

Carmen M. Enss, Luigi Monzo (eds.)

TOWNSCAPES IN TRANSITION

Transformation and Reorganization
of Italian Cities and Their Architecture
in the Interwar Period



[transcript] **U**RBAN **S**tudies

From:

Carmen M. Enss, Luigi Monzo (eds.)

Townscapes in Transition

Transformation and Reorganization of Italian Cities and Their Architecture in the Interwar Period

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How did urban Italy come to look the way it does today? This collection of essays assembles recent studies in architectural history and theory exploring the historical paradigms guiding architecture and landscape design between the world wars. The authors explore physical changes in townscapes and landscapes, covering a wide range of architectural designs from strict modernist solutions to variations of regionalism, mediterraneanism and national style from all over Italy. Specifically, the volume explains how conservation, restoration and town planning for historic areas led to the production of heritage, and elucidates the role played by architects like Marcello Piacentini, Innocenzo Sabbatini, Mario De Renzi and Giulio Ulisse Arata.

Carmen M. Enss (PhD), born in 1975, is a researcher at the Centre for Heritage Conservation Studies and Technologies at the University of Bamberg. Her research links urban planning with heritage conservation.

Luigi Monzo (PhD), born in 1977, works as an architect in Germany and teaches architectural history and design at the University of Innsbruck. His research addresses the intersections between architectural culture, design process and political conditions in regimes of totalitarian aspiration, especially in fascist Italy.

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Editing Cities in Interwar Italy

Carmen M. Enss and Luigi Monzo

During the interwar period, a myriad of construction projects (cf. Nicoloso 2012: 9-11), major restoration measures and excavation campaigns were carried out in dozens of cities in Italy and its colonies. The nationwide construction effort was carried out as part of the cultural policy strategy of the Fascist party aimed at re-shaping the urban and rural landscape.¹ In the decades of the *Ventennio*, political interest in connecting with a supposedly glorious past encountered an already well-established academic field of monument preservation and restoration theory. Artists and architects admired Italy's architectural heritage and longed for renewed national leadership (Nicoloso 1999: 41; Zucconi 1997: 20). The Fascist regime stimulated, as Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum observed, scholarship in Roman art and architecture, vernacular architecture and Italian gardens, and "[...] fostered the excavation and restoration of surviving examples" (Lazzaro/Crum 2005: 31). The intense awareness of national architectural heritage and an intention of connecting to historic building traditions informed modern architecture and urban development strategies and policies. They inspired plans for the redevelopment of historic urban quarters, where "existing structures were accentuated and perfected through a series of selective interventions" (Lasansky 2004a: 330). Despite a propagandistic commitment to the preservation of national monuments and historic urban spaces (cf. for Rome Insolera 2001), numerous historical, but often impoverished, areas were redeveloped – and thus ultimately demolished. The changes in townscales and landscapes implemented in these decades have become part of Italy's history and determine its image until today. If we visit cities

1 For a propagandistic overview on large-scale restoration projects the first fascist decade after the First World War cf. Giovannoni 1932: 409-410, 419-20. For the context of modern Italian architecture between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in general see, exemplary for a large variety of titles, both volumes of Kirk 2005.

like Bari, Bergamo, Bologna, Brescia, Forlì, Milan, Rimini, Rome, Trieste, Turin, Venice and others analyzed in this book, we often do not notice where historic urban fabric dating from before the First World War are situated and at precisely which point new urban areas, which architects and planners created during the interwar period, begin. Interwar architecture and conservation thus shaped Italy's past and created Italy's future. The effects of the building policy at that time still influence our idea of the country's typical townscapes.

Research in the fields of architectural history, urban planning, historical urban studies or monument preservation looked at whole cities, city districts, or regions as being "edited" or curated in their architectural and social development. As Diana M. Lasansky (2004a: 347) observed, "the visitor's experience of a city was carefully choreographed as a series of encounters with historic landmarks". Concurrently, the concept of "other modernity" going back to Marcello Piacentini's notion of "una modernità diversa" (Pisani 1996: 172) is being rediscovered. Sandro Benedetti described Piacentini's vision of converging modalities of renewal: Piacentini aimed both a "rediscovery (return) of tradition in the form of a creatively recovered guiding idea" and an "adapted further development", so that a self-contained process of creation could bring forth fresh architectures that were valid expressions of new ways of life (Benedetti 2004: 11).² Connecting architecture to history was not an abstract idea but was fed by practical experience in Italian towns and cities.

This book looks at variations of passing down and appropriating architectural concepts and historical structures that led to combinations and architectural compositions of historic and modern buildings and urban quarters. By examining works of Marcello Piacentini, Giovanni Muzio, Pietro Aschieri, Giulio Ulisse Arata, Innocenzo Sabbatini, and others, this book focuses on individual model projects of leading architects who influenced city transformations and transition processes all over Italy.

Numerous publications describe a staging of monuments through urban planning in Rome and Benito Mussolini's efforts to create an idealized image of Italy for his rule and government (cf. Insolera 2001, Cederna 2006, Kirk 2006, Gentile 2008 [2007], Nicoloso 2012). The studies collected in this book extend the focus to cities and regions all over the country and confirm how thoroughly architects and engineers shaped the historical urban and rural landscapes in order to give birth to a modern state. Exemplified with the region of Romagna (see the chapter by Micaela Antonucci and Sofia Nannini in this book), this territorial editing can

2 "ritrovamento (ritorno) della tradizione, come recupero creativo di una guida"; "sviluppo evolutivo".

even be seen as a means of inner colonialization of Italian regions, inspired by a myth of centralized Roman empire.

This book makes an intervention in a transdisciplinary debate within architectural history and theory about architectural culture and cultural policy in Italy's interwar period. It contributes to this debate through the analysis of buildings, towns and quarters as well as theoretical texts. In the broader perspective, the project is part of a general debate on handing down the built heritage of historical cities as a process and a political practice that continues to this day (cf. Höckerberg 2018).

Research state on urban editing between the First and Second World War

Since World War II, research has focused primarily on a complex of design techniques subsumed under a rationalist style in Italian architecture (cf. Mras 1961; Ghirardo 1980; for a critical review on architectural history that often ignored political backgrounds see Spiegel 2015: 53-54). These studies recognized that rationalist architecture was derived notably from historical architecture or historical architectural theory. Daniela Spiegel suggested recently that this successful connection of tradition and modernity in fact "caused the widespread success of the Italian Razionalismo" (Spiegel 2015: 52-54). Henry Millon pointed to a political role that architectural history played in the late Ventennio as early as 1965 (Millon 1965). Italo Insolera published the book *Roma moderna*, a critical history of demolitions performed during the Ventennio (1976 [1962]). In 1978, Paolo Sica (1978) showed the quantitative importance of urban transformation projects in Italy's interwar city planning history by assessing contemporary publications. However, Diane Yvonne Ghirardo still had to complain in 1980: "Most historians have ignored the ardent Fascism of the best architects, while others simply avoid the issue altogether and study the buildings as stylistic phenomena." (1980: 109). While we know that a politicized urbanism focused on a staging and presentation of historical monuments and archeological remains, we still do not know much about the political role of monument preservation. This lack of attention may be due to the fact that, from today's perspective, the outcomes of monument preservation are less evident than those of new construction designs. As Lazzaro and Crum (2005: 31) observed: "inscriptions and fasces were later removed from [listed] buildings [...] the crucial intervention of Fascism in these areas of study has been similarly erased." Christoph Thoenes (1995) responded to Millon's article and observed a restoration practice in the 1930s for renaissance palaces that followed the political intentions of a renewed renaissance. Klaus Tragbar (cf.

2009; 2010) analyzed not only restorations done in towns in Northern Italy, but, more importantly, the political intentions and implications for the restoration culture.

In recent years scholars have been rediscovering the abovementioned concept of “other modernity”. They defined it as a way of designing in modern forms but referring to history or a particular regional context (cf. Docci/Turco 2010; Marucci 2012; Neri 2011). While certain cases like breakthroughs in historical urban areas or specific historical zones, which were restored as a whole in combination with a thinning process, the Italian term was *diradamento*, have been studied in detail before, recent research observes urban transformation processes as a whole. Franz J. Bauer described Rome’s urban development in the 19th and 20th century as a “Construction of a myth” (Bauer 2009). The essay collection *L’urbanistica a Roma durante il ventennio fascista* (Beese/Dobler 2018) shows how actors from different academic fields combined urban design with a staging of archeological or historical monuments. This phenomenon has been portrayed for Fascist Rome before by Kallis (2014), Nicoloso (2008, 2012), Bodenschatz (2011), Vidotto (2015), Kostof (1973) and Insolera (1976 [1962]). Diane Lasansky (2004a) was presumably the first to speak of an “urban editing, historic preservation, and political rhetoric” for analyzing restoration works in San Gimignano. In her book *The Renaissance perfected* she looked at the “selective preservation” of Arezzo (2004b: 107), which she described as aimed to design an idealized medieval townscape. Not only historic quarters, but new towns rely on design concepts that invoked historical images. After the First World War, the incipient Fascism was based on a strong national-conservative culture. In that intellectual climate, namely, e.g., at the Scuola Superiore di Architettura in Rome, founded in 1919/20 (cf. Colonna 1994), architecture was assigned the role of lifting an existing architectural culture and thus also a national architectural landscape into modern times. In recent years, scholars reflected various shadows of modernity and re-established “other modernity” (*altra modernità*) as a term. What remained untouched was to categorize different approaches to handing down a historic architectural culture to modernity. Cettina Lenza’s chapter in this book responds to a theoretical background of that desideratum, whereas the other chapters analyze architecture and urban planning projects as practical examples for different strategies for reenacting architectural traditions.

The research focus for this book

This book aims to contextualize both new architecture and restoration efforts in architecture within urban and landscape transformation. We chose this overarch-

ing perspective in order to unfold a panorama of Italian townscapes in transition. Historical, architectural research often excluded monument conservation, which was commonly accompanied by efforts for staging surrounding areas, a practice of editing and integrating historical districts into the modern city. This book, *Townscapes in Transition*, looks at architecture and urban design as ways of transforming existing townscapes and landscapes to modernity and discusses theories of tradition in architecture and urban planning. The publication examines a wide range of construction and transformation processes from restoration campaigns for historic quarters up to new design concepts derived from historical models. We identify them as phenomena in a shared intellectual climate of a new renaissance of Italian architecture. The aspect of heritage was not only expressed in handing down monuments, physical structures, and the overall urban fabric but also through an architectural culture which was perceived as a tradition that could be inherited and yet modernized and transformed, – a concept that we would describe today as intangible heritage.

Departing from that heritage perspective, we can observe urban editing as a professional and political culture that included architecture, urban planning, and design, monument restoration, superordinate building programs like that of banks, fascist organizations or even the Catholic Church (for the Church cf. Monzo 2017). As we will show later, all these elements were incorporated into the field of *urbanistica* by the end of the 1920s. Because of their visible references to historical architecture, we suggest interpreting foundation cities as new editions of historic Italian or Mediterranean towns or cities.

In the first part of this introductory text, we give an overview of how an immense need for housing and urban expansion in Italy was joined to a political intention to connect to glorious ages in history. We describe how architecture and the restoration of monuments were assigned the task of simultaneously representing that past and connecting it to the present by drawing on myths and creating a backdrop to carry myths into the present. We give an overview of how architecture and commissioning were reorganized after the First World War and finally offer a panorama of significant urban development measures of that time.

In the second part, we introduce the understanding of urban planning at that time. We explain how investment in new public buildings, monument preservation, redevelopment of central urban areas and city extension were all conceived as an overall urban and regional development strategy. The different chapters of this book speak to different aspects and different scales of townscapes in transition and are shortly introduced here and contextualized within the overall strategies of *urbanistica*.

I: POLITICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL BACKDROPS OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD IN ITALY

Fascist self-fulfillment: Will for order and mobilization

After the First World War, Italy, like many other countries, is on an epochal threshold (cf. Münkler 2013: 797). Although the multi-layered processes of change that have been built up over decades are far more complex than can be captured in a central event, it is nevertheless the traumatic experience of the World War that produces a new kind of collective feeling that urges participation and change (cf. Leonhard 2018: 23-25). The well-nigh mystified “trench community” (Kershaw 2016: 105) is only the most extreme expression of a mass society that is now distinctly emerging and increasingly shaping cultural and political developments. A society of the masses that reveals itself to many contemporaries as a “deeply ambivalent result of demographic development, economic dynamism and social mobilization”³ (Leonhard 2014: 25) and that expresses itself in new ways of living, of working, but also of organizing itself. Changes that do not fail to leave the built environment unscathed. On the contrary, they turn out to be driving forces of a substantial and visible change of the living environments.

The growing inflow of persons seeking work into urban centres and the considerable birth rates since 1900, which continued in Italy even throughout the war years, articulate themselves in a dynamic urban growth and increasing urbanization in the Interwar period. In parallel, however, a counter-movement to rapid urbanization is developing aiming at opening up new or previously neglected areas (regionalism). In this context, urbanization is reflected in the densification of existing urban structures and in urban expansions, while ruralization is expressed in regional, mostly agrarian settlement policy measures. Both strategies gain increasingly in importance in the Interwar period and form the basis on which the constructional changes of the Interwar period take place.

Simultaneously, the destructive force of the World War has disenchanted the bourgeois belief in progress of the 19th century (cf. Leonhard 2014: 24-26). In the search for individual and collective self-assurance, it is now a matter of repositioning oneself in a profoundly transformed reality of life (cf. Leonhard 2014: 25). The new dynamic society that emerged in the long 19th century thus becomes the field of action of modern political mass movements that offer orientation with programmatic and intuitive offers. And it is this reorientation accelerated by the

3 „zutiefst ambivalentes Ergebnis der demografischen Entwicklung, der wirtschaftlichen Dynamik und sozialen Mobilisierung“.

First World War that characterizes the Interwar period as a transitional period between the world of the 19th and 20th centuries.

In a short post-war period, in which power in Italy is literally on the street due to a weakened liberal bourgeois government, the fascist mass movement under the leadership of the former interventionist Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) succeeds in seizing power in 1922 by a mixture of exuberant use of force and “pacification politics”⁴ (Woller 2016: 73). Already at an early stage it became apparent that the fascist regime sees itself as a new power of order that pursues the goal of “motivating” and “mobilizing” the masses for a “strictly hierarchically ordered modern people’s state without classes” that is also expansive in foreign and domestic policy (Woller 2016: 80).⁵ This combination of the will to order and mobilization becomes the paradigm of fascist self-fulfillment: on the one hand, the fascist movement wants to be the perfecter of a lost, but culturally and historically founded greatness, on the other hand, it wants to embody a young, vital – and at times also brilliant – force leading Italy into a glorious future (cf. Payne 2006: 573-591). As a result, the promise of a deeper identification with one’s own culture goes hand in hand with the demand for orientation and formation of a “new kind of civilization” (Washburn Child 1999 [1928]: 146).⁶

Towards a fascist building policy

The fascist regime, which was gradually installed in 1922 following Mussolini’s takeover of the affairs of state, sees itself as a revolutionary force. Accordingly, the 1920s were marked by the reorganization of the state structure in the sense of a corporate and authoritarian order.⁷ Through skillful consensus politics, the

4 „Pazifizierungs-Politik“. There is a plethora of studies and publications on fascism that can hardly be overlooked. Stanley G. Payne’s *A History of Fascism* (Payne 1995) and Emilio Gentile’s *Fascismo* (Gentile 2007 [2005]) may still serve as an appropriate introduction. On Italian fascism, however, in addition to the extensive basic research of Renzo De Felice, the multi-layered research of Emilio Gentile is particularly worthy of note. On the history of society and culture in fascist Italy, the works of Richard J. B. Bosworth, Christopher Duggan, Patrizia Dogliani, Jens Petersen, Wolfgang Schieder and Alessandra Tarquini are particularly important.

5 „motivieren“; „mobilisieren“; „strenge hierarchisch geordnete[n] modernen Volksstaat ohne Klassen“.

6 “nuova via di civiltà”.

7 For a brief explanation of fascist *corporatism* we refer to De Bernardi/Guarracino 2003: 233f.

transition to an increasingly totalitarian practice of rule is initiated. In this process, well described by Emilio Gentile as a phase of “totalitarian acceleration”⁸ (Gentile 2007 [2005]: 27f), Italian fascism relies less on a self-contained, immovable logical order of ideas (ideology) than on an ideology of use without precise doctrine oriented towards the practical exploitation of emotional and mythical moments, such as liturgy-like organized mass dynamics, worship of the fallen, the myth of Rome, the cult of the leader, etc. (cf. Mack Smith 2004 [1981]: 224-232, Gentile 2001). “Myths and Rites of Fascism”⁹ (Silva 1975 [1973]: 155; cf. Gentile 2005 [2001]) are stylized into connecting elements of a new mass society. In their visible counterparts, a propaganda that promises departure and novelty mixes with historical recourses creating continuity and a state supporting monumentality. Accordingly, fascist architectural politics aims at the dynamic embodiment of the Italian spirit and at the same time at the accomplishment of an Italian greatness perceived in myths. Building construction becomes the expression of a cultural ability that is experienced as superior. And yet the seeming contradiction between the fascist-sponsored recourse to tradition and the past and the simultaneous claim to be a modern nation dissolves in the ideological utility value of the newly shaped built environment.¹⁰ The ultimate goal is an idea of identity legitimized by permanence and continuity, communicated by recognition and familiarity, and at the same time projected promisingly into eternity: “What we have created is destined to exist for centuries.”¹¹

Fascism uses architecture as a means of communicating with and influencing the masses; architecture is supposed to create consensus, secure acclamation and coin people in the sense of fascism by conveying its myths. In this way, architecture becomes part of a ‘pedagogical’ process in which identity creation and fascistization merge in the education to a new ‘fascist human being’ (*uomo nuovo*). This ambition is particularly impressively reflected in the architecture of the holiday settlements commissioned by the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB), a fascist youth organization (cf. Capomolla/Mulazzani/Vittorini 2008). It is also found in the party buildings, the so-called Case del Fascio (cf. Portoghesi/Mangione/Soffitta 2006), as well as in the new town foundations of the Pontine Plain (cf.

8 “accelerazione totalitaria”.

9 „Mythen und Riten des Faschismus“.

10 On the more general theme of the search for an art and architecture which can be connotated to national motives we refer to the 2011 conference ‘Kunst auf der Suche nach der Nation’ (Art in Search of the Nation): cf. Dombrowski 2013.

11 “Quello che abbiamo fatto è destinato a rimanere nei secoli.” Benito Mussolini, quoted from Estermann-Juchler 1982, p. 31.

Spiegel 2010), in the construction of which the *Opera Nazionale Combattenti* (ONC), the fascist veterans' association, plays a major role (for the specific use of building materials and autarchy see the chapter by Angela Pecorario Martucci in this book). Against this socio-political background, the fascist regime is building a system of institutionalized influence and control. In the field of building construction, this system is essentially based on control over the training of professionals involved in the construction sector, the legal definition and corporate organization of the same profession, as well as control over the press, especially the specialized press, and the commissioning of building projects. Particularly the latter is decisive for the development of an architectural language that can be related to the self-representation of the regime.

Reforming the architects education

In accordance with the demands of a great and modern nation already established in nationalism, the political and cultural initiatives, even before Mussolini took power, were aimed at making architects ambassadors of a new national identity by reorganizing the profession and centralizing architectural education. A not inconsiderable role in the reorganization of architectural training plays Freemasonry, which, until its prohibition in 1926, exerts a considerable influence on the Istituto di Belle Arti in Rome as a result of personal interweavements. At the time, the sculptor Ettore Ferrari (1845-1931), the Grand Master of the most influential lodge in Italy, chairs the Istituto di Belle Arti (cf. Nicoloso 2004 [1999]: 28-33). Unlike the Milan Polytechnic, founded in 1865, the Istituto di Belle Arti stands for an artistic teaching approach. The two institutions' exemplary different emphases in the training of architects are reflected in the legislative initiative of the architect and Member of Parliament Cesare Nava (1861-1933), which strengthens the technical point of view, and the legislative initiative of the State Secretary Giovanni Rosadi (1862-1925), which is oriented towards the traditional art academies, from which in turn the term 'academists', later used in contemporary discourse to describe the academically trained traditionalists of older generations, as a term of combat originates. In addition, Nava proposes the establishment of architecture academies or faculties in the country's largest cities, while Rosadi initially sees education centralized in Rome. In addition to strengthening Rosadi's proposal, Rosadi is also close to the environment of the Roman architect, engineer and leading architectural historian Gustavo Giovannoni (1873-1947). Together with the architect and Member of Parliament Manfredo Manfredi (1859-1927), Giovannoni leads a group of influential Roman professionals involved in the construction sector, who, in the then most important Italian association of architects

and artists, the *Associazione Artistica fra i Cultori di Architettura* (1890-1927), dedicated themselves to the national renaissance of Italian architecture.¹² The group also includes later protagonists such as the architects Marcello Piacentini (1881-1960), who, thanks to Ferrari's intervention, is able to participate in the prestigious 1924 competition for the Memorial of the Fallen in Genoa, and Arnaldo Foschini (1884-1968), as well as the later president of the National Fascist Architects' Corporation Alberto Calza Bini (1881-1957), who, thanks to Ferrari's connections, is able to obtain a post in the Ministry of Education in 1919. As a result of the war, neither of the two legislative initiatives passes the parliament, but it becomes clear that, because of the gradually increasing influence of the Roman environment, Rome would play a central role in the training of architects.

Initially, Giovannoni is the formative figure in the debate about a scientifically founded architectural training. As spokesman, he succeeds in establishing the first Italian architecture college with the founding of the *Scuola Superiore di Architettura* in Rome (1919/20) (cf. Nicoloso 2004 [1999]: 23-49, Beese 2016: 110-113). The program of the new school adopts its training concept which is denominated *architetto integrale* (cf. Giovannoni 1916, Zucconi 1997a). It combines a profound knowledge of architectural history with an open attitude towards modern society and modern building materials and techniques. The knowledge of architectural history is applied to the discipline of *restauro*, restoration, conservation and preservation of cultural building heritage. In doing so, Giovannoni conveys a theoretical approach that emphasizes the determinant importance of the built context for new building types as well. Based on his understanding of a city being an agglomeration of building heritage, he demands extensive protection status for historical urban areas and sensitive building in the vicinity of monuments (*ambientismo*). Together with the preservation of historical monuments and decorative arts, the range of subjects furthermore includes the classical canon, typical of the turn of the century Europe, which plays into the still strong references to materiality and forms of existing architecture characterizing most of the Italian architectural designs of the Interwar period.

The reform of the professional education is accompanied by the journal *Architettura e Arti Decorative*, published since 1921 by the *Associazione Artistica fra i Cultori di Architettura* and directed by Giovannoni and Piacentini (cf. Beese 2016: 114-117). In this regard, the integral technical and artistic training aims at the development of an own, unmistakable Italian style (cf. Giovannoni 1921).

12 For the *Associazione Artistica fra i Cultori di Architettura* cf. Albrecht 2017: 29-39, see also glossary at the end of this book.

Thus, Giovannoni writes:

Please do not confuse stylistic inclinations with didactic orientation, these are two fundamentally different things. [...] in my opinion, transient fashions do not belong to what is to be taught; instead, the search for a constructive rationalism must take precedence. But on the other hand this must not lead us tearing down the bridges to the past and disrupting the line of continuity that constitutes the most praiseworthy tradition with which Italy in parts still dominates the world.¹³ (Giovannoni 1929 [1925]: 51).

The increasing importance of the controlled design of the built environment, especially in view of the growing urbanization in Italy, also leads to the newly created subject *Edilizia cittadina* (Urban construction) at the *Scuola Superiore di Architettura di Roma*, taught by Piacentini, which subsequently gives rise to *Urbanistica* (Urban planning) as an independent discipline. Piacentini, however, already makes an early plea (cf. Piacentini 1922: 60-72) for an urban development adapted to the requirements of “the economization and rationalization of the construction industry as well as the ‘de-individualization’ of society”¹⁴ (Beese 2016: 117). As a representative of an “Italian way to new tendencies”¹⁵ (Nicoloso 2004: 60), Piacentini, who has meanwhile been promoted as the undisputed broker of Italian architecture for Mussolini, assumes from 1927 on the sole management of the country’s most important architectural magazine *Architettura e Arti Decorative*.¹⁶

Reorganization of the profession

The development initiated by educational reform and journalism is flanked by a reorganization of the profession. On 24 June 1923, in Italy, the professional titles *architect* and *engineer* are legally protected for the first time in Europe, and in 1925 the transition from studies to professional life is linked to a state examination, which is still required today, for the ability to exercise the profession (cf. Tragbar 2012: 200-202). This coincides with the quasi-authoritarian corporate reorganization of the working class and the reorganization of the professions

13 “Non confondiamo due argomenti diversissimi, quali quelle delle tendenze stilistiche e dell’indirizzo didattico. [...] il mio pensiero: bando alle mode effimere [...] e ricerca di un razionalismo costruttivo, senza che questa ricerca ci faccia rompere i ponti con il passato ed interrompa il filo di una mirabile tradizione continua per la quale ancora in parte l’Italia domina il mondo.”

14 „der Ökonomisierung und der Rationalisierung des Baugewerbes sowie der ‚Entindividualisierung‘ der Gesellschaft“.

15 “via italiana alle nuove tendenze”.

16 On the outstanding role of Piacentini see above all Nicoloso 2018.

(*corporatism*) that has been carried out since 1927 within the framework of the fascist restructuring of the state. During this process, a fascist professional representation of architects is founded under the name of *Sindacato Nazionale Architetti Fascisti* (National Fascist Architects' Corporation, see glossary) and taken under the leadership of Alberto Calza Bini.¹⁷ Through its direct relationship with the Ministry of Corporation, which emerged from the Ministry of Economics in 1929, it serves above all to influencing building construction activities and thus indirectly to influence the creators of built environment (cf. Rifkind 2012a). With a view to the solidarity of Piacentini and Calza Bini in the architectural corporation the architect Giuseppe Pensabene (1898-1968) speaks even of an "artistic self-dictatorship"¹⁸ (Pensabene 1933). The importance of the institution increases along with the extent to which Mussolini, after the consolidation of his rule (effectively staged in the *Lateran Treaties* with the Catholic Church, see glossary), increasingly focuses on architecture and building policy.

During the Second Congress of the Architects' Corporation on 17 July 1931, it became clear that from now on a strong influence on the built representation of the regime and infrastructural development of the country is to be aimed at through competitions and the awarding of contracts by taking a stand for a "[p]ropaganda without rest", so that "in every favorable circumstance the public administrations will announce competitions for works of some importance, giving the Architects' Corporation mandate for the preparation of the relative calls and recognizing to the same corporation the necessary function of control over the seriousness of the operations of competition both by the individual competitors, as well as by the juries and the same public authority."¹⁹ (*Architettura e arti Decorative* 1931: 634) As early as 1932, the Architects' Corporation is able to set a moderately modern

17 The *Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Ingegneri* (National Fascist Engineers' Corporation) is also founded. The typical Italian confusion of that time between the professional titles of *architect* and *engineer* can be resolved by looking at the educational curricula: previously, building professionals were organised according to their education in the *Federazione Architetti Italiani* (for graduates of art schools) and in the *Società degli Ingegneri e degli Architetti Italiani* (for graduates of engineering schools and polytechnics) (cf. Albrecht 2017: 29 Footnote 60).

18 "autodittatura artistica".

19 "Propaganda senza riposo perché in ogni circostanza favorevole le pubbliche amministrazioni bandiscano concorsi per le opere di qualche importanza, dando ai sindacati mandato per la preparazione dei bandi relativi e riconoscendo ai sindacati medesimi la necessaria funzione di controllo sulla serietà delle operazioni di concorso tanto da parte dei singoli concorrenti, quanto da parte delle giurie e degli stessi Enti banditori."

stylistic standard by the organization and holding of a series of competitions for new churches in the earthquake-damaged area of the diocese of Messina, which is commissioned by the Bishop of Messina (cf. Monzo 2017, 699–769). This is followed by the so-called *stagione dei concorsi* (literally: season of competitions) (cf. Ciucci 2002 [1989]: 129–151, Casciato 2004: 208–233). Large-scale national competitions for public representative buildings and urban redevelopment through urban development plans (called *Piano Regolatore Generale* or simply *Piano Regolatore*, PRG or PR) are intended to shape the face of fascist Italy. In doing so, the strengthening of competition is aimed at increasing the influence of the Architects' Corporation vis-à-vis the local building and planning authorities through the composition of the juries and the selection of participants (cf. Calza Bini 1933). Among the tasks to be performed, the competitions for several post office buildings, the fascist party headquarters (Palazzo del Littorio) and the new university campus (Città universitaria) in Rome as well as for the new Santa Maria Novella railway station in Florence along with accompanying discussions on the orientation of Italian architecture stand out. However, a wide number of competitions and initiatives throughout the country testifies to a highly productive policy. Contemporaneous this policy is accompanied and channeled by Piacentini's ubiquitous presence.²⁰

The magazine *Architettura* (1932–44), formerly *Architettura e Arti Decorative*, meanwhile transformed into the mouthpiece of the Architectural Corporation, becomes, under the leadership of Piacentini, a showcase for the building activity stimulated by the regime and, at the same time, a pace setter for the officially favored, moderately modern architectural language. Giovannoni, being considered too conservative, is marginalized; the Associazione Artistica fra i Cultori di Architettura is brought into line with the fascist architectural corporation. Piacentini 'dedusts' the editorial staff of the magazine by surrounding himself with young and familiar collaborators such as Plinio Marconi, Gaetano Minnucci and Giulio Pediconi, and significantly appoints with Giuseppe Pagano, Adalberto Libera, Giovanni Michelucci and Luigi Piccinato protagonists of the Italian avant-garde as correspondents (cf. Nicoloso 2018: 134).

20 Cf. in particular Paolo Nicoloso's chapter Piacentini and unitary architectural directions for Italian cities in this volume.

Creative homogenization and state architecture

The initial “pluralism of styles”²¹ (Pfammatter 1996 [1990]), Daniela Spiegel even speaks of “extraordinary architectural variety” (Spiegel 2015: 43), is gradually becoming a relatively homogeneous national architectural trend, in which the various leading forces of Italian architecture participate. Still at the beginning of the 1930s, the fascist understanding of architecture oscillates between traditional and radically modern forms of expression, before these, accompanied by heated theoretical discussions (cf. Patetta 1972), are channeled through a real competition of currents into a unification of architectural language subserving the self-representation of the regime. This process is exemplarily reflected by the dissolution of the *Movimento Italiano per l'Architettura Razionale* (MIAR, see glossary), the Italian movement for rational architecture, which collected the representatives of a “radical rationalism”²² (Benedetti 2010: 77), at the instigation of the Architectural Corporation, and the absorption of some of its leading members (Adalberto Libera, Sebastiano Larco, Carlo Enrico Rava) in the newly formed *Raggruppamento Architetti Moderni Italiani* (RAMI) controlled by Piacentini. It is through skillful mediation and by according changing favours that Mussolini’s ‘architectural governors’, Marcello Piacentini and Alberto Calza Bini, manage to bundle the various currents into a dynamic complex of creative homogenization.

Temporary sympathies of the regime, nurtured by the revolutionary left of the Fascist party (PNF) towards the *Razionalismo* represented by young radical architects, lead to an open confrontation, which finally merges into an “architectural *trasformismo*”²³ (Monzo 2017: 103). In this process, the permissive architectural policy of the early period is gradually being turned into the claim of a ‘genuinely fascist’ architecture – an architecture that consequently recalls fascist myths of national greatness. Such an architecture, while representing the claim of a modern revolution, must therefore speak a language understandable to the masses and easily accessible to collective memory; fully in the sense of an architecture that “speaks [...] to the memory of the nation”²⁴ (Nicoloso 2008: XVII). This, in turn, has the consequence that the importance that monuments have been attributed to the foundation and fortification of national identity since Italian unification is also accorded to the new monumental buildings of the fascist state. In this regard, the *Consiglio Superiore delle Belle Arti ed Antichità*, responsible for the uniform

21 „Pluralismus der Stile“.

22 “razionalismo radicale”.

23 „architektonischen trasformismo“.

24 “che [...] parli alla memoria della nazione”.

treatment of important monuments since the 19th century, also takes on responsibility for the city as a monument site with the new Town Planning Act and thus also for the integration of historical buildings and ensembles into modern urban planning (cf. Colavitti 2018: 100, Fontana 1999). In this way, the interlocking of building heritage with modern architecture and new structures referring to this heritage is ensured.

Figure 1: Angiolo Mazzoni, Termini Station, Rome, 1941, mockup of the frontal portico realized in Acque Albule near Tivoli



From: Ciucci, Giorgio (2004), p. 477

As Paolo Nicoloso has pointed out in his study *Mussolini architetto* (cf. 2008: 219-252) the development since the beginning of the 1930s towards a decided state architecture (the so-called *Stile Littorio* or *Licortrial Style*, cf. Palozzi 1936) is part of the integration of building production into the totalitarian acceleration processes of the regime. Characteristic of this period of transition to a unification

of architectural trends in a “national modernity”²⁵ (Benedetti 2010: 67) – Piacentini also speaks here of “unitary physiognomy”²⁶ (Piacentini 1939: 6) – are the remarkably strong changes to which advanced projects in the construction and planning process are subjected, such as the Palazzo di Giustizia in Milan, the Ministero delle Corporazioni in Rome, the Palazzo delle Poste in Naples or even the church Sacro Cuore di Cristo Re in Rome. Another example, which has so far received little attention in this key function, is the result of the competition series for the diocese of Messina organized by the architects’ corporation. In 1932, even before the decisions in the aforementioned major national architectural competitions in Rome and Florence, the chairman of the jury, Piacentini, and the organizer, Calza Bini, forced a clear shift towards a formal language that mediated between the Italian building heritage, which is important for national self-assurance, and the objectification of forms (Fig. 1). It is characteristic that the generally desire for representative size and monumentality which is authoritative in the Interwar period across countries (cf. Borsi 1986), is combined with the basic principles of the avant-garde to form a symbiosis of familiar design elements and reduced formulation: “in the most modern and functional forms of expression, the classical and the monumental must be the inspiration of architectural creation”²⁷ (Mariani 1987: 67). Accordingly, in 1931 Piacentini, in his attempt to identify a specifically Italian modernity, can refer to examples from the Netherlands, France and Scandinavia, where, in his opinion, a contemporary national architectural language had been developed that was not limited to arbitrarily interchangeable functionalist forms (cf. Piacentini 1931).

Piacentini thus underscores his plea for, in his words, “other modernity”²⁸ (Pisani 1996: 172), an Italian modernity. A modernity that – in contrast to the elitist colored understanding of modernity described by Sandro Benedetti as selective (because tending towards dissociation) – stands up for an inclusive concept taking the architectural and cultural diversity of the first half of the 20th century into account (cf. Benedetti 1998: 58).²⁹

25 “modernità nazionale”.

26 “fisionomia unitaria”.

27 “il sentimento classico e monumentale, nel puro senso di atteggiamento dello spirito, [...] dovrà essere, pur nelle più moderne e funzionali forme, il fondamento dell’ispirazione architettonica”, Mariani 1987: 67; see also Etlin 1991: 418-426 and 486-492.

28 “una modernità diversa”.

29 Since the 1970s, the dualistic view of Interwar architecture from the perspective of a dogmatically perceived Classical Modern Architecture has given way to a more multilayered approach in the course of postmodern theory formation. Since then, this

Fascist building programs

The development of an architectural and urban design language that evokes associations with national myths as well as an ambitious building policy are essential elements of the fascist deployment of power. As Mussolini states: “For me, architecture is the highest of all the arts [...] because it encompasses everything”³⁰ (Mussolini/Ludwig 1932: 211). Keeping the goal of a visible change in the living environment in mind, fascist architectural policy leads to probably the largest building program in modern and contemporary history (cf. Nicoloso 2012: 9-11). This contains prestigious urban redevelopments and infrastructure measures in the urban centers of Turin, Milan, Rome and Naples as well as construction activity in smaller, rather regionally significant cities – treated in this volume – such as Bari, Brescia, Venice or the cities of the region where Mussolini was born and which was glorified to be the cradle of fascism: the Romagna. Additionally, there are many smaller and larger urban district and new town foundations. In detail, as suggested above, the measures mainly concern the design of the city centers through the construction of new government and administration buildings as well as buildings for public service, schools, post office buildings, railway stations, court buildings and branches of the fascist party. But also including sports facilities, holiday settlements for the fascist youth and leisure organizations as well as other state and semi-state welfare organizations and even state-subsidized church buildings in the new towns founded by the regime (cf. Gresleri/Gresleri/Culotta 2007). By the new buildings and the accompanying artistic-intellectual discourse propagandistically orchestrated in exhibitions, publications and excursions, the

approach has also understood architectural languages and design concepts with deeper roots in cultural history as part of modernity. However, it is only more recently that these have been detached from the perspective of postmodern overcoming strategies (Überwindungsstrategien) and have been recognized as equal as well as mutually conditioned and fertilizing expressions of one and the same time. Thus, the manifold expressions of modernity in the Interwar period have become a firmly established component of the consideration of architectural history. A circumstance that not least also contributes to opening up an ideologically undisguised view of architecture and urban planning in totalitarian regimes. Most recently, the diversity of modernity was the subject of a conference entitled *The Multiple Modernity* at the Archiv für Baukunst at the University of Innsbruck on the initiative of Klaus Tragbar (31 January - 2 February 2019).

30 „Die höchste unter allen Künsten [...] ist für mich die Architektur, denn sie fasst alles zusammen.“

fascist regime gives itself an unmistakable physiognomy and creates for the fascist model of society its own built reality. Architecture becomes a means of self-representation, self-assurance and self-glorification, but also of permanent mass mobilization nourishing, thanks to its suggestive power, the myth of fascism promising splendor, greatness and welfare. Thus, for example, in the formal language of architecture, the myth of ancient imperial Rome (*romanità*) can be linked effectively and comprehensibly to the fascist revolution and transported to the present day in order to serve as a basis for the homogenization of fascism, people, state and its leader (*Duce*, for the term see glossary) (cf. Sarfatti 1926).

The concept or idea of *romanità* is not an invention of the fascists. Rather, it is an expression of a past that was already perceived in ancient Roman society as a living reference point (cf. Sommer 2016: XVIII). As a measure of cultural location and orientation, it is probably as old as Rome itself. But it gets a new dynamic in the context of fascist self-portrayal. The concept was probably first described in fascist interpretation by Margherita Sarfatti in her Mussolini biography *Dux* (1926). There *romanità* stands for the relatively diffuse cultural ideology of fascism, according to which one rejects the copy of the old, emphasizes one's own innovative power, but nevertheless strives for a visible relation to the cultural substrate of Italy because of the greatness of the nation. Together with the analogously interpreted *italianità* (e.g. through reminiscences of the Renaissance or the iconic Dante Alighieri), it forms the categories for a traditional fascist understanding of art.

In the built object, the fascist claim to power is given a physical presence; through the beauty of the forms, the value of the materials used, and the frequently programmatic reference to glorious epochs of Italian cultural history (*italianità*), architecture is also able to reach those parts of society and draw them under the spell of fascism that would otherwise be distant from political fascism. Paolo Nicoloso has aptly summarized this influential power of architecture as a structural shaping of power of the fascist regime: "The architectural monument has the ability to transmit meanings that can reach a whole community, which is then recognized in it."³¹ (Nicoloso 2008: XVI.) As it were, it is the regime's aspiration to represent the historical continuity and legitimacy it claims through a "fascism of stone"³² (Gentile 2008 [2007]). By employing, influencing and impressing the masses, the state architecture and building policy as an essential component of a broader cultural policy promises the consolidation of fascist power. At the same

31 "Il monumento architettonico ha la capacità di trasmettere significati in grado di raggiungere tutta una comunità, la quale in esso poi si viene a riconoscere."

32 "Fascismo di pietra."

time, however, the construction programs also serve economic interests, since in addition to the construction industry, the real estate market in particular is benefiting from increased construction activity and the willingness to open up inner-city areas by radical demolition (*sventramenti*) and to declare them building land.

II: MONUMENTS, HISTORIC URBAN FABRIC AND PROPAGANDA

Producing heritage

As shown in the first part, architects drew formal and stylistic connecting lines to a mystic Roman or Italian past by using specific design principles or stylistic elements for new buildings. What is more, also physical and structural urban connections were laid between historical locations and new parts of the city. New urban structures aimed to resemble historic streets or small squares (*piazze*) both inside and outside existing towns or cities. On the basis of the studies published in this book, we consider strong similarities between *romanità* or *italianità* in architecture and ways of restoration and urban planning. The design of the new urban area in Bologna between Via Marchesana and Via Piave, for example, followed the architectural and restoration practice for medieval architecture conducted by Alfonso Rubbiani (1848-1913) in Bologna in the years before (see the chapter by Elena Pozzi, Marco Pretelli and Leila Signorelli in this book). In other places like Milan, current design strategies for skyscrapers expressed *italianità* by underlining design connections via visual connecting lines to historical buildings representing authentic historical Italian-ness (see the chapter by Scot Budzynski). The insertion of new urban *fora* was sometimes directly connected to excavations and new presentations of ancient Roman ruins in the city like in Trieste (see the chapter by Paolo Nicoloso). However, even without direct historical connections to ancient buildings, a simulation of *romanità* was used to draw connections to a supposed grandiose past, as shown by Antonucci's and Nannini's chapter for the region of Romagna. How both ideas – a connection and exhibition of historical locations through urban planning and a creative reshaping of historic buildings towards an idealized past – correlated, is demonstrated by two examples from Forlì (chapters by Giulia Favaretto, Chiara Mariotti and Antonucci/Nannini). We can describe the whole phenomena of shaping and editing urban areas as the production of heritage (cf. Enss/Vinken 2016).

Apart from editing historic areas to idealized versions of ancient Italian towns, we even find forms of an invention of history. Pozzi, Pretelli, Signorelli, Favaretto,

and Mariotti called this phenomenon in the titles of their chapters: “Planning the Past”. Such inventions were primarily used in highly politicized areas like Romagna but were also described before for other cases (cf. Tragbar 2009). A ‘medieval’ reshaping of urban landscapes can be traced back to the nineteenth century when medieval often stood generally for the opposite of modernity (cf. Zucconi 1997b: 22).

The following text aims to structure the field of producing urban heritage into the sub-areas of a) preservation and restorations of monuments, b) urban planning and urban design based on minor modifications of existing cities and c) urban redevelopment and transformation.

Preservation of monuments

While a consistent modern architectural language that spoke, “to the memory of the Nation,” (Nicoloso 2008: XVII, cit. above) surfaced only during the late years of the Fascist government, a canon of historic national buildings, National Monuments, had been identified and inventoried already beginning with the National unification in the nineteenth century (cf. Lamberini 2003). The abovementioned Consiglio Superiore delle Belle Arti ed Antichità, composed of leading specialists, architects, and art historians, e.g., restoration theorist Camillo Boito (1836-1914), had advised the relevant ministries in the way of restoring historical monuments consistently throughout the country (cf. Pane 2018). While monument preservation had affected mostly single buildings, the direct surrounding of monuments was protected from redevelopment in 1909 by law (cf. Lamberini 2003). This extension of the sphere of influence of monuments led to a disciplined cohesion of monument preservation and architecture in an urban context. The practice of planning urban development and redevelopment around safeguarded sites lead to an artistic and intellectual interaction between urbanism and architectural history that resulted in the idea of *ambientismo*.

Under the guidance of Gustavo Giovannoni, who joined the Consiglio in 1919, the concept of historic monuments opened up to whole historic quarters, city districts and even historical cultural landscapes. This affected city planning processes, since whole historic areas, vistas, and perspectives had to be taken into consideration for safeguarding in the redevelopment planning process. Conservation offices became part of planning processes. The Consiglio charged Giovannoni with providing expert opinions as commissioner for urban heritage conservation. He continuously aimed to reconcile urban planning and monumental preservation and can be considered in this role the first national heritage planner – being in charge during the whole Ventennio.

As part of an architectural culture that was under corporative fascist surveillance, restorations and archeological excavations were additionally put under a strict time regime in order to represent their results at national events, e.g., anniversaries of the *March on Rome* as exemplified recently for Rome by Sylvia Diebner (2018: 17-19).

As stated above, the fascist regime created its own built reality for the fascist model of society. That newly constructed environment included not only new buildings but existing constructions and urban fabric. Shaping and editing monuments and historic districts were very effective in creating suggestive vistas and scenes for mass spectacles and film. Architectural and urban strategies profited from a generally accepted pool of national memory as a backdrop for new buildings representing the regime. In Giovannoni's observation from a first international meeting of monument preservationists under the auspices of the League of Nations in Athens, Italy offered, compared with other nations attending the congress, with its over 40,000 listed buildings, a "unique number, importance and continuity of architectural manifestations from the past"³³ and in his view progressive legislation that put national interests in conservation in front of those of private owners (Giovannoni 1932: 410).

In the interwar period, urban planning extended to regional and territorial planning, the concept of safeguarding urban areas, urban green and beautiful landscapes were developed likewise by architects and politicians around Giovannoni, resulting in the conservation law that included landscape protection in 1939 (Zucconi 2014: 85). The chapter by Antonucci and Nannini in this book shows explicitly how new public buildings, for example, Case del Fascio, were used to create a combination and a mutual accentuation or 'enhancement' of new monumental buildings and historical monuments. The campus of Milan's Catholic University (chapter in this book by Cecilia de Carli) can be considered a masterpiece in terms of such a combination and mythical reinterpretation of the existing historical area. New architecture, restoration, and preservation of monuments, garden planning, art, and sculpture were combined to complete artwork, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. This example clearly shows how restoration works were used to draw connections to a glorious history in order to, as an exhibition catalog on *Urbanistica italiana in regime fascista* (1937) put it, "give back to the Nation all the artistic heritage that centuries passed down to it" ([Civico] 1937a: 32).³⁴ That practice included both references in modern buildings to the past and to a surrounding historical

33 "[...] dal numero, dall'importanza, dalla continuità unica al mondo delle manifestazioni architettoniche del passato."

34 "[...] per ridare alla Nazione tutto il patrimonio d'arte che i secoli le hanno trasmesso."

ambience plus an effort to restore historical buildings and structures to epitomize an ideal past.

Famous examples for a staging of ancient monuments in Rome were the breakthroughs of the Via della o (cf. Kirk 2006) and the Via dell'Impero, today's Via dei Fori Imperiali (cf. Baxa 2017), but similar measures were taken all over the country on smaller scales. Techniques of re-shaping the surroundings to help most significant historic monuments fulfil a representative role within the historic city and moderate between urban history and modernity were not new, as discussions around the staging of the capitol hill showed since the 19th century (cf. Vannelli 1992).

Yet, in fascist Italy, this staging was not only applied to historic works of art like monumental buildings (as shown for the Brescia case by Coppo), but also to memorial places connected to famous personalities of that time or friends and family of Benito Mussolini (see the chapters by Favaretto/Mariotti and Antonucci/Nannini).

Fascist policies led to an increased budget for the preservation of historical monuments. In some cases, political interests in restoration, induced to edit historic structures and the urban fabric to resemble a past that had never existed. Elena Pozzi, Marco Pretelli and Leila Signorelli speak even of 'fake[s]' (*falso*), which they observe in restoration examples in the Emilia region.

Urbanistica: Urban design for existing cities

Due to Giovannoni's role as an influential teacher at the *Scuola Romana* (the term refers to the loose aggregation of a Roman architectural class, see glossary) and to Piacentini's support for *ambientismo*, the urban design around historic monuments became part of *urbanistica*. The same was the case for new public buildings taking on monumental quality. Giovannoni emphasized this claim in his book *Vecchie città ed edilizia nuova* (1931). That volume, which was aimed to open a new series at the newly founded Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (INU), reflected the thinking of the whole Scuola Romana and was introduced by Calza Bini in a preface (Giovannoni 1931: V-VII) as a fundamental basis for the new discipline of *urbanistica*. The understanding of *urbanistica* as a mother discipline for architecture, urban redevelopment, restoration and archeology within urban contexts continues to be in use in that sense (cf. Beese/Dobler 2018: *L'Urbanistica a Roma durante il ventennio fascista*).

Giovannoni created in his master plans for new settlements of Aniene, Garbatella or Ostia, all near Rome, urban structures modeled on historical urban configurations of Rome. Piacentini, a supporter of Sitte's ideas, promoted together

with Giovannoni the aim of drawing connection lines in design to historic quarters, but he focused more on references to existing neighboring buildings.

The chapters by Lorenzo Ciccarelli and Alexander Fichte show clearly for Rome and Venice that remarkable references were made for city extensions, both in regards to the general built history and the historic neighborhood (*ambiente*) of the new quarters. For example, in the Roman garden city district Garbatella, references are made to newly discovered Roman ruins of Ostia Antica and generally to historic architecture of the ‘mother town’. The same was the case in Venice, where new streets were laid out to resemble historical Venetian canals. The above-mentioned district in Bologna, a redevelopment area in the old town, can likewise be read in that context – more than in a thinning context, which has been suggested before (Bodenschatz 2011: 309-310).

“Urbanistica italiana in regime fascista”

We mentioned above that ideas of creating a new specifically Italian architecture out of history existed before fascism and how the architectural profession was set gradually under state control. The same was the case for urban planning, *urbanistica*, organized in INU in 1930. At that time, fascism had grown into a stable political force and used cultural politics for propaganda purposes.

Urbanism in interwar Italy followed a general trend in urban planning that aimed to integrate individual plans into broader regional or territorial contexts (cf. Rifkind 2012a: 57). Experienced town planners as Giovannoni or Piacentini, who had followed the ideas of the garden city movement, took an active part in the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHTP) conference 1929 in Rome. The functionary Alberto Calza Bini was a co-organizer of that conference. He was interested in gaining sovereignty over the interpretation of urban planning in Fascist Italy and became the first president of the INU in 1930 (Wagner 2018: 158). However, self-declared rationalists from the intellectual environment of the journal *Quadrante* took advantage and gained prestige from their international contacts. All the diverse groups instrumentalized IFHTP for the legitimization of their discipline in order to substantiate its scientific and technical nature.³⁵ In parallel to a multitude of styles and tendencies in architectures, there were various understandings of a corporatist city or explicitly Fascist urban planning. A “corporatist city” was claimed in 1934 by the Lodovico Belgioioso (1909-2004) and Gian Luigi Banfi (1910-45) in the journal *Quadrante* as “an element of the full ensemble of cities, organized and framed in the Corporatist life of the nation”

35 For IFHTP and the foundation of INU cf. Wagner 2018; for *Quadrante* cf. Rifkind 2012.

(Belgioioso 1934: 40; Rifkind 2012b: 264). A propagandist exhibition in Vienna showcased “Italian urbanism under the fascist regime” (“Urbanistica italiana in regime fascista”) from a more traditional perspective in 1937 ([Civico] 1937a).

In a national context, in contrast, the majority of theorists of urban design connected their specialized texts to fascist propaganda. In the journal *Urbanistica*, organ of INU, Vincenzo Civico followed national and international efforts of urban planning in his column “Notiziario urbanistico” in various examples. Civico, as he himself remarked in an article (Civico 1937b: 467), was the editor of the exhibition catalog for Vienna ([Civico] 1937a). That exhibition, curated under the patronage of the ministry for propaganda, systemized urbanism in subcategories of “traffic and roads”, “redevelopment” (*risanamento*), “[historical] monuments”, “new quarters”, parks and “green”, “public buildings”, “new and reconstructed cities” (in this case after natural disasters) and “cities of the empire” (of the colonies and Italianized areas).³⁶ The text links most of the categories explicitly to the historical cultural heritage.

According to the catalogue ([Civico] 1937a: 26), “monumental enhancement” (*valorizzazione monumentale*) often dominated the preparation of urban development plans (*piani regolatori*) in fascist Italy.³⁷ This reflected Gustavo Giovannoni’s central claim for historical monuments which demanded, in his view, a ‘distance of respect’ around them. New buildings and architectural conditions were not supposed to change their historical environment (*ambiente*), that is certain assumed architectural characteristics such as “style”, [...] “color”, [...] “decoration” and “building technique” (Giovannoni 1918; reprinted in Zucconi 1997a: 112).³⁸ By extending that idea to an urban scale in his book *Vecchie città ed edilizia nuova* (“Old Cities and New Building”) (Giovannoni 1931), Giovannoni advocated for an urban planning that respected important urban structures or

36 Chapters in the catalogue were entitled: “Il traffico e la viabilità”, “Il risanamento”, “I monumenti”, “I nuovi quartieri”, “Il verde”, “Gli edifici e i servizi pubblici”, “le città nuove e quelle ricostruite”, “le città dell’Impero”.

37 “L’amore, la scienza, l’arte degli urbanisti, degli archeologici, dei cittadini tutti, portano il loro appassionato contributo all’opera di valorizzazione monumentale, che domina spesso nelle sistemazioni di piano regolatore [...]”

38 “Vi possono quindi rientrare le distanze da lasciare come ‘zona di rispetto’, tra la nuova fabbricazione ed i monumenti le norme riguardanti la mole e la statura degli edifici nuovi in confronto dei vecchi, tutto lo schema edilizio del tracciato di piazze e di strade. Ma non di minore importanza sono, sostituire od a non alterare l’ambiente, le condizioni architettoniche individuali di stile, di colore, di ornato, della fabbricazione che rientra nella ‘prospettiva’.”

buildings and “grafting new urban quarters on an old trunk” (Giovannoni 1931: 184),³⁹ a concept which he had developed while planning the Roman extension quarter of Garbatella together with Piacentini.

Urban redevelopment

The examples mentioned in the catalog for city transformation in the Fascist era show three different ways of dealing with historic urban fabric: First, historic districts can be excluded from major structural redevelopments. Second, new, more or less integrated structures can replace the old urban fabric, and third, it can be partially renewed, maintaining most important historic buildings or features of the urban structure such as street traces. Both preservation and restructuring followed editing strategies for cities: certain areas were ‘enhanced’ for representing a (glorious) past. Others, often more impoverished areas, were eliminated, thus erasing social misery from central urban quarters. Despite *Civico*’s affirmation that the state had built new healthy quarters, e.g. in Brindisi ([*Civico*] 1937a: 20), in reality citizens inhabiting these quarters were often expelled to the periphery, in Rome to the so-called *Borgate ufficiali di Roma*, as shown by Fernando Salsano (2010), Luciano Villani (2012) and Milena Farina (2017) for Rome. Lower social classes, who lived in poor quarters, were feared by the regime for rebelling against the system. For Bari’s old town, which was initially meant to be torn down completely except for the churches, a connection between antifascist left-wing citizens and the demolishing plans has been drawn (Mangone 2003: 317-318). Similar observations were made for contemporary German *Sanierungen* (redevelopments) (cf. Petz 1990) of poor quarters, e.g., in Hannover (cf. Zalewski 2016). In such cases, physical change in the city resulted in social editing.

An essential part of the national policy in modernization was the expansion of the railway and road systems. Existing quarters should obtain the same road access as new quarters (cf. [*Civico*] 1937a: 6). Therefore, renewing the road system was a decisive motor of urban editing. Introducing new streets into the existing city lead to the destruction of the old urban fabric. *Civico* advocated for the preservation of historical urban cores where geographically possible. He suggested laying new roads through (slum) areas with adverse hygienic conditions (*borgate*) and only a small number of listed buildings (ibid: 6-7). As Alberto Coppo shows in his chapter in this book, Pietro Aschieri (1889-1952) proposed for Brescia a system of new roads that aimed to balance between the widening and opening of streets and a simultaneous staging of significant historic buildings (e.g., by

39 “L’innesto dei nuovi quartieri sul vecchio tronco.”

opening vistas), according to theoretical approaches of Aschieri's former teacher Giovannoni. While Aschieri struggled for continuity in a historic appearance of Brescia, the urban development plans for Rome (1931) and Moscow (1935) focused more on a change in scale in order to shape new monumental avenues for the two capitals, as Anna Vyazemtseva explains in her comparative chapter on Rome and Moscow in this book. In those plans, historic monuments were used and combined with new monumentality gained by wide streets and large-size buildings.

Civico required that Italian urbanists had to bring, "light and healthiness into dense old quarters," while concurrently conserving an urban unity wherever possible and preserving significant historic buildings (*edilizia monumentale*) ([Civico] 1937a: 14).⁴⁰ He specifically named Gustavo Giovannoni's strategy of a thinning out of the dense urban fabric (*diradamento*) and described that strategy as an "ideal method" (*metodo ideale*), defining it as an "urban restoration" (*restauro urbano*). According to Civico, *diradamento* was reserved for quarters without significant redevelopment needs due to hygienic reasons (*risanamento*) and without substantial requirements for enhancing the traffic situation. Furthermore, the method should be applied only to quarters with such a significant, "historical and monumental content," that its architecture would enforce natural respect to the pickaxe (*piccone*) (all citations *ibid*: 14-15).⁴¹ Due to these restrictions, Civico's word use of, "ideal method," to describe thinning could be interpreted here in a slightly critical sense. While he named Rome (Rioni del Rinascimento), Bari, Bergamo, Fiume, Siena and Treviso as successful examples for a thinning, he calls the strategy "in numerous other cases [...] insufficient" for solving hygienic problems (*ibid*: 15). Among the 18 examples enumerated for a redevelopment of historic urban fabrics in Italian cities (Ancona, Brescia, Brindisi, Como, Ferrara, Firenze, Foggia, Forlì, Lecce, Napoli, Palermo, Parma, Reggio Emilia, Sassari, Savona, Terni, Trento, Trieste) is the new piazza Vittoria in Brescia that eliminated according to Civico a whole "sordid" (*sordido*) quarter (*ibid*: 20). While Civico

40 P. 14: "Gli urbanisti italiani hanno avuto pertanto da svolgere un tema di altissimo interesse e di altrettanta difficoltà: riportare luce e salute nel fitto agglomerato dei vecchi quartieri, conservare ad essi, dovunque possibile, l'unità urbanistica, salvare, sempre, l'edilizia monumentale, patrimonio d'inestimabile valore."

41 P. 15: "Questo metodo si presta ad essere attuato quando non concorrono, oltre quelle del risanamento, anche forti ragioni di traffico, quando l'ubicazione dei quartieri malsani, nell'insieme della città, sia tale da consentirne una certa autonomia di vita; quando, soprattutto, il contenuto storico e monumentale sia tanto notevole, da imporre naturalmente rispetto al piccone."

described the new piazza in Brescia as “monumental”, adorned with “grandiose buildings” (*grandiosi palazzi*), other examples were praised for new road accessibility, for a staging and better presentation of historical monuments or, in the case of Florence (Firenze), for their “typical urban layout” (*tipica orditura urbanistica*) (ibid: 21). The chapters of Bari (Christine Beese) and Bergamo (Sandro Scarrochia) in this book discuss realized examples for a thinning of the urban landscape. Nicoloso explains in his book chapter the opening and insertion of more or less homogenous new structures made under the supervision of Marcello Piacentini for Brescia and Trieste.

CONCLUSION

While historical monuments and architecture had become the focus of a national transformation program following Italy’s unification in the nineteenth century, the chapters of this book show how this process was renewed and strengthened after the First World War. Architecture was used to evoke historical myths as bases for a nationalist and then specifically Fascist ‘renaissance’ of historic grandeur and cultural leadership. Monument preservation was exploited to fill those myths with supposedly authentic experiences and to serve as backdrops for spectacles and a revived popular culture. These experiences of townscapes as scenographic surroundings for tourists, for outdoor political events and the new medium of film were all part of urbanism that staged monuments within an idealized environment (*ambiente*) and invited people to take pride in newly-founded state institutions by connecting the appearance of their buildings with well-known edifices. By analyzing examples from various cities and regions, this book shows how a range of disciplines contributed to shaping historic urban landscapes in an artistic, yet simultaneously politicized way.

Architecture played a crucial role in creating and designing connections between past and present. The same was the case for the field of restoration (*restauro*) and preservation, which was used to ostentatiously create connections to a glorious past and profit politically from a revival of that culture. Both architecture and *restauro* spoke to *italianità* and *romanità*. Urban planning incorporated both fields as an overall renewal strategy, reaching from cities to the whole territory.

Architects and monument conservationists regarded townscapes and cities as agglomerations of cultural heritage. This high estimation of urban heritage led in some cases to the acceptance of whole areas as worthy for being preserved – a comparatively proactive view of heritage conservation at that time. City transformation turned to an “urban restoration”. Though, what initially figured as a

sensible scheme of careful thinning (*diradamento*), often led to the creation of homogeneously idealized historic urban landscapes. Current studies collected in this book are uncovering these modifications of history and expose hidden forms of urban editing, thus helping us understand how old towns and history were being produced during the fascist *Ventennio*.

Local, regional and national transformations of historical (urban) landscapes were set gradually under the guidance of fascist professional associations, and used by fascist propaganda during the interwar period. The attempt at appropriating history infused monument preservation with the construction of myths. By recalling an image of historic buildings, new architecture out of the catalog of “other modernity” helped to revive and perpetuate that myth.

A research premise of this book is to consider architecture and monument preservation (respectively restoration) as parts of the same strategy of representing a renewed, but culturally, deeply anchored Italy. The purpose of this approach is to develop a more comprehensive view of the architectural culture in interwar Italy by combining research that is often relegated to two separate fields.

This book leaves out the fields of archeological research and excavations in the period described because of its focus on architectural history. For Rome, observations of the combination of archeology, political representations, garden architecture, and urban planning have been thoroughly researched (cf. Beese/Dobler 2018). It would be interesting to extend the argument of this book to other fields such as regional planning or garden culture.

If we look at historical urban landscapes in Italy’s cities, we need to consider that through the staging of monuments and complementary new architecture we might look today at antique, medieval, renaissance or baroque elements through the lens of fascist understanding and exploitation of history and tradition. This book offers examples of that effect. By observing the results of this well-researched field in architectural history, we can take a critical look at our own time and building practices in a historic surrounding. We see how subjective our view of a supposedly “characteristic” way of building can be and how easily restoration can lead to a falsification of history to speak to the present.

Nota bene: A glossary explaining technical terms and institutional names has been provided at the back of the book. The first mention of a glossary term in an essay is emphasized in each case by italics.

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