evict the occupants from the building. So, the Prefect proceeded with the eviction of the people still living in the building illegally, who resisted and were forcibly moved out by the police. The following year, the mayor, in a letter to the Prefect, said that the CRAL left the building but was never officially handed over, and that they were still looking to rent the spaces.

5.7.8 *Collesalvetti. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*  
The act of donation for the constitution of a CDF was dated April 1931 and it was done between the local Fascio and the Circolo Ricreativo La Pace in Collesalvetti. The Circolo donated a two-floor building with a small piece of land in via Umberto, where a shed was also used as a theatre. The donation, as in other cases, was intended for using the building as CDF. Later in January 1932, the local fascio acquired another building with land in via Umberto from a private owner. So, in this case, the CDF was not a newly constructed building but an adaptation of an existing one. The theatre was contracted out to serve as a cinema and was used by the Fascio only for six Sundays per year for political purposes. As always, Marinelli asked about the financial situation of the local Fascio, who had a loan of L. 15.000 with the Cassa di Risparmio for the construction of the CDF. The local secretary asked instead Marinelli if the tax exemption on assets (*imposta sulla ricchezza mobile*) could be applied on the interests of the loan, which Marinelli approved.

On June 1954, the Intendenza advised the Ufficio del Registro that the CDF had to be turned into a Caserma dei Carabinieri, and so they needed to evacuate the building. After the Liberation, the



CDF was occupied by CRAL, PSI, PCI, Cooperativa di Consumo and Cooperativa del Lavoro, maintaining its social and syndical function but in connection with the opposite political force (communists and socialists). In July of the same year, the Intendente informed the Prefect that the eviction was carried on and accepted peacefully by all its occupants except for the PCI, whom the Police had to remove with forced eviction. Nowadays, the building near the municipality in via Umberto, is probably still used by Carabinieri<sup>416</sup> (see Figure 72).

### 5.7.9 *Rosignano Marittimo and Rosignano Solvay. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

Mr. Vallivero sold a building in via S. Martino for L. 80.000 to the local fascio of Rosignano Marittimo. The fascio, around 1928, stopped paying for it, making up some excuses. Vallivero was intended to go through judicial authority to make the fascio pay for the building with the addition of the penalty for the missed payments. In 1930 a compromise between the private seller and the fascio was renewed and the fascio agreed to pay the rest of the debt. However, in 1932 the finances of the fascio were not sufficient to cover the remaining part of the debt (L. 24.000) and no bank would offer a loan of L. 20.000, so it proposed a new deal to Vallivero for the payment of only L. 10.000. In addition, Marinelli said that, since the fascio already paid a sum bigger than the actual market value of the building, either Vallivero accept the situation or he should reimburse the local fascio and take back the building. Vallivero replied that he would accept L. 10.000 rather than nothing, as it was prospected by the fascio.

The location of the fascio in that building, though, was not adequate to the functions of the fascio, so in 1938 the fascio started to acquire new lands to build a bigger CDF with the GIL and a medical place.

For the construction of the new CDF, the fascio already had a sum of L. 180.000, which it invested in the acquisition of 11.000 sm of land and of a building, property of Mrs. Emma Grandi Visconti.

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<sup>416</sup> Since there were no drawings of the building, the attribution can only be hypothetical but based on the comparison with other ex-CDF that were converted into police stations, it is highly probable that the function and the building are still the same.

The building was a *casa colonica* that would have been modified according to the need of the fascio, and the land was just outside the town centre of Rosignano. In 1939 the construction works began: according to the plan, the building should have been L-shape with a 20 m. tall tower (see Figure 74). The original plan by architect Gamberini also included a cinema. The decoration of the building was composed of a bas-relief on the side of the building, fasci on windows, doors, arches and the terrace and also on the stage of the cinema theatre. An eagle decorated the tower, as happened also in other cases. On the ground floor, there was the theatre (with 300 seats), the *dopolavoro*, the library, the meeting room, the shrine, and the custodian's house. On the first floor, there were the PNF offices, the archive, the GIL, the Association of ex-combatants and a big terrace. In the backyard there was also a soccer field and a place dedicated to the *gioco delle bocce* (see Figure 73).

The total cost of the construction amounted to L. 330.539, excluding the electric and water systems and the furniture. In 1940 and 1941 the entry into war determined an increase in the costs of materials, which added to the modification of the theatre (addition of L. 10.000 for the construction of a gallery to increase the seats), impacting the overall costs. Communication between the local fascio and the central fascio was always delayed, and the gallery's construction in the theatre started before the approval from the national headquarter. For these reasons, in 1942 the costs were too high for the Federation, who asked the local associations, who would have a place in the new CDF, to participate in the expenses, at least by covering the furniture costs. In September 1942, the CDF was officially inaugurated.

Today the ex-CDF is the city hall, hosting the municipality and a cinema Sala Don Giovanni Nardini (see Figure 75). All the decorations have been removed, while the structure of the building (the L-shape) remained the same (see Figure 76); it still has the soccer field on its side (see Figure 77). No mention of the original function of the building is found on the website.

The CDF of Rosignano Solvay was officially instituted in 1931 through an act of acquisition between the local fascio and the Stabilimenti Solvay & Co., who sold the land on which the CDF

stood for a symbolic price of L.1. The CDF, indeed, was built by the local fascio already in 1926; it was a rectangular building of 630 sm and it was located between the railway and the Via Aurelia. The special clauses of the contract regarded the impossibility of enlargement of the building and the right of pre-emption by Solvay in case of selling. The national PNF argued that this way of proceeding through acquisition at symbolic prices was very dangerous because the contract could be terminated (*causa di lesione*). This was why every acquisition should have been approved by the central PNF, a procedure that not so frequently happened. Regarding the façade of the building, some historical photographs (see Figure 78-80) attested the presence of the fascist writing “Solo Iddio può piegare la volontà fascista. Gli uomini e le cose mai” as a consequence of the Foglio di disposizioni n. 40, dated 28 December 1939, which reported:

*I Segretari federali provvedano perché le frasi del DUCE riprodotte nelle pareti interne o esterne delle sedi del P.N.F. o delle organizzazioni dipendenti siano perfettamente intonate all'ambiente in modo da costituire un richiamo diretto ed efficace. A tale fine unisco una serie di frasi del DUCE suddivise secondo il contenuto, in relazione al carattere delle diverse organizzazioni.*

*PER LE CASE DEL FASCIO (Esterno)*

*Credere obbedire combattere.*

*Solo Iddio può piegare la volontà fascista; gli uomini e le cose mai.*

*Camminare, costruire e, se necessario, combattere e vincere.*

*Il Fascismo crede ancora e sempre nella santità e nell'eroismo.*

*Non si può esaltare il sacrificio di ieri, se non si è pronti a quello di domani.*

*Questa è l'epoca nella quale bisogna sentire l'orgoglio di vivere e di combattere.*

*Il P.N.F. è un esercito: in esso si entra soltanto per servire e per obbedire.*

*La pace per essere sicura deve essere armata.*

*Il simbolo del Littorio vuol dire audacia, tenacia, espansione e potenza.*

*Se vuoi la pace prepara la guerra.*

*Molti nemici, molto onore.*

The second phrase was the one chosen for the CDF of Rosignano Solvay, which nowadays has been removed as part of the defascistization process.

The link between Solvay and the CDF was strong because the CDF organised the *dopolavoro* of the company. As in Piombino, Caponi<sup>417</sup> narrated the workers' manifestation of 27 July 1943, which was organised by Enzo Fioretini, who passed door to door to collect the Italian flags used by workers during the manifestation. It was an act of re-appropriation of the Sabaudian tricolour, since the fascists used to force people to exhibit it during official civic festivities and inaugurations. The author noted that the use of the Sabaudian tricolour instead of the PCI or PSI flags was pretty informative about the preference of people for using the traditional language of the nation -rather than the one of social class – in opposition to fascism<sup>418</sup>. According to other testimonies and participants to the manifestation<sup>419</sup>, there were people with the red neckerchief, showing a brave sense of political affiliation that could be the cause of arrest. The news about the manifestation circulated by word of mouth. After work, a group of workers, women, and citizens started marching from the fence of Porta Castiglioncello to the station. In comparison to the manifestation in Piombino, however, this one was milder and did not implicate the necessity of a strike since it was organised after the end of the work shift - which is also the reason why it was difficult to interpret it as a proof of an antifascist consciousness among people. Moreover, the only documented act of destruction of

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<sup>417</sup> Caponi, 2015.

<sup>418</sup> “Al contrario, è presumibile che, in assenza di una coscienza politica strutturata, il linguaggio della nazione – piuttosto che quello della classe – restasse il valore più immediato e fruibile per convogliare il malcontento e comunicare il rifiuto del fascismo. E' ormai assodato, del resto, che le culture dell'antifascismo (e tra esse quella comunista) attinsero abbondantemente ai valori ed agli stilemi della tradizione nazional-patriottica, sia per la forza d'inerzia del processo di nation building, sia per l'esigenza di capovolgere quella logica di “snazionalizzazione” che il regime aveva applicato ai propri oppositori, sulla scorta dell'identificazione totalitaria tra “patria degli italiani” e “patria in camicia nera”. In Caponi, 2015, p. 85.

<sup>419</sup> Alfredo Piasentini, in Caponi, 2015, p. 88.

fascist symbols did not happen during the manifestation but it was done by the Podestà who was appointed to remove a neon sign of a *fascio* and he used a grenade to do it “*con grande soddisfazione*”<sup>420</sup> (with major pleasure). The buildings representative of fascism, such as the CDF and the GIL, remained empty and were later looted and destroyed, again following a spontaneous and vindictive attitude.

Nowadays, the ex-CDF is occupied by the Police station (see Figure 81).

#### 5.7.10 *S. Pietro in Palazzi. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

The CDF of S. Pietro in Palazzi was initially property of the Associazione Combattenti, who started to construct the building, but it did not have enough resources to finish it and it transferred it to the PNF in 1928. Even if the building was built and used by the PNF, the legal owner remained the Associazione Combattenti and this unofficial co-ownership was not tolerated by the national PNF, who urged the local federation to acquire the entire property. The legal procedure and verifications on the property took several years, and in 1937 the equal co-ownership of the building was established. The CDF was a one-floor building composed of six rooms on the major street leading to the square of the little town.

In 1957 the Intendenza correctly communicated to the Prefettura that the ex-CDF was property of the State and of Associazione Combattenti e Reduci. Since the building could not be divided, he invited the Associazione to acquire also the other half. However, the Associazione was not interested in the acquisition. So, there was the problem of finding a proper function of public utility for the building; in the meantime, the space was rented by CRAL even if it was 24 months in arrears. In 1962 the State property of half of the building was finally sold to the Associazione Nazionale Combattenti e Reduci.

Today the building is an ARCI circle (see Figure 82) with a bar and it still bear on the façade a plaque stating the property of Associazione Nazionale Combattenti (see Figure 83). So, in this

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<sup>420</sup> Caponi 2015, p. 94.

case the original function did not change much, nor in terms of ownership or function.

#### 5.7.11 *Vada. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

In 1929 the municipality of Rosignano and Vada donated to the local fascio a land upon which the CDF was built by the Fascio itself. The municipal land (260 sm) was very central on the major square of Vada, next to the church. To build the CDF, the local fascio obtained a loan from the Cassa di Risparmio and in 1939, the debt was settled thanks to collective fundraising of the population. The CDF was one-floor simple building, with four openings on the front and a terrace on the roof, and with the sign “Casa del Littorio” on the front (see Figure 84-85).

In an article 422 on *Il Tirreno* in 2009, the ex-CDF was reported to be the property of the Church waiting to be acquired by the municipality of Vada. However, the Vatican denied the permission to sell, even if the Municipality had already allocated €300.000 to buy and restore the building to turn it into a multi-purpose centre. Without adding any motivation, the Church would restore it even if there was no clear plan other than expanding parochial activities. In another article<sup>421</sup>, in 2010, a banner was positioned outside the ex-CDF addressing the bishop of Livorno “*Signor Giusti: sia giusto e l’aggiusti*” to claim the restoration of the building. The bishop answered that the restoration works were awaiting only permission from the Technical Office of the Municipality. The intention was to host in the newly restored building the Consiglio di Circoscrizione. In 2013, another article<sup>422</sup> stated that the restoration of the ex-CDF was to be finished by summer. In the end, the restoration works were financed by Cei for a total cost of € 350.000. The building now has two-floor (the ground floor and the first floor), so the addition of the first floor probably took place after the fall of the regime (see Figure 86). The building was meant to host the parochial activities of the church, in particular, the catechism would take place on the first floor. The ground floor seems to be used for private houses, probably still the property of the Church.

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<sup>421</sup> “Botta e risposta sull’ex Casa del fascio”, *Il Tirreno*, 27 Giugno 2010.

<sup>422</sup> “L’ex Casa del fascio pronta entro l’estate”, *Il Tirreno*, 25 Febbraio 2013.

### 5.7.12 Vicarello. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio

In 1932, an act of acquisition was signed between the local fascio and Mr. De Renzis and Traxler to sell a two-floor building in via San Carlo composed of twenty rooms and land. The acquisition was made possible by fundraising among private citizens who contributed to it. In March 1940, the addition of a tower and of a theatre were initiated, but in October of the same year, it was abandoned because, even if the construction materials had already been acquired, the local PNF secretary and the holder of the construction company were called to arms. The central PNF agreed on the suspension of the works until the state of war ended. In 1942 the construction works were resumed and the central PNF agreed to increase costs to L. 130.000, excluding furniture. In March 1943, the new theatre project was changed into a refuge for the population in case of enemy attack, postponing its completion after the presumed victory.

In 1953 the Questore wrote to the Prefect that the request of the CRAL to adapt the theatre of the *casa del popolo* into a cinema was not accepted. So, after the fall of the regime, and in particular from 1946, the CDF became a *casa del popolo* and a CRAL, as in many cases, keeping in this way a worker-oriented and recreative function. In 1954 the eviction notification urged the CRAL to write a letter to the General Direction of Demanio stating that the recreative and social functions of the *circolo* were too important for Vicarello to be just shut down, and it would be great damage to the social life of the city and in particular to the workers. They added that when they occupied the building after the war, it was seriously damaged, and the restoration works (L. 300.000) were paid by the CRAL, whom the Intendenza promised to reimburse through deduction of the rental monthly payments – which not only never happened, but in 1949 the CRAL investment was not recognised by the Intendenza because it was not originally approved.

In 1954 the ACLI (Associazione Cristiana Lavoratori Italiani) manifested an interest in the ex-CDF; indeed, the priest and ACLI offered to buy the ex-CDF. In the same year, the Provveditore also proposed turning the ex-CDF into a school once the occupants had left the building. The priest did not like the proposal of the

Provveditore, arguing that it was a strategy of the Municipality to keep the building for their purposes. Indeed, he asked why it was the Provveditore and not the Municipality asking for the building since the school organisation was under the Municipality's jurisdiction. Moreover, he wondered why not extending the actual schools (which were located in another building in Vicarello) rather than occupying the ex-CDF, given that the school building was already a property of the Municipality. Finally, he concluded, the ex-CDF was not architecturally adequate for the school purpose because the walls could not be modified, as they were essential structural parts. So, he said that probably the Provveditore was playing the game of the Municipality, firstly asking for the building, then declaring it not adjustable, enlarging the actual schools and keeping the ex-CDF under the property of the Municipality that could use it as it pleased. The proposal of the priest and ACLI would be, instead, to turn the ex-CDF into a kindergarten, an ambulatory, an office dedicated to maternity and retired people. To stress the importance of this last request, the Comitato Livornese Assistenza wrote to the Intendenza to ask for the rental of the ex-CDF with the priest. In another letter, the priest stressed that he would pay the building its market value, not less. Then, he added that, even if the Provveditore promised some rooms of the new schools in the ex-CDF to be used as kindergarten managed by the church, it sounded not a practical solution for the Municipality to pay for two entire buildings to have just some few classes. Instead, the use of the ex-CDF for the priest would symbolize the transformation of the parish. Interestingly, he added that "it was well-known what it meant owning that building" (*Infatti chi è del paese sa cosa vuol dire entrare in possesso di tale edificio*) and that, for this reason, the PCI would do whatever it could to avoid the church to become the owner of the ex-CDF (*Il PCI che conosce bene tutto questo farà di tutto per evitare che venga in possesso della Parrocchia*<sup>423</sup>).

In July 1954, the Captain of Carabinieri wrote to the Prefect that some associations that occupied the *casa del popolo* started a

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<sup>423</sup> Letter to the Prefettura from the priest Giovanni Dini, dated 19 giugno 1954, ASLi, Fondo Prefettura di Livorno, busta inventario n. 212, Gabinetto Case del Fascio, fasc. 6, 15.6.6.



signature collection together with a petition to keep the CRAL and the actual associations running the place. The CRAL president exposed himself very much for the signature collection, contradicting the principle of a-politicality of his charge, and for this reason, he got administratively sanctioned. The CRAL president wrote a complaint to the Prefect asking to return to the normal administration of the CRAL and to return the license to serve alcoholic beverages. He added that the license was suspended because of the interference of Intendenza, since the building was the headquarters of the dissolved PNF. The issue of the legitimacy of the occupation of the space entered into the jurisdiction of the ordinary judiciary (*Magistratura ordinaria*). Moreover, he stressed the CRAL had always been keen on apoliticism since a single party never ran the board of directors. In August of the same year, the newspaper *Avanti*<sup>424</sup> dedicated an article to this matter, explaining that, after the Scelba law, the government evicted the *circolo*, even though the PCI, the PSI and the cooperative regularly paid the rent. The Questor wrote to the Prefect that the license suspension was adopted because CRAL was doing political activity.

In the meantime, the priest clarified that the proposal of acquisition of the ex-CDF was carried on by the parish and not by the ACLI, restating that the reuses would be the following: a kindergarten, an embroidery school for girls, the offices of ACLI and a recreative space for the children of the parish.

In October 1954, the Ministry of Finance sent to the Intendenza the decree of the Prime Minister dedicated to the destination to public use of the ex-CDF, and for this reason, they would start the eviction procedure of the irregular occupants. The Ministry of Internal Affairs also sent the *circolare* n. 19379 (7/6/1954) on the use of buildings belonging to the dissolved PNF and urged the eviction of the Vicarello building to turn it into a school. The Intendenza added that if the ex-CDF was to be used as schools, it would be rented to the Municipality. In November of the same year, PCI and PSI organised a public meeting at the *casa del popolo* on the defense of democracy, talking about the new governmental

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<sup>424</sup> "Come trent'anni fa tutta Vicarello ha difeso unita la Casa del Popolo", *Avanti*, 21 November 1954

decision to close the *circolo*. Later that month, the occupants (PCI, PSI, DC, Circolo ENAL, Cooperativa Lavoro Piave) were evicted from the building. During the clearance, the communist Tenda was arrested because he was abusively attaching posters inciting people to resist the eviction. The population organised a strike against the closing of the *circolo* and the arrest of Tenda. An article<sup>425</sup> on *Avanti* narrated the fact as a revindication of the community of their *casa del popolo*: after thirty years the people of Vicarello defended their *casa del popolo*, whom they reconquered after the violence and abuses of fascists (“*l’edificio che i vicarellesi, con i soprusi che avevano per venti anni dovuto subire dai fascisti, avevano riconquistato*”). Even if the building was an ordinary one, the article continued, that place played a special role in the memory of old people: the *casa del popolo*, the *ex-casa rionale*, the headquarter of the cooperative “Il Piave” constituted in 1922 to respond to the violence of the *squadracce*. So, being kicked out from it, as also happened in other parts of Italy, raised the memory of fascist violence against the old occupants of the building and nurtured a sense of community among the local population, socialists and communists that had never happened before. In December, after the clearance of the building, the PCI asked to use some rooms of the ex-school building as a new kindergarten of UDI, which was in the *ex-casa del popolo*. However, this may had been just a rumour to disturb the priest, since the school buildings were still functioning as primary schools and the *ex-casa del popolo* was temporarily closed to turn some rooms into new classes.

In October 1955, a year later, the school was never transferred to the ex-CDF building, which remained empty and unused. The local communist section used it to celebrate the *fiesta dell’unità* and its use was conceded for the celebration of 4 November organised by the section of Combattenti e Reduci, supported by left parties. These events pushed some other parties to note that the local administration did not carry on the transformation works needed to install the new schools, probably with the hidden objective of

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<sup>425</sup> “Come trent’anni fa tutta Vicarello ha difeso unito la casa del popolo. Storia vecchia e nuova delle sopraffazioni della classe dirigente nella provincia di Livorno”, *Avanti*, 21 November 1954.

utilising that building to favour socialist and communist associations and parties.

In January 1956, the Intendenza informed the Prefect that there were some requests to use the ex-CDF building: the parish wanted to install a kindergarten, the ONMI federation, and the Post Office wanted a place for their offices. The Intendenza accepted the request of the Post Office, since it was a public service much needed; the Prefect agreed and gave a room on the ground floor. The discontent for the unused ex-CDF and its neglect was running among the population, and it urged the Intendente to solicit the Municipality to propose a plan for its reuse. The neglect of the building came under the attention of the Intendente and of Carabinieri because of some acts of vandalism and attempted looting by some young guys trying to steal a door when they were put on the run by the sanitation worker. At the end of 1956, the Municipality finally signed a rental contract with the Intendenza for the use of the building, even if it did not specify the exact function.

In March 1957 the Municipality communicated that the ex-CDF would be used as follows: on the first floor the schools, on the ground floor the ambulatory, the ONMI and a kindergarten – replicating the original idea. The cinema theatre was already used as storage. In addition, the Municipality also indicated its intention to use the space next to the ex-CDF as a public square, as an ambulatory (constructing a new building) and as a space for the school. The Provveditore focused on the precarious state of the schools in Vicarello: one in an old building and another in a poorly repurposed place. He invited the Municipality to find a building or to erect a new one that could unify all the schools, maybe in the space next to the ex-CDF. In October, a local representative of DC forwarded to a DC politician in Rome the letter of the priest asking for his intercession. The priest, in his letter, said that they organised a committee to open a parochial kindergarten; they also acquired a place for it and just some days ago the socio-communist mayor proposed to open a municipal kindergarten. One kindergarten is more than sufficient for the needs of Vicarello and he said that almost every citizen preferred one managed by nuns rather than a municipal one.

In the meantime, the provincial doctor agreed to the construction of an ambulatory and confirmed that that place was suitable for this purpose. So, in the end, the proposal for the use of the nearby land of the ex-CDF was for a square, a school and an ambulatory. No mention of the kindergarten.

In April 1961, the ambulatory was built on another piece of municipal land, so the space nearby was used just as a public square and for the schools. In May 1961, the Captain of Carabinieri informed the Prefect that two years before the PCI constructed a building as its new headquarter on a private land next to the public square near the ex-CDF. To access the PCI headquarter, people generally passed from the state land beforementioned to be used as a square. Since the PCI knew there was a plan to dedicate that space to a public square, it built its headquarters right next to it, so that the members could use it for their political activities. Given the proximity between the new and the old school, the square was instrumental to them, but the square should not become the entry to a political party that would use it for its propaganda. The Captain also reported the public opinion of people on the issue: the political opponents of socio-communists were not favourable to the construction of a square for the political interests of a party. The Captain finally suggested not agreeing to the Municipality's requests to build a square, and to eventually re-open the problem once the PCI changed its entry to its headquarters. However, one month later, the Intendente was finalising selling the land next to the ex-CDF to the Municipality, which was constructing the new school. In August 1961, the Intendenza decided to concede the use of that land to the Municipality for two years, waiting to see how the square project would evolve.

Today the ex-CDF is still the property of the Municipality, which uses it for many different purposes, indeed, there are the Misericordia, the city hall offices and other associations (see Figure 88-89). The façade of the building still brings traces of the removed blades from the fasci on the balcony (see Figure 87) but, apart from this, it is a pretty anonymous building. Also the writing "casa del fascio" on top has been removed. The schools are still next to it, with the entrance in the square that the

Municipality shares with the ARCI section (presumably the ex-PCI headquarter), which still has access from the public square.

#### 5.7.13 *Gabbro. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

In 1928, the priest Don Giovanni Balzini sold to the local fascio a rectangular land (265sm) used as a cemetery (*camposanto*) to build the new CDF on it. There were no ideological reasons only economic and functional convenience were attached to that choice. In 1936 the newly constructed CDF was mentioned in a letter from Marinelli to the local secretary Salvini, while asking for the acquisition act. In 1942 the Head of Technical Services, Mancini, wrote to the Head of Administrative Services that the federation had issued a quotation (L. 12.700) for maintenance works to the CDF in Gabbro, which was approved.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to identify the CDF, since there were no drawings or specific addresses. It does not result either in the Demanio documents.

#### 5.7.14 *Guasticce. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

In 1929, the local fascio acquired a building and land (675 sm) in Guasticce from a private seller, Mr. Gasperini. As the technical report described, the building was not adequate for the CDF; indeed, it was a rectangular two-floor building with a *pallottolaio* (bowls field) in the backyard. In the building, there were the *dopolavoro*, the bar, offices, and a projection room. In addition, there was also a small theatre but no restrooms. The Fasci Femminili were located in another building - which did not make much sense. So, for these reasons, in addition to the fact that for some technical reasons, it was declared uninhabitable by the Genio, it became urgent to repair and enlarge the building. In 1937 the conversation between Miniati and Marinelli concerning the enlargement works to the CDF started, with an estimated expense of L. 30.000 to be obtained with a loan. However, Marinelli disagreed on the expenses dedicated to the enlargement of the theatre (L. 20.000), preferring to focus only on the maintenance of the offices. In the meantime, the local fascio moved its offices to an adjacent building. In 1938 to enlarge the CDF, the local fascio acquired land (300 sm) from Mr. Marinai and asked for a loan to Cassa di Risparmi to start the works, which

however were not approved until 1943 when; however, the funds were still missing.

The ex-CDF was probably never enlarged, and the works never started since it was demolished for traffic reasons (now there is a road). No documents were found on the decision to demolish the CDF and on eventual debates over its destruction, even if they were unlikely, given that it was not used even during the regime.

#### 5.7.15 *San Vincenzo. The construction and reuse of the Casa del Fascio*

In 1938, the fundraising campaign for the construction of the CDF reached L. 140.000, with contributions from the Società Solvay & C., the workers of Solvay, the local fascio, private citizens, and minor companies. The local fascio was preparing the contract for the purchase of land in the city centre, between the Aurelia road and the seaside, with a little square with a monument to the fallen in the front, for L. 40.000. Marinelli approved the purchase, even if, according to him, the price was too high for a fraction of municipality such as San Vincenzo. Miniati replied that, given the tourist aim of the city and the proximity to the tin mine of Monte Valerio, the price was in line with the others. In March of the same year, the fascio signed the acquisition of the land where the CDF would be later built.

In 1939 the local federal, Miniati, sent the technical and financial plan to Marinelli: from a stylistic point of view, the statue of an eagle on a *fascio littorio* should have been put on the *arengario*, the tower should not have windows to recall the Roman architecture (see Figure 90). Concerning the financial plan, Miniati informed Marinelli that L. 60.000 came from a credit that the fascio had with Solvay in terms of the working hours of the company's workers dedicated to the construction of the CDF. Marinelli argued that they could not use the overtime working hours of the Solvay workers because the party forbade it, so they needed to ask for a loan or find more contributions. Only in 1940, the local fascio obtained a contracting offer by Ditta Galligani e Tinacci to the public competition they published for the construction of the CDF, but they needed to simplify the original project, eliminating a part of the building, including the tower (see Figure 91). However, in 1941 the works were not started yet for some technical and administrative reasons, even if they managed to

collect the necessary funds (L. 149.460). In 1942, the idea emerged to move the monument to the fallen in front of the church to create a larger space for the gatherings in front of the CDF. Nowadays, the ex-CDF is in the same position as in the project, the monument was not moved since it is still in front of the ex-CDF. As is shown in some historical photos (see Figure 92-93), in the 1950s the ex-CDF was hosting the elementary schools, in the 1970s a third floor was added, but the function was still the educational one. Now the building is no longer a school, but it is the headquarter of some military associations (*Associazioni d'arma*) (see Figure 94). The building was under renovation at the time of the visit.

## Chapter 4.3 – Case study: the province of Treviso

### 5.8 Historical introduction to the province

In 1874, Treviso, as the majority of cities in Italy after the unity of Italy, underwent a reconstruction process, particularly of Piazza dei Signori as the major representation of *trevigianità*, very much influenced by the political choices of the administration to ground the identity of the city in the nationalistic Risorgimento's ideals. For instance, as Livio Vanzetto<sup>426</sup> noted, the co-presence in Piazza dei Signori of the two types of *merli* (battlements) on the major municipal buildings<sup>427</sup> and symbols was the result of the different stages of the reconstruction of the square and political ideologies<sup>428</sup>. So, the reconstruction strategies were dictated by political and not technical reasons, as instead, they were presented. This also happened in the case of the memorial plaques in Piazza dei Signori, which in 1879 were meant to celebrate the fathers of the nation (Vittorio Emanuele II, Garibaldi, Cavour, and only in 1906 was also added Mazzini). On the municipal building, on the side facing Piazza Indipendenza, were positioned the plaques dedicated to the fallen for the nation in multiple battles: from the independence wars (1848- 1870) to the war in Abissinia (1896), the victims of Nazi lagers (1962) and the fallen for the Liberation (25 April 1946). This succession of plaques indicated two dynamics, which also happened in other cities of Italy: the hiding of traumatic events and the neglect of the fascist period, which were summoned up as a civil war against a foreign enemy.

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<sup>426</sup> Vanzetto L., Brunetta E., 1988. *Storia di Treviso*, il Poligrafo, Padova, p. 17.

<sup>427</sup> The squared battlements on Palazzo dei Trecento and the dovetailed battlements on the civic tower and on the city hall (now Prefettura).

<sup>428</sup> From 1874 to 1877 the city hall was reconstructed according to different restoration criteria: on the one side the conservation of the chaotic but authentic order, on the other side a rationalization of the public space. The latter, endorsed by the bourgeoisie, prevailed and the façade of the two buildings and of the tower were redesigned with a fake Romanic style and with dovetailed battlements (*merli ghibellini*), representative of the anti-clerical sympathies of the local administration. In 1944 the Allies' bombings destroyed the upper part of the Palazzo dei Trecento and in the '40s the Christian Democrat local administration decided to reconstruct it with squared battlements (*merli guelfi*), arguing that the squared battlements were the original ones. However, as the author confirms, the squared battlements was an invention of the conservators, who decided to ignore the *terracotte* or the frescos really present originally on the façade of the building. Cfr. Vanzetto, Brunetta, 1988.



The fascist plaques (especially the plaque of Camicie Nere of 1924) were removed just after the Liberation, portraying the ruling class of the city as inclined to historical compromises for the creation of an image of Treviso led by values such as patriotism, heroism, tolerance, labour, laicity, progressivism and tradition. Toponymy followed a similar path: at the end of the nineteenth century, there was the intention to rewrite in a national-bourgeoisie way the name of the streets in a national-bourgeoisie way to remember the nation's history and, in particular, of Risorgimento. After the first world war, fascists introduced some modifications, such as via Roma imposed by Mussolini, Piazzale della Vittoria and via V. Benetazzo; however, it was after 1940 that fascist toponymy took more urban space with piazza Italo Balbo, via 23 Marzo, 28 Ottobre, 21 Aprile, 9 Maggio and via dei Martiri Fascisti. In the second post-war period, they simply cancelled the fascist parenthesis and substituted their names with antifascist and catholic references (Trentin, Bergamo, Matteotti, Corazzin, De Gasperi, Moro<sup>429</sup>).

From a political perspective, the beginning of the twentieth century in Treviso was characterised by three major political groups: the moderated bourgeoisie and aristocracy coming from the Risorgimento tradition, generally dependent on land property and not hostile to the church, thanks to which they kept the power; the bourgeoisie cleric-moderated which rotated around the Comitato Diocesano dell'Opera dei Congressi, poorly present in the urban area but rooted in the rural fractions; and the progressist bourgeoisie, lay and anticlerical, divided between democrats, republicans and socialists, the latter generally supported by the urban proletariat. Indeed, the tensions between the centre and the periphery, or the city and the rural countryside, dictated the political equilibrium. The major difference between the suburbs and the city centre was the religious rootedness, which in the city was weaker, whereas in the rural areas it was stronger. Moreover, according to the 1881 census, the suburb inhabitants were mainly farmers (2.000) and workers (1.700); the inhabitants of the city centre, instead, were composed of industry

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<sup>429</sup> Vanzetto, Brunetta, 1988, p. 33.

and transportation workers (2.100), wealthy people and landowners (500), retailers (1.000), employees (1.200), underclassmen (600) and freelancers (200). So, the upper bourgeoisie counted for 15% of total population, the proletariat for 10%, the lower bourgeoisie for 50% and the workers for 35%<sup>430</sup>. Even though the most economically influential social group was composed of a hundred families, more or less, the suburban areas were growing and thanks to universal suffrage, they were meant to count more and more on the political scene. For this reason, some intellectuals started to draw their attention to the rural world with paternalistic and controlling purposes. For instance, the ruralist Caccianiga was one of the major figures in the appreciation and re-evaluation of rural life as opposed to the urban one. He embodied the narrative of his time, which used to contrapose the love for the countryside and its rural values to the disdain for the rural masses and the necessity to redeem them through basic education. The tensions between the rural masses and the landowners and citizens were nurtured by the issue of the *dazio* (tax), whose tax base in the 1910s was enlarged to include also the areas nearby the city's walls, extending to the suburbs' inhabitants. The tension exploded on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1920, when the *arditi bianchi*, a group of peasants to protect the catholic organisations against the attacks of *rossi* (socialist peasants) and to put pressure on the agrarians, put Treviso under siege. The *arditi bianchi* were the violent arms of the catholic leagues of peasants. During the siege, they cut all transportation and communications means of the city and forcibly entered in the houses of landowners to force them to sign new contracts, which advantaged the farmers. The siege lasted a day, but it strongly impacted on the citizens, especially the bourgeoisie, who strengthened their ties with nationalist forces to contrast the white and red rebels.

From an urbanistic perspective, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the city centre of Treviso had the same problems as other cities in Italy: health issues linked to unhealthy living conditions and lack of a proper sewage system, which pushed people to abandon it and move to the suburbs, whereas immigrants from

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<sup>430</sup> *Ivi*, p. 57.

outside the province started to inhabit the city centre accepting shallow living conditions. Treviso was a dynamic and growing city, as the immigration rate testified, but was still administered with the nineteenth-century criteria by a social class unable to innovate. Felissent was the mayor (1905-1906) that mostly innovated the city's image by creating a tram railway, adopting a masterplan for rehabilitating the city centre and developing peripheries, and facilitating the living conditions of the masses. Another interesting impact of fascism in the surrounding province of Treviso was the construction, in 1935, of numerous ossuaries in Fagarè, Nervesa della Battaglia and Monte Grappa to celebrate the fallen of the first world war and to reinforce the imperial mission of Italy in the Ethiopian war. The province of Treviso, indeed, is still highly characterised by memories and memorials linked to the first world war's battles and especially to the Piave, which today still coexist with fascist-built memorials dedicated to the fallen but with a nationalistic and fascist perspective – generally, the fallen of the first world war were assumed as fascist heroes, even if it was a fake historical claim.

## 5.9 *The Case del Fascio of the province of Treviso*

### 5.9.1 *Treviso. The fascist regime in the city*

The crisis of the first post-war period was determined by two dynamics in Treviso: the high unemployment rate, especially of farmers and ex-combatants returning from war, and the funds' availability to acquire the land and to carry on land reclamation works to multiply the land. The promise of the land to the ex-soldiers was a strong argument of the rural masses, and so from 1919 new credit institutions were founded (Istituto federale di credito per il risorgimento delle Venezie) to pay the war damages back to people, and also new consortia for land reclamation were founded (Ente di rinascita agraria per le province di Treviso e Venezia in 1920, Consorzio Canale della Vittoria in 1924, Consorzio di bonifica Sinistra Piave in 1926<sup>431</sup>).

In 1919 the first *fascio di combattimento* was instituted in Treviso to address the ex-combatants' needs. The 1920 was the year, as in other regions of Italy, of huge strikes, manifestations, field

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<sup>431</sup> Vanzetto, Brunetta, 1988, p. 145.

occupations and generally of the battles of the white leagues (*leghe bianche*) to obtain the change of agricultural contracts. Fascism was also in a crisis, divided between violent fringes (*squadrisimo*) and an internal drive to domesticate it into a parliamentary force up until 1926. In July 1921, the local fascio occupied the city and the headquarters of the catholic and Republican associations to seize power. The major event, however, took place in Collalto where the peasants occupied the land of the Austro-Hungarian landowner and recriminated its ownership and colonization. On this occasion, the fascio took landowner's side, legitimising itself as the armed guardian of private property. With this strategy, in 1922, the fascists obtained the 80% in the local elections. In 1926 the internal crisis of fascism was solved with the decision to transform it into a propaganda machine. In Treviso, the fascist force was supported mainly by rural landowners and by the urban bourgeoisie who were interested in maintaining order, their status and property. The local federal channelled the consensus of rural people with the rhetoric of the land reclamation, the values of rural life dedicated to God, the Nation and the Family and the battle of the wheat. The lower and working classes were addressed with welfare tools such as the colonies for the youth, the *dopolavoro* and the group activity for the free time organised by the party. The youth was persuaded through the sport, so the construction of the stadium in 1931 played a major role, as well as the construction of the GIL with the cinema theatre and the gym. Without claiming a universal consensus to fascism, nonetheless, the only political resistance to it came from the PCI, who covertly managed to maintain a network in Treviso, Castelfranco and Vittorio Veneto<sup>432</sup>.

Some symptoms of restlessness toward fascism were starting to be perceived from 1926, during which the deflationist strategy of *quota 90* was introduced, and its effects largely affected the agricultural sector. The coming back of sharecropping contracts, falsely presented as the ideal corporative system, was instead a way to hide the rampant unemployment of the masses. The industry could not absorb all of the unemployed, who in 1930 amounted to 4.643 and in 1931 to 13.722 in the province of

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<sup>432</sup> Vanzetto, Brunetta, 1988, p. 171.

Treviso<sup>433</sup>. The state of social discomfort of the masses was testified by the return of *pellagra* and by the numerous manifestations of women and unemployed peasants claiming jobs and food. Usually, in crisis like this one, the relief valve was found in emigration, but this phenomenon was strongly limited by the law on migrations of 1931 and the law against urbanism of 1939. The only possible migration was the internal one in the Pontine marshes, where a lot of families from Treviso went, driven by hunger and by the promise of a land. Moreover, the entrance of Italy into war widened, even more, the tensions between the peasants and the urban people, given that the production of food took place in the countryside and that only a part of it would arrive in the city, while the rest was kept for the black market, bringing in this way a lot of money to the farmers. The precarious equilibrium between the city and the countryside was due to the presence of soldiers (12.000 in 1943) who brought money to the city, permitting the survival of the people living in the urban area.

#### 5.9.1.1 *The fall of the regime and the Liberation*

The revival of an antifascist feeling started to rise in 1942-1943 with the first flyers in the city demonstrating a sense of aversion against Nazis, intended as the cause of the entrance of Italy into a war that nobody wanted to fight. In Treviso, the communists already in 1937 tried to reconstitute an anti-fascist front, in the following years also other political parts (socialism, liberalism, Catholicism) started to reconstitute themselves, creating altogether what would later become the provincial Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale. So, the manifestations of 26 and 27 July 1943 were spontaneous joyful representations of people's feelings, even though the rural people were not present. Indeed, this was because the countryside lacked some politically qualified people, and the only force that could reach them was the catholic church. Generally, the following months after the armistice were generally quite calm in Treviso, with only the circulation of cyclostyled flyers inciting the clandestine resistance.

On 12 September, the city was occupied by Germans without any sign of resistance from the city. The resistance was organised by

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<sup>433</sup> Vanzetto, Brunetta, 1988 p. 178.

partisans in the same year, 1943, in the mountains, while the Nazis took control of the city and the fascists reorganised the party. The Allies hugely bombed Treviso from 7 April 1944 to 13 March 1945, destroying and damaging 82% of buildings and urging people to evacuate the city<sup>434</sup>. The reason why the Allies chose a not-so-central target like Treviso can be found in the German authorities living there<sup>435</sup>. The living conditions of people worsened with the bombings of the Allies, the lack of food, the devaluation of the lira, the black market and the civil war; in this context, the priest played a major role by offering basic services, such as food and a place to stay, and by negotiating as a third party between the hostages and the Nazi-fascists to avoid retaliations. This dynamic pushed, on the one hand, the delegitimisation of the authority of the State and, on the other, to legitimise the church as the only reality that could provide help and survival to the people. In the meantime, resistance armed groups (*Brigata Matteotti*, *Brigata Piave*, etc.) formed in the mountains, sabotaging Nazi and fascist operations. To respond to it, fascists organised into a *Brigata Nera* to capture the partisans and to retaliate<sup>436</sup>. So, in a context in which the fascists were seen as the puppets of the Nazis and the partisans were perceived as provocateurs of reprisals, the church emerged as the moderate and wise force. In 1944, antifascist feelings were felt not only by ecclesiastic people but also in schools and generally in Treviso's wealthy and intellectual social classes. On 27 April 1945, the CLN (Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale) issued the act of surrender of the fascist republican forces and stated the handover of all of the goods of the PNF and RSI. On 30 April, the official celebrations took place in the city. The CLN had the function of nominating the mayor of every municipality of the province and the role of consultant of local authorities and the Allied Military Government. Moreover, it instituted a temporary military court with jurisdiction over crimes such as delinquencies,

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<sup>434</sup> Vanzetto, Brunetta, 1988, p. 199.

<sup>435</sup> Altarui M., 1976. *Treviso postbellica*, edizioni Cassa di Risparmio della Marca Trevigiana, Treviso, p. 23.

<sup>436</sup> "Da un comunicato del comitato provinciale dell'ANPI si apprende che nel solo mandamento di Treviso i trucidati dalle brigate nere furono circa 170 dei quali solo il 30% appartenenti alle formazioni partigiane." In Altarui, 1976, pp. 36-37.

robberies and possession of weapons, which created tensions among citizens and the Allies, who seemed to remain unpunished for the same crimes. In 1946 the regional Allied Military Government headquarter was moved from Padova to Treviso, bringing the central administration of the region to the city. After the end of the civil war, the mediation of the catholic force was fundamental in creating the new leading class of the city. Even if the first major of the postwar period, Vittorio Ghidetti, was a communist, the real political power was of the DC, which positioned itself equidistantly from fascism and communism, answering in this way to the fear of the urban bourgeoisie of the red revolution. The DC was also strongly supported by the rural masses, thanks to the trust gained during the occupation. The church substituted fascism in the sports sector, occupying it at a capillary level, with every parish having its sports team.

The city's reconstruction was financed and managed by the private sector and under the control of the DC, who built 32.800 houses from 1945 to 1956<sup>437</sup>. The DC also controlled the board of directors of the Cassa di Risparmio della Marca Trevigiana, influencing its credit policy. The juncture between DC and the bank segment, particularly the credit management, was fundamental since the beginning in influencing the political and cultural dimension as well<sup>438</sup>. The link between the financial support controlled by DC and the productive sector (industrial and agricultural) strengthened when, in 1946-49, the Casse di Risparmio consorted in the Istituto regionale per il finanziamento alle medie e piccole industrie, managing mainly three sectors: the

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<sup>437</sup> *Ivi*, p. 209.

<sup>438</sup> "Fin dalle origini, le banche confessionali fungono da centri per la manipolazione politico-culturale, non solo da canali per la raccolta e l'impiego produttivo del risparmio. Si pensi al modo in cui le casse rurali contribuiscono a diffondere una mentalità conservatrice: pretendendo garanzie immobiliari per l'apertura di crediti in agricoltura – cioè ripristinando la veneranda pratica dei mutui ipotecari -, o concedendo agevolazioni all'edilizia privata – cioè finanziando la rendita marginale – esse di adoperano per convincere l'operaio e il bracciante che non esiste possibilità di emancipazione fuori dallo status proprietario." - S. Lanaro, "Società civile <<mondo>> cattolico e Democrazia Cristiana nel Veneto tra Fascismo e postfascismo", in AA. VV., 1978. *La Democrazia Cristiana dal fascismo al 18 Aprile. Movimento cattolico e Democrazia Cristiana nel Veneto. 1945-48*, Atti del congresso, Marsilio, Venezia, pp. 6-7.

capital provision to agricultural industries, the provision of seasonal credits, and in anticipating public funds to local authorities<sup>439</sup>. The only political opposition was found in Vittorio Veneto, where the left was strong even though the PCI lacked the prerequisites to become a mass party, having the catholic force the rural people under its control.

The '60s saw the slow changing process of mentality and of customs, especially with the '68 and the students' revolution. This also impacted the workspace, with strikes and a new working class mainly constituted of rural people<sup>440</sup>, but also with large contributions intended to foster the industrial sector. The law n. 635 of 29 July 1957<sup>441</sup>, indeed, focused on the depressed areas of centre-north of Italy with State contributions for the construction of public works and infrastructure, but also granting tax exemptions and lands to new small and medium companies. This led to the creation of companies and industries where there had never been, creating the small-companies diffusion that nowadays characterises that area.

From an urbanistic perspective, the 1960s were detrimental because an uncontrolled urbanisation and oversaturation of the historic centre characterised them. In the post-war period, Treviso had two main urbanistic master plans: the Piano Amati (1958-1973) and the Variante De Benedetto (1984- 1998). The first master plan was the PRG of 1945 by architect Alpagò Novello and approved by the communist mayor Ghidetti, which however was never approved by the Ministry of Public Works. The Piano di Ricostruzione of 1953 was meant to be a part of the PRG and indeed it was done by Alpagò Novello and approved by the city

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<sup>439</sup> Lanaro S. (a cura di), 1978. *Le regioni d'Italia. Il Veneto*, Einaudi, Torino, p. 9.

<sup>440</sup> The census of 1951 registered a 50% of population working in the agricultural field, contraposed to a 31% of workers in the industry and craftsmanship. The census of 1971, instead, saw a 53% of population occupied in industry and craftsmanship, while only 16% remained in the agricultural sector. Cfr. Vanzetto, Brunetta, 1988, p. 213.

<sup>441</sup> Legge 29 luglio 1957, n. 635. Disposizioni integrative della legge 10 agosto 1950, n. 647, per l'esecuzione di opere straordinarie di pubblico interesse nell'Italia settentrionale e centrale. (GU Serie Generale n.193 del 03-08-1957)



council already in 1946, but variations and additions stretched the bureaucratic time, and it was approved by the Ministry of Public Works only in 1953. The Piano di Ricostruzione was criticised because of the extensive use of derogations which brought to building speculation.

The Piano Amati included the Piano di Ricostruzione of 1953, the PRG of 1945 and partially the plan for the rehabilitation of S. Nicolo quarter of 1936 (a fascist-era plan that was never implemented due to the war). The master plan focused on the viability, on the reconstruction of the historical centre from a tourist perspective (the medieval core in the North followed stricter rules, whereas the Southern part was dedicated to residential buildings and commercial development), on the urbanistic development in the Northern area outside the walls, and on the creation of an industrial area connected to Mestre and Padova. The plan had different variations and editions, resulting from a continued tension between private interests, the need to create an industrial area and preserve a green area in the city. The plan was voted and approved in 1964 (votes in favour: DC, PSDI; votes against: PCI, MSI, PLI). Moreover, the master plan of 1968, approved by DC, focused on the centrality of the parishes which were equipped with sports facilities, cinema theatres, and gathering places for young people, stealing some of the functions of the ex-CDFs.

The Variante De Benedetto was needed in the second half of the 1970s to update the PRG to the changes in urbanistic laws and the new socio-economic context. The Progetto Preliminare, which defined the general line of the Variante, was centred around some key points: the retrieval and development of residential areas, the protection of cultural heritage, the coordination with near municipalities in a matter of viability, the support of the industrial and craftsman sectors. Indeed, the Piano Amati was oversized in the growth expectation (it was thought for a population of 180.000, whereas in 1986 the inhabitants' number was steady at 85.000), wrong in the dissemination of the industrial sector (it was planned in the North-West side of the city but, in reality, the industrial development was not located in a unique area), exaggerated in the residential occupation of land (60,23% of the territory) stealing it from the agricultural activity. The viability

created a lot of problems in the city centre. The new plan focuses, apart from the viability and new residential areas, on the public services of the city centre, such as the stadium and the congress hall in the ex-GIL (which later would become the new library). In the tools used to preserve the buildings with historical and artistic value, there were four types of restoration modalities: scientific restoration, conservative restoration, environmental restoration and the restoration that preserves the overall homogeneity of the buildings. The census of historical and cultural interest buildings was predisposed by studio TEPCO (arch. Napol and Saccon<sup>442</sup>). The last version of the De Benedetto master plan was presented in 1995, in a completely different political dimension with a new political subject (Lega) who, after Bribesville, substituted the DC in the electoral base in Veneto. The version was composed of four major aspects: (1) the sustainable development and the preservation of the natural environment, (2) the preservation of the city centre through the institution of different zones with different limitations; the (3) infrastructures plan which includes the railway system and the airport; the (4) transformation of abandoned areas -mainly industrial. The Variante De Benedetto would be modified again, mainly by Lega, transforming the original vision of Treviso as an interconnected city with Padova and Venezia, to the more isolated one where private speculative interest dominated. The master plan was finally approved in 2004. In 2013 De Benedetto was called again by Treviso municipality to give his opinion on the new master plan and its later modifications, and he argued that the assumptions on which the master plans and the variations were elaborated were not updated to a changed society and to a different economic dimension, upon which the financial crisis hit very strongly.

#### 5.9.1.2 *The Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

The idea of the construction or acquisition of a building for the new CDF<sup>443</sup> of Treviso was being discussed in 1937, when the

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<sup>442</sup> On the historical evolution of Treviso master plans cfr. Schiavinato N., *La trasformazione urbanistica a Treviso (1958- 1998)*, master thesis of the University of Venice, A.Y. 2012/2013.

<sup>443</sup> The actual CDF was located in a rented building which however was not in *stile 900*, so not modern or monumental enough.

Duce decided to give L. 100.000 for the CDF, without however a clear technical plan accompanying it. One month later, in March 1937, the Prefect publicly announced in front of 5.000 *camicie nere* that the Federal took the initiative to construct the new CDF, in accordance with the authorities. For this reason, he asked a financial contribution from all the fascists who could later say “*di poter aver portato una pietra per il commune edificio*”<sup>444</sup> (to have brought a stone for the common building). He also addressed the wealthy people like that:

*Ma specialmente agli abbienti che non devono dimenticare che si deve al Fascismo e alla Nazione restaurata nell'ordine e nel lavoro la legittima sicurezza della proprietà*<sup>445</sup>.

Reminding them that their wealth was the merit of fascism, which protected private property (landowners especially) against the occupations and recriminations of workers and peasants, they should have felt the duty to support the fascist cause financially. In August 1937, though, Marinelli was informed by an anonym complaint that the local Federal of Treviso was obliging farmers to give financial contributions for the construction of the new CDF (esteemed L. 4.000.000), which was felt as an abuse and a waste of money since there was already a functioning CDF. Marinelli reprimanded the Federal that the contribution must be individual and voluntarily. This was an example of misbehaviour of local federals that used public causes to enhance their careers.

There was the initial idea to use land donated by the municipality for the construction of the CDF, for which, in July 1937, the public call was published to gain projects for the new CDF. The identified area for the new CDF was a triangular one facing Piazza Mazzini from via Stangade and via S. Girolamo (see Figure 95). For this special conformation of the construction area, the preferred projects were the ones with the tower in via Stangade and a monumental front on the Piazza (see Figure 96). However, in August, the Administrative Federal Crosato wrote to Marinelli that according to the technical surveys on the site, it was not

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<sup>444</sup> ACS, Fondo PNF, busta 1624 letter dated 23/3/1937.

<sup>445</sup> *Ibidem*.

possible to build in that area because it was insufficient, and for this reason, the Federal Benetti was looking for another area.

On September 1937, the Provincial Administration donated the building occupied by the PNF to the same. The Palazzo ex-Zuccareda and adjacent buildings were occupied in 1931 by the local fascio as its administrative headquarter; indeed, the Province to enable the activity of the PNF, in 1934, also acquired the adjacent building by Count Einni and built a pavilion in the garden. The last step was, then, to donate the buildings in via Cornarotta to the PNF. This donation could partly be explained by the changed status of Ente Opere Assistenziali della Federazione Fascista managed by the party into Enti comunali di Assistenza that was depending on the Province. To the new institution contributed the public authorities, the credit institutions, the industrials and the syndicates; the financial administration of the Ente should be managed by Prefettura. Since the welfare associations were generally hosted in the CDF, this donation could be understood in that way. Still, the plan was to accept the donation while looking for another suitable area to build the new CDF and, after the construction, to sell the Palazzo ex-Zuccareda to the Associazione Mutilati di Guerra. Marinelli also suggested to add in the public competition that the architecture of the CDF should represent the Italian tradition elegantly and soberly, avoiding excess; this limitation also applied to the choice of materials. So, this strategy was why the local federal continued the process of the public call for projects and the acquisition of buildings from private owners to find a suitable area. Among these acquisitions, was the one from the family Ciotti for the building in via Stangade in August 1937.

In October 1937, the Federal updated Marinelli on the status of the works: on an esteemed cost of L. 3.000.000 he got commitments to pay for L. 973.925 of which he collected L. 301.916. Moreover, he found, with the municipality, an adequate area for the CDF but he would need to confiscate some properties (esteemed cost L. 500.000). Marinelli replied that the expropriation seemed not convenient given that they did not have the entire sum. He also reminded that raising money through syndicate was impossible because it would seem coercion, when instead, the donations should be voluntary. The Federal Benetti was indeed collecting

the donations through the Unione Fascista degli Industriali (industrials syndicate), and this operation did not meet the favour of the Prefect, which was fundamental. In the meantime, in February 1938, the act of donation from the Province of the palace in via Cornarotta was registered. In March 1938 the Comitato di Presidenza del Consiglio Provinciale delle Corporazioni published a fundraising call for the construction of the CDF (L. 4.000.000), to which answered, among others and private citizens, the municipality with L. 100.000, the Province with L. 300.000, the Cassa di Risparmio della Marca Trevigiana with L. 150.000. So, the financing of the CDF was a mix of public and private funds. Even if the donations were publicly declared and approved, there was the need for a more official and personal endorsement to guarantee the effective donation of that money, which is why the local Federal and the Ministry of Corporations directly asked Starace (secretary of the PNF) to manifest his interest for that. For the same reason, Marinelli asked the governor of Banca d'Italia to confirm the donation of L. 150.000 by Cassa di Risparmio della Marca Trevigiana. In the end, the Banca d'Italia agreed to contribute through the Cassa di Risparmio for L. 100.000. However, in July 1939, the financial plan for the new CDF (esteemed cost L. 3.000.000) accounted as follows: current cash of the PNF made up by offers for L. 868.714, government bonds for L. 32.000, promised offers for L. 825.976, presumed revenues from the selling of the current headquarter for L. 250.000 and of adjacent building currently OND headquarter for L. 100.000, for a total of L. 2.076.690. The remaining almost L. 1.000.000 should have been raised with private offers.

On the expropriation side, as already said, the local fascio had already made arrangements with private owners to acquire their buildings even before receiving the prohibition by Marinelli. The Ciotti family was an emblematic case in this sense. In 1938 Priano Porcu, husband of Marina Ciotti, wrote a complaint to Marinelli about the selling of their house to the PNF: the year before, the Federal urged them to sell the building -for expropriation reasons- for an agreed price; and even if they were not in Treviso and the wife was pregnant and could not travel, they managed to produce all the documentation by the date of the contract and to empty the palace from the furniture - for which they had to rent another

place. From then on, despite the numerous solicitations, they had not received any payment or information on the status of the acquisition. So, they found themselves in a situation where they could not use the house because of the contract with the PNF but were forced to pay the taxes on it and the rent for the other apartment. In the end, the acquisition act was cancelled, and the possession of the building was returned to the original owners. This way of proceeding was typical of local federations: to act (even legally signing contracts) before having the proper authorisations. On the one hand, it created a lot of problems, misunderstandings and wasted time for the administration and citizens; on the other hand, the administrative system pushed the local Federal to achieve results without financial means and in a hyper-bureaucratical and hierarchical system, which was constructed exactly to limit the power of the person.

In November 1938, the idea was to acquire Palazzo Revedin in Piazza Cavour as a possible solution for the new CDF. However, the palace would need additional work, such as constructing a new wing or purchasing the nearby schools' building to give the CDF a proper headquarter. Moreover, given the luxurious quality of the palace, it would not be in line with the directions given by Marinelli, so this project was abandoned even if the schools' building had been granted for free by the municipality. Meanwhile, the sums raised for the construction of the CDF were invested in BTP (government bonds).

In April 1939, a new proposal for the new CDF was presented to the fascio and to Marinelli. The new proposal was composed of two possible projects: the first one was the adaptation of the Commercial School's building for a total of L. 2.000.000; the second one was the construction *ex novo* of the CDF facing piazza Duomo from viale Battisti and via Risorgimento for an esteemed cost of L. 2.300.000. The Federation approved the second idea because the adaptation of an existing building that was built for another purpose was not functional to the needs of the PNF. The land on which the new CDF would stand should have been given for free by the municipality. The new public call ended up in a report (dated 15 June 1939) by the evaluation committee. The typologies of the winning projects were described to the better visibility of the CDF and to the positioning of the tower at the

corner between Piazza Duomo and via Battisti. The type A (see Figure 96) had a façade with symmetrical openings and a monumental entrance, and the tower was in the right position. The type H (see Figure 97) was similar to type A but the entrance was even more monumental thanks to the big openings divided by columns and decorated with friezes and baseboards. The type A was favoured with some modifications (size of the tower taken from type H, insertion of baseboards, creation of antenna holder on the side in via Battisti). However, Benini (Undersecretary of State for Albanian Affairs) lamented in a letter to Marinelli that the new project for the CDF would occupy the garden of Palazzo Rolandello, a sixteenth century palace property of Mrs Benini Coletti (his cousin), to which he was also very much attached. The project would make the palace uninhabitable, so in case the PNF was interested in continuing with the project, they would prefer to proceed with the expropriation of the entire palace. The PNF proposed to exchange the actual palace of the CDF (Palazzo ex-Zuccareda) with Palazzo Rolandello but Mrs Benini refused, preferring to sell it at its market price.

So, in August 1939, the hypothesis for the location of the new CDF were various: the 1937 call for project was thought for the market square, but the location was not approved because it was too far from the centre; the second proposed area was in the schools' building but it was declined because the building was not functional to the architecture of the new CDF; the third location was in Piazza Duomo at the corner of Via Battisti but again it was not approved for the irregular shape of the square and of the area of the building; the fourth location was in S. Nicolò neighbourhood, which needed to be regenerated, but this hypothesis was discharged because the space for the new CDF was insufficient; the fifth location was in viale Luigi Cadorna next to the school Gabelli but also in this case the area would be insufficient; the sixth location was in Piazza della Vittoria at the corner with via Cadorna which would be the best solution because of the regular shape of the square and because there was already the monument to the fallen of the First World War, still the PNF would need to expropriate some buildings.

In January 1940, the chosen option was the location in Piazza della Vittoria so that the PNF would not need to confiscate the palace

of Benini-Coletti. However, in February 1941, the works for the new CDF of Treviso were still listed under the projects not yet approved, together with the minor ones of Revine Lago and Giavera del Montello. In July of the same year, the idea to construct a new CDF seemed to have been abandoned, indeed, the local Federal Bianchi in a letter to the National Directory wrote that the current CDF lacked decorum and severity:

*Quando si pensi che entrando appare agli occhi immediatamente un "vespasiano" ogni altro discorso si rende inutile<sup>446</sup>.*

and for this reason, he urged the Technical Services to approve the project to modify of the actual headquarter he attached (esteemed cost L. 52.327). The new project included the construction of a proper *sacrario*, instead of the current plaque that was overlooked for its position at the entrance. The new *sacrario* was designed as a niche in the wall of the conference room, paired with another symmetrical one in order not to disrupt the sixteenth-century harmony of the room. In addition to it, also the entrance hall should had been re-designed with two front desks (one in the front and one in the back) and with decorations on the walls and ceiling. Other additions and modifications were indicated: the new Secretary's office next to the Federal's one, the substitution of the pavement, and the predisposition of a toilet in the courtyard. An interesting detail was the highlight of Bianchi (who signed as *Sansepolcrista*):

*Sta di fatto che con tutta la migliore buona volontà dei miei predecessori si era creata nella Federazione una specie di famiglia patriarcale: io sto mettendo le cose a posto anche nell'organico della Federazione per creare una sensibilità mussoliniana al servizio del Partito, del Regime e della Nazione atta a dare il buon esempio<sup>447</sup>.*

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<sup>446</sup> ACS, Fondo PNF, busta 1624, letter dated 31 luglio 1941 from Umberto Bianchi (local federal of PNF Treviso) to Alfonso Gaetani (PNF vice-secretary).

<sup>447</sup> *Ibidem*.



This was an example of how corrupt and driven by personal interest was the fascist system and administration in Treviso and throughout Italy<sup>448</sup>. This could also maybe concur to explain the delays and the numerous projects for the new CDF that, in the end, would have never been built.

In September 1941 the PNF Technical Services approved the modification works to the CDF for a total of L. 52.327 - of which the National Directory would cover the 75%, whereas the 25% should be covered by the Federation. Another extension project was presented by Technical Services for the addition of an adjunct in the courtyard and it was approved. The following month, tough, the head of Administrative Services, Montefusco, wrote that the financial plan could not be approved because the revenues were not already in the possession of the PNF but given the urgency of the project, in the end, he gave the administrative approval with the condition that the local PNF would supply the eventual lack of revenues. After the approval, the secretary of PNF reaffirmed that the Directory would not consider any additional work to the CDF for at least a decade. Moreover, the project should also include the transformation of the priest's house and the restoration of the façade of the historical palace.

Finally, in May 1942 the modification works to the CDF were in progress and in August the Federal was bargaining for the acquisition of some adjacent buildings owned by Mrs Sordi, who was willing to sell at a reduced price. The acquisition included three apartments, actually rented by the PNF, facing the courtyard of the CDF, which the National Directory approved and covered for the 75% - contrary to their previous statement. In February 1943 the Federal Gatti sent to the National Secretary the extension project to which it was added a small warehouse in the courtyard. The Secretary argued that renting the new spaces was more favourable rather than acquiring or building them. The discussion over the extension project continued until May 1943, when the project was finally approved. However, given the changed political situation of some months later, it was likely that this last project never started.

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<sup>448</sup> Cfr. Giovannini P., Palla M., 2019. *Il fascismo dalle mani sporche. Dittatura, corruzione, affarismo*, Laterza, Bari

After the fall of Mussolini's government, already in 1944, there were requests from private citizens to get refunded for the contributions they gave to the PNF for the construction of the CDF, which never happened. In the same way, the furniture companies that worked for the PNF started to solicitate their payments, in particular the Ditta Moretti not only lamented its financial situation to the Gestione Stralcio but it also got the cooperation of the ex-Federal Gatti to get their invoices payed. As also in other occasions, it was not uncommon that companies tried to get a double payment, firstly from the PNF and then from the Italian government, embodying a continuity of opportunism and personal enrichment at the expense of the State which will characterize a diffused national attitude also in the following decades.

The actual use of the ex-CDF is the Carabinieri's headquarters (see Figure 98) and the building in the ex-Palazzo Zuccareda, due to its historical and artistic value preceding the fascist era, has not changed. At the time of my visit, it was not possible to enter and visit the interiors.

#### 5.9.2 *Candelù. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

The land in Maserada del Piave, for the construction of the CDF of Candelù, was donated to the local PNF by the brothers Zangrando in 1938. In September 1939, Marinelli asked clarifications on the state of the works of the CDF, since the local fascio had already spent L. 28.000 without his authorization. The following month the local Secretary Crosato sent Marinelli the report of expenses and contributions: of a total cost of L. 40.000 they had already done works for L. 28.000, supported by citizens' donations (L. 5.500), a contribution from the Federation of Treviso (L. 7.000), commitments made by local fascists (L. 6.300) and a contribution from the Federazione Fascista<sup>449</sup> (L. 21.300). Moreover, the local population did the building foundations and the transport of construction materials for free. Even if the financial plan was supposed to break even, as it almost always happened, it did not: in 1940 the Head of Administrative Services, Montefusco, asked about the liability of L. 16.000 for the

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<sup>449</sup> It may indicate the central PNF.

construction of the CDF to the local Federal, who admitted that the donations raised from the population were less than expected. For this reason, the CDF was built without the tower, which could be added later when the financial possibilities of the fascio would permit it.

As can be seen in the drawing (see Figure 99), the front of the building was tripartite in three arch-shaped entrances and two Mussolini's mottos were painted on the walls: *Preferiamo essere temuti* on the left side, and *Credere obbedire combattere* on the right. The actual reuse of the building is probably<sup>450</sup> the kindergarten of Madonna della Salute (see Figure 100); indeed, the location in Maserada sul Piave coincides, even if the building has been modified: the first floor has been added (which was a common practice in the second post-war period), the fascist writings have been cancelled, and the openings have changed, probably in the reconstruction works after the Second World War and in later restorations.

### 5.9.3 Cison di Valmarino. *The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

A municipality deliberation dated March 1936 authorised the local Fascio to use the municipally owned building in Piazza Roma as headquarters and for its manifestations, to whose adaptation they also contributed with L. 15.000. In addition, the municipality also authorised the use of the adjacent building for the same reason. In November of the same year, Count Brandolini d'Adda donated another building with land in Piazza Roma to the local PNF.

Concerning the financing of its construction, the local federal Crosato in 1938 wrote to Marinelli that the adaptation of the CDF was approved by his predecessor Giacomini, who assured that the funds were found thanks to a special contribution by the Duce of L. 10.000. In addition to it also Starace contributed to the works with a donation of L. 50.000 for the CDF of Cison and of Revine. However, the construction cost estimate of the CDF of Cison amounted to L. 63.000 (plus L. 30.000 for furniture and

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<sup>450</sup> It is a personal attribution based on the technical drawings and the location; however, I have not found any documentation certifying it.

installations), and so the local Fascio, even acknowledging their error in starting the works before having the total sum, asked the central Fascio for a contribution. Again, this was another example of the fuzzy procedures of Fasci, who to show their importance, acted even without authorisation.

In July 1938, the municipality also deliberated to donate the building used as CDF to the local PNF on condition that they did not disfigure the façade and that the building would host the GIL and the Dopolavoro. In August Marinelli authorised the execution of adaptation works for a total of L. 23.000.

Nowadays, even if it was not a new construction, the ex-CDF is still one of the most connotated buildings of the territory thanks to the fascist writings on the façade that have been restored in 2019. Indeed, the ex-CDF and two other private buildings (see Figure 104 -106) report the following Mussolini's phrases: *La mia volontà non conosce alcun ostacolo, Camminare e costruire e se fosse necessario combattere e vincere* and *Sempre pronti a indossare lo zaino*. This restoration was approved and financed by the municipality who wanted to "tenere viva la memoria del passato durante il ventennio fascista [con] frasi pronunciate da Benito Mussolini"<sup>451</sup>. Even if it is true that mural writing was a widespread habit during the *ventennio*, what is not common is their public restoration in the present time. Indeed, it is almost too common to find fascist writings in the province of Treviso, which can be either hand-written dates in Revine Lago and Bigolino (see Figure 102-103), or writings with the face of the Duce as in Breda di Piave (see Figure 103) or on private houses as in Fagarè della Battaglia (see Figure 101)<sup>452</sup>. In Cison there is similar writing too in the main square, with the dates (1919-1920) and an eagle holding a *fascio* (see Figure 106). In this case, however, the municipality decided to restore the original fascist writings on the (now private) buildings, including the ex-CDF in the main square, to keep the memory of that period alive. The project included not only the restoration of the three fascist writings but also the restoration of the names of the streets,

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<sup>451</sup> "Cison, il Comune restaura le case con le frasi del Duce", *Treviso Today*, 17 gennaio 2019, available at: <https://www.trevisotoday.it/attualita/slogan-fascismo-case-cison-di-valmarino-17-gennaio-2019.html>

<sup>452</sup> The fascist writings are so many that there are websites -with a clear apologetic and nostalgic aim- dedicated to their collection.

a sort of general restoration of faded words, names and phrases on the walls of the historical center.

Apart from the writings, the buildings of the ex-PNF and the ex-CDF are now hosting, where there was the cinema, the Teatro La Loggia and the Museo della Radio d'epoca (Vintage radio museum); whereas the Villa Brandolini (the building donated by Count Brandolini at the time) is now a luxury historical villa of 800sm with a swimming pool, 10 bedrooms, which, according to Italic Rentals<sup>453</sup>, can be rented for approximately €2.000 per night. Clearly in the description of the Villa there is no mention of its previous use as CDF, even if it has now the restored Mussolini's writing on the wall of the square. The Teatro La Loggia, instead, remembers its past use as OND and as a cinema on the historical label positioned on the façade. It adds that in the post-war period until the 1960s it was used as a cinema and as a ballroom managed by ENAL. Then, in the 1960s it was abandoned until 2001 when it was restored and turned into a theatre and a museum.

The touristic turn of Cison, with the adaptation of the ex-PNF buildings into tourist accommodations or in cultural places, can be partly explained by the inclusion of Cison in the *Borghi più belli d'Italia* circuit and by the obtainment of the Orange flag by Touring Club Italiano. The coexistence of these different layers, meaning the restoration of fascist writings and the touristic aim of the borgo, creates an uncanny interpretation of that difficult past, which seems to be seen as a tourist attraction among the others.

#### 5.9.4 Cimadolmo. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse

In 1931, the Podestà of Cimadolmo, Zandonadi, granted the use of the building adjacent to the municipality as CDF, for a rental price of L. 100 per year. Some years later, in December 1939, the local fascio discussed acquiring a building to be used as a new CDF. The building was located in via Roma and was adjacent to another building. It was composed of two parts: the first part was three-floor, and the second part was two-floor. The actual use of the ground floor was residential, the first floor was a ballroom, and the second floor was a barn; the courtyard was used as a

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<sup>453</sup> See the link: <https://it.italicarentals.com/casa-vacanze/veneto/cison-di-valmarino/casabrando/1107/>

vegetable garden and for the bowls game. Given the structure of the building, the modification works were modest.

However, in 1940 the local Fascio acquired another two-floor building with land in Borgo Maggiore from a private owner, Mr Serafini. In 1941 the Head of Technical Services, Mancini, informed the local secretary that, since the central federation did not approve the modification works, the local fascio could only get the funds for the 75% of small CDF for rural centres. In 1942 the local federal argued that the central federation approved both the acquisition and the cost estimate; in the period between the acquisition and the start of the works, though, the costs increased to L. 25.000 but if the central direction could not provide sufficient funds, then they could not cover it. Mancini again reminded them that they had to get the authorisation before starting the works because the Directory could not simply extinguish all the debts of the local federations. In the end, after complaining, the central PNF paid for the work which was finished in October 1942. Again, another example of how construction works were carried out during the fascist regime and how the administrative relationship between centre and periphery was indicative of a supposed control over the process, which instead was more like chasing after one another.

The actual use of the first CDF in via Roma is the Town hall (see Figure 108), which is consistent with the municipal property of the building. It was not possible to individuate the second CDF.

#### *5.9.5 Cordignano. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In 1936, the Countess Margherita Brandolini d'Adda donated land to the local PNF to use it as a sports field. At that time, the local fascio owned the land upon which there was the CDF, according to federal Dall'Ongaro's letter to Marinelli. To finance the adaptation works of the CDF (total cost L. 84.000) the local Fascio raised L. 35.546 from private contributions, L. 10.000 as a contribution from the Municipality, L. 16.000 from the central Federation, while L. 15.000 were lost from private contributions. Marinelli argued that the financial situation was a disaster without the certainty of funds collection and asked why they proceeded in that way. The political secretary Bortoli explained that the CDF was inaugurated in November 1935 following the

order of the Federal, who defined a financial plan before the construction. At the time, the Federal collected donations from citizens who all paid except two wealthy families, the municipality helped with furniture, and in September the local PNF collected L. 6.868 with charity (*pescia di beneficenza*). The final project was a CDF completed with a cinema theatre, the *Dopolavoro*, the bowling club, and the ONB (see Figure 109); so, the Federal hoped that the central Federation could help with L. 16.000. Given the incorrect way of operating without asking his authorization, Marinelli did not approve the financing of L. 16.000 and invited the fascio to raise them locally. In July 1936, however, Marinelli discovered that the local Federal, Giacomini, wrote directly to the Duce asking for a personal donation to the *pescia di beneficenza* organised in order to raise money for the CDF. Again, he reprimanded his action for having bypassed the central Federation, reminding that every communication needed to be processed following the hierarchy. As it can be seen, even if the fascist regime was inscribed in a big bureaucratic and hierarchical system, it was not uncommon to plea directly to Mussolini or other important party figures in order to obtain favors or funds.

In 1938, the local secretary, Fael, wrote again to the Federation of Treviso lamenting that the passivity for the construction of the CDF amounted to L. 18.000 and since the Federation never paid their part, even if they promised so, now they could contribute with some funds. In February 1939, finally, all liabilities were paid. In addition, in 1942, the local fascio acquired the land next to the CDF from the Intendenza di Finanza in order to extend the CDF area.

The contemporary use of the ex-CDF is as civic library, municipal theatre, cultural center, meeting hall, so it kept many of the original social function of the CDF, without the fascist connotations (see Figure 110-111): the fascist writings have been removed and also the fasces, whereas the building is exactly almost the same.

#### 5.9.6 Istrana. *The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In July 1937, the Podestà granted the municipal building in Piazzale Roma for free use as CDF to the local PNF at the symbolic

price of L.1. Also the land in front of the building was part of the cession in order to be turned into a sports field. In February 1938 it seemed that the building would actually be donated to the Fascio, who asked the donation to be without any use constraint. So, in July 1939 the Podestà officially donated the building to the local Fascio but at certain conditions: (1) the Municipality could use the ground floor (at the time used as classroom); (2) the building could not be used as anything else than headquarter of PNF organizations, neither be sold; (3) the Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia would occupy two rooms at ground floor.

In 1944, the accountant of Gestione Stralcio sent to the Intendenza the balance sheets of ex-PNF together with the ex-PNF building in Piazzale Roma composed of two floors and 18 rooms. In 1945, the mayor wrote to the Intendenza di Finanza an official document asking for the restitution of the building (ex-CDF) to the Municipality of Istrana, arguing that at the time the donation was not freely decided but instead it was imposed by the Federal and the Prefect could not object it because it would be a crime of *“leso-fascismo”*. So, the mayor concluded, that was not a donation but an extortion, according to which a political party could get rich at the expenses of the municipality. This was the only request of restitution of all the cases here studied. In October 1945, the sports field, whose management the Fascio freely granted to Mr Bucciol in order to help him in his difficult personal situation, was renovated also by the Municipality. In 1946, the ex-municipal building (the CDF) in Piazzale Roma, which figured in a list of properties to be insured, was already assigned to Carabinieri to be used as their station. Nowadays, the ex-CDF is still the Carabinieri headquarter (see Figure 112), which has the same distribution of floors and rooms and it is in the same location in Piazzale Roma in Istrana.

#### *5.9.7 Loria. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In January 1939, the local Fascio was thinking about buying a building to use it as CDF, in particular they were interested to the building property of Mr Bordignon in piazza del Municipio. It was a two-floor building in good condition. The local Federal Crosato asked Marinelli permission for the purchase of the building and also the funding from the central PNF. Marinelli



answered that, even though the building did not seem adequate to be turned into a CDF, if that was a convenient deal, he authorized the purchase. So, in March 1939 Mr Bordignon sold the building and the adjacent land to the fascio. In August, the local fascio was planning some modification works to the building, such as constructing a meeting room. For this, they published a public competition, which however was unsuccessful, so they directly assigned the construction of the meeting room to the Ditta F.lli Stella for L. 40.000.

Today, in the area of the ex-CDF of Loria, which was in front of the Town Hall, there is a bus stop and the headquarter of the Police. However, the present building of the Police is clearly more recent than the original CDF, indeed, there are elements which are later additions, while the rectangular body of the building (white with red features in the windows) could be part of the original building, but there is no documentation that attests it.

#### *5.9.8 Miane. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In 1938, Marinelli approved the purchase of the building of the theatre of Miane by the local fascio to turn it into the CDF but the final purchase would take another year to raise the necessary funds - which in the end were given by the central Federation. In 1939 Marinelli authorised the modification works to the CDF but argued that the esteemed cost of L. 15.000 could be lowered and needed to be paid by the local Fascio.

The actual reuse is as municipal offices, offices of pro-loco and Avis (see Figure 113). The town hall is nearby and faces the same square, which is now a parking. As can be seen, the building is ordinary and it has for sure been restored after the war but, interestingly enough, it kept, in the entrance below the balcony, the marble plaque (see Figure 114-115) on the *assedio economico* of 18 Novembre 1935 – the same as in Pontinia. Below that is another plaque with the following text:

IL POPOLO ITALIANO HA CREATO COL SUO  
SANGUE L'IMPERO / LO FECONDERÀ COL SUO  
LAVORO E LO DIFENDERÀ CONTRO / CHIUNQUE  
COLLE SUE ARMI. IN QUESTA CERTEZZA SUPREMA  
/ LEVATE IN ALTO, LEGIONARI, LE INSEGNE, IL

FERRO E I CUORI / A SALUTARE DOPO XV SECOLI LA  
RIAPPARIZIONE DELL'IMPERO / SUI COLLI FATALI  
DI ROMA. / NE SARETE VOI DEGNI? / QUESTO GRIDO  
È COME UN GIURAMENTO SACRO CHE VI IMPEGNA  
/ INNANZI A DIO E INNANZI AGLI UOMINI PER LA  
VITA E PER / LA MORTE. MUSSOLINI

It is an extract from Mussolini's speech on the Empire's declaration (Rome, 9 May 1936) positioned on the façade of the CDF of Miane on the 174 day of *assedio economico*. At the bottom of the plaque there is also:

IL GRAN CONSIGLIO DEL FASCISMO ESPRIME LA  
GRATITUDINE DELLA PATRIA / AL DUCE  
FONDATORE DELL'IMPERO.

How these plaques remained on the walls and according to which criteria they were thought as something to be kept to be remembered, is not explained, indeed, there is no contextualisation panel.

Moreover, in front of the building, there is a statue<sup>454</sup> (see Figure 116) dedicated to the fallen for the Nation, which is composed of a basement with the names of the Miane's soldiers fallen in the war in Eritrea, in the First World War and in the Second World War, and of a statue by Vittorio Celotti representing a soldier holding the victory. The statue was positioned there in December 1922, which also explains the choice to have the CDF near it. There have also been recent additions, such as the plaque remembering the centenary of Italy's union (1961) and the one by the Artiglieri, who in 2015 added two grenades on either side of the plinth. The inclusion of statues and monuments dedicated to the fallen of the First World War into the fascist propaganda was a common strategy of the *ventennio*; however, the continuity of this practice, meaning to keep adding memorial plaques to it, is a way to normalise the fascist discourse, as if all the fallen and all the wars

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<sup>454</sup> Technical sheet available at:

<https://www.pietredellamemoria.it/pietre/monumento-ai-caduti-di-miane/>

were the same, without acknowledging any historical interpretation but just find in mercy the common denominator.

### 5.9.9 *Nervesa della Battaglia. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

Nervesa della Battaglia was named just Nervesa until 1923 when the Fascist party added “della Battaglia” to remember the second battle on the Piave, which flows nearby. In the territory, indeed, there are plenty of memorials and ossuaries -mainly of fascist origins- dedicated to the First World War and the Piave. Among the major ones of Redipuglia, Monte Grappa and Asiago, there is also the military memorial of Nervesa della Battaglia which was built in 1932-35 and inaugurated in 1938 together with the one in Fagarè della Battaglia (see Figure117). The ossuary designed by Felice Nori (see Figure 118) is a majestic 25m Rationalist tower on a concrete basement containing 3.226 unidentified soldiers’ corpses. The tombs are decorated with phrases by D’Annunzio; inside there is a black marble altar and many war devices found while excavating for its construction. The link between the First World War and fascism was powerful and used by propaganda to fascistise the soldiers of the Great War through the construction of ossuaries, monuments and memorials<sup>455</sup>. Moreover, these sacred places were also used to stage ceremonies and to create a sense of community and shared identity.

In 1938 the proposal for a deal with Cassa di Risparmio della Marca Trevigiana to obtain a loan of L. 25.000, to be paid in twenty years, for the purchase of a building to be turned into CDF, was not approved. Some months later, another financial solution was presented to Marinelli to purchase the CDF: the local Fascio acquired the building and issued a bill (*cambiale*), endorsed by the Federation of Treviso, to the Cassa di Risparmio for L. 25.600. The bill would be discounted by 6,5% and the net amount of L. 25.000 would be used for the purchase of the building. The amortisation would be divided in five years and the Cassa would withhold the amount of L. 5.000 per year as a contribution to the Federation. The interests would be paid with an annual contribution of the

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<sup>455</sup> Cfr. Malone H., 2019. The Republican legacy of Italy’s Fascist ossuaries of the First World War, *Modern Italy*, 24(2), 199-217.

Municipality of L. 1.800 for the maintenance of the rooms of the GIL. Marinelli approved this final proposal at the condition that the property of the building was of the Fascio. So, in October 1938, the Fascio acquired a rural building with land in Nervesa della Battaglia. There are two photographs of the CDF of Nervesa: in the first one (see Figure 119) the CDF is a modest building, probably a previous house, with a garden and with the sign *OND sala riunione*. Probably in 1929, when the photo was taken, the CDF was granted the free use of a building with also the *Dopolavoro* and other fascist organisations. In the second photo (see Figure 120) the CDF was obviously in another building, maybe the one that the Fascio acquired in 1938, even if the photo does not report any date, so it is impossible to affirm it with certainty. This second CDF had a much more institutional aspect, with the sign and the fascio decorated on the entrance, it also had some fascist writings on the walls – but this characteristic was very much diffused in Nervesa at the time that still nowadays traces of those fascist writings can be found on common buildings (see Figure 121). In September 1944, the Gestione Stralcio assigned the ex-CDF building to the PFR (Republican Fascist Party<sup>456</sup>), following the constitution of the RSI in Northern and Central Italy. Today it was not possible to identify the ex-CDF because of no documentation and no specific location of the acquired building.

The fascist legacy in Nervesa, but also the surrounding territory, is very present thanks to the memorials, the buildings, the fascist writings and also to local merchants, like Mr Zanette, who ended up in the newspaper in 2021 for his shop window of Mussolini and fascist objects<sup>457</sup>. He claimed that those objects (a bottle of

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<sup>456</sup> The PFR was constituted after 25 July 1943 in the Repubblica Sociale Italiana and it was dissolved together with the RSI on 28 April 1945. The leader of the PFR was Mussolini and the secretary was Pavolini.

<sup>457</sup> “Nervesa, in pieno centro appare la vetrina fascista”, *La Tribuna di Treviso*, 7 May 2021, available at: <https://tribunatreviso.gelocal.it/treviso/cronaca/2021/05/07/news/nervesa-in-pieno-centro-appare-la-ve-trina-fascista-1.40243322>; “Il Duce in vetrina è lì da oltre due mesi, nessuno ci aveva mai fatto caso in paese. Polemiche a Nervesa per il gesto di Antonio Zanette”, *Qdpnews*, 8 May 2021, available at: <https://www.qdpnews.it/comuni/nervesa-della-battaglia/il-duce-in-ve-trina-e-li-da-oltre-due-mesi-nessuno-ci-aveva-mai-fatto-caso-in-paese-polemiche-a-nervesa-per-il-gesto-di-antonio-zanette/>

wine with the face of Mussolini, phrases of Mussolini, Mussolini's busts, etc.) were a homage to his father, who fought in the war, and that for some months, nobody really cared about his showcase. The resurgence in 2021 of such arguments (the freedom of expression, the proud showcase of a fascist personal past, not even hiding the apology of fascism) is quite informative of our actual society – and of the state of the public debate upon these issues.

#### 5.9.10 *Salgareda. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In August 1940, a technical report described the municipal building used as CDF as having structural problems, such as the roof and humidity. The building was built in 1935 by the Municipality and probably the rooftop was poorly constructed already from the beginning; for this reason it needed repair work. In 1941 the Municipality donated to the Fascio the building of the CDF, on the condition that also the local section of Associazione Nazionale Combattenti. The repair works to the roof followed the donation, finishing in October 1941.

After the Second World War, in 1946, the mayor wrote to the Genio Civile about the war damages to the *casa del popolo* in Salgareda, so probably the CDF immediately became the *casa del popolo*, as also happened elsewhere.

Given the absence of technical projects, a specific address, and additional documentation, it was not possible to localise the building of the ex-CDF.

#### 5.9.11 *Revine Lago. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In 1938 the CDF of Revine was partially constructed without any authorisation. Some months later, in August 1938, Marinelli authorised the finishing works of the CDF and approved the funding of L. 20.0000 for it. The land nearby the CDF was still unresolved, so Marinelli in 1939 also approved the acquisition of small pieces of land from Mr Rivolgo, Mr Battistella, Mr Chiarel, and Mr Fontana. As can be seen from the technical drawings (see Figure 122), the CDF was a single-floor building with four frontal openings and two arched-opening on the sides, very symmetrical, with fasci as decoration all over the façade. One part, as it was indicated by the sign, was dedicated to the Dopolavoro (OND).

The municipal meeting of 7 July 1945 stated the temporary reuse of the ex-CDF as headquarter of the Communist party and as Casa del Popolo. The PCI should provide for the restoration costs of the building. So, in this case the reuse was a political one dictated by the need to appropriating and re-signifying such a connotated building, as also happened in the case of Vicarello (see Chapter 5.2). Nowadays it is not possible to identify the building, so it may be destroyed or totally reconstructed in a different way.

#### 5.9.12 *Spresiano. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In June 1936 the local Fascio acquired, thanks to the Società Anonima Bortolo Lazzaris who donated L. 140.000, the buildings of the ex-Town Hall and nearby land on the condition to turn it into the new CDF. The next year, the Federal wrote the financing plan for the modification works of the CDF for a total of L. 36.000, of which L. 26.000 obtained as a loan from citizens to be repaid in 8 years, and L. 10.000 from general contributions. However, Marinelli did not approve the loan from citizens as it was an obligation form prohibited by the National Directory; instead, they could ask for a proper loan to a credit institute. The Federal added that the restoration works will be financially supported by local fascists which have already contributed for L. 8.550 and promised another L. 3.650. Marinelli advised to not consider the promised contribution, but just the already payed ones, since the first ones always disappeared. So, in February 1939 the cost estimate was the following: modification works for the Political Secretariat L. 9.000, works for the OND L. 5.500, works for the Fascio Femminile, MVSN and maternity clinic for L. 13.000, for an overall reduced total cost of L. 25.000. The financial covers for that would be the following: contributions from the Federation for L. 15.000, oblations from private fascists for L. 5.000, revenues from the *pesca di beneficenza* for L. 3.000, cash of the local Fascio for L. 2.000. So, also in this case the multiple sources of revenues included the charitable event of *pesca di beneficenza*, which was becoming a common fundraising activity for the financing of CDF.

In 1941 the modification works were almost finished, since the Head of Technical Services, Melchiori, wrote to the Central Technical Services in Rome that the plumbing systems should be

finished by following winter. However, in February 1942 Melchiori wrote again to the Technical Services about some floor's collapses in the CDF and, indeed, it was caused by the fact that at the time of the modification works, in order to keep the costs as low as possible, that part of the floor was not fixed. Again, another example of the fuzzy way of proceeding of local Federations, trapped between a chronic lack of funds and the necessity to provide a decent PNF headquarter. As seen in the postcard dated 1940 (see Figure 124), the CDF had a sign on the tripartite entrance, and it was on the main street near the church. Nowadays, (see Figure 125) the ex-CDF building is hosting the Municipality again. The building has not changed much by comparing the postcard and the Google maps photo: it has generally been restored and the sign of the CDF has been removed but the basic structure of the building and the openings are still recognisable.

#### *5.9.13 S. Polo di Piave. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In July 1938, Marinelli gave his approval for the acquisition of a building, with a ballroom, in S. Polo di Piave from Mr Zalla for L. 7.500.

The actual ex-CDF is now a Casa del Popolo (see Figure 123) as the iron sign on the façade signals. The building is a rural stone construction, and at the time of my visit was closed, but the sign on the door indicated some activities, such as a ballroom and bowl games, probably managed by the pro-loco. Given the old sign on the door and the general trend of reuse of the CDF, it has kept the same use as Casa del Popolo from the post-war period until today and has the same function as ballroom from the beginning.

#### *5.9.14 Vidor. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In February 1935, the Congregazione di Carità donated its capital to the Ente Dopolavoro Comunale for the new Società Operaria Carlo Tittoni. Indeed, Mr Carlo Tittoni died in 1921 with a capital of L. 45.200; then, the Congregazione needed to pay the inheritance taxes (L. 18.000), remaining L. 27.200 for the constitution of the Società Operaria. The Congregazione transferred the money to the Ente Dopolavoro to invest in the

constitution of the Società Operaria. However, the town council deliberated that the Società Operaria was not necessary anymore since the new fascist laws took good care of workers; and so, it was decided to use the funds for other purposes of Ente Dopolavoro. In December 1936, the Federal Crosato wrote to Marinelli that, to provide for a decent CDF for Vidor, the local secretary was handling the purchase of a building owned by Mr Ditadi for L. 33.650. The building was a three-floor hotel that was confined to the schools, in the centre of Vidor. It was a new construction built in the first post-war period and always had the function of a hotel, so the works would be only maintenance ones. To the cost for the purchase and furniture (total L. 40.000) of the new CDF they will financially provide as follows: L. 20.000 from the donation of Congregazione di Carità to the Ente Dopolavoro (invested in stocks); L. 14.000 of personal donations from Count Covone, Count Vergerio and Mr Zadra; L. 6.000 from contributions to be collected among local wealthy fascists. In January 1937, Marinelli answered that before giving his authorisation, he needed to have the financial evaluation of the building and the local fascio needed to have all the money and contributions already cashed in. In April 1937, Mr Ditadi urged Marinelli to authorise the payment of the building because it was purchased in July 1936, and now he had to leave for A.O.I. Indeed, Mr Ditadi needed the money to buy a truck to work in Addis Abeba; if he could not afford that, he would be forced to remain unemployed in Trieste and to renounce to Addis Abeba. To sustain the request of his husband, Mrs Ditadi in June 1937 wrote a personal letter to *donna Rachele*, the wife of Mussolini, saying:

*Confidando nella Vostra Bontà e sapendo che chi a Voi ricorre fiducioso, se meritevole è ascoltato, mi prendo l'ardire di scrivervi quanto segue: sono la moglie di un ex segretario politico dal 1921, squadrista della prima ora, partecipò alla Marcia su Roma e ne ebbe il brevetto sin dal 1926. In quell'epoca, di agiata famiglia, fece molto per il Fascio, sia moralmente che materialmente e finanziariamente. (...) Presi accordi con il Segretario Politico, nonché con il Segretario Amministrativo Federale di Treviso, abbiamo venduto tale fabbricato al fascio di Vidor, per fare la Casa del Fascio, fino dal*



29.7.36 per L. 34.500 e ci assicurarono il pronto pagamento, ma ancora oggi dopo 11 mesi non abbiamo avuto neanche un soldo! Abbiamo scritto suppliche al Federale di Treviso, per poter avere il denaro, trovandoci in misere condizioni, ma non abbiamo avuto nessuna risposta. Ci siamo rivolti all'Ill.mo Federale di Trieste, il quale dopo essersi accertato del nostro bisogno, scrisse tre raccomandazioni, un telegramma, ricavandone solo una laconica risposta "pratica burocratica, abbiate pazienza". Ci siamo pure rivolti all'On.le Marinelli, quale Segretario Amministrativo del Partito, il quale ci assicurava il suo interessamento. All'Onorevole stesso scrisse il Federale di Trieste ma fino ad oggi ancora nulla. Presentandosi l'occasione a mio marito di andare in A.O.I. (...) dovendosi comprare un camion avremmo necessità del denaro che ci deve il Fascio di Vidor per l'acquisto della Casa, e precisamente L. 11.500 più gli interessi dal 29.7.36, perché le altre L. 23.000 spettarono ai mutuantii i quali ci scrivono stanchi di aspettare che hanno dato avviso al Fascio di Vidor se non si sbrigano a pagare faranno andare all'asta la Casa! Non vi posso descrivere la nostra disperazione, perché se mio marito non potrà andare in A.O.I. saremo nella più oscura miseria, qui a Trieste in 5 persone, avendo due figli ed il suocero di 70 anni. Prego quindi con la presente, l'Ecc. Vostra perché interceda e faccia sapere al Duce, Vostro Consorte, quanto su esposto onde pregarlo del Suo benevolo interessamento per sollecitare il pagamento della mia Casa al Federale di Treviso, o presso la Segreteria del Partito a Roma, ove forse la pratica si trova<sup>458</sup>.

It seems it was quite common and tolerated to ask for personal favours not only from the Federals or the Duce, but also to *donna Rachele*, the wife of Mussolini, as if she had a role in the regime's administration. Indeed, in the beginning of the letter, it was presented as a common practice to write to Rachele, since someone else already did it and managed to be heard. The letter aimed to create a bond among "wives of the regime" but also an

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<sup>458</sup> Lettera from Mrs Ditadi to Rachele Mussolini, dated 12 June 1937, ACS, fondo PNF, busta 1622, fascicolo 19 Vidor

indirect way to bypass hierarchy and arrive to Mussolini, to obtain the payment from the Fascio. It was another example of how bureaucracy worked (or not worked): reaching an important person inside the system and asking for a recommendation was the best way to obtain things.

The letter succeeded in its intent: in July 1937 Marinelli wrote to Mrs Ditadi that her file was sent to the Federation of Treviso with extreme urgency. Crosato explained to Marinelli that the problem was that the municipal council did not deliberate yet on the passage of bonds from the Congregazione to the local Fascio; so, in order to pay Mr Ditadi, he managed to pay the acquisition of the Casa only with the contributions by Mr Zadra (L. 15.000), Mr Govone (L. 5.000) and Mr Vergerio (L. 15.000). The money from the Congregazione would be later used to cover the expenses of the CDF. Marinelli approved only on condition that the contributions were donations and not loans to the Fascio. In August 1937, the Podestà sent the documents regarding the passage of bonds to the local Fascio for the acquisition of the CDF (L. 27.200 capital stock) on the condition that on the CDF would be placed a plaque in honor of Carlo Tittoni and his wife for their contribution. In September other contributions added to the ones of Mr Zadra, Govone and Vergerio: Mr Adami for L. 1.000, Mr Gerotto for L. 2.000, Mr Netto for L. 250, Mr De Zottis for L. 400, even if these were not yet cashed in. So, finally in January 1938 the acquisition of the Didati's three-floor hotel on the square of the town hall was approved and signed.

Nowadays was not possible to identify the building of the ex-CDF because there are no documents on its reuse and the buildings facing the main square of Vidor are private houses and bars.

#### *5.9.15 Vittorio Veneto. The construction of the Casa del Fascio and its reuse*

In 1931, the Fascio of Vittorio Veneto rented from the Municipality the ground floor of a building in via Dogana, for L. 2.500 for nine years. However, in the census on the PNF properties the Fascio of Vittorio Veneto indicated that the CDF was in a municipal building granted for free to whom purchase the Fascio contributed for L. 130.000, so the situation was not clear. Indeed, the local Political Secretary, Lavatelli, while waiting for the new

building of the CDF being finished, personally anticipated L. 100.000 to the constructors for the purchase of the CDF. Later he also anticipated L. 86.000 for the construction of the swimming pool, so the Fascio had a debt of L. 186.000 to Lavatelli, who abandoned his political position. In 1930 the debt situation of the CDF was the following: L. 189.687 to Lavatelli, L. 128.500 to Bertaglia and Da Ros, L. 22.318 to Idroelettrica Veneta, L. 14.272 to Italcementi, L. 25.000 to Banca di Novara, L. 20.104 to Armellini, L. 4.716 to De Nardi, L. 9.277 to Bertaglia and Candiani, L. 3.729 to Grava and Da Ros, L. 2.190 to Tomasella, L. 65.000 to general creditors. In order to remediate the debts, the Commissioner of the Fascio invited wealthy citizens to concur in the purchase and arrangement of the CDF. Also the Municipality decided to join with a contribution of L. 150.000, reaching a total of L. 488.605. So, in the end, the property of the building was municipal, with a contribution of the local Fascio for L. 130.000 (raised from local fascists) among others. There was already in 1937 an informal agreement between the Political Secretary and the Prefect for the donation of the CDF to the PNF, this justified the extensive contributions of the local fascist for the CDF.

In December 1934, the Fascio obtained a revision of the location contract, according to which the annual fee would be reduced to a symbolic L. 1, so the building was effectively granted for free by the Municipality. In March 1940 (starting the procedures) '42 (effective donation) the Podestà, together with Mr Bertaglia, Mr Candiani and Mr Da Ros (which actually would be paid later by the Fascio for the remaining debt of L. 42.000), donated the three-floors building in via Dogana to the Fascio to be used as their CDF. Indeed, the building was owned by the Municipality, which acquired it in 1931 from Mr Bertaglia and Da Ros, to whom it was still debtor when the building was later donated to the Fascio. So, the same building which in 1931 was initially rented by the PNF to be used as CDF and also to host the GIL and the OND, in 1942 was partly donated (the municipal property) and partly acquired (the private part of the debt) by the local Fascio. However, the property of the building did not last much, indeed, in August 1943, after the fall of the regime, the donation act was revoked by the Podestà. The reasons used to justify that were only bureaucratic, such as the lack of the official acceptance of the

donation by the Fascio. Following the revoke, the Municipality also renounced to collect the credit (for the bills and pending payments) from the not-existing-anymore Fascio, so all the bureaucratic matters were taken care of.

Nowadays it is not possible to find the CDF, because there are new private buildings, so it has probably been demolished.

## Cap 5 - Analysis of common arguments on the decisions over fascist heritage using the economies of worth

### 6.1 The theoretical framework

In order to deconstruct and analyse the major common arguments used by politicians, technicians and general people to justify their decisions over fascist heritage in Italy, I am using the theoretical framework of economies of worth developed by Boltanski and Thevenot in their publication *On Justification: the Economies of Worth*<sup>459</sup>. They developed a sociological theory of value, recognising that there is not only one way of creating value, but modern economies comprise multiple principles of evaluation<sup>460</sup>, also called orders of worth. Also, the relationship between agreement and discord and the instruments people adopt when they want to show their disagreement without resorting to violence is at the centre of their analysis. In this paragraph, Boltanski and Thevenot's work will be used for two purposes: the first one is to understand what type of agreement is most frequent in Italian cases; the second one is to analyse the disputes over the reuse or demolition of fascist-built architectures by de-structuring the main arguments used in the decision-making-process, adopting different orders of worth. The application of their theoretical work has been chosen here for the relevance of the justification processes in decisions over difficult heritage which are usually not investigated in their layered construction but are as fundamental as the material heritage. Moreover, since their theoretical approach has been criticised to remain too tied to principles and less to practices<sup>461</sup>, this is an effort to substantiate their framework in practice, by deconstructing discourses and decisions over fascist heritage. Before starting this analysis, it is necessary to clarify their terminology and theoretical framework. Boltanski and Thevenot start by identifying four regimes of action: the regime of familiarity, the regime of love and friendship, the regime of violence, and the regime of justification. In the latter,

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<sup>459</sup> Boltanski L, Thevenot L., 1991. *On Justification. Economies of worth*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

<sup>460</sup> Stark D., 2009. *The sense of dissonance, Accounts of worth in economic life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 11.

<sup>461</sup> Kornberger M., Justesen L., Mouritsen L., Madsen A.K. (edited by), 2015. *Making things valuable*, Oxford Scholarship Online

people need to justify themselves to be seen as legitimate actors by others. Defining the order of worth as the constitutive value framework that guides individuals' behaviours, the authors find six orders of worth: (1) the *domestic order of worth*, which is based on principles of hierarchy, loyalty and tradition, (2) the *inspired order of worth* which values creativity and mystic activities, (3) the *fame order of worth* which focuses on public recognition and prestige, (4) the *industrial worth* which is driven by technical knowledge and efficiency, (5) the *market worth* based on commercial success and finally (6) the *civic order of worth* which implies the prominence of a collective good, civic duty and solidarity. More recently, some scholars have added other orders of worth (the connectionist order of worth by Boltanski and Chiappello, and a green order of worth by Lafaye and Thevenot<sup>462</sup>), still it is not relevant to this analysis. The two French authors, then, link to these six orders of worth, six worlds which are the translation of the ideal orders of worth into reality: (1) the *domestic world*, (2) the *world of inspiration*, (3) the *world of fame*, (4) the *civic world*, (5) the *market world*, and (6) the *industrial world*. As said, worlds are described as the concrete unfolding of orders of worth in reality. The authors draw an extensive analysis of how justification falls in these six worlds by linking them to six authors: the civic world with Rousseau, the market world with Adam Smith, the industrial world with Saint-Simon, the domestic world with Bossuet, the inspiration world with Augustine, and the fame world with Hobbes.

These orders of worth or worlds have been used by scholars<sup>463</sup> to detect competing orders of worth in organisations and to show how these justifications conflict as people compete to legitimise their views of a situation. In the same way, this research uses this

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<sup>462</sup> Dansou K., Langley A., 2012. "Institutional work and the notion of test", *M@n@gement*, 15 (5), p. 510.

<sup>463</sup> Stark D., 2017. "For what it's worth. Justification, evaluation and critique in the study of organizations: contributions from French Pragmatists Sociology", *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, vol. 52, pp. 383-397; Dansou K., Langley A., 2012. "Institutional work and the notion of test", *M@n@gement*, 15 (5), pp. 502- 527; Lawrence T., Suddaby R., Leca B., 2011. "Institutional work: refocusing Institutional Studies of Organisation", *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 20(1), pp. 52-58; Jagd S., 2011. "Pragmatic sociology and competing orders of worth in organizations", *European journal of social theory*, 14 (3), pp. 343-359, among others.

framework to identify different worlds and orders of worth in the disputes over fascist heritage in Italy.

### 6.2 *The local agreements in the Italian situation*

In the analysis of Boltanski and Thevenot, there are three main figures of agreement: (1) the *clarification*, when the agreement takes place inside one world; (2) *local arrangements* aimed at finding temporary and local agreements around specific decisions; and (3) *compromises*, when a more durable agreement between different worlds is found. In the Italian case, as confirmed by the reuses of CDF, the local arrangement is the most common way of addressing fascist heritage restoration and reuse. Since these agreements are local and temporary, they depend on the political sympathies and possibilities of the municipal council of the time. Malone confirmed these findings when she wrote that after the regime's fall, local authorities acted in a "haphazard way<sup>464</sup>", meaning in an inhomogeneous and not structured way. This led, in Italy, to the norm of uncritical preservation, which allowed fascist sites to survive in the urban landscape without proper contextualisation. The reuse of these architectures is, then, the site of the local agreements, where pragmatic rationality is often paired with political interests. Local agreements are similar to Turner's definition of social dramas as "conflicts that are never fully resolved, but they are settled for a time when the conflict is redefined away from incompatible principles and toward the symbolic and ritual domain where disputants can emphasize shared concerns and superordinate goals<sup>465</sup>".

Indeed, local agreements are the most common solution in cases of *polarization*, as is the contemporary Italian situation. Polarization is a situation in which the dispute between parties is so divergent and involves different worlds that it cannot lead to a compromise but to an eventual local agreement, where negotiation room on a personal level and with communities is higher (no need to reach a greater consensus). Indeed, on the one hand, there are everyday neofascist actions aimed at preserving

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<sup>464</sup> H. Malone H., 2017. "Legacies of Fascism: architecture, heritage and memory in contemporary Italy", *Modern Italy*, 22 (4), pp. 445-470.

<sup>465</sup> Cit. in Ross 2009, p. 13.

and endorsing the fascist heritage; for instance, the DUX-shaped forest on Monte Giano, created in 1938 in honour of Mussolini and that in 2017 caught fire due to summer drought. In 2018 the neofascist movement Casapound organised a national fundraising campaign to buy the same Austrian pine trees and restore the writing with the help of 200 volunteers (who physically climbed the mountain and planted the trees), including the residents of the area. No criticisms were aroused in the national press, not even on left-wing newspapers<sup>466</sup> that just reported the news. It is interesting, instead, that on right-wing newspapers<sup>467</sup>, the news was justified by the additional technical-hydrogeological function of trees (i.e., industrial world).

On the other hand, there are increasingly more and more projects and practices of decolonization of Italian heritage and cities, coming mainly from the activist sphere (Non una di meno, antifascist local groups, Fare ala, Resistenze in Cirenaica, etc.), from academic institutions (Istituto Parri, universities in Stockholm and Basilea who started a summer school on decolonising fascist architecture) and from the artistic sector (the theories of decolonization were firstly introduced in the debate by museums and by the curatorial sphere). The actions of these actors range from toponomy interventions on the names of streets and squares (Fare Ala in Palermo, Arbegnuoc in Reggio Emilia, Resistenze in Cirenaica in Bologna, Decolonize your eyes in Padova) to urban trekkings to rediscover difficult parts of the cities (Tezeta in Rome, Decolonise your eyes in Padova), to interventions on statues (Non una di meno in Milan on the statue

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<sup>466</sup>[https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/02/04/news/casapound\\_sta\\_riparando\\_la\\_scritta\\_dux\\_sul\\_fianco\\_del\\_monte\\_giano\\_era\\_bruciata\\_ad\\_agosto-188046780/](https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/02/04/news/casapound_sta_riparando_la_scritta_dux_sul_fianco_del_monte_giano_era_bruciata_ad_agosto-188046780/)

<sup>467</sup> "Quello di oggi - ha spiegato - è però anche un atto simbolico. Vogliamo che l'Italia, e il Lazio con lei, torni a essere quello che era una volta: un Paese coraggioso e capace di opere straordinarie, come fu quella scritta realizzata durante il fascismo, che ancora oggi rappresenta un presidio indefettibile per la sicurezza del territorio reatino. Oltre al valore storico, infatti, le radici degli alberi svolgevano una preziosa funzione drenante e il danno ambientale causato dall'avanzata del fuoco ha esposto l'area al rischio di dissesto idrogeologico." - Article available online:

<https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/casapound-sul-monte-giano-riparata-scritta-dux-1490677.html>



of Montanelli, Fare Ala in Palermo), to mapping projects of colonial or fascist heritage (Postcolonial Italy by Florence university, Istituto Parri mapping on fascist monuments, Stazione Utopia in Florence) and to more academic events such as publications, conferences, university's organizations (Decolonising the academy in Bologna) to start the debate on the decolonisation of knowledge, cultural heritage, the public space, and so on. So, there is an emerging interest both by civic actors and by academics in possible new approaches to fascist and colonial heritage, in line with the ongoing international discourse on decolonisation.

In this polarisation of the public debate, the clarification between the parties has not always been avoided. Indeed, there have been few projects in which the clarification reached a stable and more permanent agreement but still at a local level, such as the case of the resignification of the ex-CDF in Bolzano<sup>468</sup> in 2017. In this case, a public call for interventions to re-signify the really connotated architecture of the ex-CDF, which had a bas-relief of Mussolini doing the fascist salute on a horse and the fascist motto *credere obbedire combattere* on the entire façade, was published. The winning artistic project by Arnold Holzknacht e Michele Bernardi foresaw the installation over the bas-relief of a neon writing quoting a phrase by H. Arendt: *Nessuno ha il diritto di obbedire*, translated into the three official languages of the province. This modest addition was sufficient to make a statement about the building and the past it represented without destroying or erasing anything of it. Apart from the superficial resignification, the current function of the building is in line with the other reuses that I mapped; indeed, it is the headquarter of the Guardia di Finanza. This does not diminish the architectural-artistic intervention which pushed the Municipality and the city to take a position on that historical period and issues. However, this kind of intervention represents the exception rather than the rule, also because Bolzano is an exceptional case, as a city on the borders between two States. The colonisation and Italianization policies

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<sup>468</sup> Cfr. Hökerberg H., 2017. "The Monument to Victory in Bolzano: desacralisation of a fascist relic", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol.23, issue 8, pp. 759-774.

applied during the regime in Bolzano left a strong mark on the communities living there, nurturing contrasting feelings against or in favour of fascism at the time and developing now a more conscious approach toward that past and issues of cohabitation and tolerance.

An example where, instead, a dispute has not brought to an agreement is Predappio<sup>469</sup>, the city where Mussolini was born and buried, that every year on 28 October, to celebrate the March on Rome, hosts hordes of neofascists re-enacting fascist rituals on the tomb of Mussolini. The economic spin-off of those rallies impacts the city, where memorabilia and fascist merchandising can be easily found in central shops. In 2017, to limit this situation without prohibiting it, the mayor of Predappio Frassinetti (PD) published a project for the reuse the ex-CDF of Predappio to turn it into a museum and centre for studies on fascism. The project was endorsed by international scholars, who were also part of the scientific committee, arguing for academic and institutional work in the city to contrast neofascism and educate on that historical period. Other Italian intellectuals, on the contrary, opposed the project for different reasons: some criticized the historiographical approach of the museum, others the idea of a museum dedicated to fascism, saying that it would have had the opposite effect by acting as a sort of monument to fascism<sup>470</sup>. After a public *querelle* carried on the press, the project, which would have started with the purchase of the building by the Municipality from the Province, was abandoned. Only very recently, an article dated January 2022<sup>471</sup> reports that the Soprintendenza consented to the restoration of the building of the ex-CDF, but this does not include the museum's project. Again, an empty restoration with no critical reuse of the building is taking place in Predappio.

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<sup>469</sup> Cfr. Storchi S., 2019. "The ex-Casa del Fascio in Predappio and the question of the "difficult heritage" of Fascism in contemporary Italy", *Modern Italy*, 24 (2), pp. 139-157.

<sup>470</sup> Cfr. Wu Ming, *Predappio Toxic Waste Blues* (part 1,2,3), available at: <https://www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/2017/10/predappio-toxic-waste-blues-1-di-3/>

<sup>471</sup> "Ex Casa del Fascio, via libera al restauro", *Il Resto del Carlino*, 28 January 2022, available at: <https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/forli/cronaca/ex-casa-del-fascio-via-libera-al-restauro-1.7299031>

### 6.3 *Dissonance in time*

One of the variables of local agreements and compromises is time. In local agreements, the time span is shorter than in compromises. In the context of dissonance, time refers not only to a period of time in quantitative terms but also to the change of the social context in time (similar to epoch). As mentioned in Chapter 2, dissonance is a concept embedded in the translation of buildings or objects or places into cultural products, finding in their marketable dimension the concurrence of different and conflicting meanings. It can describe a specific type of heritage, representing values and a past not coherent with contemporary society and values, focusing on its repulsive characteristics. It has been described as a relational concept between a built heritage and the person or communities which interpret it and assign a meaning to it. In this last sense, dissonance depends on the diverse interpretations and on the different communities who relate to heritage. As cited in Chapter 2, dissonance shares similar characteristics with the concepts of frictional geography, of social and psychocultural drama, as mentioned before. All of these concepts share the assumption that *dissonance varies with time*. Usually, it is thought that dissonance is less perceived as time passes by, since the period between that difficult past and contemporary society increases. For instance, the violent practices that took place at the Colosseum - which certainly are not part of society's values nowadays - do not produce a high dissonance because the perception of contemporary Italian society is too distant in time from that of Ancient Rome. However, it cannot be said that dissonance is directly proportional to time, on the contrary, *it can vary in a not-linear way*: it can emerge after a long period of neglect, as the case of Columbus' memory<sup>472</sup> in the US, or being silent after a period of conflict about it. So, I suggest that *the emergence or the silencing of dissonance is related to attention*, which is the result of political interests, civic awareness and communities' necessities. The choice to make-visible and

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<sup>472</sup> Corning A., Schuman H., 2015. "Collective memories and counter-memories of Christopher Columbus", in *Generations and collective memory*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago

reactivate dissonance in relation to a particular heritage/past is - often a conscious- political act, as it is the choice to silence or hid it; what can change are the strategies and the justifications used in both cases. Ross stresses the political importance of psychocultural dramas (which are similar to the activation of dissonance) to “evoke, build, and reinforce strong emotions that stake claims and mobilize actions in the name of the group<sup>473</sup>”. Attention and the activation of dissonance are directly related to collective memory and the identity of imagined communities. Some authors <sup>475</sup> have paralleled the change of social contexts and sensitivities toward social issues as a matter of generations, defining it as “a set of people in a particular time period, often with respect to an event or a set of events<sup>474</sup>”. They juxtapose this definition with the concept of collective memory by saying that “this distribution of beliefs, feelings, knowledge, and forms is anchored in time, it reflects the second part of the meaning of generation<sup>475</sup>”. If the notion of generation has been central in explaining the different behaviours of people toward difficult pasts through their relationship with parents and their familiar history<sup>476</sup>, the author this research prefers to not use because of the risk of a homogenizing effect. The notions of dissonance and of attention which are at the core of this analysis aim to look at the intersectionality of society in addressing these topics. Indeed, attention can be activated by groups composed of people of different ages, familiar histories, gender, nationality, job, and many more variables which hardly can fit into a single generation or coherent group. At the same time, attention can be silenced by groups of people of the same age, nationality, gender, etc. – i.d. of the same generation – as the previous one. So, talking about generations in this specific case is not very much informative. This is why *dissonance activator* or *dissonance silencer* are preferred

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<sup>473</sup> Ross 2009, p. 15.

<sup>474</sup> *Ivi*, p. 15.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>476</sup> Especially in the study of the Nazi legacy and memorialization. Paggi L. (a cura di), 1999. *Memoria del Nazismo nell'Europa di oggi*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze; Focardi F., 2016. *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano*, Laterza, Bari; Speccher T., 2022. *La Germania sì che ha fatto i conti con il Nazismo*, FactChecking, Laterza, Bari.

terminologies which can be applied also to groups and to discourses.

So, dissonance varies over time in a non-linear way according to the attention (political interests, community needs, civic awareness) paid to how specific cultural heritage is interpreted by groups. The activation of dissonance generates conflicts or psychocultural dramas which can lead to temporary local agreements or compromises.

An example of the change of dissonance (and attention) in time is the case of Vicarello. As shown in Chapter 5.2, in the postwar period there had been a fight over the reuse of the ex-CDF of Vicarello among communist associations, the municipality and the priest, exactly because of the political meaning of such an appropriation. In a letter to the Prefect the priest stressed the political importance of the building:

*Per me Parroco e per i buoni di questa Parrocchia l'edificio della Casa del Popolo investe tutta un'altra importanza: ci dà la speranza di una trasformazione della Parrocchia. Infatti chi è del paese sa cosa vuol dire entrare in possesso di tale edificio. Il PCI che conosce bene tutto questo sono sicuro farà ogni tentativo pur di evitare che venga in possesso della Parrocchia. Ma se una parte della popolazione sarà scontenta ho la certezza che la maggioranza sarà ben soddisfatta di veder realizzarsi ciò che da tempo è il suo desiderio: un Asilo retto da Suore per i bambini; un luogo di sala ricreazione per la gioventù; un ritrovo ed un'assistenza per i lavoratori<sup>477</sup>.*

Given that the proposed functions of the building were pretty much the same (it was already a Casa del Popolo acting as a gathering and recreational place for workers; the Provveditorato proposed to use the building as an extension of the schools; the Municipality proposed to open a not-religious kindergarten in the building), the real difference was the owner of the building, so a

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<sup>477</sup> Letter to the Prefettura from the priest Giovanni Dini, dated 19 giugno 1954, ASLi, Fondo Prefettura di Livorno, busta inventario n. 212, Gabinetto Case del Fascio, fasc. 6, 15.6.6.

political matter: the catholic or the socialist forces. The communist forces, which were evicted from the building, hugely protested with petitions, strikes, and occupations. Indeed, the building had a special importance in the collective memory of citizens, who reconquered it after the violence and abuses of fascists who occupied it in the first place. Later, the conflict over the ex-CDF exceeded also the building, involving the nearby space used as a square, whose proximity to the Arci was seen problematic given the political aim of the *circolo*.

Moreover, the priest indirectly accused the Provveditore of playing the game of the Municipality:

*Non vorrei che il Provveditore agli studi inconsciamente facesse il gioco del Comune in questo senso che, una volta acquistato l'edificio a scopo scolastico, il Comune lo dichiarasse di impossibile trasformazione e quindi ingrandisse il vecchio edificio rimanendo in possesso dell'attuale Casa del Popolo destinata a scopi che piacciono al Comune compresi gli attuali<sup>478</sup>.*

Actually, the priest was not wrong, in fact, the building was assigned to the Provveditore in order to host the new rooms of the schools but, in reality, it remained unutilized for some years, during which it hosted national celebrations and *feste dell'unità*, so politically connotated events. After a period of neglect and after the acknowledgement of the unsuitability of the building to be turned into classrooms, the ex-CDF was sold to the Municipality, which used it to host different public services (post office, offices, health care).

This last phase opened up a strategy of intentional neglect as a way to silence dissonance. It is not clear if in the case of Vicarello the neglect of the building for a certain period was intentional or not, but since the priest guessed the strategy of the Municipality at the time, it may have been intentional. Neglecting a building means keeping it away from public opinion and sight - as to say

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<sup>478</sup> Letter to the Prefect of Livorno from the priest, dated 12 march 1954, ASLi, Fondo Prefettura di Livorno, busta inventario n. 212, Gabinetto Case del Fascio, fasc. 6, 15.6.6.

from public attention - in order to decrease the level of dissonance and the political potentiality for a conflict. So, the Vicarello case exemplifies how dissonance can vary in time, from a period of high dissonance after the second World War to a lack of dissonance nowadays. This case highlights also the presence of a third party (the Provveditore) acting as a dissonance silencer.

#### 6.4 *The compromise in the Italian context*

In the postwar history of Italy, some cases of compromise over the re-use and re-signification of fascist heritage were found. Usually, these cases were the representation of a political view aimed at reconciling the nation under an interpretation of fascism as a parenthesis<sup>479</sup> of Italian history. There is extensive literature on the continuity of the state, from an administrative, juridical and political perspective (the missed epuration), linking it to an historiographic and psychoanalytic interpretation of the memory of fascism<sup>480</sup>, where the Resistance had a particularly important function of absolution from fascism and nation building. In this context, it is important to remember how this unifying political vision was also sustained by economic interests linked to the Marshall Plan and by the European Recovery Plan, whose aim was the creation, through a series of economic subsidies (also derived from war damages), of a block of states in line with the political, social and economic vision of the US<sup>481</sup>. I am not here recalling the whole historiographic interpretations, but I am going to address how this political vision translated into decisions over fascist heritage.

The easiest intervention, in this case, is the apposition of plaques on buildings, creating a linear succession of events originating from fascism and arriving until today. Example of it is the CDF of

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<sup>479</sup> Benedetto Croce developed this interpretation after 25 July 1943.

<sup>480</sup> On the continuity of the state, among others: Pavone C., 2020. *Gli uomini e la storia. Partecipazione e disinteresse nella storia d'Italia*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino; on the missed epuration, among others: Franzinelli, M., 2016. *L'ammnistia Togliatti. 1946. Colpo di spugna sui crimini fascisti*, Feltrinelli, Milano; on the importance of Resistance in the Italian memory: Focardi, F. 2005. *La guerra della memoria. La Resistenza nel dibattito politico italiano dal 1945 ad oggi*, Laterza, Bari.

<sup>481</sup> Velo F., 2011. "I piani europei e la ricostruzione delle città", in *Guerra, monumenti, ricostruzione. Architetture e centri storici italiani nel secondo conflitto mondiale*, Marsilio, Venezia, p. 162.

Bambolo, where the fascist plaque has been maintained, even with the removal of the fascist mention (see Figure 64). Another plaque from the local ANPI (partisans association) has been added (see Figure 126), together with a plaque remembering the fallen in the Second World War. Another similar example is the tower of Sabaudia, where the Mussolini speech carved on a side of it (see Figure 29) was paired with the quotation of Pertini, stating the importance of the constitution of the Republic, on the other side (see Figure 30). Another example similar to this is the compromises found for the Foro Italico<sup>482</sup> (Foro Mussolini) in Rome where, on the occasion of the Olympic Games in the 1950s, the Christian Democrat government decided to remove two of the most offensive inscriptions (one on the Fascist oath of allegiance, and one against the sanctions of the League of Nations) while at the same time adding three dates to the marble blocks (1943 - the overthrowing of the Fascist regime, 1946 - the creation of the Italian Republic, 1948 - the enforcement of the new Italian Constitution), in an attempt to narratively complete the history of Italy.

A similar kind of compromise is the contemporary continuation or additions of the original fascist bas-reliefs, mosaics or paintings. For instance, the bas-reliefs of Palazzo del Governo in Livorno, which was built in Rationalist style in the 1930s, have been completed with a later addition (see Figure 127), in the same style, stating the institution of the Republic on 2 June 1946.

These are strategies of normalization and reconciliation of the national history, where the fascist heritage is neutralized by its domestication into a more general historical and national framework. This normalization is not only affecting its material presence, which is justified and unquestioned in its existence and permanence, but it is also affecting any possibility of re-emerging dissonance, *de facto* silencing it. Indeed, the positioning of a plaque or the artistic addition of something that states how history continued afterwards makes the interpretation of historical linearity unquestionable and it supports, in theory, a healthy move on from fascist time but, in reality, it helps to not coming to

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<sup>482</sup> Petersen A., "Contesting heritage. Shifting political interpretations of Rome's Foro Italico", in Jones K.B., Pilat S., 2020.



terms with that past. This reconciliation position was endorsed in the post-war period by the *centrismo* and generally by the DC governments, so it lasted long and affected our interpretation of the past. According to the orders of worth, this strategy answered from the civic world to an issue coming from the same world, but it has been shown how the interests in producing a reconciling national history and in maintaining a certain political position were dictated also by economic reasons (market world).

Nowadays, this approach can be questionable from different perspectives: from the historiographical one by rejecting the reconciling interpretation, to the social perspective by making visible the still latent dissonance of heritage. Overall, however, what this heritage strategy has produced and is still successfully producing today is a sort of invisibility of the fascist heritage, which is not really seen or perceived as dissonant in the city context, not because it is not dissonant but because it has been silenced and normalized. For instance, it is not infrequent to find fascist buildings and monuments totally decontextualized in music videos of every genre, used as sets with no history or symbolic meaning.

### *6.5 Analysis of the main arguments on the reuse, restoration and demolition of fascist heritage as disputes*

Before starting the analysis of the main arguments of disputes over fascist-built heritage, it is important to briefly recall how some of the concepts at the basis of these arguments are rooted in the restoration practices that took place in the postwar period.

The concept of the “original” or of the “authentic” applied to artworks and the practice of restoration have a long history - which will not be recalled here. However, it is relevant to highlight the discussion on the reconstruction of Italian cities which took place in the postwar period, especially the conference of Florence in 1946, during which architects and art critics discussed the problematics of the postwar reconstruction of the city centre of Florence and generally of Italian cities. On this occasion, some of the fundamental issues related to the reconstruction of architectures and cities were raised: the difference between restoring a monument, architectures and neighbourhoods; the different levels of reconstruction (integral, in

style, partial, including or not the original parts, etc.); the role of the architect and of the urbanists in the reconstruction process; the different needs and characteristics of the restoration after the war and the standard restoration; the eventual integration of modernism in the restoration process.

In an extensive article by Bellini<sup>483</sup>, some of the different critical positions on Italian cities' reconstruction were recalled, starting from Bernard Berenson who argued for the reconstruction not only of monuments but also of the picturesque for identity reasons, even if it meant creating the reproduction of the reproduction (copying from photographs and paintings). The inclusion of modern architecture was not even considered in his vision as something that could be preserved. Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, instead, pointed out how this reconstruction would create an artificial copy, a sort of fake thematic reconstruction typical of international expositions. Armando Melis refused the academic position of integral reconstruction too and also the modernist renovation of cities, opting instead for a pragmatic solution based on the maintenance of the road system and on the reconstruction of modest architectures. Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti posed the issue of the reconstruction of the city centre in connection with the overall urbanistic scheme of the city and its functions. He refused the rationalist urbanistic scheme because it was not compatible with the antique structure of Italian cities, but he also refused the fake historical reconstruction. He argued for a reconstruction inspired by historical references in dialogue with an idea of modernity aware of the context in which it operated. On an administrative level, Ragghianti pointed out the lack of coordination between different Ministries in the reconstruction of cities: for instance, the Ministry of Education was responsible for the interventions on the cultural heritage, but the finances dedicated to the works for war damages were managed by the Ministry of Public Works. Moreover, the matter of competencies was central both to the Genio Civile who did not have any historical knowledge, but also to the Soprintendenze that acted as

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<sup>483</sup> Bellini A., 2011. "La ricostruzione: frammenti di un dibattito", in *Guerra monumenti ricostruzione. Architetture e centri storici italiani nel secondo conflitto mondiale*, Marsilio, Venezia, pp. 14-65.

custodians of the single monumental building considered as an artwork and not as part of an urban environment - a tendency that was already outdated at the time. He insisted on the necessity of an *ad hoc* urbanistic office that could coordinate the reconstruction of city centres and integrate different functions of other public structures. Roberto Pane stressed the psychological and sentimental importance of monuments and buildings' reconstruction, seen as more important than the discussion on the original materials<sup>484</sup>, opting for a formalistic approach to architecture where the image was predominant. Also Gustavo Giovannoni highlighted the sentimental function of architecture, even if more linked to the idea of preserving the expression of the Nation, of genius and lineage. He strongly opposed the reconstruction of modern architecture because he did not recognize to it a specific style, embodying past positions which saw any type of modernism as opposite to the Italian architectural tradition. On the contrary, Michelucci proposed a human-centred approach to urbanism, where the architect was more a mediator of instances, needs and urbanistic concepts than an authoritative creator. For this reason, he treated monuments only in connection to the urban environment, opposing the Soprintendenza's approach that saw them as relics. As it can be seen, this postwar debate opened up the problem of reconstruction to different levels: from the more technical one related to restoration, to the identity of Italian cities linked to monuments and stylistic architectural aspects, to touristic and economic interests of cultural heritage, and finally to the social and political aims of architecture.

Considering the restoration of architectures, during the 1930s the *liberazioni*, *isolamenti*, *sventramenti* and *ripristinì*, dictated by propaganda politics, were common practices. After the bombings, however, the war damages created an incredible opportunity for

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<sup>484</sup> Some of these discussions pertained the difference between maintenance and restoration, or the use of original materials reassembled (e.g. the case of a building made of stones is not considered a case of restoration but of reconstitution), or the concept of originality in the case of the architect who design the building but do not practically built it. How a building can be called original if only a small part of its materials are the original ones and are continuously being substituted in time?

architects, conservators and restores to shape the new image of Italian cities. This opened a series of different restoration practices that were not homogeneous nor linear as they were instead often narrated, as Treccani<sup>485</sup> argued. Indeed, the conditionings from the economic, political and social spheres counted even more than technical justifications, in a generalised effort to show the rebirth of the nation's spirit through the reconstruction of monuments and cities<sup>486</sup>. In particular, the war damages became the pretext to affirm restoration principles which incentivised the reconstruction of the antique and not of the pre-war condition of the building, contradicting some cardinal principles which were already officially endorsed at the time, such as the palimpsest form of the building and the non-prevalence of unity of style. What often happened was the restoration of buildings in their antique (or authentic, with all the problematics that this concept assumes) version with the elimination of -mainly baroque – stratifications. The choice over the final version of the building was, then, arbitrary and based on a perceived unity of style which weighted more toward the aesthetics of the building rather than its historical value. In the words of Renato Bonelli:

*La posizione filologica che vuol considerare il monumento come testimonianza storica, ma ne ignora invece il valore artistico, è dichiarata inaccettabile: un'opera architettonica non è solo un documento, ma è soprattutto un atto che nella sua forma esprime totalmente un mondo spirituale e che essenzialmente per questo assume importanza e significato. Essa rappresenta per la nostra cultura il grado più alto proprio per il suo valore artistico e appunto da questa fondamentale considerazione*

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<sup>485</sup> Treccani G., 2011. "La ricostruzione narrata. Esperienze e tesi negli scritti di restauro d'architettura nel dopoguerra", in *Guerra monumenti ricostruzione. Architetture e centri storici italiani nel secondo conflitto mondiale*, Marsilio, Venezia, pp. 80-120.

<sup>486</sup> In questo senso, si può distinguere un primo periodo, verosimilmente di maggior tensione culturale e forse anche di maggior impegno, cui seguì una stagione, che prima si è detta una seconda fase post-Liberazione, che coincise col cosiddetto centrismo politico, comunque più suggestionata da motivi esterni all'ambito del restauro, quali ad esempio gli ingenti finanziamenti degli alleati, in particolare statunitensi e dalle pretese di vedere concretamente rinascere con i principali monumenti anche l'anima della nazione. - G. Treccani, 2011, p. 83.

*sorge il nuovo principio informatore del restauro: assegnare al valore artistico la prevalenza assoluta rispetto agli altri aspetti e caratteri dell'opera, i quali devono essere considerati solo in dipendenza ed in funzione di quell'unico valore*<sup>487</sup>.

The prevalence of the artistic value over the historical one permitted the elimination of stratifications that were not appreciated and freed the building from those outrageous additions. So, the war damage became instrumental in remodelling buildings and monuments according to a stylistic-figurative unity which was declared as authentic - selecting the history and negating the passing of time of the building or the monument. In a diffuse agreement on the refusal of the integral reconstruction of buildings, the critics stated that if the damage was too massive, the artefact should be kept in the form of a ruin<sup>488</sup>. However, the maintenance in the form of ruin was mainly done in the case in which a bombing made emerging from the destroyed building previous and antique ruins, turning them into archaeological areas. Moreover, great was the room given to the tool of the *deroga*, which became the presupposition and legitimation strategy of every form of restoration and reconstruction, which were addressed on a case-by-case basis – paralleling a local agreement type of solution. So, between the maintenance as ruin and the reconstruction, the second was the preferred option both by general opinion and by specialists, as Renato Bonelli wrote:

*Le deroghe a queste norme, da eccezione divennero regola costante, e tutti i monumenti, anche quelli quasi totalmente*

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<sup>487</sup> Bonelli R. 2011., *Il restauro architettonico*, in Treccani, 2011, p. 86.

<sup>488</sup> The typologies of damaged buildings and monuments were three: the first were the buildings with little damages that could be restored; the second included monuments that were highly damaged where the restoration was possible and preferable at the most antique (original) version of the same; the third category regarded the buildings completely destroyed that could be maintained as a ruin. However, the conservation as a ruin was possible only for buildings dating to Medieval or antique times, the same did not applied to Baroque architecture. Moreover, the reconstruction was permitted in cases of *edifici scomposti*, meaning made of stones (*pietra da taglio*) which could be reassembled. Cfr. Treccani, 2011, pp. 89-90.

*distrutti, furono integralmente ricostruiti; qualsiasi scrupolo venne abbandonato, e dopo trent'anni di disciplina a malincuore sopportata, i restauratori trovarono finalmente il desiderato sfogo alla loro smania di sviluppare un'attività architettonica nel corpo ora martoriato dei nostri monumenti*<sup>489</sup>.

So, the exception became the rule, in a moment when the rule was the pre-war philologic restoration, which was based on the criteria of marking the difference between the antique part and the contemporary addition<sup>490</sup>, in a palimpsest view of the building. In conclusion, in the postwar period architectural restoration, once released from the concept of authenticity, could operate more freely on the reason of exceptionality in order to reconstruct an ambient or a sort of feeling of places which were not there anymore but that were still very present in the common feeling and imagery of citizens. This was achieved using different theoretical justifications and derogations, obtaining as a result a restoration more similar to a *ripristino* or stylistic reconfiguration used to eliminate unwanted additions to monuments and buildings, without the accuracy of the philologic restoration. In this sense, Treccani talks about a restoration driven not by necessity but by *opportunity*<sup>491</sup>. He added:

*Solo muovendo da questo sfondo per lo più inesplorato si spiega l'affermarsi, con un consenso praticamente unanime, di quelle specifiche modalità ricostruttive sostenute, anzi ratificate, da quel grande contenitore di luoghi comuni che più volte abbiamo designato del com'era e dov'era. (...) S'intrecciò "ricomposizione stilistica" e "ricostruzione storica", anzi se ne celebrò la presunta innocenza della reciprocità dello scambio dando luogo a vere e proprie acrobazie ricostruttive. Guidati da inesorabili approssimazioni e da generose discrezionalità il tratto comune di questi restauri fu dunque la cancellazione*

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<sup>489</sup> Bonelli, *Danni di guerra*, in G. Treccani, 2011, p. 97.

<sup>490</sup> Usually, the new materials and reconstructed parts were flagged with the indication of the date of the restoration directly on the building.

<sup>491</sup> Treccani, 2011, p. 98.

*delle fasi formalmente dissonanti e il radicale ripristino di manufatti compiuti con processi ispirati a un ambientalismo d'ante guerra, che portarono al loro isolamento dal tessuto urbano*<sup>492</sup>.

By appealing to the concepts of the original (*com'era e dov'era*), in reality, the restoration processes took instead a different way, often not nearly close to what it was. For this analysis, it is important to highlight how the critical justification used by Soprintendenti or restorers was instrumental to legitimate other interests, such as pleasing certain stylistic preferences, in a homogenizing view of Italian cities where the dissonant elements of monuments or buildings were eliminated; answering to a need for identity for communities who saw their cities and symbols destroyed; and to deal with psychological traumas of loss on a national level. All of these issues will also be adopted and influence the contemporary debate on the reuse or modification of fascist-built heritage.

Starting from this discussion, the following part will try to analyze the main arguments used in public disputes over the reuse of fascist heritage, showing how some of the concepts here outlined are at the origin of these arguments. The main arguments are: (a) the original one, (b) the aestheticization one, (c) the identity matter, and (d) the *damnatio memoriae* or cancel culture one.

**a) The original argument (industry world and civic world)**

One of the main arguments that is still used in a sort of unquestioned way nowadays, is the restoration or reconstruction of the original or authentic building "as it was and where it was", as to say in its authentic version or in some cases following a philologic restoration, positing specialization and technical knowledge as the only criteria to choose over the reuse, restoration or modification of fascist heritage. The question of restoration is here presented as a mere technical issue rather than as a political or ethical question. This position is often used by some architects and Soprintendenti to justify conservative interventions on heritage and, exactly for this same reason, it is

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<sup>492</sup> *Ibidem*.

endorsed also by right-wing politicians in order to maintain the status quo or to stress some kind of continuity with the past and tradition. The scientific assumptions and basic concepts (*com'era e dov'era*, the authentic or original version) at the basis of this argument are rooted in the debate on restoration that took place after the Second World War. But, if in that case, also other positions were taken into consideration and different interests were evaluated against each other, in the contemporary public debate these are not considered, and the problem is relegated just to a technical matter.

In this dispute there are two main worlds on stage: on the one side, the industry world where competences and skills are portrayed as neutral knowledge, and on the other side, the civic world, meaning conservative politicians hiding their values and intentions behind the shield of technical competences (industry world) or behind the justification of universal aesthetic judgement (inspirational world and industry world). The civic world uses justifications from other worlds in order to hide the ambivalent and multiple nature of heritage, especially in the case of the extremely politicized one of fascist heritage. Fascist heritage is part not of only one world, it is part of the civic world since it reminds of anti-democratic values and represents the regime, but it is also part of the industry world in its technical adherence to architecture and restoration practices, and in some cases it can also be seen as part of the inspirational world if it is tied to identity matters of the city. However, this ambivalence is not acknowledged and, instead, there is the tendency to treat it not politically but in a scientific way, trying to hide the political nature of heritage. So, different worlds here are not competing but they are overlapping and using each other, to gain credibility over a dispute that in the end is political.

A practical example of this can be found in the dispute in Cison di Valmarino on the restoration of fascist writings on the ex-CDF and other buildings of the borgo. As we saw, the mayor Cristina Pin (*Lista civica*) used to stress the authenticity and the adherence to an origin of the writings which, in reality, was completely arbitrary, since the buildings and the borgo were prior to fascism and they had also a 77 years-old history after that. The mayor



justified that operation (which amounted to € 115.000) as historical rather than political:

*[Cristina Pin] ha specificato di non avere tessere di partito e di essere [l'operazione] "quasi a-politica", di un recupero storico-culturale, che non ha nulla di politico. "E' un recupero storico e filologico – rende noto il primo cittadino -, la storia si deve conoscere, non nascondere. Non si tratta in nessun modo di un recupero politico. E' una parte della storia, non si può negare"<sup>493</sup>.*

To use the argument of historicity and authenticity intended as "how the building originally was" has been and still is a way to indirectly sustain that historical period hiding behind the legitimation of the cultural heritage preservation. Moreover, the mayor added that the fascist writings would be paired with labels in order to contextualize them, and this minimal latest addition convinced the opposing political forces. The labels (see Figure 107) contextualize the writings as citations from different Mussolini's speeches (one also in celebration of the anniversary of the march on Rome) and the wall writings as tools of propaganda, together with the radio and cinema. Then, they remind the local propaganda activity of two citizens of Cison, Ada and Remo Dolce, and next to them, as a sort of *par condicio*, also the opposition to fascism of the town without, however, citing any name. There is no explanation of the project or of the motives of that restoration. It is interesting to note how the opposite political part, in the end, agreed on the restoration of fascist writings just thanks to the labels, as if the apposition of labels -which do not even explain the frame into which this project is explained- would be a sufficient justification.

Moreover, the article continues:

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<sup>493</sup> "A Cison il Comune restaura (anche) le scritte fasciste", *Oggi Treviso*, 16 gennaio 2019, available at: <https://www.oggitreviso.it/cison-comune-restaura-anche-le-scritte-fasciste-201828>

*Tre slogan di propaganda come se ne possono trovare in decine di abitazioni italiane sopravvissute al passare del tempo. Sulle tre case di Cison le scritte risalenti al ventennio fascista stavano diventando ormai un ricordo scolorito. Il sindaco e la sua amministrazione hanno pensato allora di tenere viva la memoria di quel periodo con un restauro non troppo appariscente e rispettoso nella ripulitura delle scritte che ora sono tornate a stagliarsi in bella vista sui muri delle tre abitazioni.*

In the article, the restoration of the fascist writing is presented as something neutral, as a common practice to a-critically put into practice when the past paint fades away, something that has to be done without really wondering why. The fact that something is going to be lost or disappear is in itself a sufficient reason to restore it, which is more symptomatic of a collective trauma related to loss rather than the result of a proper thought on the selection of what is worth to be preserved. So, in this sense, the fascist writings here are treated as cultural heritage in need of preservation, as if all cultural heritage objects are the same, and treating cultural heritage as a neutral category filled by the time passing by rather than a conscious act of selecting and remembering. Moreover, it is interesting to note how the restoration process is here described: something not too flashy and respectful, treating fascist writing (and cultural heritage as a category) as something sacred – which cannot be questioned.

Another interesting case is the restoration of fascist *borghi* in Sicily, which were new constructions, part of the plan of agricultural colonization *Colonizzazione del Latifondo Siciliano*<sup>494</sup>. Nowadays they are mainly abandoned and neglected, so the Sicily Region decided in 2017-2019 to create a tourist network among *borghi* and

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<sup>494</sup> In 1940 the fascist regime constituted the Ente di Colonizzazione del Latifondo Siciliano with the objective of building new *borghi*, developing the agricultural activity of the region, modernizing the region, and carrying on land reclamation. It founded 8 *borghi*, whereas other 8 remained on paper. In 1965 the Ente di Colonizzazione del Latifondo Siciliano has been substituted by Ente di Sviluppo Agricolo (legge regionale 10 agosto 1965, n. 21), which inherited also the *borghi*.

to restore them. The Executive Project of the Sicily Region<sup>495</sup> on the restoration of Borgo Bonsignore begins with an introductory warning on the distance from that ideological past:

*E' bene ricordare fin da principio che posizioni ideologiche o presupposti politici nulla hanno a che vedere – almeno nell'attuale dibattito culturale sul Restauro – con l'intervento conservativo che si ritiene necessario per Borgo Bonsignore.*

The fact that it was felt necessary to state the non-alignment with that past means that a sort of ambiguity (and maybe dissonance) was perceived in restoring fascist *borghi*, which were left abandoned for seventy years. The need to justify the restoration work of fascist heritage as a not political choice is a recurring attitude.

The Executive project continues on the problematics of philological restoration, endorsing the postwar positions before mentioned:

*Il problema della ricostruzione postbellica è impossibile da affrontare con gli strumenti del restauro filologico, che per sua stessa natura prevede interventi puntuali e mirati ed esclude il ripristino. Lo stesso Giovannoni nel '46 riconosce l'impossibilità di applicazione della Carta del Restauro sebbene ne continui ad affermare la validità teoretica. (...) Definire univocamente e con precisione cosa effettivamente debba considerarsi "autentico" in architettura non appare per nulla facile, se si considera l'intensa evoluzione storica di molti edifici. Nel restauro si considera autentico un oggetto quando esso è legato alla sua origine "... in quanto porta su di sé impressi sia i segni fisici delle proprie origini che quelli del processo, più o meno intenso, ma inevitabile, che ha subito nel tempo.*

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<sup>495</sup> "Recupero e riqualificazione del Borgo Bonsignore "Ribera". Progetto esecutivo. Relazione descrittiva dell'intervento", Progetto degli architetti T. Guagliardo, C. Gazzitano, I. Perrone, Assessorato dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali e dell'identità Siciliana, 2019.

So, in the impossibility of defining what is really authentic, the preferred solution is to restore the original essential characteristics and eliminate the others:

*Appare, quindi, evidente come il restauro di Borgo Bonsignore non possa prescindere dalla necessità di recuperare i caratteri essenziali delle architetture che lo compongono, senza timore di eliminare tutti quegli elementi che ne hanno alterato, quando non del tutto cancellato, ogni significato non soltanto in relazione al progetto originario, ma anche di concreta possibilità di qualificazione per un riuso futuro. (...) L'intervento restaurativo su Borgo Bonsignore, infatti, deve prevedere, sulla scorta di una conoscenza approfondita del progetto dell'Ing. Mendolia e della sua realizzazione nel 1937, uno sforzo di "ricostruzione" atto a restituire un esempio di architettura ed urbanistica che oggi non è sfigurato dagli anni (al netto delle superfetazioni, gli edifici sono in buone condizioni), bensì dalla mancanza di una visione unitaria.*

Using a logical spin, the restorers opted for the removal of later additions and the restoration of the buildings in their original version, using the concept of unified vision (very similar to stylistic unity) and the same position that postwar restorers adopted. However, differently from the postwar preoccupations of reconstructing historical city centers, in this case the reconstruction is of a fascist *borgo* -among many other fascist *borghi*- which does not have any particular artistic relevance (it was very much stressed the use of minor architectures). The adoption of a stylistic and artistic justification, instead of an historical one, in the restoration of the original does not seem very coherent.

So, there is an effort to deviate the debate from the civic world (where heritage is approached as a political resource) to the industry world where it becomes the object only of experts' judgement (where heritage is seen as a set of artistic, technical and material problems), recognizing the primacy to the latter.

**b) Aestheticization argument (industry world, market world and civic world)**

The aestheticization argument is similar to the previous argument, since aesthetic value is included in the criteria over the preservation of cultural heritage. Indeed, the Italian law on the preservation of cultural heritage includes, as a tool to preserve and not disperse its built cultural heritage, a *vincolo* of historic-artistic value for buildings and monuments. In the Bottai law of 1939<sup>496</sup> the preservation was applied to *cose di bene artistico e storico*, meaning artifacts with archaeological or ethnographic interest (paleontology, numismatics, manuscripts, documents, incunabula, rare books, etc.), and with the following law<sup>497</sup> it included also villas, parks and gardens, intended as *bellezze naturali*. However, the aesthetic value was predominant on the historical one:

*se è vero che varie categorie di beni erano tutelati in virtù del loro valore storico, era prevalente quello estetico, che non solo restava l'unico valido per i beni artistici, così esplicitamente richiamati, ma proiettava la sua influenza anche su altre categorie, e in particolare sulle architetture*<sup>498</sup>.

So, a sort of implicit hierarchy among the preserved objects and relative values was constituted: the primacy was held by the artistic objects (artworks) in which the aesthetic value was explicit, then there were architectures and archaeological artefacts, and finally the archival documents. The author continues:

*l'idea di una gerarchia fra i beni culturali imperniata sul primato dei valori estetici, è ancora largamente presente e anzi, si potrebbe dire, ancora dominante, avendo ricevuto un insospettato aiuto dalla diffusione della cultura di massa e dal turismo culturale*<sup>499</sup>.

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<sup>496</sup> Legge Bottai, n. 1089/1939. Tutela delle cose di interesse artistico e storico.

<sup>497</sup> Legge n. 1497/1939. Protezione delle bellezze naturali.

<sup>498</sup> Bladacci V., 2014. Tre diverse concezioni di patrimonio culturale, *Cahiers d'études italiennes*, Online, n. 18, p. 48.

<sup>499</sup> *Ivi*, p. 49.

Starting from the legislation and the preservation laws of cultural heritage and arriving to mass tourism, the hegemony of the aesthetic value was established. This is why it still dictates contemporary decisions and valuation processes on architectures and also on fascist architecture, where the political dimension is silenced in the name of the beauty of the building. So, the argument of aestheticization is used in order to hide political endorsement of that past (civic world) and to exploit the marketable potential of these cities (market world), domesticating dissonance by translating it into an artwork.

Examples of it can be found in many fascist heritage cases, the main one probably being the CDF of Como by Terragni, which is probably going to be turned into a National Museum of Rationalism – as the right-wing local cultural assessor declared<sup>500</sup>. The stress on the beauty of the object is generally used to blur its political and dissonant aspects, and again to move the debate from the civic world to the industry world and perhaps also to the inspirational one, where the object is treated as an artwork rather than as a document, removing the historical and political layers and focusing only on the artistic dimension. In the case of CDF this strategy of silencing dissonance is particularly evident since we know that these buildings were conceived with a practical function and architects explicitly stated their intentions of representing and eternalizing fascism. Just to show how internationally widespread these arguments are, also Trump used aesthetic justification for the decision to keep the Confederate monuments, hiding his real conservative aim:

*"Sad to see the history and culture of our great country being ripped apart with the removal of our beautiful statues and monuments...the beauty that is being taken out of our cities, towns and parks will be greatly missed and never able to be comparably replaced!"<sup>501</sup>*

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<sup>500</sup> "Museo nazionale del Razionalismo alla Casa del Fascio, Borghi: "Si farà, sono emozionato", *Quicomo*, available online.

<sup>501</sup> "Trump's history of defending Confederate 'heritage' despite political risk", *Abc news*, 11 June 2020.

The musealization of entire city centres, such as in the case of Pomezia, are quite revealing of this strategy. The philological restoration of the buildings' plaster and the stress on the accuracy of the restoration process is again borrowed from the technical and artistic field in order to channel all the problems related to heritage into a technical dimension. The city is treated as an archaeological site or thematic park which, while still inhabited and used for its original functions. In the description of the urban scheme and of the characteristics of the city, the tone and the argumentative features used to position it in the art history discipline, where Rationalism is described just as a style in the linear succession of different artistic movements developed in Italy. As in the art historical tradition, Rationalism's difference and continuity with other artistic styles are here at the center of attention:

*L'architettura italiana del primo periodo post-bellico è ancora legata agli schemi tradizionali, benché l'espansione dei linguaggi contemporanei in Europa la rende sempre più permeata a innovazioni nelle forme e nei materiali utilizzati. Lo stile barocco, il recupero del gotico e delle forme rinascimentali lasciano spazio, già nei primissimi anni Venti, al razionalismo italiano. (...) Un linguaggio, quello razionalista, che richiama il mito imperiale romano e le pulsioni rinascimentali, ma anche il primo Ottocento tedesco. (...) La bellezza non andrà più ricercata negli stucchi o nelle merlature bensì nel succedersi armonico di geometrie lineari e tutte simili nello slancio verso l'alto che per la prima volta disegna un diverso skyline italiano. Il razionalismo del Ventennio non è collegato al futurismo di Marinetti, del quale costituisce piuttosto una "normalizzazione": le forme vagamente spaziali, ispirate dalla fantascienza e dalla letteratura di svago sono sostituite dalle esigenze di una politica accentratrice, desiderosa di modernizzare il paese e imporre una visione univoca<sup>502</sup>.*

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<sup>502</sup> Official website of the city of Pomezia: <https://www.pomeziaetorvajanica.it/pomezia/da-vedere/architettura-razionalista/>

It is not incorrect to describe Rationalism as an artistic or architectural style, although choosing to approach and interpret it *only* from the artistic perspective, especially when dealing with the restoration of inhabited cities, is rather a political choice.

It is interesting that increasingly more new towns, such as Sabaudia o Tresigallo (in Emilia Romagna), have started advertising their image as Metaphysical cities, borrowing the term from the artistic field (inspirational world) and especially from De Chirico. It is not a case that the volume (and exhibition) on new towns in the Pontine marshes and in the colonies is titled *Metafisica costruita*<sup>503</sup>, creating a direct link between De Chirico's paintings and the urban settings of new towns - even if it is still questionable from an academic perspective<sup>504</sup>. In describing these new towns, for instance, in the case of Tresigallo the elements more stressed are being out of time and space, symmetry, Futurism, ideal city, madness and calm and it is also included in the network of *Città d'Arte*<sup>505</sup>. The translation of (a difficult) cultural heritage into a market product, easy to consume because it is presented as an ideal city and an artwork, here comes in association with the stylistic unity of the city, seen as an exceptional example:

*L'alto valore artistico nella cittadina di Tresigallo risiede proprio nella sua completezza dal punto di vista del patrimonio edilizio-architettonico, unico capace di trasmettere la complessità del progetto urbano originale e la qualità del disegno degli spazi aperti; e questo non solo attraverso l'esistenza di meri volumi costruiti, ma anche con la cura per i dettagli costruttivi*<sup>506</sup>.

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<sup>503</sup> Besana R., Carli C.F., Devoti L., Prisco L. (a cura di), 2002. *Metafisica costruita. Città di fondazione degli anni Trenta dall'Italia all'Oltremare*, Touring Editore, Milano.

<sup>504</sup> Guzzi D., 1988. *Giorgio De Chirico: arma virumque cano: il mito classico dell'eroe guerriero*, Leonardo Arte, Firenze

<sup>505</sup> Official website of the city of Tresigallo: <https://www.tresigallolacittametafisica.it>

<sup>506</sup> Tresigallo and the artists: <https://www.tresigallolacittametafisica.it/citta/artisti/>



However, attesting the uniqueness and exceptionality of Metaphysical cities seems pretty hard, since also Aprilia is, according to Papi, the best representation of De Chirico's Metafisica:

*Nel contesto italiano e in quello particolare della bonifica integrale delle cinque città pontine, gli esempi di Sabaudia e Aprilia, sono quelli che più si avvicinano a quei due modelli: l'uno rispondente all'innovazione del movimento moderno europeo, razionale e futurista; l'altro più legato formalmente alla tradizione italiana e mediterranea. (...) Aprilia, quarta delle Città di fondazione dell'Agro pontino, spicca, più di qualsiasi altra, per i numerosi ed evidenti segni tratti dal lessico dechirichiano: dall'arco-tipo (elemento principale dell'architettura romana) al portico-tipo; dalla statua-simulacro ai leggeri sfasamenti dei punti di fuga; dalla grandezza spoglia della piazza alla sua "severa malinconia"; dai marcati assi prospettici alle immancabili torri-simbolo dei fondali. Gli scorci fotografici della città appena costruita sembrano esprimere, in una linea di collage tridimensionale, il misterioso paradigma della metafisica reale<sup>507</sup>.*

So, if the use of the exception and the stylistic unity recalls the legislation before mentioned, interpreting new towns just as artworks or as (archaeological) sites is indicative of a strategy of de-politicization of heritage by politicians, architects and city managers. The reasons for that can be found either in a difficulty in dealing with these issues (civic/ inspirational world) - symptomatic of a lack of coming to terms with that past - or in the intentional reviving of the fascist past and values through the preservation of its material legacy (civic world), or also in an economic interest (market world) in exploiting their potential touristic appeal. In any case, this leads to an a-critical preservation of the materiality of the object detached from its political dimension. As also in the previous case, when the argument

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<sup>507</sup> Papi G., 2002. "Aprilia ritrovata", in *Metafisica Costruita*, Touring Editore, Milano, p. 121.

moves from one world (civic) to another (industry), the debate over the possibility of reuse and over the restoration's choices is stripped from the public sphere and it is presented as something unambiguous, undebatable and strictly technical.

**c) Shared identity argument (domestic world and civic world)**

Another argument, pretty much used in the contemporary debate, is the reference to a common identity strictly linked to the materiality of the city. The fundamental ideas of this argument can also be found in the Italian legislation, where the idealistic concept of a unitarian cultural heritage is opposed to a positivistic classification of cultural objects (*patrimonio culturale VS beni culturali*) and it is strictly connected to an identity value. In this case, the cultural heritage is presented, regardless of its aesthetic and the historical value, as the expression of the identity of a community, which can have different levels of territorial width and related identities: from local to national or transnational communities. For instance, on an international level, the UNESCO definition of universal value conceives cultural heritage as owned by humanity intended as a universal community. On the national Italian scale, the concept of cultural heritage was associated with that of national identity since the beginning of XX century; for this reason, it was necessary to regulate and limit the exportation of material cultural heritage through a law<sup>508</sup> which introduced the ban on the exportation of cultural heritage and artworks. The institution of the *notifica* was later introduced in 1909<sup>509</sup> in order to declare the artistic and historical interest associated with an artifact or a monument or a building and control its circulation and state of preservation. So, the acknowledgement of a national identity of cultural heritage went hand in hand with its export limitation and its exit from the market in terms of property. In 1966 the new law<sup>510</sup> on the definition of cultural heritage (*bene*

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<sup>508</sup> Legge Nasi, n. 185/1902. Portante disposizioni circa la tutela e la conservazione dei monumenti ed oggetti aventi pregio d'arte o di antichità.

<sup>509</sup> Legge Rosaldi, n. 364/1909. Norme per l'inalienabilità delle antichità e delle belle arti.

<sup>510</sup> Legge n. 310/1964. Costituzione di una Commissione d'indagine per la tutela e la valorizzazione del patrimonio storico, archeologico, artistico e del paesaggio.

*culturale*) included “everything that constitutes a material testimony of civilization”, recognizing, this time, the primacy of the historical value (as a document) over the aesthetic one and linking the notion of heritage with the community’s identity one. This latest definition was also adopted, as a residual category, in the Codice dei beni culturali (art.2), which highlights (art. 1) the function of cultural heritage in the preservation of national memory and of its territory<sup>511</sup>. The importance of material heritage as testimony and representative of community’s values has played a symbolic role in postwar reconstruction processes, as it was the case in Italy but also later and elsewhere, for instance in the case of the reconstruction of the Mostar’s bridge as a symbol of peace and cooperation among people. However, this identity characteristic can also be used to nurture nationalisms and conflict, especially in the case of difficult heritage.

In the case of Latina, for instance, the justification over the restoration of many buildings and elements of the city was found both in the restoration as the original but also in the identity of the city which was presented as ontologically tied to its fascist conception. In this case there is the presence of two different worlds: the inspirational world tied to a common identity and individual values, and the civic world where politicians compete between each other for power. If it is undeniable that new towns have a fascist origin, it should not be that straightforward that their contemporary identity cannot be modified or that they cannot move on from that, or that additional identities and layers cannot be added. Can Latina signify something else (or more) than a fascist new town? By not posing this question, the civic world uses the inspirational world in order to legitimize a unique - presented as unifying- interpretation of the city’s identity and past. Even if the apology of fascism has been declared a crime<sup>512</sup>, the identity argument tied to it is still largely used by politicians. For instance, in 2021, the call for identitarian roots was the argument used by the Lega local politician Claudio Durigon in

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<sup>511</sup> Codice dei Beni Culturali, art. 1, comma 2: La tutela e la valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale concorrono a preservare la memoria della comunità nazionale e del suo territorio e a promuovere lo sviluppo della cultura.

<sup>512</sup> Legge Scelba, 20 giugno 1952, n. 645. Norme di attuazione della XII disposizione transitoria e finale (comma primo) della Costituzione

order to rename the park titled to Falcone e Borsellino to Arnaldo Mussolini. In particular, he said in an article<sup>513</sup>:

*“Mai e poi mai penserei di mettere in discussione il grande valore del servizio prestato allo Stato dai giudici Falcone e Borsellino: ciò non toglie che è nostro dovere considerare anche le radici della città” (...)* *“Figuriamoci se voglio andare contro due eroi come Falcone e Borsellino. Il mio intervento, in quel contesto, con le persone di Latina, voleva solo ribadire la storia della città, che non va dimenticata. La stessa storia della mia famiglia è legata alla bonifica di questa terra, stiamo parlando delle persone che hanno dato pure la vita per questo, che sono morte di malaria.”*

Here it is not referring anymore to the concept of originality of the city plan, but he shifted the attention to the common family roots, the identity of the community, which - he added- descended from Veneto and Friuli emigrants, but are unified in the fascist land reclamation experience.

*“Questa è la storia di Latina, che qualcuno ha voluto anche cancellare con quel cambio di nome al nostro parco che deve tornare a essere il Parco Mussolini che è sempre stato”.*

Here he is referring to the change of name of the park in 2017 that the mayor Coletta (civic list) claims as follows:

*“Quando nel 2017 abbiamo intitolato il Parco a Falcone e Borsellino (si chiamava “parco comunale” sin dal 1943), non l’abbiamo fatto per rivalsa nei confronti della storia della città. Abbiamo scelto i valori e il sacrificio di due uomini dello Stato che hanno perso la vita per l’affermazione della legalità e della giustizia contro la Mafia. Le stelle polari di chiunque decida di impegnarsi per il bene pubblico e amministrare una città. Le nostre stelle polari quando 5 anni fa ci siamo candidati per*

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<sup>513</sup> “Il parco torni a essere intitolato a Mussolini”: bufera per le parole di Durigon. Lui: “Polemica Sterile”, *LatinaToday*, 6 August 2021. Available at: <https://www.latinatoday.it/politica/parco-mussolini-durigon-polemica.html>

*trasformare Latina in una casa di vetro, per cambiare tutto, per cancellare quell'immagine di illegalità e clientele con cui la cattiva politica aveva sporcato Latina*<sup>514</sup>.

The difference, as it can be noted, lies in the fact that the mayor Coletta used arguments inside the civic world in order to solve a dispute born in the civic world. Indeed, he referred to the values and ideals at the basis of the public good and its management, adding also an awkward reference to the “house of glass” used as a metaphor for transparency of local politics, quoting, in a more or less conscious way, Mussolini as well.

The democratic legitimation of right-wing parties in the 80s, which culminated with the birth of Alleanza Nazionale in 1995, developed together with the resurgence of fascist writings on buildings and walls, such as the motto *vincere* on walls in Sabaudia and Borgo Montenero, as Ciammaruconi noted<sup>515</sup>. Another return of fascist symbology was proposed by the centre-right municipality of Sabaudia which in 2002 voted for the restoration of the lictor fasces in the high-relief *La Vittoria in marcia* on the façade of the town hall. This decision was thought to be financed with a collective subscription in order to reinforce the sense of community and rootedness of citizens, again weighing on the concept of a shared identity. However, the project was stopped by the opposition, which is symptomatic of a dissonance perceived and a resistance from the civic world. This was just another example of how the far-right political parties still use the fascist heritage and -in the Pontine marshes - the link with their fascist origin in the contemporary image of the cities.

**d) *Damnatio memoriae* argument or cancel culture (civic world and market world)**

Recently the discussion over the presence of certain statues and monuments in cities, not only in Italy, but starting in America with the debate over the Confederate monuments, have been at

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<sup>514</sup> “Parco di Latina, Coletta: Messaggio pericoloso voler cancellare i nomi di Falcone e Borsellino”, *LatinaToday*, 8 August 2021. Available at: <https://www.latinatoday.it/politica/parco-falcone-borsellino-mussolini-coletta.html>

<sup>515</sup> C. Ciammaruconi, 2009, p. 50-51.

the center of international attention. It acquired the dimension of a real global phenomenon, gaining the journalistic naming of *cancel culture* and raising easy criticisms of iconoclastic nature. In Italy this debate has been translated in public discussions over the destruction or removal of fascist heritage for ideological reasons. Before the so called cancel culture, the *damnatio memoriae* was an antique technique of modifying the memory of the past, based on the exclusion of a person from historical records and the removal of his presence from memorial materials (inscriptions, rituals, etc). In the case of fascist heritage, the *damnatio memoriae* translated mainly into the erasure and destruction of fascist symbols, monuments and Mussolini's busts in the aftermath of the fall of the regime. The *damnatio memoriae* is the result of a test internal to the civic world, meaning a confrontation on issues related to civic identity and political vision of a community, the result of the reassessment of the common values' framework. The *damnatio memoriae* usually is the most common reaction when a regime falls and there is a change of political situation or a war, for instance the image of people tearing down statues of deceased political leaders is very widespread, at least in the Western imagery. However, it is interesting to see when this argument has been used several years after the fall of fascism and in order to hide other interests coming from other worlds.

As we saw, the case of Aprilia is the only example of intentional destruction of a CDF, in contrast with the identity argument and the "restore the original" argument which were used in the same territory. However, the destruction of Aprilia's CDF happened in the 70s, so 25-30 years after the end of the regime, a delay which is significant. The 60s and the 70s were a period hugely impacted by land speculation and industrialization, especially the Mezzogiorno which received dedicated funds. Moreover, it has to be reminded that at the time the modern buildings of the '30s were not *vincolati*, meaning considered cultural heritage since they were too recent to be put under preventive preservation (presumption of historical and artistic value can be declared after 70 years from its construction before the public building can be considered cultural heritage) and modern architecture was not considered enough valuable to be declared of artistic interest. So, in this context of emerging economic interests and the decreasing

attention toward modern architecture, the demolition of the CDF was passed as a case of late *damnatio memoriae* against the fascist period.

However, Gianfranco Compagno, a journalist and a citizen of Aprilia, argued that the main reason for the demolition of the CDF was not an ideological one but an economic-financial one:

*(...) l'unica che stava dietro la piazza era la Cassa di Risparmio di Roma (oggi Unicredit), che si è resa disponibile a concedere "un mutuo chirografario di lire 26.950.000 per l'acquisto di due immobili del Demanio dello Stato, ex Casa del fascio ex Gil". (...) Chiaro l'interesse dell'Istituto di credito, affinché si demolisse il manufatto di fondazione. Anche la Banca Popolare di Aprilia era interessata all'abbattimento. Da lì a qualche anno avrebbe spostato la sede unica, da sotto i portici di piazza Roma (2 anonime serrande) in via delle Mammole (oggi piazza Roma), angolo via delle Margherite. Ma vogliamo parlare degli interessi speculativi dei costruttori, o dei "palazzinari" come li chiamano a Roma. E la politica? O meglio i politici, anche loro curavano propri interessi. Allora sfatiamo una volta per tutte, anzi voglio ribadire un concetto espresso anche alla delegazione dell'Università Trier, l'abbattimento della Casa del fascio non fu motivato da ideologia, ma semplicemente da interessi economici<sup>516</sup>.*

So, in addition to private investors and real estate actors, an interest in the demolition of the CDF was sustained also by some banks. Indeed, if the building was used for all those years and had hosted so many functions, no structural reasons can be found for its demolition; on the contrary, it was an intentional choice inserted in the new master plan. Indeed, in the *delibera*<sup>517</sup> declaring the intention of the city council to demolish the building, there are no explanations for that except the need to enlarge the square - which was already pretty big, since it was designed to contain the fascist *adunate*. Also, it is quite interesting that the only political

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<sup>516</sup> Compagno G., "La casa del fascio di Aprilia dalla progettazione alla demolizione, 1936-1972", *Il Giornale del Lazio*, 17 Dicembre 2020 – 13 Gennaio 2021, p.9.

<sup>517</sup> Delibera del Consiglio Comunale, verbale n.21 del 29 marzo 1972.

party which opposed the acquisition of the ex-CDF (through refrain from voting) for its demolition were the communists (PCI). If it was the case of a *damnatio memoriae*, the opponents of fascism should have been the first proposing and supporting the demolition, not the ones withdrawing from it.

According to the architect Giovanni Papi, the demolition of the CDF was the result of a late *damnatio memoriae*, added to the phenomenon of the building speculation of the 60s and 70s, affecting not only the CDF but also the ex-GIL and the municipal building:

*La damnatio memoriae come una mina a scoppio ritardato fa disintegrare la Casa Comunale e la Casa del fascio, annullando l'unità dell'impianto urbanistico e lasciando quello che è stato definito "uno spiazzo" informe ancora in cerca di soluzioni<sup>518</sup>.*

He added that it was also the lack of architectural competences of the city council of that time that produced that "*scempio*". In addition to it, the predominance of economic speculation and the use of restoration or demolition for economic interests, which was a diffused practice in Italy already from the postwar period, fostered the choice for the destruction:

*(...) è un campionato sconcertante di errori, presunzioni, ignoranza, ma anche di situazioni che probabilmente nascondono interessi economici<sup>519</sup>.*

In this case, adding to a lack of regulation and attention toward the modern architectures, the *damnatio memoriae* (civic world) was instrumental to the local politicians and real estate investors to undertake real estate operations (market world).

Another partial demolition which was presented as an anti-fascist *damnatio memoriae*, is the demolition in the 1960s of the original external stairs of the Post Office in Latina and its replacement with

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<sup>518</sup> Papi G., "Motivazioni e riflessioni storiche" in G. Papi G. (a cura di), 2001. *Latium Vetus – Città di Fondazione*, atti del convegno di studi 27 ottobre 2001, p. 10.

<sup>519</sup> Bellini, 2011, p. 22.



ones in concrete. However, as Pennacchi highlighted<sup>520</sup>, at the time the decision taken by the city council was not opposed by the four MSI city councilors among which seated also Frezzotti (the architect of Latina) and so it does not seem to be really a case of political struggle, but more probably another political use of the *damnatio memoriae* in order to satisfy other interests.

### 6.6 The Test

The new phenomenon of cancel culture created by the Black Lives Matter movement brought a new way of looking at cultural heritage, and particularly to colonial heritage, that hugely impacted not only the US but also Europe and Italy. In Italy, in the last years, the contemporary society and in particular activists, artists and collectives started reclaiming public spaces and redefining the representation of the past in the cities. Some examples can be found in the collective *Resistenze in Cirenaica*, born in the neighborhood Cirenaica in Bologna in 2015, that in the years using different methods (from urban guerrilla to theatrical performances) addressed the colonial legacy in the toponomy of streets, started narrating the histories of partisans or people who opposed fascisms, it published some books (*Quaderni di Cirene*) on their performances and activities and it participated to academic conferences and programs, in a fruitful debate between practice and theory. In particular, the activity of urban trekking addressing specific buildings, or a particular toponomy of the cities, has been a successful strategy of different activist groups in making visible the colonial legacies in the urban environment.

Another example can be found in the feminist activist collective *Non una di meno* who, in 2019, actively engaged with the statue of Indro Montanelli in Milan by pouring over it some pink paint (see Figure 128). The intent of the feminist group was to address the fact that there still is a statue (and a park) dedicated to a man who bought for L. 350 his Ethiopian wife, at the time aged only 12 years old<sup>521</sup>. The reactions to this desecration were quite emblematic, from the most predictable one that described the action as

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<sup>520</sup> Pennacchi A., 2019. Topografia antica e città moderna. Dal Cancellone del Quadrato a Latina già Littoria, *Limes*, n. 8, p. 26.

<sup>521</sup> Cfr. Coin F., "Il riscatto femminista della storia", *Jacobin*, 13 march 2019. Available at: <https://jacobinitalia.it/il-riscatto-femminista-della-storia/>

vandalism, to a need for a re-contextualization of the colonial period and marriage practices of the time, advocating for not using an anachronistic perspective:

*Mi sento costretto dopo aver visto quella foto della statua di Indro imbrattata di vernice rosa dalle femministe del terzo millennio, nonché l'alluvione di commenti isterici, violenti e privi di qualsiasi prospettiva e senso della storia che si sono abbattuti su di lui. Una opinione può essere formalmente corretta, e tuttavia anche storicamente insensata, perché quello che conta è soprattutto "il contesto". Ovvero la comprensione profonda di cosa è accaduto, di dove è accaduto, e di perché è accaduto, e non (come in questo caso) la lettura di un fatto inquinata dall'affermazione di un anatema pregiudiziale e apodittico<sup>522</sup>.*

However, what emerges here under the historical framework and reconstruction, is instead a reaffirmation of the superiority of the historical knowledge (industry world) over the political need to question that statue (civic world), and its election as the only possible and authoritative voice over these matters. It is also interesting that the author before stating his position in defence of Montanelli, felt the need to reassure the readers about his political left-side position and his education by a feminist mother, as if these titles were sufficient or indispensable to justify his statements' credibility. If it is true that historical contextualization is fundamental in reading the past, it is also essential to read the present and its new needs, recriminations and instances. The clash here addresses not the figure of Indro Montanelli from an historic or historiographic perspective but its occupation of a public space – exactly as in the case of the Confederate monuments in America. The debate on the presence of the statue and what still represents in all its problematic aspects, has been moved from the public sphere -intended both as public space of the city and as the civic society (civic world) - to the specialistic historical knowledge,

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<sup>522</sup> Telese L., "In difesa dello stupratore Montanelli", *TPI*, 11 June 2020. Available at: <https://www.tpi.it/news/indro-montanelli-difesa-statua-moglie-telese-20200611269874/>

where only few experts have the right to speak (industry world). This is another strategy of silencing the dissonance resurging from the colonial and fascist legacy. This case is also an opportunity to see how the coalition between activism and artistic language work in the direction of making dissonance loud. Indeed, the artist Simona Da Pozzo made an artistic project on the statue of Indro Montanelli in Milan and especially in Porta Venezia neighborhood (which was usually inhabited by Afro-descendant people) called *Twelve*<sup>523</sup>, a slideshow of photographs of friends and supporters at the age of twelve years old. Starting from this intimate call, the project was, then, open to the public who could send their photograph aged twelve years old in a digital hacking project of the monument to Montanelli. The coalition of artistic languages and

Another case of urban intervention, in this case on the toponymy of the city, is the one by *Fare Ala* in Castellammare del Golfo (Sicily) addressing the square dedicated to Giorgio Almirante, founder of MSI and director of racist magazine *La difesa della razza* during fascism. The square was dedicated to Almirante only in 2013 and in an unofficial way, with a label painted on the wall, following the proposal of the previous center-right mayor Marzio Bresciani. The collective painted next to it another label saying (see Figure 129): “*segretario di redazione della rivista la difesa della razza. 1938-1942. Capo di Gabinetto del Ministero della Cultura Popolare della Repubblica di Salò*”. This is the typical guerrilla urbanism’s intervention that *Fare Ala* developed during *Manifesta* in Palermo together with Wu Ming, during which instead of re-naming a street or a square they add an informative label describing the person and stressing his colonial or fascist past. The writings have been removed, and so the collective repainted a new label saying “*Fascista, repubblicano e fucilatore di partigiani*”. The event attracted the attention of far-right politician Giorgia Meloni, who tweeted:

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<sup>523</sup> The call, the letter and the video with the slideshow is available here: <https://www.roots-routes.org/twelve-there-is-no-age-no-place-no-time-to-become-a-slave-by-simona-da-pozzo/>

*“Ancora atti vandalici dei soliti imbecilli contro il padre della Destra italiana Giorgio Almirante, questa volta a Castellammare del Golfo. Ma si mettano l’animo in pace: non riusciranno mai a scalfire il ricordo di questo grandissimo patriota<sup>524</sup>.”*

Again, the urban intervention was firstly addressed as vandalism but also as a political act, since she felt the need to re-affirm the importance of Almirante as the “father of the Italian right” and as a “patriot”. These last additions positioned the discourse inside the political realm (civic world), where a fight over values (the right and the left) and the conflict over a difficult past (the roots of the democratic Italian state) were finally expressed and not hidden behind a historiographic argumentation. The collective reacted by printing a Giorgio Almirante silhouette on paperboard (see Figure 130) and bringing him around as a ghost in the night in the square next to the town hall:

*“Apparso fantasma di Giorgio Almirante ieri notte a Castellammare del Golfo! Lo spettro di Almirante, disturbato dai precedenti interventi di guerriglia odonomastica, ha smesso di riposare in pace. Ha lasciato la piazza a lui dedicata e ha cominciato a vagare per la città, facendo una piccola sosta per salutare i suoi amici nel palazzo del municipio<sup>525</sup>.”*

It is interesting how the reaction of the collective took place as a performative act in the public space. Indeed, performativity and the reappropriation of the public space are typical political actions, stating again and even more consistently their belonging to the civic world.

In these cases, what is taking place are tests on the interpretation of cultural heritage, on its values and relevance for contemporary society, creating inevitably clashes between different worlds and positions. Generally, the test is the occasion to add new meanings

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<sup>524</sup> “Almirante. La piazza che divide”, *AlqamaH*, 10 ottobre 2019. Available at: <https://www.alqamah.it/2019/10/10/almirante-la-piazza-che-divide/>

<sup>525</sup> *Ibidem*.

and ways to look at heritage and objects in dispute (monuments, statues, architectures). These new meanings come from the civic world and are competing with different arguments instead are drawn from the industry world (specialization, aestheticization, etc). The test is sustained by the activists addressing different issues which go also beyond the object: they question the presence of monuments as a way of questioning the past they represent. In this sense, these moments can be defined as legitimacy tests, as they are challenges to the existing common order.

The notion of test in Boltanski and Thevenot is defined as a moment in which challenges to unfolding action may occur and through which actors seek to confirm or readjust the conditions and principles shaping ongoing activities. Tests are instances where the link between the micro-level actions and macro-level principles are assessed in the empirical realm<sup>526</sup>, meaning that are occasions of questioning the current value framework. Dansou and Langley find that the notion of a test offers an approach to understanding varied forms of intentionality (agency), provides a conception of institutional work as relational (relationality between people and material objects), and finally is an analytical lens that focuses attention on critical moments of institutional evolution over time (temporality). In this sense, the notion of a test is relevant in understanding the clash between different orders of worth that is happening now, on a global level, around difficult heritage. This approach takes into consideration the agency of new social groups entering the debate on the preservation of fascist heritage, the relationality of dissonance in emerging between statues or buildings and people, creating clashes, and the temporality of dissonance, meaning its relevance as a test in time. All the different projects and artistic activities around difficult heritage can be seen as tests since they introduce a reflexive process aimed at reframing certain situations and integrating new principles into them. Taken together, these actions can contribute to challenging the situation and propose a new social arrangement. According to Boltanski and Thevenot there can be two types of tests: a test of the state of worth, which questions the

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<sup>526</sup> Dansou K., A. Langley A., 2012. "Institutional work and the notion of test", *M@n@gement*, 15 (5), p. 504.

degree of the principle applied in a situation, and a test of orders of worth, which questions the appropriateness of the principle applied in a situation. The latter test is the one which applies to the case of difficult heritage. Indeed, what these interventions question is not the technical restoration procedure of a building or monument but its presence in the public space, so the appropriateness of the value framework.

The authors find three forms of actions which can develop in a moment of test: the first one is the *interpretative agency*, in which actors seek to reinstate a proper arrangement in an ambiguous situation, but they do not aim at affecting the value framework. The second is the *strategic agency*, which includes attempts to directly address principles that guide actions because they are felt inadequate, and for this reason, it may also introduce also a new principle. The third form is the *pragmatic agency*, comprehending operations of relativization and pardon, in order to avoid the continuation of tensions. The result is to suspend the test without reaching an agreement. In the case of the clash on difficult heritage, the strategic agency is the prevailing one, given the high level of intentionality in changing (or destroying) the dominant value framework and creating new principles or ways to look at that heritage. The pragmatic agency, instead, is the form of action that is commonly found in local agreements, where the tension (test) is not solved on the principles level and a temporary solution is enhanced in order to resume action and find a practical solution in the real world.

Clash and strategic agency are instances of dissonance, which does not mean they are just negative or destructive moments, but they can also be occasions to develop new ideas and solutions. As Stark highlights:

*Dissonance occurs when diverse, even antagonistic, performance principles overlap. The manifest, or proximate, result of this rivalry is a noisy clash, as the proponents of different conceptions of value contend with each other. The latent consequence of this dissonance is that the diversity of value-frames generates new combinations of the firm's resources. Because there is not one best way or single metric but several mutually coevolving yet not converging paths, the*

*organization is systemically unable to take its routines or its knowledge for granted. It is the friction at the interacting overlap of multiple performance criteria that generates productive recombinations by sustaining a pragmatic organizational reflexivity*<sup>527</sup>.

Once the new instances brought by the clash become part of the conversation, then, the potentiality to change the value framework which governs decision-making is possible. In the difficult heritage clash in Italy, the new instances brought by activists groups, artistic projects, and social sensitivities are beginning now to be taken into consideration by the academic field and by some political actors. The discourse over these topics is expanding, starting to include new subjects and to address differently the knowledge over some problematic topics. However, the discourse is still in the stage of the clash because in order for dissonance to be a generative propeller for new ideas and solutions, as also Stark argues, it needs to be organized. Instead, the public debate in Italy is still polarized on a public and political level, but it is beginning to be addressed and organized by museums (restitution of colonial objects, addressing in different ways their colonial collections) and small research groups in academia.

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<sup>527</sup> Stark, "The sense of dissonance", in Berthoin Antal A., Hutter M., Stark D. (edited by), 2015. *Moments of valuation: exploring sites of dissonance*, Oxford Academic, Oxford, p. 27.

## Cap 7 - Conclusions

### *7.1 Findings and new research perspectives*

Considering the data collected, the research has shown that the majority of ex-CDF in the three provinces is still in use, while very few have been demolished and among them, only one for supposedly political reasons. The main function of their reuse is as headquarters of law enforcement forces, municipal services, schools and cultural spaces (mainly municipal libraries). However, this persistent reuse was not followed by critical thinking on the problematics and possibilities of fascist heritage but has been dictated, in the postwar period, by practical needs, political interests and then by an uncritical approach. As also stated by Malone<sup>528</sup>, in the chaotic context after the fall of the regime, Italy remained for a period without a defascistization policy on a national level, so local authorities acted in a haphazard way; she finds three main options: (1) destruction, which took the shape of spontaneous attacks on Mussolini's representations and by chiselling off symbols of the regime from buildings; (2) neglect, due also to the cost of demolition of buildings; (3) reuse, which is the most frequent case with buildings mainly due to economic necessities. Even if Malone did not study specifically the ex-CDF, her argument that the norm is uncritical preservation in Italy is also valid in this case. The survival of fascist built legacy allows Fascist sites to live in the urban landscape without proper contextualisation. Pragmatism, financial and institutional inertia mostly seems to have characterised the reuses of CDF in the post-war period until now. Indeed, the investments and decisions taken during fascism have been carried on during the Republic, and on an institutional level the functional reuses of the majority of the CDF have been decided according to continuity of property, needs to host public services or law enforcement bodies, rather than on a proper rethinking of the criteria to use them or ethical matters. The fact that law enforcement offices are the most frequent reuse for CDF is highly symbolic and symptomatic of this institutional inertia.

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<sup>528</sup> Malone H., 2017. Legacies of Fascism: architecture, heritage and memory in contemporary Italy, *Modern Italy*, vol. 22 no. 4



An essential contribution of this research is testing the dissonant heritage theory and the difficult heritage concept in Italy. As Fuller stated recently in a conference<sup>529</sup>, according to difficult heritage theory, the fact that an object or a building is still here by definition is meant to hold its original meaning; however, it is an assumption that needs to be verified case by case. This work, using a multi-perspective methodology and a historical reconstruction through archival sources, aims to test this assumption in the Italian case. As the mapping of the current reuses of the ex-CDF and the historical reconstruction showed, the research tried to verify the presence/absence of dissonance by looking at the meaning's gap between the original intention and the nowadays reuse. Data show that in three different political contexts and provinces, there is not a clear or explicit institutional position, instead is more frequent to observe what Fuller calls "inertia memoriae", i.e. things that are still here but without political meaning. The political dimension has recently been added by decolonial discourses and activist interventions. Moreover, data also show that the decision over the reuse or the destruction of ex-CDF happened in a much more complex and stratified way, usually dictated by local power and needs rather than by a critical preservation perspective or institutional directions. This brings to a double conclusion: on the one hand, the mere presence or reuse of fascist-built buildings does not generate dissonance per se since its meaning may have been renegotiated in time thanks to an active resemantisation or due to inertia memoriae. On the other hand, the lack of perceived dissonance does not straightforwardly presume a fascist appreciation among people since the relation between heritage and people, as some authors a bit simplistically suggest. As demonstrated, the phenomenon is more complex and has historically integrated different dimensions (changing political interests, practical needs, local economic interests, etc.). Another innovation of this research, related to the previous one, is the focus on ordinary fascist-built architectures in decentralised middle provinces, which have been widely overlooked in favour

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<sup>529</sup> "The architectural heritage of fascist Italy from 1945 until today" workshop, organised by KNIR, Rome, 14 April 2023.

of monumental architectures, exceptional options and major cities. As also stated by Malone, there has been scholarly neglect of minor cities and administrative buildings. Fuller added that in Italy there are few difficult sites intended as the MacDonalD's Nazi Party Rally Ground (e.g. Predappio, Foro Italico), but instead, it has a lot of representative architectures and monuments. This research addresses this academic gap by looking at administrative buildings and gaining a closer understanding of the ordinary way fascist-built heritage has been addressed in Italy, focusing on a more representative reality of the territory. By focusing on buildings and not on monuments, the research also brings attention to the architectures' ambiguity residing in their use (i.e. the multilevel meaning of a building which reside also in its use and reuse in time and also the utility of a building which can contribute to its preservation). The capillary and ordinary characteristics of the CDF, as highlighted in the previous chapters, give a brand-new perspective on two levels: on the content level by creating knowledge on the case studies (Livorno, Latina, Treviso), on the methodology level by providing a model for the analysis of buildings which can be applied to every CDF or fascist-built architecture in Italy and not only to the most famous or exceptional ones (e.g., Terragni's CDF in Como). The scope of this research, covering and comparing the reuses of ex-CDF in three provinces, is also quite innovative since no other publications acquired this many data, according to the author's knowledge.

Another big innovation of this work is also the integration in critical heritage studies of organisation studies - especially the use of Boltanski and Thevenot framework - in addressing and deconstructing the public argumentations over the reuse of fascist heritage. This approach allows for overcoming logic deadlocks in the public discussion of political matters from a technical or artistic/intellectual perspective. Integrating the financial and institutional perspectives with the notion of local agreements gives an understanding of how decisions have been taken over time as a series of interrelated local interests in the impossibility of reaching a general compromise. Local agreements influence each other and should be understood from a diachronic perspective rather than as isolated moments – as they are often

presented in academic papers. Moreover, the ownership perspective is important in reuse and preservation decisions, and taking for granted that the State's ownership is neutral is a big mistake: the cases have shown how much inference the political history had and still has on the actual reuse of the CDF. Deciding over a building or cultural heritage is then a political decision in possession of the owner; so, in the case of public property, a public governance dimension should be added to the technical issues of preservation. The application of organisation studies' theoretical frameworks to non-organisations but to inter-organisational groups and State apparatuses is also an innovative characteristic of this research.

Finally, a last contribution of this research is the new concept of dissonance linked to attention (see paragraph 7.2), which from a negative meaning in the dissonant heritage theory, is here assuming a positive and innovative potential for new critical approaches and organising methods of discussion around heritage studies.

Dissonance has been loud in some case studies, in different periods of time, signalling changing attention toward that heritage. So, concerning the relationship between dissonance and heritage, the three cases, taken as proxies of different attitudes toward the fascist past, show that there is not a straightforward relation between dissonance and the political position toward fascism; indeed, there has been only one case of destruction presented as a consequence of ideological position in the Latina province, the area most in line -from a political perspective- to the fascist legacy. Moreover, there have been cases in which dissonance was stronger (e.g. Vicarello, Aprilia, Latina), but in the majority of cases, the reuse (or the neglect) was random and uncritical. The relationship with dissonance changed in time and place, following different interests, and it was not strictly related to architectural features.

As above mentioned, these findings test the applicability of the dissonant heritage theory in the Italian context, questioning the fundamental assumption of a direct interpretation of heritage as a mirror of the relationship toward a difficult past. As it has been demonstrated, the fact that in Italy there are still so many fascist buildings does not necessarily mean that there is an appreciation

and lack of conflict with that past. On the contrary, many authors tried to interpret this matter in different ways, among which collective amnesia is still one of the most diffused ones. Starting from the lack of an Italian Nuremberg<sup>530</sup> and the so-called *amnistia Togliatti*<sup>531</sup>, the missing epuration of fascist crimes created a national absolution which blocked on a cognitive level the coming to terms with what happened during the *Ventennio*. This translated into a strong continuity between the fascist public apparatus and the republican one: people -once declared fascists- in the public administration, in the military sector, and in the political dimension kept their roles and jobs, creating a continuity which was problematic on different levels, including the memorialisation and development of an effective national condemnation of the people responsible for fascist crimes. If this interpretation is true on a historical and maybe cognitive level, in order to understand the effects of that phenomenon on cultural heritage, it is necessary to adopt an interpretation based, instead, on the concept of public *attention* as the interpretative tool to read dissonance.

## 7.2 *Dissonance as a matter of attention*

Dissonance results from collective attention (or lack of it), which is related to political interests, civic awareness and communities' necessities. As showed in the cases, when dissonance was

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<sup>530</sup> The failure to hold such a trial had grave consequences, first on judiciary grounds and later regarding the assessment of historical truth. (...) Few of those accused of war crimes committed on the peninsula were prosecuted, most notably those assigned responsibility for the Fosse Ardeatine massacre, while the Italian government otherwise buried the evidence it had gathered for some fifty years in the so-called cabinet of shame –a “most Italian solution” which served to pacify both domestic tensions and diplomatic relations with the new West Germany, while also conveniently allowing Fascist war crimes in the Balkans to be quickly forgotten. On the level of historical “truth” the actual Nuremberg and its absent Italian counterpart created a deformation of historical memory (...) founded on the separation of Germany’s responsibilities from those of other European nations and, therefore, on the forgetting of the faults of the Allied armies and the responsibilities of the European ruling classes for Nazism’s rise to power and their collaboration with Hitler’s New European Order”- Cfr. M. Battini, *The missing Italian Nuremberg*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, pp. 22-23.

<sup>531</sup> Cfr. M. Franzinelli, *L'amnistia Togliatti. 1946 colpo di spugna sui crimini fascisti*, Feltrinelli, 2016.

perceived it was because either political interests or civic ones were conflicting with each other. If there was no attention toward the building, neither was there dissonance. Attention, as dissonance, is time sensitive, meaning that it changes in time according to new and different political and civic interests that generate or silence attention. Dissonance, then, can be activated or silenced, both in an active way: among the strategies of the making of dissonance there are contestations, public gatherings, signature collections, performances, installations, urban guerrilla, storytelling and all of those elements that generate public discourse. The presence of the press (local, national, generalist, specialized) has an active role in the creation and maintenance of dissonance and in shaping the public discourse and highlighting different interests. The press is also fundamental in broadening the issue from a local perspective to a national one, enlarging the lens and expanding the dissonance from one single building to more broad themes. So, what triggers attention and activate dissonance can be both material characteristics of the building, such as symbols, writings, names or architectures, and immaterial ones, such as a strident reuse, a new political interpretation or use of it, its inclusion in a touristic network that elides its political and difficult aspects. These elements can capture attention and generate dissonance if inserted in a critical context, endorsed by politicians, intellectuals, artists, and civic associations. In response to these, as already said, there are also silencing strategies which the same actors with opposite interests can utilize. For instance, inscribing the problem of reusing fascist heritage only in a specialistic and technical dimension (e.g. Sabaudia, Pomezia, Cison di Valmarino, etc.) is one of the many possible ways of silencing dissonance and keeping the civic actors outside of the debate.

It can be said that attention, on a collective level, can be seen as a social phenomenon and nowadays, we are witnessing the creation of this new attention toward colonial and fascist legacies. As also stated in Chapter 6, the activation of dissonance usually functions as a test, questioning the current value set of cultural heritage and possibly introducing new values and alternatives to the existing ones. So, dissonance is not a mere characteristic of a building but the result of changing attention in time of a group of people and

civic sensibilities. Concerning the interpretation of difficult heritage and dissonance, the decolonial theoretical framework seems to be nowadays the dominant one, so a proper investigation of its impact in critical heritage studies should be acknowledged. Decoloniality in the context of Italian fascist architecture means un-normalizing that heritage and reactivating the attention (or the gaze) on those buildings which have been silent elements of our reality and of our cities. The process of un-normalization is essential to make dissonance loud, to make citizens acknowledge the history of a building, of a collection, of the name of a street. Un-normalizing is the first step in order to open a dialogue on the possibilities over the meaning, the reuse, or the abandonment of that heritage and, on a collective level, to address the legacies of coloniality and the fascist past. Starting from the material and immaterial heritage of cities, some groups of activists and collectives in Italy have started a series of decolonial actions aimed at awakening dissonance in citizens<sup>532</sup>. All these collectives act in a similar way (urban guerrilla, renaming streets, installations linked to historical facts and places in the city), and they have also started a network among themselves in order to collaborate on a national level. Some of those groups also fruitfully interact with academia by participating in university conferences even if they are less interested in traditional knowledge transmission and more connected to performativity as an engaging tool.

The main problematic aspect of these artistic and activist projects is their temporariness, meaning the fact that when the project is over also the community goes back to normality, and dissonance can be silenced again. If the temporary aspect is in line with Mignolo's idea that decoloniality is an option among others and it

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<sup>532</sup> For instance, Resistenze in Cirenaica, the collective based in the neighbourhood Cirene in Bologna, started to address the toponomy of the streets of Bologna with actions of urban guerrilla, renaming, tagging, urban trekking, artistic and musical performances in public spaces in the city. This created, at first, curiosity among people living in those streets, and then engagement and a sense of ownership toward those squares and public spaces which have started to be inhabited again. Similar actions have been carried on also in Reggio Emilia (Arbegnuoc collective), Rome (Tezeta), Milan (Restauro Arte Memoria), in Padova (Decolonize your eyes collective), and in Sicily (Rete Anticoloniale Siciliana).

should not be the only one and forever (otherwise it would just substitute the hegemony of modernity with another one), it is also true that the legacy or effect of artistic or activist interventions can be very short and generally they affect the individual in an empathic way, keeping all the problematics of empathy<sup>533</sup>.

### 7.3 Organizing dissonance

Dissonance has been said to be dependent on collective attention, meaning a social phenomenon driven by political interests, civic awareness and community needs. In this sense and in opposition to the dissonant heritage theory, dissonance is not presented here as a negative characteristic intrinsic to heritage but rather as a positive force that can lead to a productive change or innovation. As Stark<sup>534</sup> argues, dissonance happens when alternative principles of the valuable encounter each other, and for this reason, dissonance can be a kind of constructive change.

*In fact, more than the simple coexistence of orders of worth, innovation is promoted by the collision of evaluative principles. It is when things do not fit together comfortably that novel recombinations become thinkable. Disagreement about what's valuable can make for new value propositions. Organizations create wealth when they support dissonant principles of worth<sup>535</sup>.*

Even if Stark studied dissonance in organizations, his principles can be applied also to cultural heritage cases. Indeed, the application of organisational studies' methodologies to cultural heritage entails a shift of scale: from the study of organisations as complex systems with multiple interests to the study of the inter-organisational field, characterised by a double level of dissonance among organizations with different interests, and among different stakeholders within the organisations. Moreover, both contexts

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<sup>533</sup> For an analysis of empathy in public and political decisions cfr. Bloom P., 2019. *Contro l'empatia. Un difesa della razionalità*, Liberilibri, Macerata.

<sup>534</sup> Stark D., 2009. *The sense of dissonance*, Princeton University Press, Princeton

<sup>535</sup> Stark D., 2017. "For what's worth. Justification, evaluation and critique in the study of organizations: contributions from French Pragmatists Sociology", *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, Volume 52, 383-397, p.388

include multiple stakeholders and the creation of public discourses in order to legitimize their choices. Stark finds in dissonance, intended as the friction of different evaluative frameworks, the potential for innovation and for developing new identities and actors in the different worlds.

*Dissonance occurs when diverse, even antagonistic, performance principles overlap. The manifest, or proximate, result of this rivalry is a noisy clash, as the proponents of different conceptions of value contend with each other. The latent consequence of this dissonance is that the diversity of value-frames generates new combinations of the organization's resources<sup>536</sup>.*

He defines the process of innovation, which in this context can be interpreted as change, as “a curious cognitive function of recognizing what is not yet formulated as a category<sup>537</sup>” and it is deeply disruptive of cultural taken-for-granted assumptions. So, dissonance is to be thought in the coexistence of multiple, principled standpoints in which none of them can be taken for granted as the natural order of things. As can be seen, the deconstruction of the objectivity of cultural assumptions, the open process of integrating conflicting rationales and the temporariness of solutions, are all in line with the issues of the decolonial option. However, the condition under which dissonance can be generative is if it is organized, otherwise, it is just a chaotic clash and it cannot produce a conversation. Stark finds these reflective models of organized dissonance in *heterarchies*, meaning “organizational forms of distributed intelligence in which units are laterally accountable according to diverse principles of evaluation<sup>538</sup>”. In his concept, heterarchies maintain and support active rivalry of evaluative principles, organizing them so that friction never becomes personalized and always focuses on

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<sup>536</sup> Stark, 2009, p. 27. In this case, Stark used the term “firms” instead of “organization”, but in the context of interorganizational application to cultural heritage I preferred the term “organization” without changing the intention or meaning of the author.

<sup>537</sup> Stark, 2009, p.4.

<sup>538</sup> Stark, 2009, p. 19.



reasoned justifications. These organisations should function according to a discursive pragmatism, by which groups make “temporary settlements to get the job done, with the knowledge that this is not a once-and-for-all resolution of the disagreements<sup>539</sup>”. The openness of this solution is interesting if applied to the cultural heritage sector, where such a hypothesis is still missing and where the concept itself of preservation seems to be opposite to that of temporariness.

In thinking about ways of organizing dissonance and keeping it an open process, the contribution of Farias<sup>540</sup> is here very relevant. Starting from the positive concept of dissonance in Stark, he distinguishes between *evaluative dissonance* and *epistemic dissonance* as shaped by normative and cognitive expectations respectively. He addresses moments of epistemic dissonance practised and organized on a day-to-day basis, stating that alternatives emerge during anti-valuation moments in larger transvaluation processes which are characterized by epistemic dissonance. Anti-valuation moments, as parts of epistemic dissonance, are situations in which people refrain from assessing or giving value to certain entities so that alternatives and new values can emerge. In the study of architectural studios, he individuates three practical organisations of epistemic dissonance: casual engagement coming from proximity, review meetings (to collectively re-view complex chains of decisions), and project mediators (including different representations of the project). Organizing dissonance in this sense means holding expectations on the result of the process, gathering different perspectives and knowledge, reviewing the decision process multiple times in order to explicit sources of dissonance, and finally coming up with a new alternative solution. For instance, the Bolzano case is a good inspiration for a public competition used to gather new suggestions and projects on how to address the difficult legacy of the ex-CDF. However, even if the practical tool of public competition can be a good way of organizing dissonance and even if the final project positioned directly the

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<sup>539</sup> Stark, 2009, p. 27.

<sup>540</sup> Farias I., 2015. “Epistemic dissonance. Reconfiguring valuation in architectural practice”, in Berthoin Antal A., Hutter M., Stark D. (edited by), 2015. *Moments of valuation: exploring sites of dissonance*, Oxford Scholarship online.

matter of preservation in the political realm, in that case there was still a commissioner (the municipality) and a committee who decided according to standard criteria of preservation (not a public participation to it), and the reuse of the building as the Guardia di Finanza headquarter was not addressed as a problematic issue. It was the surface of the building which was mainly changed and not its use and function, which, however, can also be a source of dissonance, as in the cases of the ex-CDF used today as law enforcement's headquarters, connecting in an uncanny visual way the fascist state and ideology with the republican police forces.

#### *7.4 Organizing dissonance in practice*

Even if this research is situated in critical heritage studies and adopted some theoretical framework from organisations studies, the development of a new concept of dissonance - specifically its organising aspects - opens to other disciplines and problematics concerning also governance, management and public administration. This last paragraph aims to collect suggestions and starting points of reflection that should be further developed in those other fields of research, which go beyond the scope of the current thesis.

Three major steps can be identified in order to move from an uncritical approach to fascist heritage in Italy to a critical one based on dissonance: (1) *un-normalizing* the presence and the preservation of fascist buildings in our cities, studying their history, questioning their uncritical reuse and changing the gaze of citizens. This first phase is carried out by activists, artistic projects, and universities, who highlight Italy's toponomy, the forgotten history, and the legacies of colonialism and fascism in contemporary cities and society. It has the educational and civic aim of engaging citizens in the debate over the public spaces and the common, but also the political one of opposing the reappropriation by far-right movements of fascist heritage (material heritage) and the re-enactment of fascist rituals (immaterial heritage), as in the case of Predappio. The tools used in this initial stage can be creative, artistic, performative, but always political. As shown by social movements, social media, or digital activism, is crucial in this stage in order to gain visibility

on the issue. However, it is also very important to keep together the digital realm and the real situation in the specific context of action. In the present time, Italy is in this first phase. The second step is (2) *organising dissonance* in a way that can be generative and productive of new meanings of heritage, new approaches to its preservation and new acknowledgements of how the past is used in the present. It is important to stress that organising dissonance should not be addressed as a problem to be solved once and for all and that a reconciliation option should not be a forced or preferred solution. Indeed, what difficult heritage brings to the fore is the impossibility of reconciliation with a certain past and some parts of society; so, in order to be generative, it should be accepted as such and not forced into a reconciliation pattern that aims at just silencing dissonance for a period of time. Instead, to keep the dissonance an open process, a public debate over why a certain kind of cultural heritage should be preserved and how, should be opened. All the participants in the debate should suspend their traditional assumptions on who should decide over cultural heritage/what is cultural heritage, and generally the question of heritage should not be gated only into specialistic fields but should be firstly addressed into the political dimension, which is constitutive of it. The only limitation to this debate concerns the participants: especially in the case of fascist heritage it is very relevant to exclude, according to Mouffe<sup>541</sup>, antidemocratic forces ( neo-fascist, regime's nostalgics).

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<sup>541</sup> "Once we accept the necessity of the political and the impossibility of a world without antagonism, what needs to be envisaged is how it is possible under those conditions to create or maintain a pluralistic democratic order. Such an order is based on a distinction between 'enemy' and 'adversary'. It requires that, within the context of the political community, the opponent should be considered not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated. (...) The category of the 'enemy' does not disappear but is displaced; it remains pertinent with respect to those who do not accept the democratic 'rules of the game' and who thereby exclude themselves from the political community."- Mouffe C., 2020. *The return of the political*, Verso, London, p. 4. She differentiates between agonism and antagonism, where the first is among adversaries and the second is among enemies. In a democratic situation, all the antagonism should transform into agonism, meaning that the adversaries in this conversation should be legitimate actors "with whom we have in common a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of democracy" (Mouffe C.,

Organising dissonance basically aims, firstly, (2.1) at reframing the question of heritage from a specialistic dimension to a political and public one, which means acknowledging the historical and contemporary political use of heritage. Acknowledging the political dimension of heritage, in contemporary democratic society, means legitimising its contextual temporariness and open-ended process. It is what Mouffe defines as agonistic pluralism, acknowledging the temporariness of political decisions (and so also of decisions on heritage) as the first step to understanding how to organise agonistic pluralism<sup>542</sup>, or in this case dissonance.

Recognizing the political aspect of heritage means presenting the issue of preservation explicitly as a political matter of collective identity and nation building, rather than as a matter of purely artistic value upon which only specialists should decide. Acknowledging that choices over heritage are always the temporary result of a provisional hegemony and that exclusion is always the other part of the coin is fundamental to keeping the dissonance open. The emergence of dissonance activates a debate and potential disagreement on difficult heritage, which can be productive of new interpretations and solutions; whereas the absence of any kind of critical discourses around preservation or the legacy of difficult heritage is a symptom of a lack of critical awareness or the positioning of heritage outside the political sphere (so that it does not generate any dissonance) and under the control of specialised elites.

Secondly, (2.2) organizing dissonance aims at developing inclusive approaches to heritage management which shift the

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1999. "Deliberative democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?", *Social Research*, vol. 66, n. 3, p. 755).

<sup>542</sup> "When we accept that every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power and that always entails some form of exclusion, we can begin to envisage the nature of a democratic public sphere in a different way. (...) By warning us against the illusion that a fully achieved democracy could ever be instantiated, it forces us to keep the democratic contestation alive. An "agonistic" democratic approach acknowledges the real nature of its frontiers and recognizes the forms of exclusion that they embody, instead of trying to disguise them under the veil of rationality or morality (...) or to naturalize their frontiers and essentialize their identities." Mouffe, 1999, p. 756- 757.

perspective from *governing* dissonance (meaning controlling it from a State/European perspective of silencing dissonance) to *organizing* dissonance. The first includes all the different managerial approaches to difficult heritage which, instead of changing the terms of the conversation, aim at silencing dissonances, and erasing divergences, in favour of a unified and common reconciliation. Examples of this can be found in Kisić<sup>543</sup> (see Chapter 2) and in Tunbridge & Ashworth who developed a management system primarily based on the consumption of dissonant heritage in the context of tourism and specific to the management of heritage of atrocity. The main criticisms that some authors<sup>544</sup> find in their approach are framing dissonance as something intrinsic to heritage and the stress on tourism as the primary lens to deal with and manage difficult heritage, which crystallizes heritage through aestheticization and musealization (es. Pomezia, Sabaudia, Tresigallo). Kisić<sup>545</sup> in her manual on governing heritage dissonance, uses the interpretation of concepts of dissonance, conflict and reconciliation in the Faro Convention to develop an Inclusive Heritage Discourse opposed to the AHD (Authorized Heritage Discourse). The Inclusive Heritage Discourse unlocks the order of a singular heritage discourse to many heritage discourses, including diverse notions of heritage and a plurality of values. It should operate with a bottom-up approach and it should deal with dissonance through negotiation and reconciliation. However, the concept of dissonance still remains a negative one (which creates conflictual readings of the past and needs to be managed) and the stress on reconciliation and peacebuilding linked to heritage directs the efforts of creating new dialogues and new values in an oriented way, toward an already-defined common goal of reconciliation.

On the contrary, organizing dissonance means keeping the process of heritage making (becoming-heritage and defining-heritage) open and understanding decisions as temporary, acknowledging the impossibility of a permanent agreement. The

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<sup>543</sup> Kisić V., 2013. *Governing Heritage Dissonance. Promises and Realities of Selected Cultural Policies*, European Cultural Foundation.

<sup>544</sup> Smith (2009).

<sup>545</sup> Kisić V., 2013.

decision process should be revised many times with different actors (specialists, architects, citizens, mediators, etc.) in order to find an agreement, which will not be permanent but temporary, according to the changing sensibilities of society (attention) and political positions. As Farias found collective revisions a tool for organizing dissonance, in the same way, heritage managers should find tools that activate the debate and organize conflictual positions. It is not necessarily a matter of creating *new* tools, also existing ones (e.g. public competitions or call for ideas) can function if framed and used in a participative, open-ended, pluralistic and public way. These tools should envision a participative and transparent decision process; public events where themes and projects can be presented to citizens and to the institutions; academic conferences where the discussion can be channelled into knowledge; roundtables among different subjects (public representatives, associations, cultural institutions, etc.). If an *ad hoc* tool cannot be found, also creative strategies can be an option, as in the case of experimental preservation. Jorge Otero-Pailos explains experimental preservation as a way to put pressure on the traditional praxis and criteria of preservation and governmental protection of cultural objects in order to question the “narrative that government preservation bureaucracies always act in the interest of the common good<sup>546</sup>”. In order to do so, he presents some projects that question the selection criteria of cultural objects<sup>547</sup> and test the potential of existing objects to become heritage and the activation of communities<sup>548</sup> in determining how to preserve buildings and objects.

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<sup>546</sup> Otero-Pailos J., “Experimental Preservation: the potential of not-me creations”, in Otero-Pailos J., Langdalen E., Arrhenius T. (edited by), 2016. *Experimental Preservation*, Lars Müller Publishers, Zurich, pp. 11 – 40.

<sup>547</sup> For instance, he writes about Reinhard Kropf’s project of preserving waste or Lucia Allais’ work on preserving epoxy resins, which is typically used in preservation techniques as a supplement secondary to the object being conserved and meant to be invisible.

<sup>548</sup> A clear example of it is the project by Lars Ramberg on the Palast der Republik, upon which he installed the sign “zweifel” (German for “doubt”), questioning and inviting citizen to evaluate a building which was perceived as difficult heritage. For East Germans that building was the Socialist Party headquarter, while for West Germans it represented the GDR legacy and so an aberration that

This process of decision making which involves communities is exactly the open-ended process mentioned earlier, which should focus on participating members and how they interpret cultural heritage rather than over-imposing traditional concepts of preservation which silence the potential for dissonance. The creation of a community in the process of selection and making of heritage is directly linked to the third step of organizing dissonance.

The third step(3) is the passage of the use of the building /heritage *from a property perspective to an ownership one*, meaning that the communities of people and institutions who participate to the decision-making process on heritage should also be eligible to run the space and to feel entitled in symbolically owning it by living and using it. This passage means disrupting what has gone on until now in the choices over the reuse of difficult heritage buildings, where the legal owner of the building (the State) decided over it according to functional needs or to a not-so-hidden political agenda. As we saw, this led to uncritical preservation and reuse, which instead now are questioned by civic groups, intellectuals, and artists engaging with difficult heritage. Ownership is here intended as the possibility to being entitled to take care of a place, even without having the legal property over it, which means taking care of the common. The *Care Manifesto* listed public spaces among the four core features in order to build caring communities, defining them as “spaces that are co-owned by everyone, which are held *in common* and are not commandeered by private interests<sup>549</sup>”. As “reclaiming and extending ‘public place-making’, then, enables us to build communities that care<sup>550</sup>”, in the same way problematizing difficult heritage and engage in an open discussion on its possible reuse and reinterpretation with a wide audience (including specialized preservationists, public owners such as the State, the Province or the Municipality, and citizen who have an active

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should be replaced with a replica of the castle that was there before. Cfr. J. Otero-Pailos, 2016, p. 20-21.

<sup>549</sup> The Care Collective, 2020. *The Care Manifesto. The politics of interdependence*, Verso, London, p. 46.

<sup>550</sup> *Ivi*, p. 57.

interest in using the building for public purposes) could generate caring communities and a shared sense of ownership.

Clearly, this shift entails also a rethinking of different roles. The State (as the owner of the building, in this case) and its territorial declinations of provinces, regions and municipalities should guarantee of the accountability of the organizing dissonance process. A new notion of accountability should here be proposed, one that does not focus only on transparency intended purely as making accounting and administrative processes visible, but one based on an ethical stand on the public good (how can it be valuable for citizens, instead of focusing mainly on investors).

Moreover, also specialised professionals should integrate critical approaches updated with global discourses into their discipline. Also the figure of the cultural manager or mediator should be a hybrid figure (either an academic or/and a professional) with interdisciplinary education, deeply rooted in critical heritage studies and a specialist in organizing dissonance. So, a shift in framing the problem of difficult heritage from an only specialized perspective of preservation to a political dimension, goes together with a change in the education of professionals from a disciplinary perspective to an interdisciplinary and critical approach.

These steps and suggestions should be taken as starting points for further development with focuses on management, governance, public administration, and organisation studies, among the others.



### **Further research**

Further studies should address and develop the notion of dissonance and its organizing, both in relation to the Faro convention and to organisation studies linked to uses of the past, conflict, identity, processes of valuation, and change management. The issue of organizing dissonance opens field of research in practices that deal with valuation and making-of-valuable for communities, with changing valuations of the past and their integration in the present identity, with values changing in different social contexts, with emerging conflicts and their resolution, etc. This can also lead to studying how social movements affect valuation processes in cultural (less measurable) contexts. Moreover, another important addition of this research to the organisation studies is inviting to apply theoretical frameworks to bigger, multi-level and more complex systems than single organisations.

From a public governance perspective, the reuse of cultural spaces should be addressed not only from a technical point of view but also from a critical and ethical standpoint. Administrative practices should develop ethical criteria as well as community-based inclusion strategies. Different actions and functions should be identified at different levels of public bodies (State, regions, provinces, municipalities) and public institutions (Demanio) to address the reuse of difficult heritage from a critical and community-based perspective. The scale perspective, however, should not be intended in a hierarchical and closed way, but it should integrate a fluid and networked idea of scale in the public administrative sector. Research should also study a more granular definition of the State that takes into consideration the administrative arrangements that distribute authority and resources across levels of government and create a complex governance network dealing with cultural heritage.

Moreover, a fruitful research area that could intersect the issues of organising dissonance is the public governance applied to the urban commons at a city level. Urban studies may be another field of research with overlapping interests and topics, such as the reuse of buildings and their relational ability to produce dissonance as part of urban commons. Dynamics of making visible the urban commons and managing conflicts can be

compared to difficult heritage cases and can influence the organizing of dissonance.

From a professional and managerial point of view, specific curricula should be developed for the role of mediators in the organisation of dissonance with communities. Research should address different ministerial levels and local ramifications to develop professions and roles that could productively communicate in the mediation process of organising dissonance. Moreover, ethical and critical standpoints should be integrated in the management of difficult heritage, further study on this specific issue is very fundamental.

Further interdisciplinary research should also focus on the intersection of organisation studies and critical heritage studies, and more generally on the application of organisation studies to the cultural sector, from museum studies to creative industries, especially in the Italian context.

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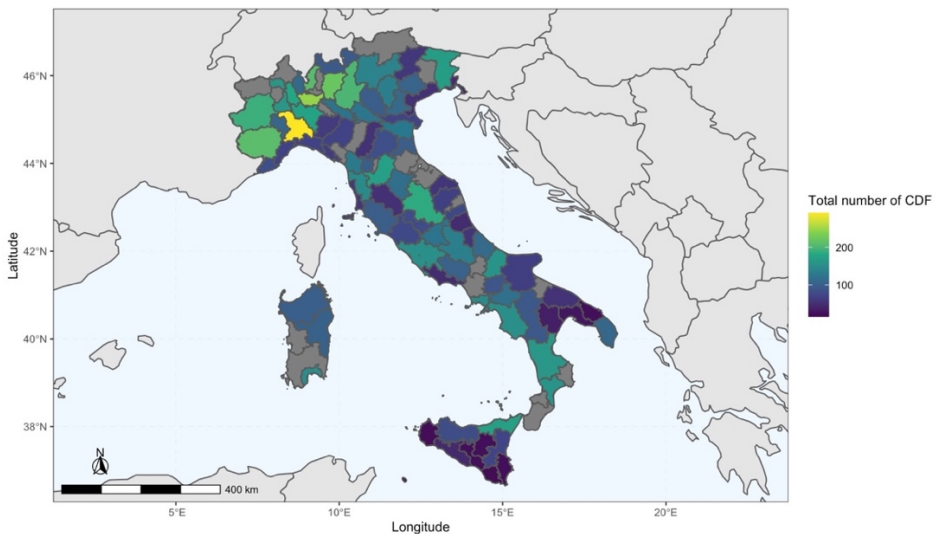


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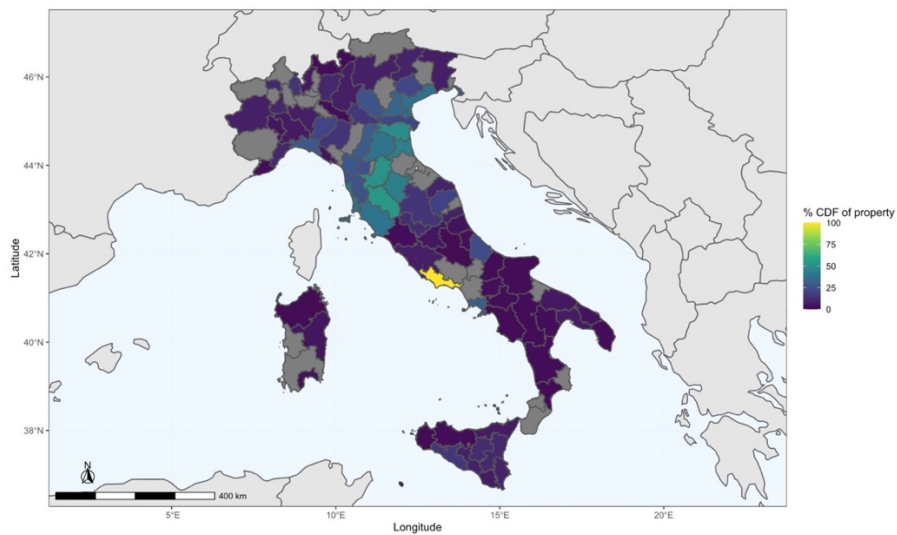


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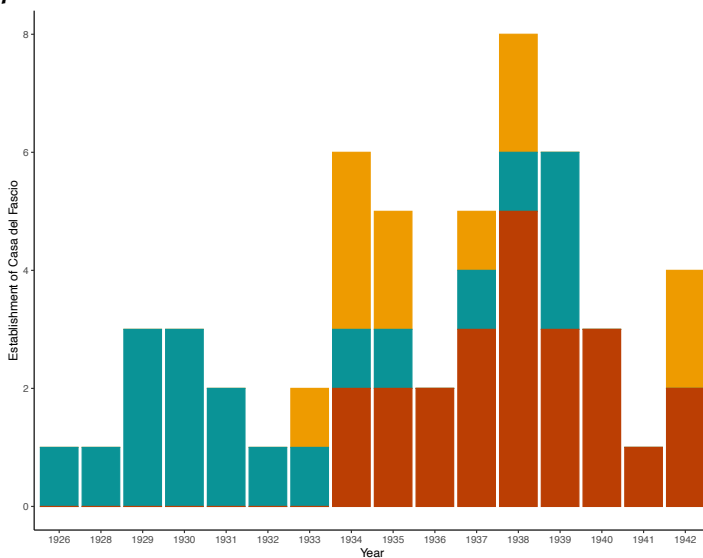


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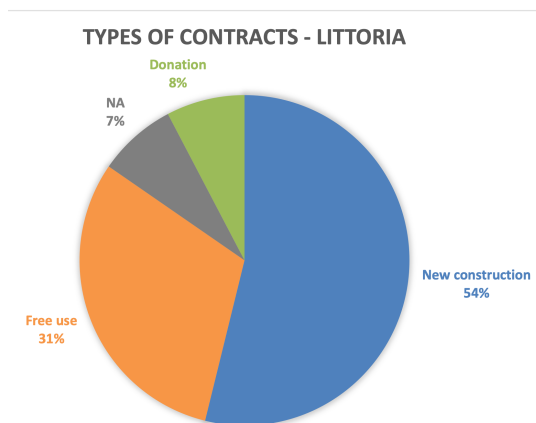
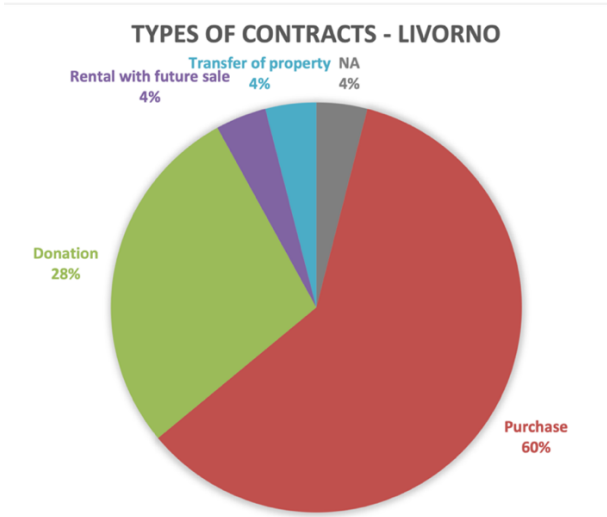
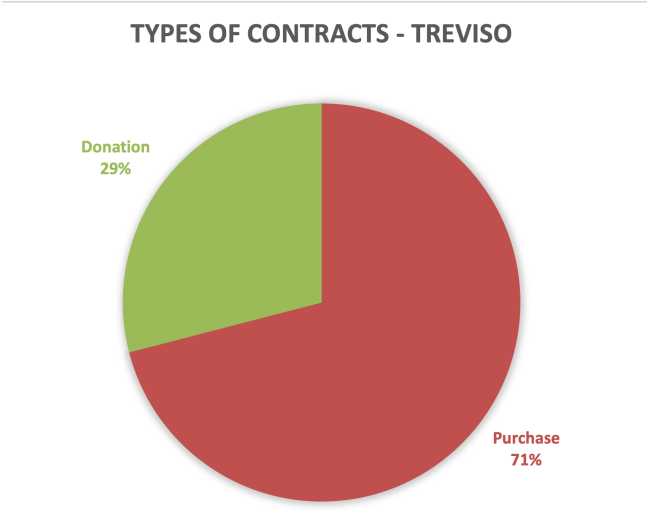


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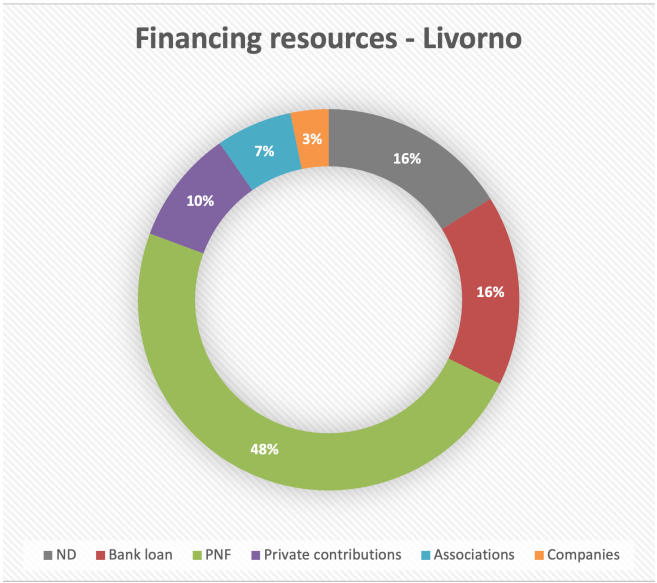


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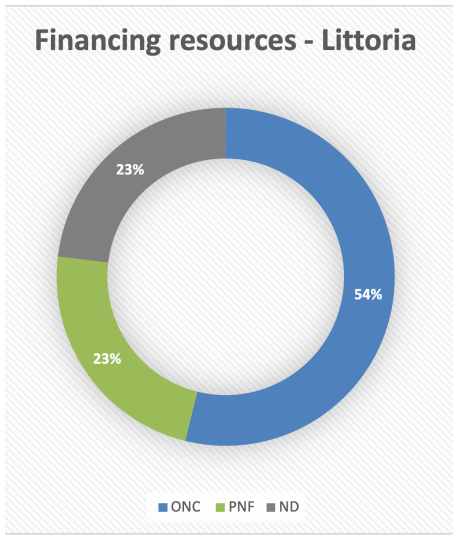


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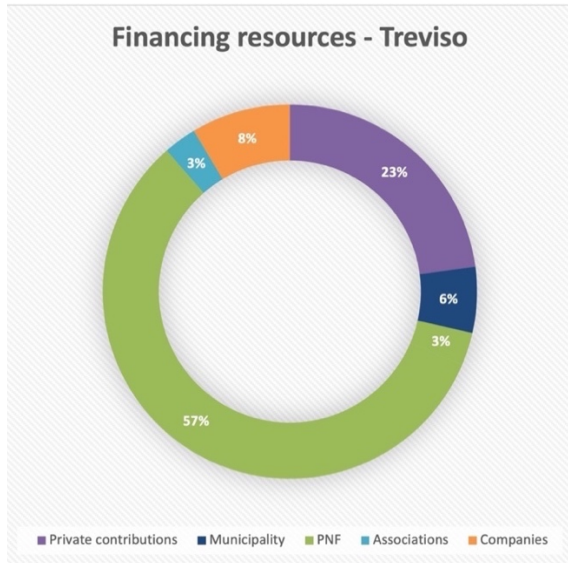


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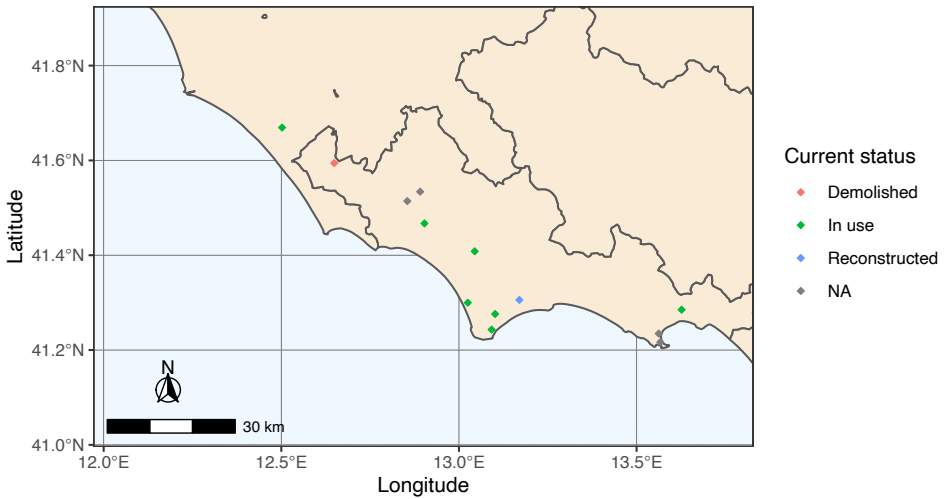


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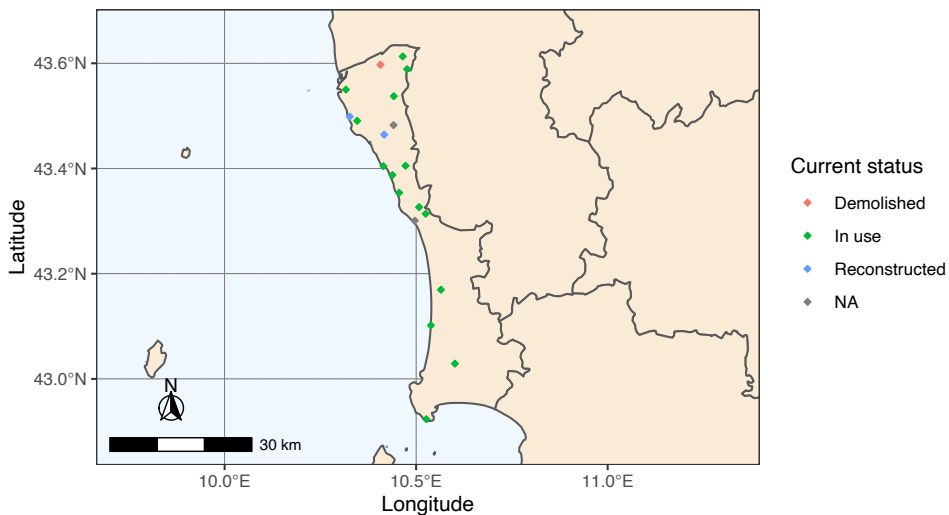


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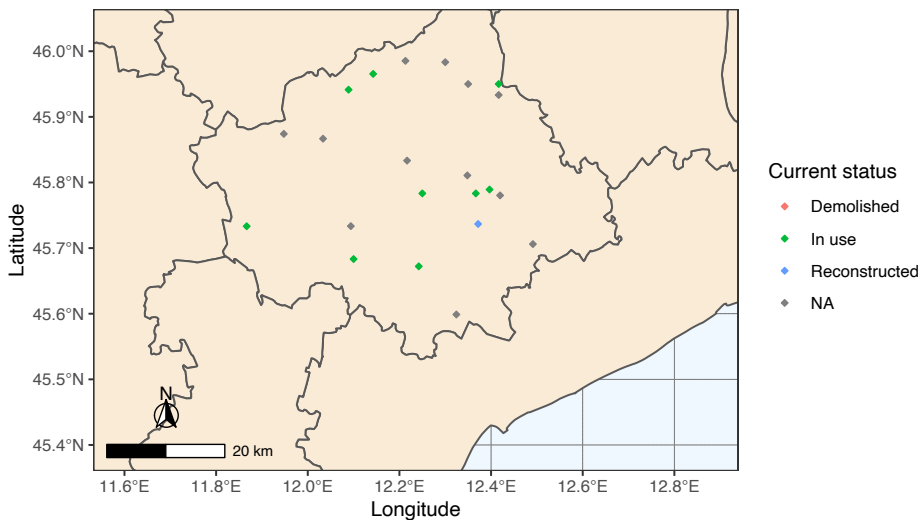


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**Chapter 5.1**  
**Littoria**



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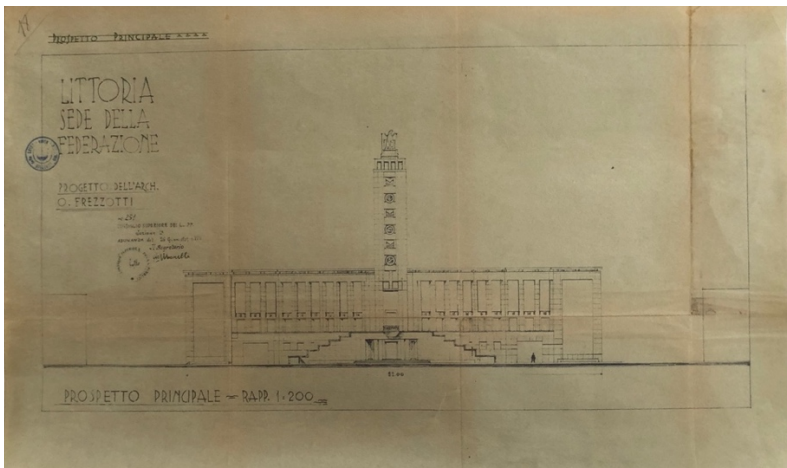


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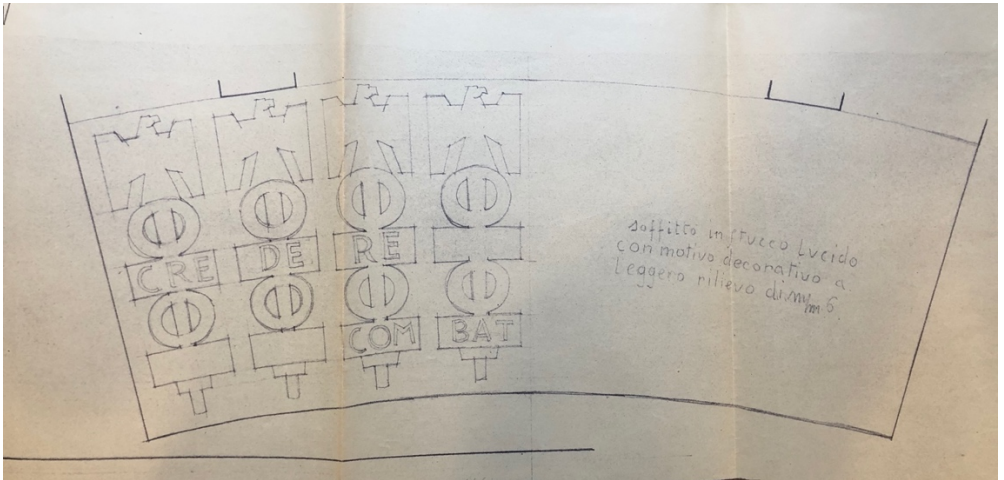


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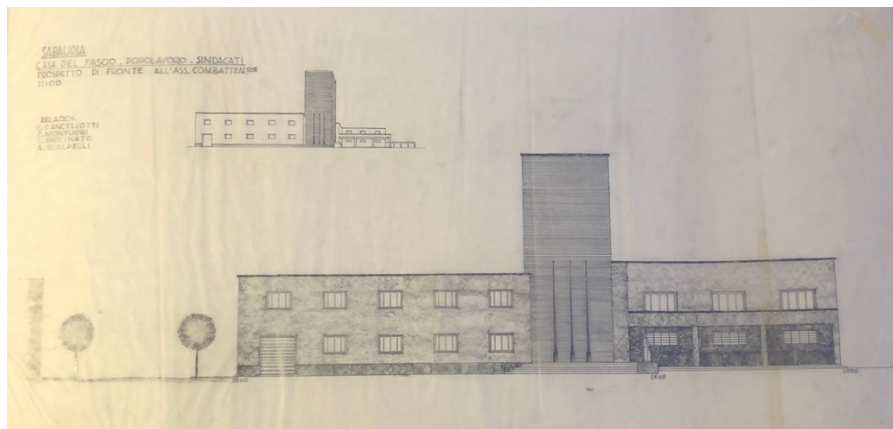


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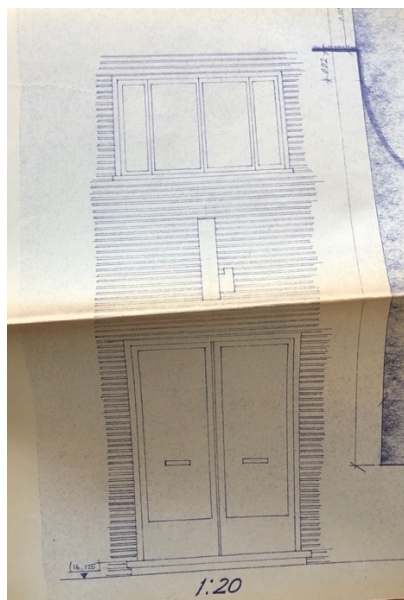


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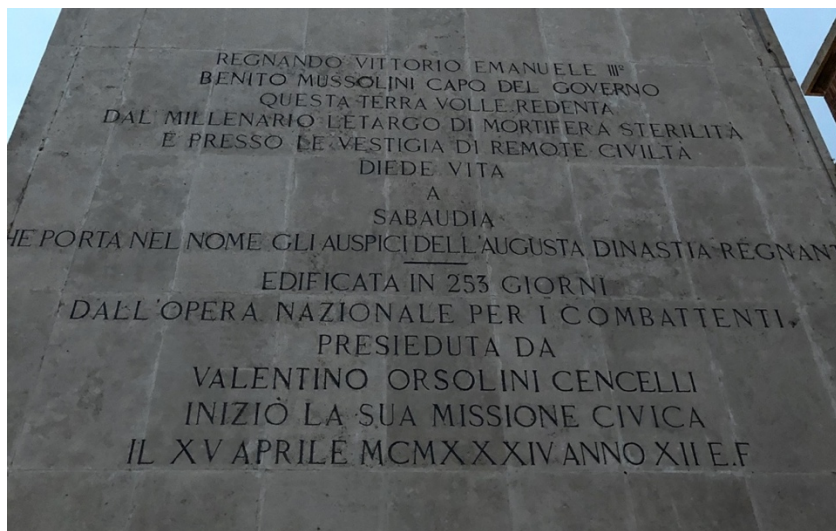
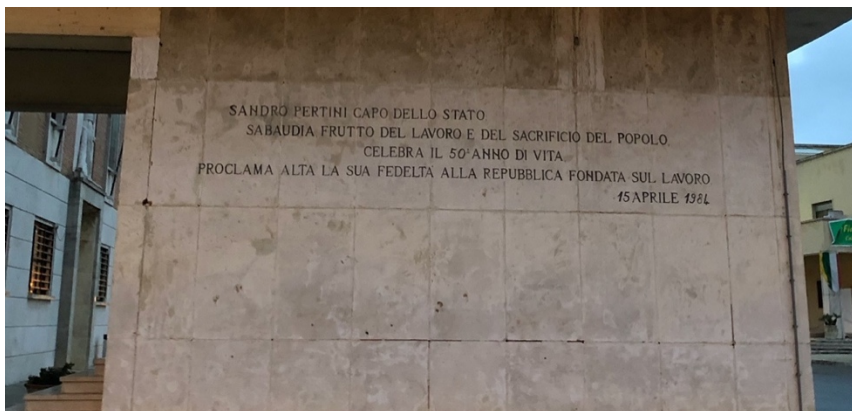


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**Chapter 5.2**  
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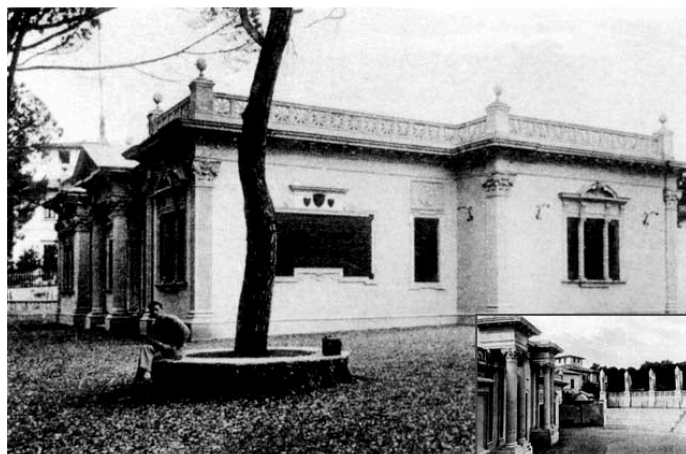
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1932 - La Casa del Fascio

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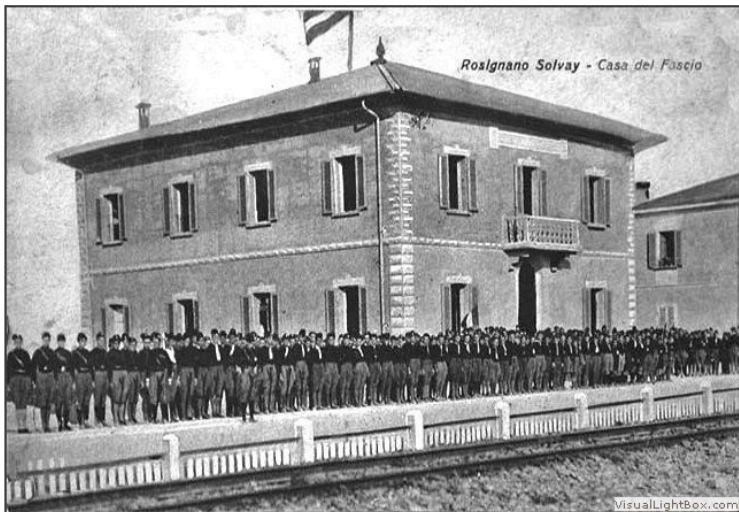
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ROSIGNANO SOLVAY - Vie Aurelia

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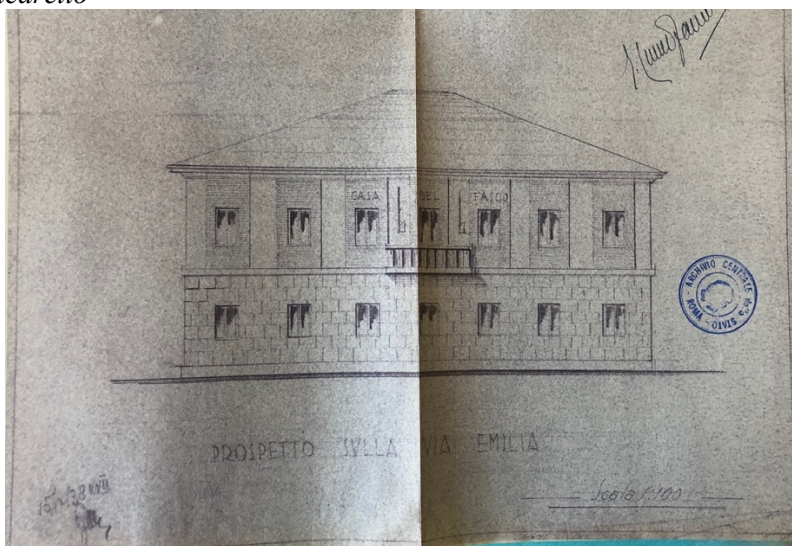


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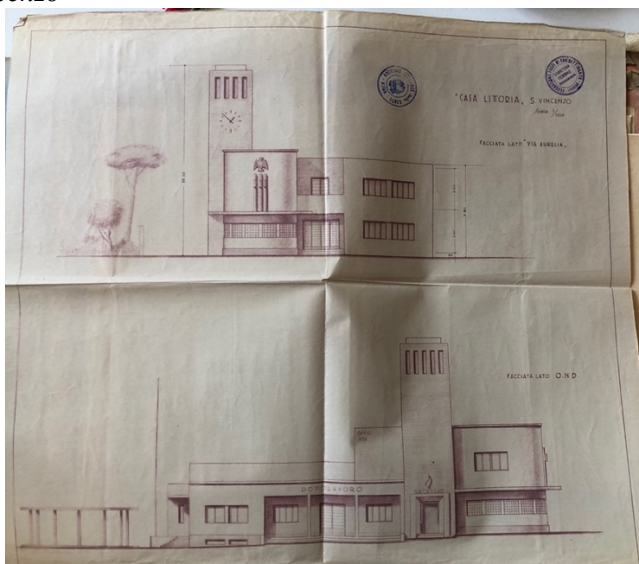


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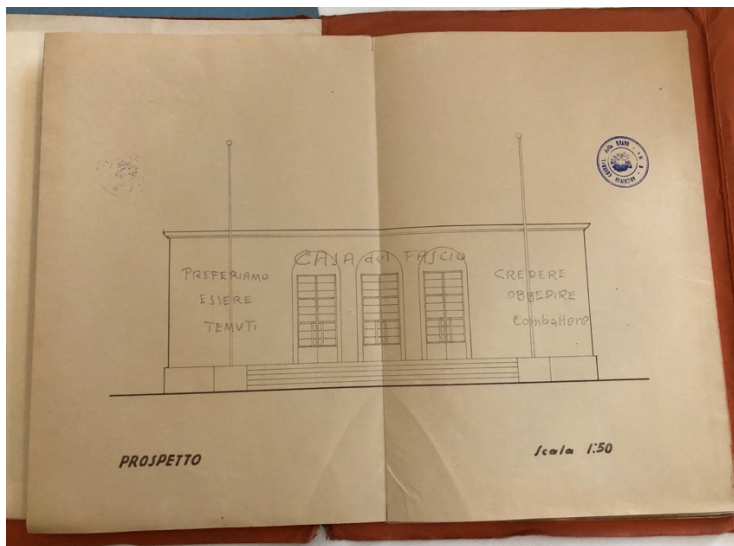


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Figure 104 - The ex-CDF of Cison di Valmarino with fascist writings. Source: photo of the author.



*Figure 105 - Other fascist writings in Cison di Valmarino. Source: photo of the author.*



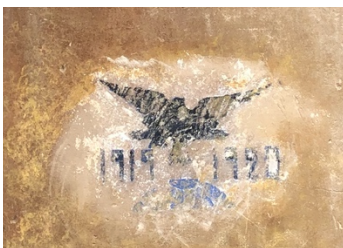


Figure 106 - Fascist writing in Cison di Valmarino main square. Source: photo of the author.

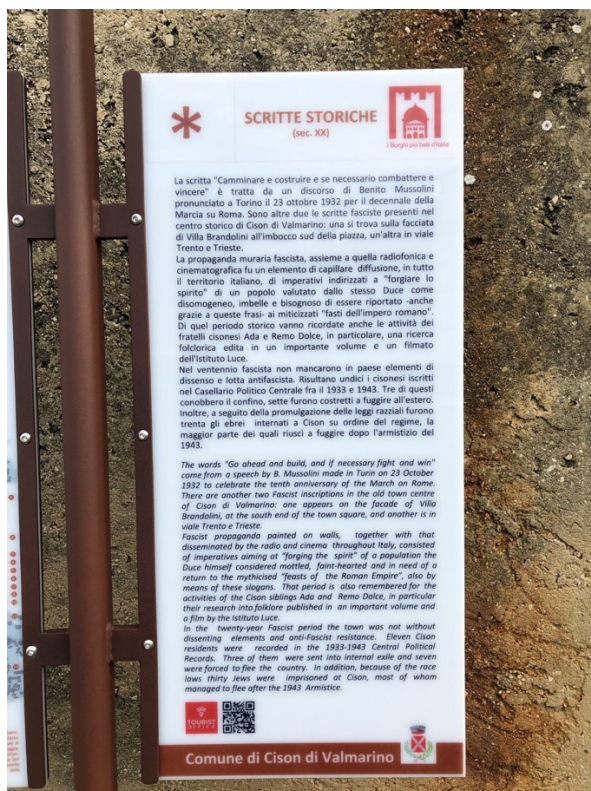


Figure 107 – Labels on the fascist writings in Cison di Valmarino. Source: photo of the author.

*Cimadolmo*



*Figure 108 - The ex-CDF, now Municipality. Source: photo of the author.*

*Cordignano*



*Figure 109 - The CDF in Cordignano. Source: Archivio Centrale di Stato di Roma, fondo PNF 3730, b. 1622*



*Figure 160 - The ex-CDF now as library and cultural center. Source: photo of the author.*



*Figure 111 - The ex-CDF now as library and cultural center. Source: photo of the author.*

*Istrana*



*Figure 112 - The ex-CDF now a Police station.*

*Miane*



*Figure 113 - The CDF today as pro-loco, AVIS, and municipal offices. Source: photo of the author.*



Figure 114 - The facade of the ex-CDF with the plaque of Mussolini speech and economic sanctions. Source: photo of the author.



Figure 115 - The plaques on the CDF. Source: photo of the author.



Figure 116 - The monument in front of the ex-CDF. Source: photo of the author.

### *Neroesa della Battaglia*



Figure 117 - Monumental memorial in Fagarè della Battaglia. Fascist salute. Source: photo of the author.



Figure 118 - *Sacrario del Montello. Ossuary in Nervesa della Battaglia. Source: online image.*



Figure 119 - *“Nervesa della Battaglia - Casa, fascio, Fier Amilcare”, 1929. Autore Z. Dal Secco, Archivio ICCD, fondo Dal Secco n. 2486.*

Source: <http://www.fotografia.iccd.beniculturali.it/inventari/scheda/579316>



*Figure 120 – “Nervesa della Battaglia - Casa del Fascio, cerimonia in onore delle madri e delle vedove di guerra, sono presenti alcune autorità cittadine e religiose”, Autore Z. Dal Secco, Archivio ICCD, fondo Dal Secco n. 2486. Source: <http://www.fotografia.iccd.beniculturali.it/inventari/scheda/579615>*



*Figure 121 - Semi-cancelled fascist writing “Duce in alto i cuori e i pugnali” in Nervesa della Battaglia. Source: photo of the author.*



*Revine Lago*



*Figure 122 - Drawing of the CDF in Revine Lago. Source: Archivio Centrale di Stato di Roma, fondo PNF 3730, b. 1623*

*S. Polo in Piave*



*Figure 123 - The ex-CDF now Casa del Popolo. Source: photo of the author.*

*Spresiano*



*Figure 124 - Postcard of the CDF in Spresiano. Source: online image.*



*Figure 125 - The CDF now as the Municipality. Source: Google maps.*





Figure 128 - Non una di meno intervention on the statue of Indro Montanelli in Milan, 2019. Source: online image.



Figure 129 - Urban intervention in Piazza G. Almirante in Castellammare del Golfo. Source: online image.



*Figure 130 - The “ghost” of Almirante in the square of Castellammare del Golfo.  
Source: online image.*

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