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From fascism to the postwar era: The “two lives” of Cesare Valle, architect and urbanist

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## Abstract

Roman engineer Cesare Valle (1902–2000) was a leading figure in 20th-century Italian architecture and urbanism, although his name is not widely recognized except among specialists in architectural history of the interwar period. His career can be divided into two ‘separate lives’. In the first one, from the mid 1920s until the early 1940s, he was one of the protagonists of fascist architecture, working in Italy and its colonies. In the second one, after World War II, he worked as an urban planning expert for the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport, playing a prominent role in postwar Italian urban-development policy.

This chapter will present Valle and his work in Rome in the 1920s and the early 1930s, focusing on his collaboration with renowned engineer Pier Luigi Nervi. Then it will analyze his work as both an architect and an urbanist for the Fascist regime in the 1930s and 1940s, with special concern for a series of projects in the Romagna region and for the plans of the cities of Carbonia in Italy and Addis Ababa in the fascist colony of Ethiopia. Finally, it will present some concluding remarks on his career as an urbanist working for the Italian government after the Second World War. In addition, it will employ the recent restoration of Valle’s Casa del Balilla in Forlì as a case study of the debate on the reuse and resignification of fascist-era architecture in Italy.

Running Head Right-hand: From fascism to the postwar era

Running Head Left-hand: Micaela Antonucci

## 21

### From fascism to the postwar era

#### The “two lives” of Cesare Valle, architect and urbanist

Micaela Antonucci

Roman engineer Cesare Valle (1902–2000) was a leading figure in 20th-century Italian architecture and urbanism, although his name is not widely recognized, except among specialists in architectural history of the interwar period. His career can be divided into two “separate lives.” In the first one, from the mid 1920s until the early 1940s, he was one of the protagonists of fascist architecture, working in Italy and its colonies. In the second one, after World War II, he worked as an urban planning expert for the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport, playing a prominent role in postwar Italian urban-development policy.

During his “first life,” Valle worked all over Italy, often collaborating with notable architects and engineers – Gustavo Giovannoni, Marcello Piacentini, Pier Luigi Nervi, Ignazio Guidi and Riccardo Morandi, for example – and designed many public buildings and urban plans for the Fascist regime. He developed an original style, reconciling classicism and modernism, monumentality and Rationalism, and he was one of the few professionals able to work with equal skill in engineering, architecture and urban planning.

His “second life” began in 1941, when he decided to leave private practice and work for the government. Owing to his versatility, know-how and experience, he maintained this role during the transition from regime to republic, working both for branches of the Italian government and for many prestigious international institutions, such as the United Nations, the Italian National Olympic Committee and the European Single Market.

Because Valle's work for the Fascist regime ended in 1941 – a short time before the regime itself fell, in 1943 – and because in the postwar period he built a brand-new career as a “person of institutions,” his figure and his work remained on the sidelines of the debate on fascism's afterlife, at least until recent years. Beginning in the 2010s, Valle's work, in particular his work in the Italian region of Romagna, was rediscovered as projects for the reuse of some of the buildings that he built for the regime started a new debate on the legacy of fascist-era architecture in Italy.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will present Cesare Valle and his work in Rome in the 1920s and the early 1930s, focusing on his collaboration with renowned engineer Pier Luigi Nervi. In the second part, I will analyze the architecture built by Valle for the Fascist regime in the 1930s, with special concern given to a series of projects in the Romagna region, birthplace of Benito Mussolini. In the third part, I will discuss Valle's work as an urbanist and, among the numerous important urban planning projects that he was called on by the regime to work on, I will analyze the two case studies of Carbonia in Italy and Addis Ababa in the fascist colony of Ethiopia. Finally, I will present some concluding remarks on Valle's career as an urbanist working for the Italian government after the Second World War, as an ideal case study of how professionals associated with fascism built entirely new careers in the postwar era. In addition, I will employ the recent restoration of the Casa del Balilla in Forlì as a case study of the debate on the reuse and resignification of fascist-era architecture in Italy.

This chapter will include part of my already-published material on Valle's work in Rome and in Romagna<sup>1</sup> and present my current research focusing on Valle's projects in Ethiopia and on his work for the Italian government after the Second World War. My primary sources are the documents and materials of the Archivio Cesare Valle in Rome.

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## **Tradition/modernity: Rome, 1925–35**

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Born in Rome in 1902, Cesare Valle studied civil engineering at the Regia Scuola di Ingegneria di Roma, where he graduated in 1924 with a project for a Bramante-style church supervised by Gustavo Giovannoni (1873–1947), one of the key protagonists of Italian architecture bridging the 19th and 20th centuries, whose work spanned many disciplines. Valle’s engineering background, coupled with his fascination with history, restoration and urban planning that followed Giovannoni’s teachings, made him one of the few professionals in the fascist era who was equally skilled in engineering, architecture and urban planning.<sup>2</sup>

Valle was among the youngest professionals summoned to work for the Fascist government. In 1926, he was hired by the Architecture, Technical and Urban Planning Service of the Governorate of Rome, where he was given the opportunity to take on a range of both architectural and urban-scale projects in the city’s historic center. Along with his job for the Governorate of Rome, he began to work on his own projects, at a moment when the architectural mood in Rome, still highly influenced by tradition and classical heritage, clashed with the growing trend of Rationalist architecture, triggering a lively debate between “traditionalists” and “modernists.”<sup>3</sup> Within this debate, Valle was one of the few who, without abandoning the traditional, were able to grasp and embrace the new. In the early 1930s, he carried out a range of projects, both residential and public, all of them linked by the search for a language that was modern but at the same time remained faithful to the *genius loci* of Rome. Among these projects, of particular note was the Casa Viola apartment block (1933–35), which constituted a crucial stepping stone in Valle’s professional development. Here his formidable talent for projects with a historical context was tempered both by the new Rationalist style and by recent technological innovations in the efficiency and expressiveness of reinforced concrete.

**[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-Figure-001 Here]**

Figure 21.1 Cesare Valle, Palazzina Viola in Rome, perspective, 1933.

Source: Archivio Cesare Valle

Valle's confident mastery of the technical and construction aspects of architecture received a boost from his collaboration with engineer Pier Luigi Nervi (1891–1979), a partnership that would prove critical to his professional development.<sup>4</sup> Nervi met Valle, ~~11 years~~ ~~Valle's senior, was in Rome~~ in the early 1930s, at a point when he had already achieved a high degree of fame, due largely to the success of the design and construction of the Giovanni Berta Stadium in Florence (1929–32). Riding this wave, Nervi dedicated the first half of the 1930s to several stadium projects, always giving structural and technical innovation a central role: a 55,000-seat stadium project for the 5th Triennial of Milan (1933), the Littorio stadium in Livorno (1932) and a project for a 120,000-seat stadium for the FIFA World Cup to be held in Rome (1934). It is on the last of these that he brought in Valle to work with him, probably because the Roman engineer was more familiar with the contemporary architectural and political scene in the capital city. The unprecedented and bold structure proposed by Nervi and Valle for the stadium in Rome was the first of its kind in reinforced concrete, and although it was not built, it was widely publicized and became an authoritative model for stadia of large dimensions, so much so that they were asked to re-elaborate it between 1943 and 1947 for a project for a 150,000-seat stadium in Rio de Janeiro, the largest in the world at the time.<sup>5</sup>

With Roman architect Ignazio Guidi (1904–78), Valle and Nervi also participated in the Governorate of Rome's open competition for a planned Auditorium on viale Aventino in Rome. The Nervi–Valle–Guidi proposal revolved around a large trapezoidal room with a dynamic continuity between vertical and horizontal structures, the reinforced concrete beams curving down and creating the pillars of the entrance wall. Although ultimately none of the projects were built, except the Casa Viola (carried out by Nervi's building firm Ingg. Nervi&Bartoli), the collaboration with Nervi marked a clear step forward in Valle's work. He acquired a much deeper understanding of the expressive potential of new construction techniques, which would be decisive in the buildings that he designed in Romagna for the Fascist regime.

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## Architecture and power: Cesare Valle's work in Romagna for the Fascist regime (1933–41)

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In the early 1930s, Cesare Valle reached a professional peak. Involved with various projects, he was awarded many prestigious assignments by the Fascist regime, among them a series of architectural projects in the Italian region of Romagna, birthplace of Fascist leader Benito Mussolini (1883–1945).<sup>6</sup>

From the early days of his political rise, Mussolini – in part for sentimental motives, but also for propaganda opportunities – maintained a keen interest in the fate of his childhood village, Dovia di Predappio, in the province of Forlì. In presenting himself as a “man of the people,” Mussolini mythologized his small town, rural background by removing the area rhetorically from its peripheral status, casting Forlì (the largest town near his natal village) as “la Città del Duce” – that is, “the Duce’s City.” The change had to be clearly visible – in Forlì as well as in other Romagna cities – and buildings and monuments were to be erected to remind everyone of the rise to power of one of its most famous sons.

How fascism used art and architecture as an elevated propaganda tool has already been noted and widely highlighted by academics.<sup>7</sup> The case of Romagna, and Forlì in particular, has been the subject of many studies, both from the historical and architectural points of view.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the 1920s, Forlì and its province became crucial in Italian politics, due to their close connection with Mussolini. Substantial investment from Rome went to develop an industrial economy and to construct a grandiose new town centre. From 1929 onwards, huge transformations took place: the Fascist government promoted and financed the construction of over 300 new architectural and urban projects, and a new *piano regolatore* (master plan) was approved, overseen by Valle’s master, Gustavo Giovannoni, who was called in from Rome. The plan was focused on, first, modernizing the historical centre and, second, expanding the city along a new south-east axis, which pivoted around an avenue named ~~for~~-after Benito Mussolini.<sup>9</sup>



To carry out Forlì's large-scale project of modernization, on Mussolini's and his closest advisors' orders, architects and engineers were sent directly from Rome. In addition to Giovannoni, there were Luigi Piccinato, Cesare Bazzani and Cesare Valle, all of whom worked alongside local professionals. Valle arrived in Forlì, according to his own testimony, thanks to Enrico Del Debbio, the architect charged with overseeing the construction **over all of Italy** of the Casa del Balilla, headquarters of the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), the Fascist organization that provided youth with military, physical, cultural and professional education.<sup>10</sup> Del Debbio singled out Valle to Renato Ricci, the powerful president of ONB, and in 1932 Ricci commissioned the Roman engineer to design the Casa del Balilla in Forlì, named after Arnaldo Mussolini, Benito's younger brother and main assistant, who had died in 1931.<sup>11</sup>

Built in 1933–35, the Forlì ONB headquarters received immediate and universal praise and was promoted by fascist propaganda as a major example of this new building type. Valle noted that

The Casa del Balilla in Forlì has been recognized as pioneering in its facilities and perfect, functional efficiency; the greatest technical and architecture magazines covered it in-depth, and the project was displayed in London following an invitation by the Royal Institute of British Architects.<sup>12</sup>

The building consisted of different blocks, was built with reinforced concrete structures and was divided into two main sections, each with a distinct purpose and its own separate entrance. One building featured a gym, swimming pool and fencing hall, and it was intended for sporting activities, its lower blocks illuminated by the great windows facing into the rectangular inner courtyard. The other, intended for cultural and official activities, was distinguished by the dynamic contrast between the vertical nature of the tower and the horizontal curves of the main body, and it contained a theatre-cinema, library, offices and a memorial dedicated to Arnaldo Mussolini **[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-UnFigure-002 Here]**. With Ricci, Mussolini attended

the building's July 7, 1935, inauguration, to emphasize the importance of this project both for the regime and for him personally.

**[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-Figure-002 Here]**

**Figure 21.2** Cesare Valle, Casa del Balilla in Forlì, perspective, 1933.

*Source:* Archivio Cesare Valle

Valle designed four other Case del Balilla in Romagna in the 1930s. These were single-story edifices, modest when compared to the one in Forlì, but Valle nonetheless afforded each one a recognizable architectural twist. In Predappio (1936–37), he elevated the low rectangular building on a wide podium with processional steps, rendering it more visible and giving it a hint of monumentality. For Forlimpopoli, he designed a tower that was asymmetrically skewed from the bottom (1933–36). In Savignano sul Rubicone, the compact design of the main building hollowed out unexpectedly in one corner, marked by a giant pillar to identify the entrance (1933–37). In Mercato Saraceno, the building blocks retreated and advanced, creating a plastic game of forms (1936–40).<sup>13</sup>

Valle's final building in Romagna was the Collegio Aeronautico della Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (College of Military Aeronautics) in Forlì (1936–41), dedicated to Mussolini's third son, Bruno, who was a pilot and died in 1941 during the Second World War. It was built adjacent to the Casa del Balilla, with which it engaged in a subtle dialogue. The building was divided into functionally distinct sections, each with an independent entrance. The inner courtyard façades consisted of large glass windows; the street façade, on the other hand, assumed a monumental, yet ~~simple~~, sober style. The picturesque main entrance, facing a colossal marble statue depicting Icarus (by Francesco Saverio Paolozzi), was arranged asymmetrically with one corner marked by three giant pillars.<sup>14</sup> By this time, Valle had confidently mastered a monumental, yet simple, design language – one that was alert to functional requirements yet assumed a Rationalist simplicity – one in which art and technology naturally combined. Neither the first, the most prolific, nor the most influential among the architects and engineers working in

Romagna during the fascist era, Valle was, nevertheless – and herein lies his central contribution – among the first to introduce both the new language of Rationalist architecture and the innovations in building technologies to the region.

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## Cesare Valle the urbanist: From the planned communities of the Fascist regime in Italy to the Italian colonies

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At the start of his career as engineer and architect, Valle established a parallel career as an urban planner. In 1926, with his friend Luigi Piccinato and some young graduates of Rome's new School of Architecture (Eugenio Faludi, Roberto Lavagnino, Luigi Lenzi, Gaetano Minnucci and Eugenio Montuori), he founded the Gruppo Urbanisti Romani, or GUR (Roman Urbanists Group). The GUR – who were later joined by many others – rapidly became one of the principal proponents for the development of modern urbanism in Italy, advancing numerous proposals in national competitions for city plans, including those of Padua, Foggia, Brescia, Arezzo, Cagliari and Perugia. These regularly won prizes and important honours, though they seldom came to fruition.

Many of the GUR members also participated in projects for the *città di nuova fondazione* (planned new towns), ~~where~~ **which** the regime was constructing in the **area of the** reclaimed Pontine Marshes. **15** Valle was not involved in this first phase of the new towns being promoted by the Fascist government. As a result of the experience gained in those years, however, he developed a talent for urban planning, which became an increasingly important part of his career. Indeed, after the Second World War ended, he would train all his energies on urban planning.

The year that the Italian Empire was proclaimed, 1936, was a watershed year in Cesare Valle's career as an urbanist. He was awarded a teaching post in urban planning and in 1938 assumed another one in technical architecture, first at the University of Naples and the University of Pisa and then in the Engineering Faculty at the University of Rome. At this time

too, he was called on by the regime to work on important urban planning projects both in Italy and abroad. Among them, two were particularly significant: the plan for the new town of Carbonia in Sardinia and the plan for the overhaul of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Ignazio Guidi collaborated with him on both.

Initially planned for 12,000 inhabitants, later growing to 50,000, Carbonia was a “company town” constructed for the Azienda Carboni Italiani between 1937 and 1939 to provide housing for the employees of the coal mines in the Inglesiente region, mining encouraged by the energy policies of the regime.<sup>16</sup> Those were the years of the so-called *autarchia* (autarchy) – that is, a self-sufficiency policy initiated by the regime in 1936, following the sanctions levied on Italy by the League of Nations after the invasion of Ethiopia, a policy aimed at reaching Italian autonomy in both energy production and the supply of raw materials. Because it caused a shortage of metal in the building industry, the regime promoted the search for new building methods that would reduce the use of iron and steel, including steel used to reinforce concrete.<sup>17</sup>

The construction of Carbonia, based on the work of Valle, Guidi and Gustavo Pulitzer, thus represented a challenge not only from a planning perspective but also from a technological one. Following the autarchy instructions, the main buildings of the town were built from bricks and local stone, relying on reinforced concrete only for the roofs of the most important structures.<sup>18</sup> The projects for Carbonia relied on simple, austere forms, without monumentality; this was not meant as a celebration of fascist power but rather as an “autarchy manifesto.”

**[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-Figure-003 Here]**

Figure 21.3 Carbonia, the church and the bell tower.

Source: Architettura. Rivista del Sindacato Nazionale Fascista Architetti, September 1940

At that time too, Valle and Guidi, with engineer Arturo Bianchi, worked on urban projects in the Italian colonial territory of Ethiopia: plans for the new city of Addis Ababa, carried out between 1938 and 1941 under the auspices of the Ministry of Italian Africa. Architecture and urban planning were crucial to Italian colonialism, and like other *città nuove*

built throughout Italy, the ones of East Africa were steeped in state propaganda. The Fascist regime considered Ethiopia, conquered at the cost of the bloody repression of local resistance, a tabula rasa, perfect for experimentations in new forms of urbanization. Its objective was to remove any historical trace of the preexisting civilizations while creating new structures able to host a large number of Italian settlers.<sup>19</sup>

The project for the new Addis Ababa by Valle and Guidi included a preliminary study (Programma urbanistico per Addis Abeba, 1936–37) and two proposals for a master plan (1938–39); the latter of these were carried out after the assessments of the supervisory committee composed of Enrico Del Debbio, Giò Ponti and Giuseppe Vaccaro. The final plans – although ultimately only partially realized – represented a prominent expression of the contemporary planning research in the creation of the new cities.<sup>20</sup>

For the design of this project – as is evident in the annotated travel journals, maps and photographs in the Archivio Cesare Valle [\[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-UnFigure-004 Here\]](#)<sup>21</sup> – Valle travelled with Guidi and Bianchi through Italian East Africa (*Africa Orientale Italiana*, which included Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia) from July to November 1936.

To draft the city plan for the new “capital of the empire,” Addis Ababa, in addition to surveying the territories of Italian Africa, Valle carried out an in-depth study of other African colonial cities, especially those of the French colonies. His studies of the cities and building types in Italian East Africa were the subject of numerous publications, and he included these topics in his university lessons at the end of the 1930s.<sup>22</sup> The Valle–Guidi projects for Addis Ababa copied several features of French colonial cities, such as including a rigid ethnic division between military, civilian and indigenous populations and the presence of a monumental city centre as the symbol of the colonial domain. In all the plans for Addis Ababa, the Italian, the commercial and the indigenous quarters were always kept separate. The natural barriers – the two torrents Curtumi and Ghemifilè and a “green belt” of vegetation – constituted the lines of racial segregation between black people and white people, Africans and Italians. A new, elevated city centre, a sort of acropolis, was located at the crossing of the two main road axes [\[Insert](#)

**15031-3689-SIV-021-UnFigure-005 Here**, a schematization that at that time could be compared, in terms of size and architectural features, only to the E42 exhibition district in Rome. **23**

**[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-Figure-004 Here]**

Figure 21.4 Cesare Valle, sketches and notes on North African traditional architecture.

Source: Archivio Cesare Valle

**[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-Figure-005 Here]**

Figure 21.5 Cesare Valle, project for Addis Ababa's new monumental centre, 1939.

Source: Archivio Cesare Valle

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## **From fascism to the Republic: Cesare Valle and the urban-development planning in Italy after the Second World War**

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Thanks to his experiences in Italy and in the colonies, Valle earned a place among the professionals entrusted with prestigious and challenging projects promoted by the Fascist regime; yet at the same time, he maintained a quite independent profile, both politically and professionally. Above all, he felt himself to be a person of the institutions, working more in their service than in that of fascist power. This credo brought him to make a decision that opened up a “second life” for him professionally and that represents a clear break from his previous work.

In 1941, Valle was appointed director of urban services at the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport, opting to set aside his responsibilities as an independent professional and dedicate himself fully to modernizing public urban planning policies and national urbanistic legislation. The master plans proposed by the GUR in the 1920s and 1930s had demonstrated the inadequacy of the current urbanistic regulations with respect to the new needs of the modern cities. That

experience had started a debate on the need to issue a new modern urban planning law, establishing the obligatory nature of the general master plan. This law was approved in 1942, and it was the result of the work of a commission composed of representatives of various ministries and expert members, including former GUR members Luigi Piccinato and Cesare Valle.

Owing to his know-how and experience, Valle maintained this role during the transition from regime to republic and, in the years following the end of the war, played a fundamental role in the reconstruction of the country. With his ceaseless activity, within both the institutions of the Italian Republic and the university, he asserted the central role of urban planning in drafting and regulating the development of the Italian territory.

At the end of the 1940s, Valle was appointed president of the Consiglio Superiore dei Lavori Pubblici (the main technical advisory unit of the Italian government in control of public competitions and works and of the certification of construction materials), playing a prominent role in the postwar reconstruction and in the development of a new urbanistic policy in Italy.

His experience with the projects for the new towns and the planning of colonial cities in the 1920s and 1930s seemed to play little role in Valle's approach to postwar works, inspired by different models and ideas. He conducted in-depth research on what he believed to be the most relevant case studies of innovative urban policies from abroad, and he organized fact-finding missions for Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport colleagues, especially to northern European countries (Poland, the Netherlands) and to Scandinavia. In Italy, partially as a result of these initiatives, experimentation in housing policy materialized with both the creation of the Comitato di coordinamento dell'Edilizia Popolare (CEP) and the projects of the so-called Quartieri Coordinati (Coordinated Quarters) in four population centres: in Palermo, Sassari, Vicenza and Salerno. In 1962, this research and experimentation served as the foundation for the drafting of Law n. 167, one of the most important postwar Italian measures promoting the construction of social and government-supported housing across the country. Valle's increasing authority in the field of urban planning led to invitations to collaborate with prominent national

and international institutions, among them the United Nations, the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI) and the European Single Market. **24**

Cesare Valle is an ideal case study of how architects once associated with fascism developed themselves in the years after the Second World War. He succeeded in carving out an original path that began with the architecture and cities he built for the Fascist regime – works that combined monumentality, functionality and modernity – and continued into the postwar era with the renovation and development of urban planning in Italy.

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## **The “afterlife” of fascism: The work of Cesare Valle and the legacy of fascist-era architecture in Italy**

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Valle’s work for the Fascist regime ended in 1941, a short time after the fall of the regime itself. In the postwar period, he took up a new career as a “person of institutions.” Probably because of this significant change in positions, both Valle and his work have remained on the sidelines of the debate about fascism’s “afterlife,” at least until recent years.

In the 2010s, Valle’s work, in particular the architectures that he built for the Fascist regime in Romagna, was rediscovered by scholars and local stakeholders alike. Projects for the reuse of some of this architecture fuelled a new debate on the legacy of fascist-era architecture in Italy.

In particular, the restoration of the former Casa del Balilla (later GIL) building in Forlì was one of the major case studies promoted by the ATRIUM (Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes in Europe’s Urban Memories) project. ATRIUM was started in 2011 by several European partners with the aim of preserving the urban and architectural heritage of 20th-century totalitarian regimes; the Italian partner was the municipality of Forlì. Within this project, buildings such as the Casa del Balilla would serve as a testimony of European history, creating a new cultural route (later acknowledged by the Council of Europe) and promoting new meanings and new uses for this heritage. **25**



The intrinsic risk in this direction, of course, is that it could be understood as an apology for the totalitarian regimes that produced those architectures, shifting a positive evaluation of the architectural objects to a sanctioning of their promoters' motives. This concern seemed particularly valid in the region hosting Mussolini's birthplace, where every year a small but significant number of neo-fascists from across Italy meet to celebrate the Duce's memory. To avoid condemnation, public discussions were encouraged in which the reuse projects provide opportunity to reflect on the contrast between the democratic present and the physical memory of the totalitarian past.

The city of Forlì constitutes a major urban and architectural heritage from the fascist period, and the former Casa del Balilla is among the model case studies of this process. Like many other buildings considered symbols of the regime, in the postwar era, the Casa's fascist past resulted first in its demonization and then in indifference. Following a long period of degradation and neglect, restoration began on the building in 2009, provoking the citizens of Forlì – and Italians everywhere – to come to terms with an “uncomfortable” historical heritage.

The building's high tower originally carried on both sides the young Fascists' oath of loyalty: “Nel nome di Dio e dell'Italia, giuro di eseguire gli ordini del Duce e di servire con tutte le mie forze e se necessario con il mio sangue le cause della Rivoluzione Fascista” (In the name of God and Italy, I swear to follow the orders of the Duce and to serve with all my force and, if necessary, with my blood, the cause of the Fascist Revolution). After the fall of the regime, the letters, originally set in relief with white marble, were removed and their traces gradually deteriorated. During the restoration of the building, the question of what to do with them arose. It was decided not to restore the letters but to leave their traces, as witness both to the fascist propaganda and to its rejection by the local population after the Fascist regime's fall **[Insert 15031-3689-SIV-021-UnFigure-006 Here]**.<sup>26</sup> Today, the former Casa del Balilla hosts important exhibitions on the topic of the architecture of totalitarian regimes, contributing to the resignification of the building and a new appreciation of its architectural value.

In the past few years, Cesare Valle's work has been the subject of much research, studies that have brought attention to an important yet relatively neglected figure in the history of fascist architecture. Some of his buildings are now major case studies in the reuse and resignification of the fascist-era architectures. But because many would prefer to erase the memory of Fascist rule, and because many more understand the restoration of fascist architecture as sanctification of fascist beliefs and thus consider it unconscionable, the renovation of this architecture is hotly debated and often contested.<sup>27</sup> Still, as with the case of ~~the former~~ Cesare Valle's Casa del Balilla, the re-evaluation of the fascist era's Rationalist architecture has proven to be both a means of valorizing urban and architectural history in Italy between the wars (~~and the work of Cesare Valle in particular~~) and a reason to reflect on how historical objects replete with negative connotation might, in the present, be reinterpreted and valued for the temporal dimension that they exude.

## Notes

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- 1** Micaela Antonucci, "Architettura e regime: le opere realizzate dal Fascismo in Romagna/Building construction under Fascism in Romagna," in *L'architettura, i regimi totalitari e la memoria del '900. Contributi alla nascita di una rotta culturale europea/ Architecture, Totalitarian Regimes and Memory in the 20th Century. Contributions to the Birth of a European Cultural Route*, eds Claudia Castellucci, Veronica San Vicente Capanaga, and Cristina Valicelli (Forlì: Casa Editrice Walden, 2014), 75–84; Micaela Antonucci, "Cesare Valle tra Roma e la Romagna (1924–1942). Ingegneria e architettura fra tradizione e modernità," in *Cesare Valle. Un'altra modernità: architettura in Romagna*, ed. Ulisse Tramonti (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2015), 43–55;

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

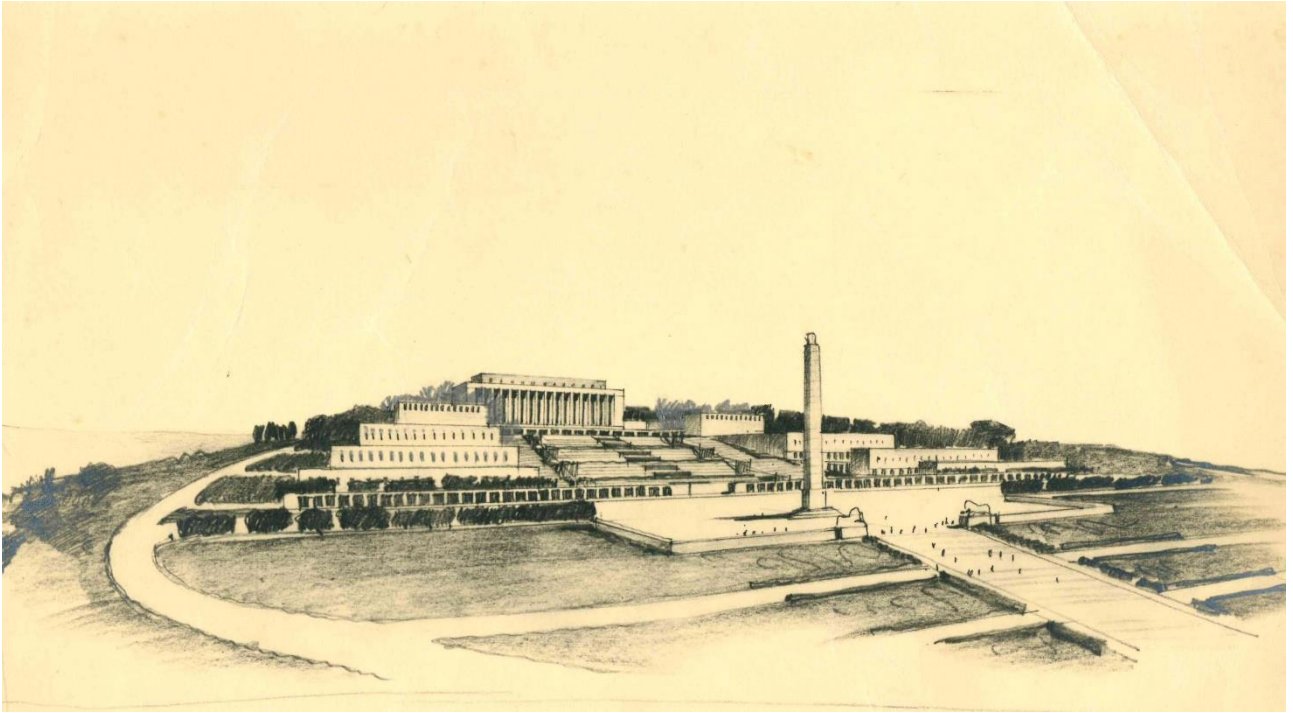


Fig. 5



Fig. 6