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Historical Consciousness through Fascist-era Architecture in Contemporary Italy:

How Can Local Authorities Come to Terms with the Fascist Past?

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Abstract

During the fascist period, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, numerous architectural projects were conducted by the regime to use for its propaganda. Most of them still remain and are used for various purposes in today's Italian society, and the reason and importance of their preservation and utilization are still in discussion. This thesis contributes to considerations of how the past of fascism is perceived in today's Italy by focusing on fascist-era architecture. To approach this question, the main aim of this thesis is to analyze how local authorities can express the past of fascism to the public through the era's architecture. Debates surrounding fascist-era architecture since the post-war period are organized in Chapter I.

In this thesis, the method of 'critical preservation' of fascist-era architecture, that is, preservation with contextualizing and providing a tool to interpret it, is pursued. In this consideration, 'risemantization', that is, giving new meaning to fascist-era architecture, is one of the key concepts. In particular, from the case studies of Bolzano/Bozen, Forlì, and Perugia, discussed in Chapter II, the importance of this concept for critical preservation can be seen. Chapter III takes up the principle object of this thesis, the Palace of Italian Civilization (*Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*) in the district of EUR, Rome, and tries to propose the way of its critical preservation. This whole district and the monumental building have been considered as one of the most representative and impressive examples of fascist-era architecture and fascism's urban development project, but no effective measures to come to terms with the fascist past have been made by the local authority so far. Rather, this building is often valued with de-politicized and de-fascistized perspectives.

Here, the concept of 'palimpsest' is also discussed to think about the means of critical preservation of the Palace. Through applying this concept, too much emphasis on the 'fascist' aspect of this building's context can be avoided, so that its multilayered meanings and memories can be contextualized. The peculiarities of this case – the fact that a certain level of the artistic

value is admitted, and that this building is temporarily managed by a private enterprise of the fashion brand FENDI – can be overcome. Regarding these concepts and points, this thesis proposes to install panels around the building for 'critical preservation' of the Palace of Italian Civilization, with clear explanations about the historical background of its construction, its evaluation from artistic and architectural points of view, and its use after the regime. Although it cannot be the ultimate solution because the situation surrounding this building will continue to change, this thesis argues that in the current situation where the whole building is used as an office and is closed to the public, this approach of paneling may be the most feasible solution.

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Introduction

0.1. Introduction – How Can Italy Confront the Fascist Past through Architecture Created for its Propaganda?

When people travel to Rome, most of them may use the Termini station, the central railway station of this city. While walking from the Colosseum to the Mouth of Truth, tourists may see the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation's marble building surrounded by numerous national flags. There are similar cases outside Rome as well: if people get off the train at Forlì, a city in Emilia Romagna, and head towards the city center, they may find some schools with impressive exteriors. What the buildings referred to here have in common is that they were constructed with a particular political agenda during the fascist period.

After coming to power in 1922, and especially during the 1930s and 1940s, Italian fascism and its dictator, Benito Mussolini, actively promoted architectural projects, including city developments, all over the nation. The regime took advantage of architecture as a political instrument to govern the nation, to show and maintain authority, and to enlighten the masses by using its characteristic of spreading and creating the identity of 'Italian' as well as 'fascist' to the whole citizens (Nicoloso 2010, 10-12). Also, fascism was eager to keep its policy and ideals by engraving them visibly in the urban space (Baioni 2020, 181-194). In short, architecture was used for fascist propaganda. Having a background deeply connected to the past of dictatorship, however, most of the architecture created during this period still remains and is used for various purposes in today's Italian society. Undoubtedly, these facts have been provoking debates surrounding fascist memory in Italy, especially since the 1990s (Malone 2017, 461). In general, urban spaces where people live are regarded to be influenced by political, economic, or social conceptions. The city is thought of as a result of the historical process of clarifying and differentiating the social structure which constitutes it (Ricciardi and Severi 2014, 2). For example, the development of capitalism affected urban planning. As typically seen in the

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development of Paris in the 19th century, the city was planned in an organic and programmatic fashion with a network of boulevards that facilitated logistics and human flow and made it easier to mobilize the military in times of emergency, such as protests (Ricciardi and Severi 2014, 2). The same thing can be said in the case of the period of neoliberalism: the feminist and architect, Elisabetta Teghil, describes that with the emergence of neoliberalism, the urban social environment changed to a structure that excluded and facilitated the control of the poor, blacks, illegals, and immigrants (Teghil 2014, 128-131). In short, she explains that changes in urban space and urban architecture "is a mirror of political and economic choices" (Ibid., 131). What is important is that these changes happen individually, that is, gradually and invisibly for inhabitants so that they do not have to grasp the whole picture of changes, and people can accept them (Ibid.). Architecture created during the fascist period that remain in the public urban space in Italy is regarded as a factor of the same phenomenon – that is, they can influence urban space politically and ideologically, which is still unnoticed today.

The most recent debate was brought by an article titled "Why are so many Fascist monuments still standing in Italy?," posted online on the American magazine *The New Yorker* in 2017 by Ruth Ben=Ghiat, the American historian of Italian history with a focus on post-colonialism.[1] Details will be given in the last section of this chapter, but there were both positive and negative reactions towards her opinion by some intellectuals such as Emilio Gentile[2], Antonio Pennacchi[3] and Fulvio Irace[4], and this article became a trigger for a broad discussion. The meaning of the monuments' survival in the modern public sphere has been debated in Italian society. In other words, the reason and importance of their preservation and

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[1] Available from: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/why-are-so-many-fascist-monuments-still-standing-in-italy (accessed June 17, 2022).
[2] See https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/demoliamo-monumenti-fascisti-creare-lavoro-se-ascoltassimo-new-yorker-AEuFsmiC (accessed September 22, 2023).
[3] See https://www.ilfoglio.it/cultura/2017/10/12/news/il-palazzo-della-civilta-alleur-e-bellissimo-la-risposta-di-pennacchi-al-new-yorker-157269/ (accessed September 22, 2023).
[4] See https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/il-populismo-giornalistico-che-ignora-capolavori-dell-architettura-fascista-AENr8VhC?refresh_ce=1 (accessed December 21, 2022).

utilization are still under discussion.

This thesis considers how the past of fascism is perceived in today's Italy by focusing on architecture built during the fascist period – and often under the regime's direction. To approach this question, the main aim of this thesis is to analyze how local authorities can express the past of fascism to the public through this architecture.

Architectural projects were conducted all over the peninsula by the regime during *ventennio*, and one of the most focused areas was Rome. The regime and Mussolini paid special attention there in order to create the new Italian – and fascist – capital, based on its core ideal 'myth of Rome,' which meant that Italian fascism and the capital, Rome, had had a continuous tradition for more than 2000 years from the Ancient Roman Empire (Fujisawa 2001, 216-217). That is, the dictator intended to express the continuous glory from the Ancient Roman period to fascism to the masses through architecture (Nicoloso 2010, 11). In addition, Mussolini hoped to let the regime's greatness remain in the urban space through architecture and city developments for future generations as well (Fujisawa 2001, 240; Nicoloso 2022, 64-65; 70-71). By creating the new capital in Rome, Mussolini intended to realize these aims. Keeping this fact in mind as a background, this thesis considers examples of architecture in Rome as the principal object for analysis. In particular, the main focus will be on the district of EUR, the area composed of architecture created by the regime as a main site for the World's Expositions in Rome scheduled in 1942, in southern Rome, especially the Palace of Italian Civilization (*Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*), which is the most iconic building in this district.

0.2. 'Fascist-Era Architecture', not 'Fascist Architecture'

In this thesis, when it comes to mentioning 'architecture,' it refers mainly buildings, but the term encompasses monuments as well. Here, this thesis uses the term "fascist-era architecture," rather than "fascist architecture." Architecture during the 1920s and 1930s

consisted of three architectural styles: *movimento Novecento*, rationalism, and monumentalism (as discussed later). In short, architecturally and architectural historically speaking, there was no style defined as "fascist architecture," as the architect, doctor, essayist, and writer Gianni Biondillo describes.[5] The group of Italian writers and translators, Wu Ming1, provides three reasons regarding this point (Wu Ming1 2017): for the first, neoclassicism/monumentalism and rationalism were not features of only Italy and fascism. In fact, in those times, buildings with these styles were created in other European countries and the USA as well, so it cannot be defined as a unique style of fascist Italy. A similar thing can be said even inside the field of Italian architecture, that is, 'fascist' features are 'Italian' ones at the same time. Balconies or towers, which are considered 'fascist' characteristics, for instance, have been longstanding features of Italian buildings (Maulsby 2014, 29-31). Secondly, architecture could have been created even if Italy had not been under fascism. In today's Italy, the idea that "fascism did something good as well (*il fascismo ha fatto anche cose buone*)[6]" (Wu Ming1 2017) is partly rooted in the public, and architecture is considered one of the prominent examples representing this phrase because of its artistic value. However, there is a possibility that creating buildings was a part of the public policy as the contemporary Keynesian states. Moreover, they points out that some of the architects who played an active part during the fascist era had been claiming antifascism already before 1943, such as the members of the studio BBPR in Milan, Gian Luigi Banfi, Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso and Enrico Peressutti, who created the Post, Telegraph, and Te.Ti Office (*il Palazzo delle Poste, Telegrafi e Te.Ti),* in EUR and so on; Giovanni Michelucci, who designed the Florence Santa Maria Novella Station; or Giuseppe Pagano, who designed the building of the Department of Physics of Sapienza University of Rome (*Istituto di Fisica della Sapienza a Roma*) (Wu Ming1 2017). Based on

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[5] From an interview with Gianni Biondillo in Wu Ming1, 2017.
[6] Translation is by author. Hereinafter, all translations from Italian into English is by author, unless otherwise noted.

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their argument, it is simplistic to define all edifices built during the fascist era as 'fascist architecture.'

In addition, defining architecture during the dictatorship period may attempt to connect fascism to aesthetics, and it can be a counterposition to more modern architecture in Italy. Recently, in April 2024, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Giacomo Matteotti's death – who was a socialist opposing fascism and assassinated by fascist killers – the writer Antonio Scruti published a monologue.[7] In it, he accused the fascist regime of having engaged in political violence, such as systematic murder and massacres, not only during a particular period but throughout its entirety (Scurati 2024). Moreover, he mentioned that the prime minister Giorgia Meloni, from the post-fascist party, would want to revise history: according to him, she shifted the blame for the persecution of Jews and other fascist atrocities to the Nazis and did not denigrate the experience of the regime as a whole (Ibid.). Meloni condemned his monologue by switching the point of view (Majoli 2024). Also, more generally, Brothers of Italy (FDI: *Fratelli d'Italia*), the far-right party she joined, used a contrast of images between architecture created during the fascist period and more modern times for the election campaign in 2015 (Wu Ming1 2017). The poster underlined an elegant, pleasant impression of 'fascist architecture' compared to heavy, inorganic 'socialist architecture.' By doing so, it can be read that Meloni and FDI would emphasize the message that "fascism did something good as well" not to totally deny the past. This approach is outside the focus of this thesis, namely, to think about how the fascist past can be confronted through architecture in current Italy, so excessive deference to aesthetic values should be avoided.

However, at the same time, it has been confirmed that some architectural projects

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[7] The full text is available on *la Repubblica*: Scurati, Antonio. 2024. "Il testo di Scurati censurato dalla Rai: "Governo Meloni post fascista, vuole riscrivere la storia" [Scurati's text censored by Rai: "Meloni government post-fascist, wants to rewrite history"]." *la Repubblica*, April 20, 2024. https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2024/04/20/news/monologo_scurati_25_aprile_censura_rai-422639990/ (accessed April 29, 2024).

were created with political intent, namely, as propaganda of the regime, as mentioned in the previous section. The district of EUR, which is the main object of this thesis, for instance, was developed under Mussolini's order to make Rome the fascist capital visually (as discussed in Chapter III). Therefore, for convenience, this thesis defines the term 'fascist-era architecture' as architecture built during the fascist period under the regime's direction, paying particular attention to this point.

0.3. The Concept of 'Critical Preservation' and 'Risemantization'

The anthropologist and musicologist, Sharon Macdonald, explains the concept of 'historical consciousness' as "(...) a notion of historical consciousness recognises and seeks to theorise people's awareness of the past, history and historicity. It entails not simply examining how the past affects the present or is used in it, but investigates people's self-conscious definition of some aspects of the past as 'history', their notions of the agency of the past, their apprehensions of time, and their 'temporal orientations' – how they perceive past, present and future and their interrelations" (Macdonald 2006, 12). Based on this concept, this thesis will look at how the fascist past is and will be recognized in Italy. Focusing on architecture (and partly monuments), which is a media existing in public space, it will consider how to engage with the past and its implications.

In the latest general election in September 2022, FDI achieved the position of the leading party, and its leader Meloni, became the prime minister. FDI was initially born out of a post-war movement inherited from the fascist past, and the government is considered the most right-wing regime since the end of WWII (Kirby 2022), allying with the center-right *Forza Italia* (FI), which had been led by Silvio Berlusconi, and the far-right League (*Lega*), whose representative is Matteo Salvini. In other words, in Italy, the right-wing has been growing in power year by year. In that situation, some are concerned that fascist-era architecture might be

used by them for their political intention (as discussed more in Chapter I). Christina Goulding and Dino Domic, the professors of the marketing field, explain that "Images of the past are used to legitimize current day political ideas and provide a sense of national pride and identity" (Goulding and Domic 2009, 91). Also, they argue that history, past, and heritage are closely connected with the dominant political system, and sometimes, they are utilized to strengthen nationalism or social bonding: and the past "can be tampered with or rewritten in order to legitimize and gain acceptance of political messages and ideologies" (Ibid., 99). According to their arguments, it can be assumed that fascist-era architecture that remains in the urban fabric might be utilized with political intention by the current right-wing party to gain more presence and power. This concern is one of the bases that this thesis tries to consider as a way to confront the fascist past through architecture in Italy. Also, Goulding and Domic refer to the idea of 'nostalgia' as "memory with the pain taken away," including a desire for the past that is idealized but no longer exists (Ibid., 97). According to them, since this sense is connected with a longing for a beautiful past, it could function as a coping method with a current challenging situation (Ibid., 98). For this point, they mention that "museums and heritage may become cultural carriers of ideology, embedded in selective versions of history," so that "heritage can be used as a powerful weapon in support of political rhetoric and ideologies" (Ibid., 99), which leads to bring 'anemoia,' a nostalgic sentiment for a time one has never actually experienced. Since architecture has a strong connection with the concept of 'heritage,' we should consider its potential to become a medium to evoke anemoia for the fascist past in the present day.

However, the notion of 'heritage' is also questionable in this discussion: that is, doubt about whether fascist-era architecture can be regarded as 'fascist heritage' exists. The archaeologist Dacia Viejo-Rose argues that 'heritage' sites are places that fix narratives of memory and history, identity and belonging (Veijo-Rose 2015, 10). A problem that occurred in the process of the preservation of fascist-era architecture as 'heritage' is the ignorance of their

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'fascistness.' This architecture tended to be merely preserved as 'cultural heritage,' not 'fascist heritage' that represents the fascist past actively (as discussed in detail in Chapter I). The historian Hannah Malone suggests that if they are preserved only under the name of 'aesthetics,' buildings have to be stripped of their political content (Malone 2017, 457). Yet, they have a strong connection with political ideology, so it is doubtful that the political and historical context can be ignored when it comes to thinking about this architecture's value and meaning. At the same time, sometimes it is implied that 'heritage' is sacred and special (Macdonald 2006, 19). In this sense, the 'heritagization' of fascist-era architecture may include the uncritical justification and the valorization of the fascist past (Arthurs 2010, 124). In other words, practices of preserving fascist-era architecture as 'fascist heritage' might lead to deify the fascist past.

Therefore, what is required is a 'critical preservation' of fascist-era architecture, not 'heritagizing' it. This concept means conservation along installing "devices that re-contextualize the site" (Malone 2023, 52-53). In fact, today, it can be assumed that Italian people who use, commute or pass by places of fascism, including architecture, do not tend to focus on its past of fascism (Maulsby 2014, 29; Albanese and Ceci 2022, 23). Behind that, there is a need for more tools to support the interpretation of the past for the public. Without any explanation, there are possibilities that the fascist past would be normalized, and people cannot understand the ideology correctly, which would cause nostalgia or anemoia for fascism. The historian Joshua Arthurs claimed that, by offering an opportunity not just to see the architecture but to understand the history, the didactic value from the historical and aesthetic points of view can be strengthened, and meaningful justification can be given to fascist-era architecture (Arthurs 2010, 125). In order to realize it, the key is to provide tools for the public to critically understand and interpret the past through fascist-era architecture, with a form of museum, exhibition, labeling, or paneling, for instance (Ibid.; Belmonte 2022, 90; Malone 2023. 52–53).

Here, one thing should be noted that it is insufficient to solely monumentalize fascist-era architecture. There is a dilemma that memorizing something as a 'monument' may lead to release people from the duty of memorizing and can promote forgetting at the same time (Borsari and Leoni 2022, 31). In other words, in the search for a way to relate with the past through fascist-era architecture, more than mere 'commemoration' or 'monumentalization' of the practice is required. Based on these considerations, this thesis explores the possibility of the 'critical preservation' of fascist-era architecture in EUR.

In this thesis, 'risemantization' is one of the key ideas. The concept of 'risemantization' means giving a new meaning to something, namely, architecture, monuments, and so forth. The historian of education, Seveso Gabriella, explained that by risemantizing something, it can be shown that objects have a different meaning with the times (Seveso 2020, 77-78). One of the representative examples of risemantizing fascist monuments in Italy is seen in the city of Bolzano/Bozen, which will be presented in Chapter II in detail. This concept can be applied to museums as well. In general, the museum plays a role in telling the history that has changed and is risemantized over time to the public through exhibited objects as media: by doing so, the place functions as a structured place to make the past a 'risemantized present' (Garofalo 2015). The AfricaMuseum in Tervuren, Belgium, represents this point well: this, too, will be discussed in detail in Chapter III, but the museum is decolonized by using the original objects prepared as propaganda to promote colonialism (AfricaMuseum n.d.b). Applying this concept to monumental things, which include ideology, can incorporate criticisms of the original meaning and intent into their image, and can be able to offer through-provoking solutions to what is challenging to treat (Wu Ming1 2017).

In this thesis, local authorities are considered a central actor when considering the measure of 'critical preservation.' Today, for managing heritage, a local community's will is respected as a top priority. That is, the desire for a sense of place and cultural identity for the

heritage by the local community takes precedence over the needs of tourists who consume products and experiences (Ashworth and Bart 2010, 451). Though it is for 'heritage' and this thesis is based on the idea that fascist-era architecture is hard to consider 'heritage,' this principle can be applied to it, since it can be assumed that different actors will seek different things for 'critical preservation.' In addition to this point, for (re-)interpreting history, a consensus can more easily be made on the local level than on the national level.

At the same time, the actor who actually leads and carries out practices to come to terms with the past through fascist legacies is the local municipality, not the government or the State. This point can be clarified by considering case studies in Chapter II that present actual examples, but there is also a legislative background. The museologists Donata Levi and Denise La Monica explain and organize this point well (in Levi and La Monica 2015), so these two paragraphs provide a brief summary of it: based on two basic principles – laws enacted during the fascist period, and the Civil Code provisions for public heritage and laws on urban planning applied in 1942 – the Constitution delegates the protection of historical and artistic heritage and landscapes to the state in Article 9 of the Basic Principles and the management of museums and libraries to local governments in Chapter 5, Article 117.[8] However, because the latter contains ambiguities regarding interpretation, the provision was not immediately applied. Since then, disputes over heritage administration between the state and local governments have played out for decades. From the 1960s, following the trend toward decentralization, there was support for the transfer of jurisdiction over cultural and environmental protection, historical and artistic heritage, and urban landscaping to the regions. On a regional level, during the 1960s and 1970s, each region enacted laws governing the operation and work of museums. However, at the national legal level, complete transfer was not achieved except in the field of urban planning at

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[8] Full text of the current version of the Constitution in English is available from: Quirinale. n.d. "Constitution of the Italian Republic," edited by the Gerneral Secretariat and Research Department. https://www.quirinale.it/allegati_statici/costituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf (accessed June 5, 2024).

the time of the 1970s. In addition, the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Heritage was established in 1975 so that cultural and natural heritage was under state control. In the following decade, state and local government cooperation was required without any clear legislation.

On the other hand, according to Levi and La Monica, local authorities strengthened their initiatives for cultural and natural heritage, such as educational practices of heritages and restorations in Emilia-Romagna or Umbria. The administrative authority was granted to the regions over the cultural sector in the early 1990s. The national government changed regulations and institutions, allowing local governments to take direct action on the heritage of their respective regions. By the Bassanini Law enacted in 1997[9], decentralization was more firmly established, and all responsibility for protecting landscapes and historic centers was returned to the regions. And by the legislative decree no. 112 of March 31, 1998[10], the national and local jurisdictions were clearly defined for each estate administration act. When amendments to Chapter V of the Constitution were approved in 2001, the government was given the authority to enact this Code in 2004. With this Code, the laws in cultural heritage and landscape protection were reorganized. In particular, Article 4 stipulates that the heritage protection function is to be exercised by the Ministry of Land and Infrastructure, which may delegate its exercise to the regions through agreements and coordination (Levi and La Monica 2015). Therefore, the local authority is now considered to be a critical agent in providing the interpretation which can be shared the most, and a tool for critical understanding to the public in this thesis.

0.4. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion. In

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[9] Full text is available on Gazetta Ufficiale: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1997/03/17/097G0099/sg (accessed June 5, 2024).

[10] Full text is available on Gazetta Ufficiale: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1998/05/21/098A4235/sg (accessed June 5, 2024).

the introduction, the aim of this work is clarified. At the same time, the concepts of 'critical preservation' and 'risemantization,' which are key to thinking about the issue surrounding remaining fascist-era architecture, have also been explained. The recent controversies surrounding (treatments of) architecture created under the fascist regime will be organized in Chapter I by reflecting on the existing literature and recent research. The trends related to this topic in the academic field and the need for this thesis will be briefly clarified.

Chapter II is dedicated to case studies in three Italian cities: Bolzano/Bozen, Forlì, and Perugia. Each of them has been trying to confront the fascist past through fascist-era architecture, monuments, or physical remnants, and these cases represent some significant concepts for critical preservation. In the north Italian city Bolzano/Bozen, practices for the Monument to Victory (*Monumento alla Vittoria*) and the House of Fasces (*Casa del Fascio*) emerge as examples of 'risemantization' of fascist tangible remnants, with the installation of a permanent exhibition and explanation panels as well as contemporary art of light. As a place close to Mussolini's birthplace, Forlì has various fascist-era architecture constructed as a part of fascist urban development, and today they are used for the city's tourism industry. While these two cities have been trying to mainly focus on the practice of architecture and monuments, the case of Perugia confronts *fasci littori*, the symbol mark of the fascist party, left in the Covered Market (*Mercato Coperto*) in the city. Although it does not treat architecture well, this case shows the process of debates on fascist traces in the public space among the local government and community. Also, from the series of discussions, the meaning of 'a-politicization' and 'de-politicization' of fascist remnants can be seen. These three cases present crucial points for 'critical preservation' by local authorities.

The final chapter focuses on the district of EUR and the Palace of Italian Civilization (*Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*) in Rome, discussing how local authorities can use this building to come to terms with the fascist past. Its historical background is explained beforehand so that

the inseparable connection between this building and the fascist regime can be visible. Then, based on findings in Chapter II, this chapter provides an idea to constitute a series of explanation panels around the building to contextualize it. For this proposal, another concept of 'palimpsest' is applied, in order not to emphasize the 'fascist' aspect too much but to contextualize it inclusively. For a conclusion, the thesis re-analyze the cases in Chapter II from the perspective of this concept in the last part.

Chapter I: Debates Surrounding Fascist-era Architecture Since the Post-war Period

1.1. After Fascism: Debate from the Post-War Period

Soon after the collapse of the regime, there were movements to demolish fascist symbols, buildings, and monuments, but most of them were preserved and merely reused for decades, ignoring the past of fascism (Malone 2017, 449; Bartolini 2022, 135). Destruction was limited to the direct symbols of fascism, and these were removed from the urban space violently, especially on 25th July 1943 after Mussolini's overthrow, on 8th September 1943, facing the armistice and at the end of the war in 1945 (Malone 2017. 449; Cajani 2019; Baioni 2020; Albanese and Ceci 2022. 11). It was thought that destroying them would atone for Italians' illusions about fascism and lead to a break with the past (Baioni 2020). Since then, even historians and architects have been leaving fascist-era architecture uncritically in urban space (Malone 2017, 457). Indeed, there was a practical reason for choosing to do so. Although there were terrible Allied bombings in Italy, they left most of the Italian cities as well as the architecture intact. What was more, after WWII, Italy was in a state of economic and social turmoil, and it was not realistic to demolish the buildings given that there was a scarcity of materials, that is, it might be a self-abusive act for Italy: in particular, numerous infrastructure facilities, such as railway stations, schools, buildings of local and national government were created during the *ventennio*, and they were chosen to be preserved and reused (Malone 2017, 453-454; Nicoloso 2022, 71). Yet, it is unlikely that this was the only reason for the remaining problematic remnants. The following section looks at and organizes the disputes about fascist-era architecture from the 1950s until 2017.

figure 1: Metal 'fascio' torn down from the headquarters of the National Fascist Party in Florence on 25th July 1943 (Museum of Salò, author's photograph, 2023)

1.2. Debate Surrounding the Foro Italico Beginning with the 1960 Rome Olympic Games

As mentioned above, fascist-era architecture tended to be ignored in the post-war period. However, this does not mean that the debate about the memory and past of fascist-era architecture never happened: one of the first public debates regarding the relationship between the use of fascist-era architecture and fascist memory was provoked during the period of the 1960 Rome Olympic Games. For this event, the *Foro Italico*, a sports complex in Rome, was chosen for its venue.

In 1954, the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI: *Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano*) set the desire to host the Olympic Games in 1960 with a vision to attract the international society's attention to the Italian Republic, and Rome officially got the right to host the Games in 1955 (Martin 2017, 59). Around this time, the Italian government was led by Christian Democracy (DC: *Democrazia Cristiana*): as for the prime minister, the situation was shifting to the right. In particular, Adone Zoli from DC, who had been the prime minister from 1957 to 1958, reluctantly began to form a coalition with the Italian Social Movement (MSI:

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Movimento Sociale Italiano), a far-right neo-fascist party, in order to get his administration established, since DC no longer had enough votes to form a government without support from MSI – this was a decisive step in the government's shift to the right (Ito 2016, 75). On the other hand, the left was gaining ground within the party: in fact, in 1955, a leftist member of DC, Giovanni Gronchi, became the president with an expectation to improve the relationship between the left and right in the party (Ibid., 74). Around the same time, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI: *Partito Socialista Italiano*), which was losing its hegemony within the left-wing forces, began to take a dialogue line with the ruling party, and DC started to move toward the establishment of a center-left coalition (Ibid., 77). In short, as a party based on anti-fascism as well as anti-communism, DC was swinging between left and right.

Generally speaking, as one of the hugest global events, the hosting of the Olympic Games had been functioning as a good opportunity to show national identity and image to international society (Modrey 2008, 691-692). In addition to this point, the 1960 Games became the first ones to be broadcast live all over the world, so it was expected to be an unprecedented opportunity to show Italy's establishment of vibrant democracy and economy after having got rid of the fascist past to the international society (Martin 2017, 61).

Here, the problem related to the memory of fascism and the identity of the Republic was triggered (Ibid., 68). By this period, not only in the economic or social field but also in the world of sports, had Italy not taken any systematic approach to come to terms with the fascist past and memory (Ibid., 59-60). Instead, there was a certain level of continuity from the fascist period. Count Albert Bonacossa, who held Italy's third International Olympic Committee (IOC) seat, prevented Italy's exclusion from international competitions without changing the direction of sports politics from the fascist period (Ibid., 60-61). Although he had ties to fascism, he was well-versed in the internal politics and diplomacy of the organization, having been a member of the IOC since 1925 (Ibid., 60). He was removed as an Italian IOC member, but CONI, which

itself had functioned as a propaganda tool under fascism, could continue to play a central role in hosting the Olympic Games after the war. For this situation, CONI President Giulio Onesti was also a key person. He clearly separated the field of sports from politics by cooperating with many of its former employees (Martin 2017, 60-61). Therefore, though Italy aimed to appeal to its national image globally, hosting the Olympic Games revealed an insufficient settlement of the fascist past. At the same time, this global event also unveiled some unsolved issues and divisions in the Italian political environment, especially the relationship between communism and Catholic. Since the unification of Italy, sports and leisure had been one of the keys for the Catholicism Church to establish an influence on politics based on faith (Ibid., 62). Thus, the Catholic Church used this opportunity to strengthen its vision of Italy and combat the left, cooperating with DC (Ibid.). The left opposed and criticized this stance of the Church as well as DC, regarding them as carrying out anti-communist and pro-Catholic campaigns (Ibid., 63). However, on the other hand, since it had been financed, the Italian Communist Party (PCI: *Partito Comunista Italiano*) played a role in establishing sports relations with the Soviet Union and mounting its support for the convention (Ibid., 62-63). In short, behind the Olympic Games were political discussions, expectations, and pressures from each political side.

One of the debates that arose in the hosting of the Olympic Games was about its venue, the *Foro Italico*. This sports complex, formerly named *Foro Mussolini* and renamed after WWII, was constructed by the regime and inaugurated in 1932. Under Mussolini's direction, it was expected to be a place of physical education for young fascists to turn them into 'new men,' which meant physically strong, brave, and healthy fascists, and a representation of fascist ideology celebrating the fitness and beauty of men (Petersen 2020, 112-113). The *Foro Italico* consists of some sports facilities, such as the Stadium of the Marbles (*Stadio dei Marmi*), the CONI headquarters, and the headquarters of the *Opera Nazionale Ballila*.[11]

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[11] The *Opera Nazionale Ballila* was a fascist young organization.

Moreover, this place was full of fascist decorations. One of the most impressive ones was the inscription "MUSSOLINI DUX" on the marble obelisk at the complex's entrance, which became the object of a discussion in 2015, as described later. Another iconic example was the mosaics that paved the *Piazzale dell'Impero* (today *Viale del Foro Italico*), a monumental boulevard at the entrance and two lines of thirteen blocks beside the mosaics. The former showed fascist slogans, symbols, activities, and historical victories, while the latter had inscriptions that offer a sequence of crucial events for the regime's history to commemorate them, such as Mussolini's founding of the *Popolo D'Italia* newspaper and the anniversary of the March on Rome (Arthurs 2010, 117; Martin 2017, 69; Petersen 2020, 114).

Unsurprisingly, this historical background was why the use of this place for the international event triggered a discussion related to memory and identity. On the one hand, Italy claimed that the Republic was based on anti-fascism, but on the other hand, the *Foro Italico* held a deep relationship with the fascist past, which could not be ignored. CONI wanted to make the continuity between modern times and the ancient past of Rome globally visible through the venue so that the 'artful' and 'elegant' image of Italy would be spread to the world (Modrey 2008, 698-699). However, it is unlikely that the use of the *Foro Italico* would fulfill this requirement of Italy. This place had held numerous memories of fascism and Mussolini as a form of symbols and inscriptions, which symbolized the power and strength of the regime. Faced with the possibility of holding the Olympic Games in such a place, their meaning was newly discussed at the parliamentary and public level in post-war Italy (Ibid., 699): the core question was whether the fascist decorations, such as inscriptions and mosaics, could be seen as simply a historical fact or would instead be thought of as propaganda of the regime (Petersen 2020, 117).

At first, the government led by DC made a decision to renovate the *Foro Italico*, and CONI restored some of the mosaics, murals, and inscriptions (Arthurs 2010, 120), which caused

a severe objection by the leftists. In February 1959, they petitioned the Rome City Council to eliminate the fascist inscriptions from buildings, including the Stadium of the Marbles, but this request was unsuccessful (Modrey 2008, 699). Then, in October, the Communist Party requested to remove the fascist decorations, and in the following month, a Communist delegation brought this issue to the Italian parliament by asking the then prime minister Antonio Segni and his government to clarify their position – it made the discussion heated (Ibid.). Some politicians feared that keeping these decorations visible would give visitors the impression that Italy had still been respecting and celebrating Mussolini (Zimmerman 1959; Camera dei Deputati 1959, 10614; Modrey 2008, 699: Petersen2020, 117). For communists, remaining fascist monuments and inscriptions meant "the failures of the post-war Republic, its abandonment of anti-fascist values, and the reluctance of the Christian Democratic government to confront an uncomfortable past" (Arthurs 2010, 120). Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, in the leftist in *Vie Nuove*, supported erasing the fascist representations from mosaics in the *Foro Italico* so that it could be re-proved that anti-fascism and the Resistance were the fundamental ideals of Italy (Macciocchi 1960, 15, quoted in Martin 2017, 70).[12] On the one hand, the government responded to these arguments by claiming that, however dark the fascist past might have been, these inscriptions and motifs had been a component of Italian history (Zimmerman 1959; Camera dei Deputati 1959, 10613-10614; Modrey 2008, 699-700; Arthurs 2010, 120; Malone 2017, 462; Petersen2020, 117). On the other hand, there was another factor: the then government and the Roman city government kept fascist motifs visible despite these discussions. At that time, both the national and city governments were led by DC. However, the prime minister following Segni, Fernando Tambroni, needed to rely on the coalition parties to establish a government and decided to set up an alliance with MSI (Modrey 2008, 700). He

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[12] Original reference: Maria A. Macciocchi. 1960. "Togliere All'Italia la Truccatura Fascista [Taking the Fascist Trick Out of Italy.]," *Vie Nuove* 33, XV, 14–15.

established a government in April 1960 but could not gain enough support in the parliament. Therefore, he decided to get closer to the neo-fascist party MSI to gain their support. Because the relationship between DC and MSI was stronger in Rome than at the national level, and despite criticism from the left, the government continued to plan to hold the Olympic Games without removing the fascist representations from the *Foro Italico* (Martin 2017, 70).

In fact, dissatisfaction with his government, mainly from leftist parties and workers, had exploded. One of the most representative events was a series of clashes that happened in Genoa. This city had been the center of resistance against Nazis and fascism (Ito 2016, 80). In 1960, the MSI announced holding the party congress in this city, and Tambroni permitted it (Ibid.; Martin 2017, 70). Against this announcement and decision, the leftists, beginning with the communists, the Camber of Labor, as well as universities' students and professors, protested, leading (violent) demonstrations not only in this city but also around Italy. In particular, on 30th June in Genoa, a demonstration led to a violent clash between participants and police (Martin 2017, 70). As a result, in July, Tambroni and his administration were forced to resign (Ibid.; Ito 2016, 80).

It was this time when Amintore Fanfani became the prime minister for the third time in July 1960, that is, only one month before the beginning of the Olympic Games, that the situation surrounding the event and the *Foro Italico* changed. With his strong anti-fascist stance, he ordered the removal of some of the fascist symbols and inscriptions before the start of the games (Modrey 2008, 700). Neo-fascists and right-wing extremists opposed this decision, leading protests, planting bombs, or presenting slogans praising Mussolini in the public space, with backing from the MSI (Ibid.; Malone 2017, 462).

As a result, a part of the *Foro Italico* was modified by making a compromise faced with pressure from the far-right. The most ideological decorations, such as a tablet celebrating the fascist resistance to the League of Nations sanctions following the invasion of Abyssinia

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and a mosaic quoting the fascist oath, were erased and covered. The most impressive measure, however, was the modification of a chronological table of marble blocks, which aimed not to eliminate the fascist past that the series of blocks narrated but to create a new layer of history and emphasize the continuity of the State through the fascist era. To this end, the government chose to revise the original historical timeline by newly putting three crucial dates for the Republic at the end of the sequence – the end of the fascist regime in 1943, the creation of the Italian Republic in 1946 and the Italian Constitution in 1948 (Arthurs, 2010, 120; Martin 2017, 69; Malone 2017, 463; Petersen 2020, 117). On the other hand, the inscription of the obelisk was left intact. Therefore, the measure to come to terms with the fascist past in the *Foro Italico* by the 1960 Olympic Games ended up incomplete. It should have meant that at the governmental level, Italy could not reach a comprehensive agreement on the memory of fascism in this place.

This problem was also covered in the international mass media, but in a different manner. The historian Eva Maria Modrey points out that some journalists of *the Los Angeles Times* or the *New York Times* treated the Italian communists' move of claiming to eliminate fascist decorations as typical behavior of the Soviets, and this issue was turned into an international debate about Cold War politics (Modrey 2008, 701). In other words, without the architectural sign and its interpretation, Italian architecture became an instrument for a political dispute about the Cold War situation, and the *Foro Italico*'s inscriptions, which had symbolized the power and force of the fascist regime during the *ventennio*, became the political statement of Italy (Ibid.). While issues about the past and memory of the regime was discussed at the journalistic level, other international media such as TV and a guidebook published by the *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro*[13] barely referred to the fascist regime, and they only mentioned this

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[13] For example: Banca Nazionale del Lavoro. 1960. "Games of the XVII Olympiad, Rome 1960: the official report of the Organizing Committee Organizing Committee of the Games of the XVII Olympiad, v.1 [sic]," 50-94. Digitally published by the LA84 Foundation, 1960.

complex's architectural and artistic features (Petersen 2020, 117). In this sense, the 1960 Olympic Games were de-politicized and turned into a stage for apolitical and international sports games – at least, by avoiding discussion of the remaining fascist decorations, the Italian government hoped to represent this place in this way (Ibid.).

There were critiques from intellectuals as well. The representative figure was Gianni Rodari, the communist writer and journalist. He wrote an article about the *Foro Italico* and the Olympic Games in the newspaper *Paese Sera* on 7th November 1959. In it, he expressed his support in principle for removal because of the risk that the decorations would become a symbolic image of Rome for foreigners coming for the Games (Rodari 1959). However, regarding the situation that this place might be used without massive modifications, he offered a more critical approach to preserving them (Ibid.). He proposed to put extra explanations to the chronological inscription of fascist events, that is, to 'update' this chronology, to make this place a "museum of contemporary history" (Ibid.). In other words, the proposal argued that even if this site is to be used for the Olympic Games, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure it does not remain in its original form.

Since the 1960 Olympic Games, the *Foro Italico* has been used for national and global sports events, such as the 1990 FIFA World Cup of soccer and the annual Italian Open tennis tournament (Petersen 2020, 111). Although there have been several discussions regarding the restoration and preservation of this sports complex, almost no modification of the fascist representation has been done so far. In 2015, a photo taken at *Sala d'onore del Coni* in the *Foro Italico* provoked a debate. It was taken by some representative Italian rugby players with the then president of Italian Rugby Federation, Alfredo Gavazzi, and that of the CONI, Giovanni Malagò on the occasion of the Six Nations Championship of rugby (Miele 2015). The issue of this photo was that the figures were standing in front of an artwork entitled "Apotheosis of

https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll8/id/19251/rec/26 (accessed February 2, 2024).

Fascism (*Apotesi del Fascismo*)," created by an artist named Luigi Montanarini in 1928 at the behest of Mussolini in order to commemorate the glory of Italian fascism [figure 2]. The work depicts fascist motifs, beginning with *Il Duce* at the center and the fascist symbol *fasci*, eagles, and black flags surrounding him, with Italian people, leaders, and soldiers. Also, there are "*Arditi*," which where the elite forces of the Italian army in WWI, a Goddess of Victory, and warships and fighter planes. In short, these motifs represent fascist belligerent attitudes.

figure 2: Apoteosi del fascismo by Montanarini Luigi (retrieved from Catalogo Generale dei Beni Cultrali, May 25, 2024)[14]

Although, in 1944, the whole work was hidden from view with a drop curtain, the removal of the cover was proposed in 1996 by Walter Veltroni (Miele 2015). Originally joining PCI, he became one of the leading members of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS: *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*) in 1991, which was the descendant of PCI, and was the Minister of Cultural Heritage at the time of this proposal. In an interview on *La Stampa* in 2013, emphasizing that he opposed historical and political revisionism, he explained the reason for the cover's removal (and measures to deal with fascist legacies in general) as a practice to hand over the products of history to the future generation so that they could recognize and remember

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14 Catalogo Generale dei Beni Cultrali. n.d. "La Roma di Mussolini apoteosi del fascismo."
https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/1201205519 (accessed May 25, 2024)

their civilization (Feltri 2013). In other words, he thoroughly supported a visualization and restoration of fascist-era artworks and heritages in order not to repeat the tragedy brought by the regime. Due to his proposal, the CONI decided to remove the cover of "Apotheosis of Fascism" in 1997, with a certificate by the Superintendence of Architectural Heritage, and since then, it has been left on view (Miele 2015).

Against this treatment, unsurprisingly, some disagreements arose. The socialist and a representative observer of racism in football, Mauro Valeri, for instance, was one of the figures who asked the CONI to cover the artwork again. He pointed out Article II of CONI bylaws, which stipulated that the organization's purpose was the physical and spiritual betterment of the "race": according to him, keeping the art visible with this basis as a background meant a historical shortcoming of CONI (Ibid.). Nevertheless, the "Apotheosis of Fascism" has been not only kept visible but also used by the highest authorities in the sporting world to honor Italian sports and its triumphs (Ibid.).

In the same year, the then president of the Chamber of Deputies, Laura Boldrini, called for the elimination of the inscription "MUSSOLINI DUX" on the obelisk. This call provoked a wide reaction among the Italian media, and in the political world, as both the left and the right opposed her. What was interesting was that the left has changed its position regarding preservation and restoration since 1960: the then President of the Democratic Party (PD: *Partito Democratico*), Matteo Orfini, supported the preservation of this obelisk because it had been a part of Italian memory (*La Repubblica* 2015; *Corriere della Sera* 2015; Malone 2017. 465). Meanwhile, some right-wing politicians such as Andrea Augello, who has been the member of the MSI and the post-fascist National Alliance (AN: *Alleanza Nazionale*), and Dario Rossin, the representative for FI, praised the value of the art and architectural patrimony, with de-politicized view on the *Foro Italico* (*Il Tempo* 2015; *Corriere della Sera* 2015; Malone 2017, 465). Actually, as mentioned, this place has been used for the annual Italian Open tennis

tournament every year. A tennis journalist mentions that the reason has been its symbolic character: he explains that the influence of the political meaning has been weakened because this place had never been covered, and the aesthetic value has been maintained (Bisti 2021). Indeed, according to him, this place is not in the best condition from an international point of view, but there are minimum facilities for sports and games (Ibid.). In addition to that, in his opinion, it is difficult to change the venue because of the place's brand for the tournament (Ibid.).

1.3. Fascist-era Architecture Valued by 'Aesthetics'

He does not intend to give an opinion from the political perspective but solely did as a figure from the tennis field – this might have a connection with the point Rossin mentioned in the last debate, that is, respecting the 'artistic and architectural' value of the *Foro Italico*. In fact, one thing that must be noted is that one of the main and longstanding reasons for preserving and restoring fascist-era architecture has been its artistic value. After the collapse of the regime, Italy tended to reuse fascist legacies under the name of 'aesthetics' and treat them as significant artifacts of Italian rationalism (Malone 2017, 453; Cajani 2019). In this process, the political and ideological context of the architecture was encouraged to be separated from artistic value, and fascist symbols were erased and modified, with expecting which memory to memorize and which to distort (Arthurs 2010, 124; Malone 2017, 449-452). In fact, in 1974, the Italian left-wing intellectual, Pier Paolo Pasolini, in his documentary, "*La forma della città* (The shape of the city)," commented about Sabaudia, a city created by the regime, as follows: "Sabaudia was created by the regime, there is no doubt about it, but it has nothing fascist in fact, except for some exterior characteristics (...) although it was ordered by the regime according to certain criteria of rationalistic, aesthetic and academic character, Sabaudia finds its roots not in the regime which ordered it, but in the reality that fascism tyrannically dominated but failed to

undermine" (Pasolini 1974).[15] In short, he thought of Sabaudia as a city without anything fascist, even though the regime's order constructed it. He saw the city as separated from the past of fascism.

In the 1980s, preservation and restoration as 'national heritage' or 'national patrimony' started, forgetting its 'fascistness' (Carter and Martin 2019, 118). One of the reasons for this development was legal procedure, that is, related to Law no.1089, "the protection of objects of artistic or historical value (*Tutela delle cose d'interesse artistico o storico*),"[16] originally enacted in 1939. Regarding the rule of this law, in this period, the government started to analyze the architecture created in the 1930s, questioning whether to preserve them as 'national heritages' or not (Belmonte 2022, 90). Certainly, spaces closely connected to fascist ritual activities and clear fascist exteriors were modified, but other features have been protected by the law still today which postulates a more significant artistic value than political one (Maulsby 2014, 28-29). From the 1990s, debates surrounding this architecture began to appear in Italian media as one way to rethink the question, 'what is fascism?' (Malone 2017, 461). Because of the existence and rise of right-wing parties, beginning with MSI, a major neo-fascist party for the first in Europe after WWII, followed by the emergence of the 'post-fascist' Northern Alliance, both fascism and Mussolini became a center of debate in Italy again (Arthurs 2010, 115).

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[15] A documentary of Pier Paolo Pasolini. "La forma della città". Available on YouTube: Fabio Brolis. 2013. "Pier Paolo Pasolini – La forma della città (1974)," YouTube, uploaded on August 21, 2013: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btJ-EoJxwr4 (accessed May 23, 2024). Original script in Italian is transcribed in Wu Ming1, 2017: "*Sabaudia è stata creata dal regime, non c'è dubbio, però non ha niente di fascista, in realtà, se non alcuni caratteri esteriori [...] Sabaudia, benché ordinata dal regime secondo certi criteri di carattere razionalistico, estetizzante, accademico, non trova le sue radici nel regime che l'ha ordinata, ma in quella realtà che il fascismo ha dominato tirannicamente ma che non è riuscito a scalfire*". Translation is by author referring to this script by Wu Ming1 2017.
[16] Full text is available on Gazzetta Ufficiale: https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1939-08-08&atto.codiceRedazionale=039U1089&elenco30giorni=false (accessed May 29, 2024).

1.4. Recent Debate Provoked by an Article in 2017

The trigger of a recent debate about architecture and other fascist remains was the article posted by Ruth Ben=Ghiat in *The New Yorker* in 2017.[17] This post was soon translated into Italian and published in the magazine *Internazionale*.[18] It triggered the debate surrounding fascist-era architecture from academia to the public, reflecting the contemporary situation of the emergence of neo-fascist and populism in Italy and that of the heated global discussion around monuments connected to racism, colonialism, or imperialism (Malone, mentioned in a workshop, April 14, 2023; Ben=Ghiat 2017; Carter and Martin 2019, 120; Albanese and Ceci 2022, 15).[19] Ben=Ghiat addressed the issue that fascist monuments, including architecture, have been preserved, although there was anti-fascist resistance and the rise of the Communist Party after the end of the war. She also pointed out that there is a possibility of the architecture to become a political tool again for right-wing parties. This article provoked controversy among the public, from Americans to Italians, on social media and so forth (Wu Ming1 2017; *Il Sole 24 ORE* 2017; Guerri 2017; Di Michele 2020, 164). Most were critical of her argument: some supported the value of 'Italian rationalism' architecture; others referred to the Colosseum, where there was cruelty in massacring pagans, Christians, and animals (*Il Sole 24 ORE* 2017; Guerri 2017).

There were some reactions from Italian intellectuals as well. Wu Ming1, however, defended her argument (Wu Ming1 2017). They claimed that since Ben=Ghiat had been a member of the international scientific committee that convened to evaluate the project of a

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[17] Available from: https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/why-are-so-many-fascist-monuments-still-standing-in-italy (accessed June 17, 2022).
[18] Translated by Tortorella, Bruna. 2017. "I monumenti fascisti restano in piedi [Fascist monuments remain standing]." *Internazionale*, October 30, 2017. https://www.internazionale.it/reportage/ruth-ben-ghiat/2017/10/30/monumenti-fascisti (accessed on January 2, 2024)
[19] The example from the global perspective is conflicts over the monuments of the Confederate in the US around 2017. In Italy, actually, the plan of creating a fascist museum in Predappio, birthplace of Mussolini, began and was in discussion since 2016. The workshop Hannah Malone mentioned this point was *The Architectural Heritage of Fascist Italy from 1945 until today*, by KNIR Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome on April 14, 2023.

museum in Predappio (Ben=Ghiat 2017), it is unthinkable that she was hostile to fascist-era architecture, and he condemned the critics as 'ignorant' (Wu Ming1 2017). On the other hand, Emilio Gentile, the Italian historian of fascism, for instance, showed his disagreement with her argument of demolishing the fascist-era architecture ironically. According to him, the biggest problem for the Italian democracy is the fascist past. A series of demolition may have aspects that contribute to other social issues in Italy, such as solving employment problems. However, he argued that it is not the greatest solution to the problems facing Italian democracy, as coming to terms with its fascist past is the most important issue (Gentile 2017). Antonio Pennacchi, the Italian writer of the left-wing, opposed her opinion in an interview in the newspaper *Il Foglio*. He argued that Italian history is based on the 'continuism (*continuismo*),' that is, it has developed by using the remnants of the previous period. Therefore, since at least *fasci* were already removed and these architecture have become simply buildings, it is natural to remain and utilize them today for this country (Stefanini 2017).[20] Fulvio Irace, the Italian architect and architectural historian, also objected to Ben=Ghiat, as the value of architecture can be judged after some time has passed. At the same time, he claimed that the reassessed history should not be revised since it relates to a collective memory (Irace 2017). Regardless of the pros and cons, because of Ben=Ghiat's article, fascist-era architecture has become an object of debate relating to the treatment of fascist memory in Italy.

The article started a debate not only in public but in the academic field. The meaning of fascist-era architecture (including other remnants such as monuments and heritages) has begun to be deeply questioned, and its study has become increasingly fashionable (Malone, in the workshop, April 14, 2023). However, no solution has yet been found concerning the district of EUR, even though it is recognized as one of the most famous and notable examples of fascist-era architecture.

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[20] From an interview with Antonio Pennacchi in Stefanini, *Il Foglio*, October 12, 2017.

In conclusion, a fundamental question of this thesis is whether fascist-era architecture could be 'de-fascistized' or 'de-politicized.' Although it depends on each local social and historical context, fascist-era architecture is generally not used as memorials even by fascist sympathizers (except in Bolzano/Bozen and Predappio), meaning that, many anti-fascist people do not think it is necessary to risemantize fascist remains (Cajani 2019). Indeed, these remains are highly regarded for their artistic value from an architectural point of view: some of them were regarded as masterpieces of architecture at the beginning of the 20th century in Italy. However, it seems impossible to separate any piece of architecture perfectly from the political context, as each has a background deeply connected with the dictatorship. Actually, with the revitalization of right-wing politics, there is a danger that fascist-era architecture and fascist places could be used as a stage of contemporary politics. At the same time, it is said that the Italian people's indifference is obvious (Albanese and Ceci 2022, 22-23). This thesis questions this situation and tries to think about what Italian local authorities and historians can do, especially regarding the case of Rome.

Chapter II: How Have Italian Local Authorities Tried to Confront the Fascist Past through Fascist-era Architecture? – Practices in Bolzano/Bozen, Forlì and Perugia

2.1. Introduction – Practices to Confront the Fascist Past at the Local-Level

Although the problem of the fascist past and its memory is deeply connected to the state of Italy, and should be discussed and solved at the national level, it is the local government that decides how to deal with fascist-era architecture and implements changes – that is why local authorities have been pondering this issue. Given their jurisdiction, it is worth exploring how they have tried to confront the fascist past through fascist-era architecture in their respective cities. This chapter will introduce and analyze actual practices in three cities: Bolzano/Bozen, Forlì, and Perugia.

These three cities have been/are trying to come to terms with the fascist past through material traces, which are often thought of as 'problematic' and 'threatening democracy,' in each own way. In other words, in situations with different political and historical contexts, they seek the most appropriate means for themselves. Practices are being implemented respectively: more concretely, the stakeholders at the core of each action are varied. At the same time, the need to deal with their legacies is raised by the municipalities. Moreover, from each practice and related discussion, some critical key terms regarding how to confront the past through architecture emerge.

Therefore, this chapter aims to pursue processes that can be potentially applicable to other cases by analyzing the historical and political context, as well as debates and practices around fascist-era architecture in these three cities. Indeed, there is no universal, sufficient, and effective way of coming to terms with the fascist past through fascist-era architecture for all cases in Italy, although they are categorized as 'fascist heritages' in one term. It is not only geographical but also in periodical meaning: putting it bluntly, if a practice that already has been done would be implemented in the future, it cannot be assumed that it would have the very

same effect (Di Michele 2020, 164-167). However, if examined, some points that are essential to advancing discussions and putting them into practice might appear. Based on this assumption, the next section considers discussions or practices in the three cities.

2.2. Bolzano/Bozen

2.2.1. City of Bolzano/Bozen and Fascism

Located in northern Italy, in the province of Alto Adige/Südtirol, the city of Bolzano/Bozen is characteristic in its history and inhabitants. Until the beginning of the 20th century, this city was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in 1919, after WWI, it was annexed to the Reign of Italy. Locating at the border area between Italy and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire (today Austria) and having the distinctive historical background that it does, there have been three linguistic communities that have cohabited in this one city: a German-speaking and an Italian-speaking group, along with a Ladin-speaking one, a specific minority of this area.

At the time of the annexation, the German-speaking community was in the majority, with a small number of people of the Ladin community (Carlà and Mitterhofer 2019). During the fascist period, Mussolini promoted their 'Italianization' by renaming the names of streets and public spaces in Italian or conducting education in Italian to denationalize the German and Ladin people (Ibid.). Also, a considerable number of Italian people from other poor cities in the peninsula were invited as 'immigrants' to industrialize the city in order to overcome the German-speaking population, and succeeded with the result of fourteen times more Italian people in 1943 than in 1910 (Ibid.; Favargiotti, Busana and Cappelletti 2020, 200). Because of these practices during the *ventennio*, for German-speaking and minority people, there is a memory of being oppressed by fascism in this city.

Also, fascism and Mussolini conducted an urban planning project of Bolzano/Bozen to create a new northern capital of fascist Italy. Contrary to the historical center which the

German-speaking people had already filled, located on the east side of the Talvera/Talfer river, Mussolini and Marcello Piacentini[21] tried to build the Italianized city ('new town') on the opposite side. The center was the Monument to Victory (*Monumento alla Vittoria*) (Carlà and Mitterhofer 2019; Favargiotti, Busana and Cappelletti 2020, 199-200), and they created the House of Fasces (*Casa del fascio*) at the ex-*Piazza Arnaldo Mussolini* (today *Piazza del Tribunale*).

While Italian fascism tried to Italianize German-speaking citizens, some people had been supporting Nazi Germany and Hitler since 1933: this year, an illegal Nazi organization was created, and members were secretly exposed to Nazi and Hitler's ideology (BZ '18-'45 2016, 67). In 1935, faced with the annexation of Saarland by Nazi Germany, support for Hitler among South Tyrolean became more vigorous, but at that time, Hitler did not include them in a plan of unifying 'German people' in order not to make the relationship with fascist Italy worse (Ibid., 67-70). Indeed, around this time, the bilateral relations were not good. Mussolini opposed Hitler's plan to merge Austria, and in 1935, fascist Italy established a joint front against Nazi Germany with Britain and France (Itabashi 2022). Because of the invasion of Austria by German troops in 1938, the Nazi directive became more firmly established among South Tyrolians, especially among the younger generation (BZ '18-'45 2016, 67-70). In 1939, Mussolini signed an agreement with Hitler: it was to allow German and German-speaking Italian inhabitants living in this area to vote on whether to emigrate to Nazi Germany or remain in the city, and more than 80% opted for Germany, so around 75,000 inhabitants chose to move (Hökerberg 2017, 765). Later, after the armistice in 1943 until 1945, Bolzano/Bozen was occupied by Nazi Germany, so this vote and the occupation revealed the failure of Italian fascism's Italianization policy (Ibid.).

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[21] Marcello Piacentini was one of the most representative architects in the 1930s and in whom the dictator had a special trust (Nicoloso 2022, 58).

In the late 2000s, the municipality, as well as local historians, started to work toward the critical preservation and historicization of the monumental traces of fascism in this city, and today, practices are in place for each location: around the bas-relief and its installation of the ex-House of Fasces, and the permanent exhibition of the Monument to Victory. What the city of Bolzano/Bozen did surrounding these symbolic places is considered a good case of 'risemantization' of difficult architecture and monuments. The next section will look at their background and how they appear in today's society.

2.2.2. The Bas-Relief of the Palace of Finance Offices and the *Piazza del Tribunale*

figure 3: The Piazza del Tribunale
The building on the right side is the Courthouse, and the other side is the Palace of Finance Offices.
(author's photograph, 2023)

The *Piazza del Tribunale*, which is located on the west side of the Talvera/Talfer River, was designed to create a 'new Bolzano' in 1933-1934 and constructed in three years from 1939. There are two notable buildings here: the Courthouse and the Palace of Finance Offices [figure3]. Both of them were constructed during the fascist period. The latter building formerly housed the ex-House of Fasces (*Casa del fascio*), the headquarters of the Fascist party. In

addition to these buildings, there is the Church of Cristo Re and the Dominican monastery on the opposite side of Italia Street (the *Corso Italia*), running along the eastern part of the square. Therefore, the *Piazza del Tribunale* became the center of four essential functions – politics, judiciary, religion, and ideology – representing the system of totalitarianism (BZ'Light on dictatorships n.d.d).

On the front side of the Palace of Finance Offices, above the entrance, the impressive bas-relief consisting of fifty-seven panels is presented [figure4]. Created by a South Tyrolean sculptor Hans Piffrader between 1939 and 1942, this work shows the history of fascism and wars, including propaganda contents representing the fascist motto 'Believe, Obey, Fight' (BZ'Light on dictatorships n.d.b). At its center, Mussolini is depicted riding on horseback [figure5]. After the collapse of the regime, the Trento Superintendence of Monuments proposed to remove it from the building to prevent unfavorable reactions from the international society, but the removal was not realized (BZ'Light on dictatorships n.d.b).

figure 4: The Palace of Finance Offices with the bas-relief (author's photograph, 2023)

figure 5: Mussolini on horseback (author's photograph, 2023)

This building and bas-relief had not caused as heated controversy as the Monument to Victory, as mentioned later, because of its location far from the city center, but in the 2000s, a debate between leaving it, destroying it, or removing it ignited (Di Michele 2020, 160). Facing this situation, in January 2011, Sandro Bondi, the then Minister of Culture of the center-right government led by Berlusconi, mentioned the problem surrounding the monument in his letter to the then President of the Autonomous Provincial Council of Bolzano-Bozen, Luis Durnwalder from the center-left party of South Tyrolean People's Party (PPS: *Partito Popolare Sudtirolese*), and referred the need to intervene to the local government. Thus, in the following month, the Autonomous Provincial Council of Bolzano-Bozen decided to conduct a competition for a measure of intervention for this bas-relief, changing the façade and making the bas-relief invisible, in which anyone could participate, such as artists, architects, historians, and so forth. Under criteria such as a solution "no longer visible directly but accessible thoughtfully, with appropriate explanatory texts" (BZ'Light on dictatorships n.d.c), a special

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commission that was set up for it chose an idea modified and integrated from five joint winners among the 486 projects submitted (Di Michele 2020, 161).

In 2017, an installation was presented in front of the bas-relief. This light installation quotes the words of Hannah Arendt, one of the most influential intellectuals of the 20th century, from her comment in a radio interview by Joachim. C. Fest in 1964, written in the three official languages of this city (Italian, German, and Ladin): "No one has the right to obey" [figure6]. This phrase came from Kant, and by using it, Arendt ironically opposed "the 'banality of evil', personified in the Nazi Adolf Eichmann, (...) [who] attempted to refer back to Kant's categorical imperative to justify his actions, distorting completely the meaning" (BZ'Light on dictatorships n.d.a). In the competition, it was strictly regulated to respect the historical and artistic value of the original work. The sign was fixed to the wall of the building so that it does not directly hit the bas-relief so that the installation was done not to damage the bas-relief technically and materially (Di Michele 2020, 162).

figure 6: The installation on the bas-relief (author's photograph, 2023)

With this installation, the committee of this project thinks that the bas-relief was historically contextualized, and the ideology of Mussolini's image and the fascist motto have

been offset by covering with this phrase (BZ'Light on dictatorships n.d.a). Wu Ming1 assess this practice as a 'beautiful and meaningful' practice to give a new meaning, that is, to risemantize the difficult monument (Wu Ming1 2017). At the same time, however, they show doubt about the form of this installation: this phrase is shown by light, so it can be easily canceled by turning it off, while the building itself is made of stone, the stable material remaining for a long time (Ibid.). Also, it is true that during the daytime, Arendt's phrase can be difficult to see well (as seen in figure4 and 6) (Di Michele 2020, 162). However, by using the light, reversing the meaning of this intervention can become possible: namely, it will be realizable to replace these words with another phrase according to the social and periodical demands in the future (Ibid.). In this way, this installation practice gives a new meaning to this bas-relief without completely erasing the original one in the sense of historical and physical modification.

2.2.3. The Monument to Victory and a Permanent Exhibition "BZ '18-'45 one monument one city two dictatorships"

Initially, the Monument to Victory was designed as the memorial for fallen soldiers of the 2nd Regiment of the *Tiroler Kaiserjägerin*, whose construction began in 1917. However, it was unfinished because of the annexation. After he took power, Mussolini thought to convert the characteristic of this monument 'to the Italian Victory,' and with the design by Piacentini, it was inaugurated in 1926, adopting a feature of the classic triumph arch to represent the *romanità*, which was one of the cores of fascist propaganda and ideology (BZ '18-'45 one monument one city two dictatorships n.d.; Hökerberg 2017, 762). By destructing the previous monument of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and creating a new one in the same place, he intended to represent the Italian dominance over the Empire (Hökerberg 2017, 762; Di Michele 2020, 153). Therefore, this monument became the symbol of the fascist ideology and fervent nationalism of this city.

figure 7: The Monument to Victory (author's photograph, 2023)

As mentioned above, for German-speaking and minority people, there has been a memory of being oppressed by fascism in this city. In particular, during the *ventennio*, the 'country of Italy' meant almost the same as the 'fascist regime,' which led to violent, terroristic acts in this city (and the region) for decades. During the Nazi occupation periods, German was again recognized as an official language, German schools opened, and a concentration camp was inaugurated (BZ '18-'45 2016, 70-71; Hökerberg 2017, 765). Just after the liberation from fascism, from May to December 1945, numerous people of the minority in this area claimed their right to self-determination, demanding the return of South Tyrol to Austria. Yet, in the Paris Agreement in 1946, South Tyrol was decided to be a part of the new democratic Italy, and the right was not admitted (BZ '18-'45 2016, 76-77). Moreover, although Italy and Austria agreed to protect the linguistic minorities in this area in the same agreement, because of the influx of immigrants from southern Italy and Italy's failure to abide by the arrangements of the agreement, Austrians began lobbying for self-determination in the region in the 1950s (Rete

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Degli Archivi per non dimenticare n.d.). Therefore, protests against Italy did not disappear: rather, they caused overheated terrorism. In particular, a separatist terrorist group *Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol* (Bas), and an Austrian organization *Bergisel-Bund Schutzeverband für Südtirol* (Bid) caused violent acts, which the Austrian government vaguely supported: and in 1961, the broadest and spectacular attack, called "night of fire (*notte dei fuochi*)", occurred, which brought forced countermeasures against the German-speaking people by the Italian government (Rete Degli Archivi per non dimenticare n.d.). In the following year, Austria and Italy restarted and negotiated to realize a peaceful settlement of conflicts (Ibid.). Meanwhile, however, a series of terroristic acts had been growing more and more, which culminated in the summer of 1967: the wave of terror subsided with the approval of the negotiations but resumed in 1978 due to slightly less intensity with the recognition of the dual language principle (Ibid.).

After the end of WWII, the Monument to Victory played a role not only as the remaining fascist symbol but also as a center of the tension between two German-speaking and Italian-speaking ethnic groups: many activities took place around this monument organized by various parties, political movements, and associations (Carlà and Mitterhofer 2019; Di Michele 2020, 157). In particular, after a terroristic activity of bombing in October 1978 and another one in the following year attempted by German-speaking separatists, this monument was surrounded by a fence and made off limits – this act let it be isolated physically as well as mentally, causing a sacred and inaccessible image among the public (BZ '18-'45 2016, 134; Di Michele 2020, 15). Even though the tension had gradually eased off since 1972, when the territorial autonomy of Alto Adige/Südtirol was extended, and additional measures to protect the minorities were decided by the Second Statute of Autonomy, this monument had been still functioning as a site of conflict. Until 1997, it was used for the place of military ceremonies by Italian-speaking nationalists to keep the sanctity (Carlà and Mitterhofer 2019; Di Michele 2020,

157). Unsurprisingly, the Monument to Victory has been a target of controversy between preservation and demolition: the Italian-speaking people, especially the right-wing parties, have been for preserving it, regarding it as Italian cultural heritage, while the German-speaking right wingers have been against its preservation – in fact, this monument was regarded as a political provocation by the Nazi troops, and a part of it was destructed by German soldiers during the Nazi occupation period (Hökerberg 2017, 765; Carlà and Mitterhofer 2019). These facts make it unavoidable to treat the oppressed memory among the German-speaking people carefully in order to contextualize this monument today.

In 2011, work began to design a permanent exhibition in the monument's basement, "BZ '18-'45," which would open in 2014. The program agreement was signed in 2012 between provincial councilor Sabina Kasslatter Mur, representing President Luis Durnwalder, Bolzano Mayor Luigi Spagnolli from PD, and an architect, Ugo Soragni. In this agreement, the province and the municipality of Bolzano/Bozen agreed to donate 100,000 euros each (Provincia autonoma di Bolzano – Alto Adige 2012). The project was mainly led by Soragni and historians, but the committee of this museum was composed of the Italian state, the government of Alto Adige/Südtirol, the municipality of Bolzano/Bozen, as well as historians and art historians from Italian- and German-speaking groups (BZ '18-'45 2016, 11; Hökerberg 2017, 767).[22] It aims to contextualize the history of Bolzano/Bozen and this monument from an inclusive standpoint. The contents seek to show multiple aspects of the monument, not only the past related to fascism but also the oppression German-speaking minorities faced under the regime, through images, video, and sound as well as texts. By doing so, it expects to provide a tool for comprehending historical investigation (Di Michele 2020, 158).

The exhibition inside the basement floor is divided into three parts: in the inner path,

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[22] Historians and art historians who joined this committee were Andrea Di Michele, Hannes Obermair, Christine Roilo, Silvia Spada and Ugo Soragni. (BZ '18-'45 2016, 11).

the history of the monument itself is explained, while in the outer perimeter, this city's history is shown, and at the four corners, the exhibition provides further insights. Also, an LED ring was installed at one of the *lictorial* columns. It projects a scrolling text of the exhibition title in the three official languages in order to break its monumentality (BZ '18-'45 one monument one city two dictatorship 2014).

figure 8: Inside the permanent exhibition
The exhibition people looking at in this photo is one of the inner paths, and on the other side, there is the outer perimeter one. (author's photograph, 2023)

In addition to the explanations, the main feature of this exhibition is the visitor's physical experience of diving voluntarily into history. In the exhibition of outer space, for instance, the archival photographs are exhibited with glass panels, and there are text panels behind them. Intentionally, the latter panels are partly hidden by the formers [figure9], so all visitors have to get closer to the panels to read the full text, that is, to get an opportunity to know and think about the history (Ibid.).

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figure 9: The text panel in the outer perimeter (author's photograph, 2023)

The whole practice is thought of as a good example of the 'risemantization' of a place and monument of fascism. Thanks to the neutral stance of the contents, this exhibition prompts the public to think about the past to promote dialogue about the interpretations between individuals, and the monument itself converted its function into a place for them. After the inauguration of the exhibition, Giovanni Belardelli, the historian at the University of Perugia, praised it as a realization of the best possible solution for confronting the difficult past with sincerity in *Corriere della Sera*: narrating the past like it was, without any accusations or excuses (Belardelli 2014). Not only this tendency but also the content is considered to provide a new interpretation of the monument itself. The historical interpretation of the exhibition is based on the recognition of the controversial aspect of the monument, and that makes it possible to risemantize it (Hökerberg 2017, 768-769). In this practice, material intervention to the monument, such as destruction, covering some part, or design modification, was not taken (except for installing the LED ring outside). Instead, using a means of exhibition, it was sought to let the monument deviate from the original interpretation and be desacrified – this is an effective way to enable re-interpretation (Ibid.). Hannes Obermair, the historian and a member of the Commission of this exhibition, commented as follows: "the Monument to Victory has

assumed new meanings today and has become 'a radically different monument, a monument 2.0'" (Carlà and Mitterhofer 2019).[23]

There were indeed some negative comments about this practice: it is pointed out that the exhibition, for instance, is instructive and comes down to offering 'tools' for keeping democratic discussion about the past to the public, without becoming a 'place' for dialogue (Angelucci and Kerschbamer 2017, 69). This exhibition is indeed all about providing the information. Physically speaking, utilization for cultural events inside the exhibition space was expected at the beginning, though there have been no actual practices in these years because of the need for plans and resources (Di Michele 2020, 166). However, the very fact that it furnishes 'tools' is commendable. Generally, when it comes to facing the fascist past remaining in public spaces or artworks, it is essential to provide tools for users to interpret, criticize, and recognize their inherent messages (Belmonte 2022, 90). In particular, this exhibition should deserve recognition in the point that it is the only one which deals not only with fascism but also the occupation of this city by Nazi Germany between 1943 and 1945, as mentioned before – in fact, that point is indicated in the exhibition's title 'two dictatorship.' In addition to that, it includes the sensitive topic of the coexistence of two language groups in this city during this difficult period (Di Michele 2020, 165-166). Before its inauguration, this monument was solely a place of tension and conflict between two groups. However, today, its meaning has changed, and this exhibition opens the door to thinking about how to come to terms with the past for the public. Actually, in a third party's opinion, this exhibition got the 'special commendation' of the European Museum of the Year Award by the 39th European Museum Forum since "the project is a very courageous and professional initiative aimed at promoting the humanism, tolerance and democracy" (BZ '18-'45 2016, 149). Moreover, the Italian Education and Training Directorate of the Province of Bolzano (*la Direzione Istruzione e Formazione italiana della*

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[23] From an interview with Hannes Obermair in Carlà and Mitterhofer 2019.

Provincia di Bolzano) and German education authority (*deutsches Schulamt*) in this city created a collection of teaching materials "Monument to Victory – Paths in Local History (*Il Monumento alla Vittoria – Percorsi di storia locale | Das Siegesdenkmal – Unterwegs in der Landesgeschichte*)," in cooperation with Italian-speaking and German-speaking teachers from junior-high and high schools (Amministrazione Provincia Bolzano n.d.). In order to change this monument and surrounding area to be an educational space for students between twelve and nineteen years old, it provides a guidance for the educational program.[24] The aim is not only to understand the exhibition contents but also to recognize the historical events of this city between 1918 and 1945 at local, national, and global levels and to acquire the ability to find the roots of the present in the past (Felis, Frainer et al. 2022, 9-10). In short, this monument is also used for educational purposes, using the new context brought by the permanent exhibition, the local authority, and the schools.

For the reception of this exhibition by citizens and visitors, though it is difficult to see, the reviews posted on Google Map and Tripadvisor show almost all positive reactions. Most of them are commented on in Italian or German, but there are also ones in other languages, rating "an interesting exhibition," "providing context for the history of this monument of this city," and "well and definitely worth a visit."[25] Of course, there are some negative comments as well – especially for the LED ring outside, since it is an ugly decoration that detracts from the artistry of the monument's appearance[26] – but it can be said that this exhibition is perceived as meaningful, basically. Actually, this monument gets a rate of 4.2/5.0 with 1035 comments on Google Map and a rate of 3.5/5.0 with 265 comments on Tripadvisor (these include ones

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[24] The pamphlet of the guidance is available online: https://issuu.com/landsuedtirol-provinciabolzano/docs/percorsi_di_storia_locale_-_unterwegs_in_der_lande?fr=sZjQzMDUzNTA3MzM (accessed April 28, 2024).

[25] For example: https://g.co/kgs/TQ3g6RS; https://g.co/kgs/jN2rvqG; https://g.co/kgs/ip11Zrz. Google Map: https://g.co/kgs/mDfsWGu (accessed April 8, 2024); Tripadvisor: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187857-d3206727-Reviews-Monumento_alla_Vittoria-Bolzano_Province_of_South_Tyrol_Trentino_Alto_Adige.html (accessed April 28, 2024).

[26] For example: https://g.co/kgs/RC8yAcr; https://g.co/kgs/GPtNVXj (accessed April 8, 2024)

that do not directly mention the exhibition or practice). It has been indicated that its controversial aspect has been gradually eased, and the new interpretation created by the exhibition may be disseminated since there has never been protest act against the monument after the inauguration (Hökerberg 2017, 769; Di Michele 2020, 167).

Also, the criticism that 'tools' are only available to those who enter the exhibition and not to passengers outside can be assumed. However, this is the very reason the LED ring was settled to avoid this problem. The journalist of *Corriere della Sera*, Marco Del Corona, commented that, by presenting the exhibition title constantly, this monument has been historically contextualized to be proof of "dramatic decades" (Del Corona 2014). In other words, it also contributed to stripping sanctity from the monument aesthetically and symbolically (Hökerberg 2017, 769; Di Michele 2020, 159).

2.2.4. 'Risemantizing' the Fascist Past

In general, the controversy on fascist-era architecture has involved mainly two choices of destruction and removal, in order not to preserve, leave and ignore the physical proof in a city. This passive attitude reflects the current situation of many Italian municipalities, which have yet to find a solution to dealing with the experience of fascism itself (Di Michele 2020, 164). However, as seen in this section, Bolzano/Bozen's case provided the third one, that is, risemantization. By historicizing, contextualizing, and giving a new meaning to the remnants, this city has attempted to come to terms with the past head-on — and from the point of view of the fact that protesting activities that were seen for decades disappeared after the practices, it may have succeeded.

2.3. Forlì
2.3.1. Forlì – a desire for "*Città del Duce*"

During the fascist era, the province of Emilia-Romagna, a northeastern part of Italy,

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was expected to be the 'cradle of fascism' because of the presence of Predappio, the birthplace of Mussolini. Located close to this city, especially, Forlì was one of the cities where the regime and Mussolini actively promoted urban projects to transform the whole city into a 'showcase of modernity' (ATRIUM n.d.h; Varon 2021). This goal was also aimed at making Forlì a 'city of the *Duce* (*città del Duce*)' that celebrates fascism and Mussolini himself (Leech 2018, 246). In other words, Italian fascism intended to show the regimes power and to create a consensus among the inhabitants by utilizing the urban landscape. Therefore, the regime promoted architectural and urban projects in the city center with a clear political agenda, collaborating with some Roman architects such as Gustavo Giovannoni, Cesare Bazzani, and Cesare Valle. The development was conducted particularly along the newly constructed boulevard, the *Viale Benito Mussolini* (today *Viale della Libertà*), outside the historical center [figure10] (ATRIUM n.d.h; Varon 2021).

figure 10: The Viale Benito Mussolini (author's photograph, 2024)

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figure 11: The Railway Station of Forlì (author's photograph, 2024)

figure 12: The Monument to the Fallen at the Piazza della Vittoria (author's photograph, 2024)

This boulevard was created as the strongest tool for fascist propaganda, being inappropriately large size for the local population of the time: since the grand street leads from the Railway Station of Forlì [figure11] to the square *Piazza della Vittoria*, which holds the Monument to the Fallen, dedicated initially to soldiers died in WWI [figure12], it was intended

that visitors might be able to feel the 'modern' and 'grandiose' atmosphere of this city from the very moment of their arrival at the station.

Along this boulevard, some buildings were constructed in the eclectic style, *stile littorio* or rationalism (ATRIUM n.d.i; ATRIUM n.d.n). The characteristic of them was that they were given the educational or sports function to create a new generation of 'fascist new men,' like the Technical Industrial School.

figure 13: The former Technical Industrial School
It is one of the educational facilities along the street. (author's photograph, 2024)

The College of Military Aeronautics, for instance, designed by Cesare Valle, was built in 1937 to train future pilots and engineers by familiarizing them with the ideal of fascist heroes, namely, aviators who always were ready to fly and fight [figure14]. This goal can be seen not only from the concept of the school but also from the decorative art of the building: a Statue of Icarus commemorating the myth of flight was put in front of the building [figure15], and so

was a mosaic artwork which tells the history of glorious Italian aviation at the entrance (ATRIUM n.d.k).

figure 14: The College of Military Aeronautics
It is currently used as a secondary and middle school. (author's photograph, 2024)

figure 15: Statue of Icarus (author's photograph, 2024)

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On the opposite side of the *Viale Benito Mussolini*, the Santarelli preschool was created between 1934 and 1937, with Guido Savini's design [figure16]. As well as propagandistic education, fascism focused on education and social service to build consensus by disseminating an image of modernity (ATRIUM n.d.l).

figure 16: The former Santarelli preschool (author's photograph, 2024)

Buildings constructed along the *Viale Benito Mussolini* were not only educational institutions but, probably the most importantly, a facility to control the leisure time of the younger generation. The *Casa del Balila* (then GIL: *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*) was created with 'perfect' rationalist style – as Piacentini admitted – designed by Valle. With physical and cultural education and leisure activities, all aimed at the younger generation, this multifunctional place played a role in propagating the 'cult of sports' to the local people (ATRIUM n.d.j). The most iconic characteristic of this architecture was the presentation of the young fascists' oath put on the tower, which showed the clear connection between architecture

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and politics at that time: "In the name of God and Italy, I swear to carry out the orders of the Duce and to serve with all my force and if necessary with my blood the cause of the Fascist Revolution."[27] From this easily visible decoration, the intention of the regime to fascistize the younger generation in this city can be seen well.

figure 17: The tower with the young fascist oath of the ex-GIL building (author's photograph, 2024)

Although it is away from the *Viale Benito Mussolini*, the Post Office building at the *Piazza Saffi*, the main square of Forlì, is also worth focusing on [figure18, 19]. In this area, to show off the regime's power and to turn it into a place for fascist ceremonies, some monumental architecture were constructed destroying numerous historical buildings. This office structure, designed by Cesare Bazzani, had an iconic façade at the front and features of Classicism and neo-Renaissance.

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[27] Original text in Italian: "*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, la causa della Rivoluzione Fascista.*" Translation is quoted from Leech, 2018. 249.

figure 18: The Piazza Saffi (author's photograph, 2024)

figure 19: The Post Office building (author's photograph, 2024)

After the fall of Mussolini in July 1943, some anti-fascist performances were held against these buildings and urban developments: firstly, against the former GIL building, especially against its tower, the iconoclastic action to attack the characters of the fascist oath happened soon after the collapse of the regime on 25th July 1943 by young anti-fascists. Also, undoubtedly, the boulevard's name, *Viale Benito Mussolini*, was changed into the Liberty Avenue (*Viale della Liberta*). For this renaming, to contextualize the past and not cause any

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misunderstanding, a stone plaque with the following explanation was put at the end of the street: "This street is dedicated to the memory of all those martyrs who, wherever they may have fallen, and whatever may have been their ideals which they surely professed, have borne witness to, with their suffering and the sacrifice of their lives, their faith in liberty."[28]

figure 20: The plate put at the end of the Liberty Avenue (author's photograph, 2024)

Then, after the iconoclastic acts and the renaming of the street, the buildings constructed during the fascist era for propagandistic use started to be admitted only with a functional perception, such as the school or the post office. In other words, the meaning of tangible fascist heritages was ignored, denied, or 'desemantized' (Leech 2018, 250-252).

In short, the city of Forlì was full of fascist material remnants in the urban space. This historical fact has not been comfortable for the city, so in the 1990s an effective solution to improve the city's image started to be explored by the local government, and this attempt was aimed not only at inhabitants but also visitors: for the former, strengthening local identity with

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[28] Original text in Italian: "*Questo viale è dedicato alla memoria di tutti i martiri che sotto qualunque cielo ed in difesa di qualunque ideale sicuramente professato hanno testimoniato con le sofferenze e col sacrificio della vita la loro fede nella libertà.*" Translation is by author referring to Leech 2018, 250.

information and tools for understanding the city's past was expected, while for tourists, the local government wanted Forlì to become 'a city holding precious properties' (Varon 2021). The turning point came in 2009: the City Council of Forlì, at this time led by PD, which aimed at encouraging democratic conversation and enhancing local identity through the fascist past in the city (Ibid.), started to confront tangible testimonies, beginning with the restoration of the former GIL building. The point of this restoration was not to reappraise the regime but to redefine it as historical proof: destroyed characters were left untouched in this restoration, and only ones that remained without damage were repaired (as seen in figure17). By doing so, in addition to the meaning of a fascist symbol, the memory of the rejection of the regime by the local population was symbolized. In this sense, this restoration 'risemantized' the former GIL building (ATRIUM n.d.g; Leech 2018, 250).

2.3.2. Confronting the Past in Cooperation with ATRIUM

As the first step for confronting the fascist past, the city set up the Committee for Rationalist Architecture and then proposed an international project to construct cultural tourism surrounding heritages which have a deep connection with the 'dark' past in Europe (Leech 2018, 246). This year, Forlì got a two million euro grant from the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, the organization founded in 1987 aiming to create tourist routes focusing on the architecture of totalitarian regimes in Europe to make architectural heritage a space to remember and critically understand the past, and to evoke a new interest in the urban environment (ATRIUM n.d.f). With this budget, Forlì became the leading city of Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the XX Century in Urban Memory (ATRIUM), a cross-border cooperation program in southeastern Europe.

ATRIUM, involving eleven countries and eighteen institutions in southeastern Europe, is a program that gathers different European experiences to find 'shared historical elements,' focusing on totalitarian and autocratic regimes' 'dissonant' and 'uncomfortable'

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heritages (ATRIUM n.d.b).[29] This program aims to encourage various interpretations of heritages and to make historical and critical discussions among the public possible at local and European levels (ATRIUM n.d.c; ATRIUM n.d.e). Based on its political and ethical democratic stance of critical and ethical denial of totalitarianism (clearly defined in Article 2 of the Status of the ATRIUM Association[30]), it supports the preservation and presentation of this architecture as testimonies of European history (ATRIUM n.d.d; ATRIUM n.d.f). This program was certificated as one of the Cultural Routes in 2014, and four years later, it was praised as "Best Practices in 2018 in Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development" (ATRIUM n.d.a).

In Forlì, there are roughly two programs put into practice led by ATRIUM: an educational project named "ATRIUM GO!" and cultural tourism routes. The goal of these programs is to find a way to narrate and discuss the local 'dissonant heritage' (Varon 2021). The first program, "ATRIUM GO!," is a brand of educational school tour.[31] Collaborating with local high schools and students, it conducts a guided tour around the city, as well as a workshop focusing on the ex-College of Military Aeronautics and mosaic art for students. More concretely, the tour explores architecture from the railway station, along the grand street to the *Piazza della Vittoria* with the following material remnants in this city; and in the workshop, students are supposed to think about the relationship between arts, architecture, and power (ATRIUM n.d.n).

For the second one, ATRIUM offers a guided tour around the fascist-era architecture in the city and provides information about the architecture itself and the concept of fascist propaganda represented by them (ATRIUM n.d.o). Also, on the ATRIUM's website, the

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[29] The concept of "dissonance," in the ATRIUM's context, is explained as follows: "besides being interesting from a purely stylistic point of view, these [dissonant] buildings are also seen as objects that can trigger a critical reflection on the regimes that built them" (ATRIUM n.d.m).
[30] Full text is available from: ATRIUM. 2019. "'ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th century In Europe's Urban Memory interpreted to promote human rights and democracy' Association." approved on 16th May 2019. https://atriumroute.eu/images/media_articoli/documenti/ATRIUM_cultural_route/Statute_2nd_amendement.pdf (accessed June 6, 2024).
[31] This program is held not only in Forlì but also in Labin, Croatia.

touristic map whose path traces the fascist heritages, 'Resistenza mAPPe' created by the Historical Institution of Emilia-Romagna Online (*Istituti storici dell'Emilia-Romagna in rete*), is presented. By looking at it, visitors can explore the fascist heritage following the routes by themselves.[32] Since this online map also has a historical explanation of each building, it is designed to allow tourists to learn and think about the history even without a guide. Incidentally, not only the practices led by ATRIUM but also the city itself promote cultural tourism around fascist-era architecture. At the tourist information center in the *Piazza Saffi*, a map that shows a tourist route called "*Forlì Città del '900* (Forlì City in '900)" is distributed for free, and the same information is presented on a city map in front of the train station and signs around the city [figure21, 22].[33] The explanation of this map refers to the past of fascism that heritage possesses – this is a difference between the case of Forlì and the other two cities mentioned in this chapter.

figure 21: The sign in front of the railway station
On the right side, the explanation about fascist-era heritages is explained, and on the map, the tourist route is indicated with blue arrows. (author's photograph, 2024)

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[32] Resistenza mAPPe. n.d. "Forlì I luoghi dell'architettura fascista."
https://resistenzamappe.it/forli/fc_architettura_fascista (accessed on May 25, 2024).
[33] The same information is also available on the official website of culture and tourism of the city of Forlì:
Comune di Forlì Cultura &Turismo. n.d. "Forlì Città del '900."
https://scopriforli.it/servizi/turismo_cultura/percorsi_fase02.aspx?ID=3# (accessed on February 18, 2024).

figure 22: A sign in town
This kind of sign is settled around the city. (author's photograph, 2024)

2.3.3. Bottom-up Approach to Treat Fascist-era Architecture as Historical Testimony and Touristic Resource

What can be said from these practices and this fact is that Forlì has been actively trying to confront the fascist past by turning fascist-era architecture in the city into touristic resources as historical testimonies. In other words, today the urban space itself plays a role as an "open-air museum" (Varon 2021), documenting the *ventennio* and perceptions, events, and historical figures in this era (Ibid.; ATRIUM n.d.h; Leech 2018, 252). Therefore, this city and its practices give a new meaning to fascist heritage in addition to the past they have, without ignoring or erasing it and by providing a new function. What is important here is that ATRIUM – as well as the city of Forlì as seen in the tourist map's explanation – is never trying to lean toward historical revisionism: instead, it focuses on historical events and facts narrated by the fascist-era architecture and the popularization of the regime's ideology through these buildings (ATRIUM n.d.m). Again, these practices do not ignore nor emphasize the connection with the

fascist-era architecture in the city and the problematic past (Varon 2021). Actually, for example, in the explanation of the touristic map, no reflection on nor praise for the regime can be seen. This attitude towards fascist, or totalitarian, heritages is existed since before in Europe to introduce new experiences for visitors so that architecture is utilized as a cultural tourism resource and promotes economic growth at the local level (Ibid.). Therefore, it is recognized that this architecture is simply treated as a sort of historical document that tells the fascist past in the urban space by both the city government and ATRIUM.

At the same time, it also can be found that all of these practices are based on an intention of promoting discussions about the tangible heritage of the fascist regime through organizing programs in a so-called 'bottom-up' approach (Leech 2018, 250-251). For instance, the "ATRIUM GO!" project offers a socio-touristic experience and an opportunity for students and teachers to discuss the local fascist past. This will motivate them, especially the younger generation, to narrate the local fascist heritage and to define its meanings (Varon 2021). Like this, the ATRIUM's practices are designed for the local population, various actors, and associations to be involved naturally in the open discussion surrounding the fascist 'dissonance' heritage, so that a path to a mutual dialogue on fascist-era architecture in this city is opened to the public (Leech 2018, 251-252). That is to say, how the physical traces of the dictatorship's past mean are not centrally determined by the local government but are left to individual interpretation. Although this approach has a potential danger of causing an apologist attitude if the past of the dictatorship begins to be evaluated positively because of the sensitivity and complexity of the theme, it is effective in promoting the confrontation of the past, which cannot be a source of local pride through visual and material traces (Ibid., 252-253).

2.4. Perugia

2.4.1. Found *Fasci Littori* at the Covered Market

In Perugia, the capital of Umbria in central Italy, there is an ongoing discussion about

a fascist symbol remaining in a city market. Different from the other two cities' examples, it is not a problem with the architecture itself but a part of the decoration. In this case, the perspective of 'risemantization' of the trace, which can be seen particularly in Bolzano/Bozen's case but in Forlì as well, is lacking, that is, it focuses on only the 'fascist' past. However, this case is worth mentioning regarding the example of 'a-politicization' or 'de-politicization' of the fascist material remnants in the public urban landscape. Also, the series of controversies may be thought of as an example that clearly shows the process of debate and dialogue, which has not been limited to the local political level but has involved the public.

figure 23: The *fascio littorio* and the Grifo at the Covered Market in Perugia
The same symbol is put above the door on the opposite side of the building. (retrieved from Umbria 24, 2021, July 27)[34]

The Covered Market (*Mercato Coperto*) was built between 1930 and 1932 by the chief engineer of the municipality of Perugia, Giuseppe Grossi, and the then mayor Giovanni Buitoni. The original aim of creating a new market was to liberate the *Piazza del Sopramuro* (today *Piazza Matteotti*), the square where the Market is located, from its function as a marketplace (Bossi 2021b). Under this aim, two *fasci littori*, the symbol of the regime, were

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[34] Daniele Bovi. 2021a. "Perugia, nel 'nuovo' Mercato coperto riportati alla luce due fasci littori accanto al Grifo," *Umbria 24*, July 27, 2021, https://www.umbria24.it/attualita/perugia-nel-nuovo-mercato-coperto-riportati-alla-luce-due-fasci-littori-accanto-al-grifo/. (accessed January 11, 2024)

put above the entrance doors alongside the *Grifo*, a mark of a griffin, which has been the symbol of the municipality of Perugia.

As other direct symbols that remained in Italy, the *fasci littori* did not escape the iconoclastic movement: in 1945, after the 'liberation,' it was covered with mortar by citizens (Bori 2021). Since then, the symbol's existence in the Market has been forgotten and has gradually become unknown.

The situation began to change in 2021: during an investigation carried out in cooperation with the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage for the restoration of the whole Market which started in 2019, the fascist symbol was found under the mortar and started to be restored together with the Market itself (Bossi 2021c). This decision sparked a debate, in particular from the center-left, not only at the local political level but also among the public, including local researchers, about how to deal with this fascist symbol remaining in a public space in the following years.

In the history of the Italian Republic, Perugia has traditionally been a left-leaning city with the largest support for the DC by citizens in regional elections. However, faced with the collapse of the First Republic and Berlusconi's rise to power in the early 1990s, local politics began to lean to the right. In 2014, the current mayor, Andrea Romizi from FI, took office, and finally, in 2019, the center-right party became the governing party of the City Council (Campi and Damiani 2019). It was precisely during this period of political change in the city that the debate about the Market accelerated.

2.4.2. Controversy over *Fasci Littori* at the Political and Public Level

First of all, organizing the flow of the discussion about the *fasci littori* from 2021 is needed. The province of Umbria considered the renovation and redevelopment of the Market as important, and five million euros was spent from public funding. Since this 'renovation and redevelopment' included the restoration of the authoritarian symbol, after the founding of the

fasci littori, in July 2021, the center-left parties condemned visualizing and restoring it with the public funding, which might provide an image that the city would not like to give to citizens and tourists (*Perugia Today* 2021a; Bossi 2021b). At about the same time, some networks opposed putting the fascist symbols in the public space adjacent to the *Grifo* at the Market, the historic gateway to Perugia, the capital of Umbria, however crucial restoring historical traces is (Bovi 2021b). Against these criticisms, the city planning councilor Margherita Scoccia from FDI clarified that the restoration and visualization of the *fasci littori* was decided because of the philological point of view, not the political one, and emphasized that this symbol did not belong to FDI's political tradition or vision (Bossi 2021b; Bovi 2021a). Faced with the start of the debate at the local-governmental level, Alberto Grohmann, the professor of economics at the University of Perugia and one of the figures who commented most in the discussion, claimed that it was not appropriate to put the trace in a space for commercial activity, nor at the museum since it was just a decorative factor without any value, and he proposed to put a plaque emphasizing the reason why it was installed at the public facility in 1932 and presenting the historical explanation. An idea to move it to the museum in the city and to narrate, explain and contextualize the history to the visitors was made by another local politician (D.B. 2021). In response to this situation, mayor Romizi posted his opinion on his Facebook, which had mainly three points: that there was no political intent to restore and visualize the *fasci littori*; that this visualization was to consider the symbol as historical evidence, so it was not contradictory to the constitutional principles; and that the city had already been ready to conduct a discussion cooperating with citizens, organizations, historians, cultural figures and the Superintendence (*Perugia Today* 2021b; Romizi 2021).

The debate progressed, especially in September 2021. On the 13th, fifty-nine professors from two universities in the city announced an appeal in which they asked for the removal of the *fasci littori* from the Market and a use at a museum to the City Council. That

appeal argued that the fascist symbol could not be treated the same as other monumental materials, and it had been kept to produce exclusive racial meanings and messages (*Umbria 24* 2021b). Also, on the 28th, a public demonstration organized by an organization called Network 10 December (*Rete 10 dicembre*) was held in front of the *Palazzo dei Priori*, the building of the municipal administration, with slogans of "Respecting the history (*Rispettare la storia*)" and "I do not want *fascio* there anymore (*Il fascio non ce lo lascio*)." This demonstration attracted about 300 people from various organizations and labor unions in Perugia and Umbria, and they demanded to cover the *fasci littori* again in order "to respect the history of our city and country, (...) and to restore the situation desired by our fellow citizens in the aftermath of the Liberation" (Nardoni 2021; *Umbria 24* 2021d; *Perugia Today* 2021g). On the following day, the culture councilor explained that the Superintendence decided on the restoration because of the artistic value assessed by art historians, and at the same time, it would be impossible to transfer the symbol to another place like a museum because it would require masonry and beams but the Market had been designated as a tangible cultural property (Bossi 2021c). It was at this time that the opposite center-left parties pointed out that the *fasci littori* do not have any historical and artistic value and raised their question about the low assessment for the mortar, which had covered the symbol for more than seventy years (*Umbria 24* 2021e) – the latter point is the very difference between this case and the ex-GIL tower's restoration in Forlì.

Mayor Romizi was eager to solve the situation, and in February 2022, he set up an unofficial working group of four city council members – two of them were in favor of the removal of the symbol and the other two against it – in cooperation with organizations such as National Association of Italian Partisans (ANPI: *Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia*), technicians and historians, aiming at deriving a shareable solution for this problem, and he ordered the group to present an idea to the parliament by 20th June[35] (Bovi 2022a; D.B. 2022a).

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[35] 20th June is the memorial day with two meanings for the city: Perugia uprising in 1859 against the temporal

Finally, in April 2022, this working group decided to cover the symbol and to remove it from public view again, under the condition of avoiding apparent damage, making it possible to leave room for inspection and maintenance, and ensuring the reversibility of interventions (Dan. Bo and Mau. Troc 2022; D.B. 2022b). For this decision, the center-left politicians, such as Tommaso Bori from PD, expressed some degree of satisfaction, but at the same time, they pointed out that this treatment was imperfect and proposed a need to assert awareness, consciousness, and attitude through actions, not just words, for the achievement of anti-fascism, which has been the basis of the Constitution (Bossi 2022; *Perugia Today* 2022; D.B. 2022b).

2.4.3. 'A-politicization' of Fascist Traces and Confronting Them with the Local Community

Two points are worth mentioning in this debate: the 'a-politicization' and 'de-politicization' of the fascist symbol and the dialogue involving the public, such as local historians and communities. For the first point, consistently through the whole discussion and from the mayor's comments, the intention to a-politicize this symbol can be seen. In his first comment, for instance, he emphasized that there was no political intent for the restoration and the debate itself should not include a political ideology. He explained that making the symbol visible was just a technical choice to treat it as historical proof (*Perugia Today* 2021b; Romizi 2021). Just the day after the demonstration in September 2021, in the parliament, he intended to find the solution for the problem, not the value of the symbol, in cooperation with third parties and experts (Bossi 2021c). Given these attitudes and comments, it would seem that he expected the Market with the *fasci littori* to be seen as a 'non-fascist' place. On the contrary, the opposite center-left politicians presented their thoughts of considering the symbol as a mere decoration without any value, so that it was unnecessary to remove the cover and leave it in

authority of the pope (D.B. 2022a), which was accompanied by a massacre; and the day of liberation from Nazi in 1944.

public space (*Umbria 24* 2021e; *Umbria 24* 2021f). Paradoxically, this opinion indicates that restoring, preserving, and visualizing the symbol could be appropriate if enough 'artistic value' as a piece of historical heritage or work was recognized.

However, is it possible to completely 'a-politicize' or 'de-politicize' this debate or controversy surrounding fascist-era architecture and remnants in general? Instead, by attempting to a-politicize and de-politicize the discussion, the debate itself is becoming more political. In fact, in the case of Perugia, the controversy at the City Council level has continued for more than a year, with the mayor changing his attitude and response each time. At first, in August 2021, he personally supported Grohmann's idea of leaving the symbol visible with placing a plate of historical explanation, but after the demonstration, he admitted the problematic characteristic of the symbol (*Perugia Today* 2021b; Romizi 2021; *Umbria 24* 2021e). By the time he formed the working group, he was willing to work on a solution in which the *fasci littori* would not be directly visible (D.B. 2022a). From this change, it can be found that he has been failing to a-politicize the debate, which he initially hoped to do. The concept of 'a-politicization' shows disinterest in politics, but at the same time, it represents an absolute connection with it (Calculli 2019). Therefore, since it deals with the fascist regime that is still problematic and influential today (unlike ancient or medieval times), the debate itself is almost impossible to fully a-politicize and de-politicize. Rather, the debate keeps fascism politically sensitive.

Regarding the second point, the importance of discussion and dialogue between the local government and communities is well illustrated in the whole process of this case. Certainly, doubts regarding the restoration of the symbol were originally raised by the center-left politicians and discussed at the City Council. However, once it got heated, some columnists showed their opinions through local newspapers or on social media[36], and academic figures

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[36] For example: Franco Parlavecchio. 2021. "Il BLOG di Franco Parlavecchio: Fasci e restauri, la storia non si

such as Grohmann and Tommaso Montanari, the art historian and the president of the University for Foreigners of Siena, also responded to this controversy[37] – for the former's proposal, again, mayor Romizi also mentioned and personally endorsed the post on his Facebook (*Perugia Today* 2021b; Romizi 2021). More performative acts, that is, the announcement of the appeal and the demonstration, were also taken. These movements spurred public discussion and even led the mayor and the City Council to form a working group involving various stakeholders. Through a series of steps, a sort of flexibility of the city and mayor can be recognized. Although the final decision to re-cover the *fasci littori* is not a perfect score of 100, this flexibility of response may be why the center-left opposition has been able to gain a degree of acceptance. That is, while the mayor himself has been leading the discussion involving third parties and experts, he was not a part of the working group, and it can be assumed that he was to include only a little of his subjectivity in the conclusive determination. Only municipalities could go through this process. In other words, this case shows that, since this practice is carried out by local authorities, which are close to local communities and citizens, and whose opinions are

cancella, si racconta per evitare gli errori passati [A BLOG of Franco Parkavecchio: Fasci and restorations, the history cannot be canceled, it is told to avoid past mistakes]," *Perugia Today*, July 30, 2021, https://www.perugiatoday.it/rubriche/blog-franco-parlavecchio-fascio-restaurato.html. (accessed January 11, 2024); Luca Gatti. 2021. "«Riportare alla luce i fasci è un gesto ingenuo che non serve alla memoria storica di Perugia» [«Resrrecting fasci is a naive gesture that does not serve the historical memory of Perugia»]," *Umbria 24*, August 2, 2021, https://www.umbria24.it/opinioni/riportare-alla-luce-i-fasci-e-un-gesto-ingenuo-che-non-serve-alla-memoria-storica-di-perugia/. (accessed January 11, 2024); Tommaso Bori. 2021. "Fasci littori al Mercato coperto, Bori: «Ha più valore storico la malta con cui furono ricoperti» [Fasci littori at the covered market, Bori: «The mortar with which they were covered has more historical value»]," *Umbria 24*, August 17, 2021, https://www.umbria24.it/opinioni/fasci-littori-al-mercato-coperto-bori-ha-piu-valore-storico-la-malta-con-cui-furono-ricoperti/. (accessed January 12, 2024); *Perugia Today* (d). 2021. "Fasci littori al Mercato Coperto di Perugia, interviene Sgarbi: "Fratoianni talebano, li lasci dove stanno" [Fasci littori at the covered market in Perugia, Sgarbi intervenes: "Fratoianni Taliban, leave them where they are"]," September 11, 2021, https://www.perugiatoday.it/attualita/fasci-littori-mercato-coperto-perugia-interviene-sgarbi-fratoianni-talebano-interrogazione-parlamento-sinistra-italiana.html. (accessed January 12, 2024). Also, see Vittorio Sgarbi's Facebook post on September 10, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/121157734607309/posts/4607729869283384/?d=n. (accessed January 12, 2024).
[37] For Grohmann: D.B (a). 2021. "Fasci littori al Mercato, la proposta di Grohmann: «Restauro inopportuno. Restino lì ma serve una targa» [Fasci littori at the market, the proposal by Grohmann: «Inappropriate restration. Let them stay there but need a plaque]," *Umbria 24*, July 29, 2021, https://www.umbria24.it/attualita/fasci-littori-al-mercato-proposta-grohmann-restauro-inopportuno-restino-li-ma-serve-una-targa/. (accessed January 11, 2024). For Montanari: *Umbria 24* (a). 2021. "Montanari sul caso dei fasci littori di Perugia: «Fateci un murale vicino per disprezzarlo come merita» [Montanari on the case of fasci littori in Perugia: «Make a mural next to it to despise it as it deserves»]," September 12, 2021, https://www.umbria24.it/attualita/montanari-sul-caso-dei-fasci-littori-di-perugia-fateci-un-murale-vicino-per-disprezzarlo-come-merita/. (accessed January 12, 2024).

easily, and required at the same time, to be heard, it is possible to achieve active dialogue and cooperation with them.

2.5. Conclusion – What Can Be Said Through These Three Cases

This chapter looks at debates and attempts surrounding fascist-era architecture, including other physical traces, from three cities in Italy. In Bolzano/Bozen, the municipality has been trying to historicize and contextualize these monuments. Adopting an installation of contemporary art and a permanent exhibition using crypt space under the Monument to Victory may have succeeded in 'risemantizing' the difficult monuments. While Bolzano/Bozen gave a new meaning to fascist-era testimonies, Forlì has been exploiting the fascist-era architecture in this city for the creation of its image. This city promotes cultural tourism following traces of fascist urban development officially, in cooperation with the organization ATRIUM. Also, public discussion is expected in its projects, especially among the local younger generation. The city and ATRIUM programs allow citizens and tourists to think, understand, and critically interpret history. The local government and community dialogue can be seen well in the debates on the *fasci littori* in Perugia. The mayor effectively involved the local community, such as organizations and historians, in the discussion and made progress with this problem by hearing and accepting their opinions. On the other hand, in this case, an intention to 'a-politicize' or 'de-politicize' the *fasci* to make the public space non-fascistic is seen. However, embracing this motive was already political in itself, and it could be read that the intention was not realized in this discussion.

Thus, although facing the same 'fascist-era architecture and legacy,' the debates and efforts followed three different paths. To reiterate, there is no consistent and universal solution to this issue. The problem for Italian local authorities is how to problematize and deal with it in this situation. What is important, which is found in these three cases, is to pay close attention

to each city's own historical and political context behind architecture and traces and to respond accordingly. As seen in the previous chapters, the issue of the treatment of fascist-era architecture has been discussed mainly at the national level. However, not only because it is the actor that examines and implements practices but also because of each of the cities' specific backgrounds, how to confront the fascist past through tangible heritage should be considered actively by municipalities. In this process, it is effective and required to involve the public: as mentioned in Perugia's case, the strengths of local authorities over the state are the ability to listen to citizens' opinions more closely and deeply and to cooperate with the local community such as experts. Beyond the political discussion, this act makes it easier to come up with a solution that makes some sense. In addition to that, it is also essential to remember that it can be effective to narrate history neutrally without intervening too much with the municipality's interpretation. As seen in Bolzano/Bozen's exhibition and Forlì's programs brought by ATRIUM, providing information without emphasizing nor ignoring the past, namely, what happened surrounding heritages in each city, would be helpful for the public to confront the problematic era critically.

Here, the basic premise is that local authorities must confront the fascist-era architecture in their municipalities. Yet, this need and a necessity to risemantize them are not embraced by some Italians, especially with a significant number of left anti-fascists (Cajani 2019). In this view, partly it may exist the longing for 'a-politicization' or 'de-politicization' of fascist legacies. However, as seen in Perugia's case, the debate to 'a-politicize' and 'de-politicize' themselves is inseparable from the political context. At the same time, since the discussion is about fascism, which is an era that still has political influence in contemporary Italy, it would be wrong to exclude politics from it. In other words, what is required is not 'de-fascistization' but 'contextualization' (Hökerberg 2017, 761). Building upon these insights and questions, the following chapter will examine the possibilities for coming to terms with the

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fascist past in Rome, focusing on the district of EUR.

Chapter III: Means for 'Critical Preservation' of the Palace of Italian Civilization in Rome by Local Authority

3.1. Introduction – the District of EUR and the Palace of Italian Civilization in Rome

The previous chapter explained the need to confront the past by the local government and some key points to do so. Based on the findings, this chapter seeks to express the past in the city of Rome through the district of EUR, especially the Palace of Italian Civilization (*Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana*). This whole district and the monumental building are considered some e of the most representative and impressive examples of fascist-era architecture and its urban development project: in fact, the district was one of the significant architectural projects during the *ventennio* (Nicoloso 2010, 293). Nevertheless, no effective measures to come to terms with the fascist past have been made by the local authority so far. Again, there is even a suggestion that some people do not see the need for risemantizing the buildings in this district, including the palace, since they are not regarded as 'fascist memorials' (Cajani 2019).

However, given the fact that they are often held up as prime examples of fascist-era architecture (and its urban development projects), can they be separated from the debate on the memory of fascism? Or, is it possible to 'de-politicize' them from the fascist past? Having these questions as the background, possibilities of representing the past through them and attempts to do so by the local government are to be proposed in this chapter. To achieve this goal, first, the brief history of this district and the building are to be explained in this section.

In the southwestern part of Rome, the district of EUR was constructed as a site of the World Expositions in 1942 (hereinafter E42). The fascist regime planned this event as an occasion to show its ideal vision of the 'myth of Rome' symbolically and physically to international society (Kallis 2013, 362). Hosting E42 in 1941 was initially proposed by the then Minister of Corporations, Giuseppe Bottai, in 1935 (Ibid., 374-375). From the very beginning, this project was founded on political purpose: for instance, the year of the Expo was changed

from 1941 to 1942 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the March on Rome (Kallis 2013, 375). Also, the regime would exhibit objects reflecting concepts that were crucial for it in order to utilize this opportunity to showcase its policy to the world (Cosmo 2017, 125-126).

In the district of EUR, whose name stands for *Esposizione Universale di Roma* (Universal Expositions of Rome), a large-scale city development was conducted, and various buildings were constructed to convey the fascist ideal to the world through the international event. To emphasize the continuity from the Ancient Roman period in order to express the 'myth of Rome' symbolically and visually, for instance, the fusion style of classicism and modernism was used. Features of classicist architecture, such as arches and pillars, were often adopted, as seen in the Palace of Italian Civilization, which is discussed later. In fact, at the beginning, a more modern style was planned to be used. However, because of the two concerns of abstraction without an explicit 'national' character and sustainability, it was rejected. Instead, classicism was adopted to propagate the myth and to represent continuity with tradition visually (Nicoloso 2020, 66). At the same time, the project of this district reflected another fascist core policy: a long for 'permanence.' Mussolini wanted to convey the fascist political philosophy and history to the contemporary national and international society and the future generation. Based on this aim, the EUR was expected to be the symbol of fascist persistence (Fujisawa 2001, 240). This point can be seen well from the material of architecture: almost all of them are made of marble, which is a material that is resistant to natural deterioration and is likely to remain for an extended period in comparison with other materials such as glass, steel or concrete (Nicoloso 2022, 59; 65). Through realizing these two points, the regime and Mussolini expected this district to be "Mussolini's city (*città mussoliana*)," which would symbolize the "fascist-style" architecture and leave long-lasting traces of fascism for future generations to symbolize the eternity of fascist Italy (Fujisawa 2001, 240; Nicoloso 2022, 64). With this intention, the direction of the whole district was left to Piacentini, who had strengthened the

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relationship with Mussolini further after the project of Rome University City (*Città universitaria di Roma*), began in 1932 (Nicoloso 2010, 293-306). In this sense, the creation of EUR can be regarded as a project that made clear progress in the relationship between architecture and politics in fascist Italy (Ibid., 293).

Among them, the Palace of Italian Civilization was the most attractive and monumental piece of architecture.
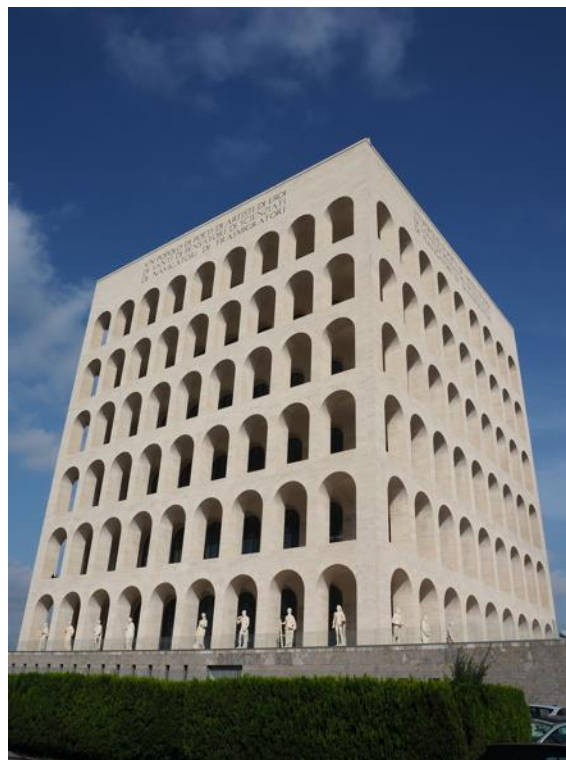
figure 24: The Palace of Italian Civilization (author's photograph, 2022)

This building was supposed to be the main exhibition hall of E42, holding "an exhibition on the 'primacy' of the Italian race and civilization" (Malone 2017, 457). With a chronological display, it intended to sequence different periods of Italian history. One can quickly notice that there is the same inscription, saying, "a people of poets, artists, heroes, saints, thinkers,

scientists, navigators, and transmigrants,"[38] inscribed on the top of every four sides in a readable way. This phrase is taken from Mussolini's speech after announcing the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 (Ben=Ghiat 2017), namely, a deep connection with fascist imperialism can be seen.
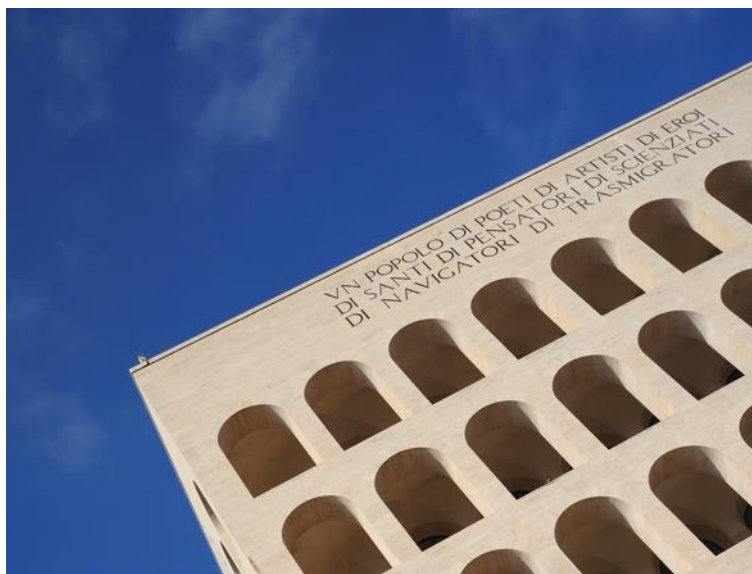
figure 25: Inscription on the top of the Palace of Italian Civilization (author's photograph, 2022)

The main feature of this edifice that cannot go unmentioned is a series of arches, which symbolizes the Romanity (*romanità*) and is the reason why this building is called 'square colosseum (*colosseo quadrato*)' (Somma 2020, 79-80). It follows the essence of classical architecture, and its distinctive design makes this building iconic and eye-catching. The number of arches, six by nine, was set over the number of letters in the *Duce*'s name, BENITO MUSSOLINI (Loncar 2020, 96). Classical characteristics are also seen in sculptures around the building: Sculptures of Dioscuri are placed at the four corners of the Palace, creating a sense of sacredness similar to that of an ancient Roman temple (Ibid., 94).

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[38] Original text in Italian: "*Un popolo di poeti di artisti di eroi di santi di pensatori di scienziati di navigator di trasmigratori*". Translation is quoted from Ben=Ghiat 2017.

figure 26: One of the Sculptures of Dioscuri (author's photograph, 2022)

As seen here, the district of EUR and the Palace of Italian Civilization was constructed with political intention and have an inseparable relationship with fascist policies. Because of the outbreak of WWII, E42 was canceled, and the opportunity to show its ideal to the world was unrealized. Some construction works of buildings were stopped. Nevertheless, these buildings were never demolished; instead, some of the halted work was resumed after WWII, leading to the completion of unfinished buildings, including the Palace of Italian Civilization, again under the direction of Piacentini, along with the original design. The reason for this completion is uncertain, but at least it can be assumed that the intent not to demolish them was not only the post-war economic and social climate (as discussed in Chapter I) (Nicoloso 2020, 71), but also the perceived need to intentionally preserve the fascist past. In particular, Mussolini's aim of leaving long-lasting traces of fascism in the form of legacies in urban spaces was partly inherited by the influential conservatives that existed in Italy during the Cold War – the right-wings had utilized this iconographic symbolism for their propaganda, both clearly and implicitly (Baioni 2020). This means, ironically, that the planned "Mussolini's city," which tells the fascist memory for the future, was completed at the hand of the 'anti-fascist' government (Nicoloso 2022, 72).

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3.2. The District of EUR and the Palace of Italian Civilization since the End of WWII until Today: Use by FENDI and its Approach to the History

3.2.1. Use of Image and Jurisdictional Change from the Post-War Period

After the end of WWII and the completion of construction in 1953, for events for seventy years, the Palace of Italian Civilization has not been used as an exhibition hall or for more general use. However, this edifice has been used several times as an image. Just after the end of WWII, even before its completion, the Palace emerged in some artistic products such as films and stage plays: it was with strong social intention to show disapproval of Italian society, or after the completion, to satirize and to show disenchantment with it (Somma 2020, 80-82).[39]

In 1951, the former general secretary of the *governatorato* of Rome between 1935 and 1944, Virgilio Testa, was appointed as the commissioner of the EUR, and he asked Piacentini to take all responsibility for completing the whole architectural project from the fascist period in this district (Ibid., 82). In this flow, the Palace's construction was finally finished in 1953. In the same year, the "EA53," an exposition on modern agricultural innovations – it was the exception of its lack of use as an exhibition place – was held there for around four months, and after that, from 1956, this building was owned by the National Federation of the *Cavalieri del Lavoro* (*Federazione Nazionale dei Cavalieri del Lavoro*) for 29 years (Ibid.; Loncar 2020, 101).

Since the 1970s, some in the architectural fields have re-evaluated the appearance of the Palace and appreciated its aesthetic qualities. Yet, others still denied these features, and the academic circle did not consider the relationship between 'fascist architecture' and fascism precisely during the 1980s because it was thought of as a tiny issue (Somma 2020, 82-83).

Meanwhile, the space was used for non-exhibition purposes: in 1985, it was

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[39] Typical examples are: the film "*Roma Città Aperta*" by Roberto Rossellini in 1945; the play "*L'esposizione Universale*" by Luigi Squarzina, firstly played in 1955; the film "*Le Tentazioni del dottor Antonio*" by Federico Fellini in 1962 (Somma 2020, 80-82).

announced that a film festival, "Roman Summer (*Estate Romana*)," would be held in EUR. For the first, the venue was planned for the Palace of Italian Civilization, but it soon changed to the Congress Palace (*Palazzo dei Congressi*) in the district. Architecture and art enthusiasts were in favor of this decision since this Palace was thought to be one of the most remarkable representations of Italian rationalist architecture. Also, they did not admit the artistic value of the former at that time. However, because this film festival took place at the Colosseum, the Circo Massimo, or other 'monumental' places in this city before, it was thought not to be so impressive and attractive, in fact (Zefferi 1985). Or, in 2003, a summer festival of theater and cabaret, "In the shadow of the Colosseum... square (*All'ombra del Colosseo... quadrato*)," took place at the Palace of Italian Civilization. This event included cabaret and comedy shows, stages by TV stars, film shows, an exhibition of the history of comedy, and so forth (*Corriere della Sera* 2003a). The director of this festival, Francesco Quintiliani, declared that holding this event at this location "is a kind of challenge" (*Corriere della Sera* 2003b). The culture assessor of the municipality, Gianni Bordagna, also explained that "this new location could be a happy synthesis of urban planning, folk traditions, and culture" (Ibid.). Some years later, in 2009, the mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno from AN, showed his desire to host the Formula One Grand Prix in the district (Menicucci 2009a; Menicucci 2009b). For this plan, the president of *Federlazio*, an association of small- and medium-sized enterprises in Lazio, explained that the circuit, which would be constructed around the entire district, would make "3,000 years of history in one hour, the fusion of futurism and the Colosseum" (*Roma Today* 2009). However, this plan received massive opposition from residents, and neither could meet the requests from the Formula One convention (Testimona 2010; *Roma Today* 2010). Therefore, the plan was abandoned at last in 2011 (*Roma Today* 2011). While the plan for the Formula One Grand Prix was unrealized, an open-wheel single-seater motorsport championship for electric cars, Formula E, was held in this district, using the street circuit called "EUR city circuit (*circuito*

cittadino dell'EUR)": this event was held here from 2018 until 2023, based on the idea of Formula One during the term of Virginia Raggi, the mayor of Rome, since 2016 (Caponetti 2023). As in these examples, the Place of Italian Civilization has often been used/planned to be used for non-original purposes.

In the 1990s, a new joint-stock company, EUR SpA, was established by the then mayor of Rome in order to "valorize" control of the vast amount of assets in this district (Belmonte 2023, 9). The first attempt to use this building for its original purpose as an exhibition place was taken into practice in 2001: based on an agreement in 1999, the then government and the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Giovanna Melandri, announced the opening of a National Audiovisual Museum (Mav: *Museo nazionale del'audiovisivo*), using the internal space of the place (Colonneli 2001). At this time, she described the building as very modern and a part of the technological heritage of the 20th century, and the permanent cultural activity center, which might be used for exhibitions, concerts, events, and so forth, would be settled in this museum (Ibid.). From 2006, a restoration activity was held using public funds because this organization was controlled by the Ministry of Finance and the Municipality of Rome. Then, during the mayoral term of Alemanno, the Palace was decided to be a place for a permanent exhibition of "Made in Italy," together with the project of the audio-visual museum, by an agreement between the Ministry of Cultural Activities, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Municipality of Rome and EUR SpA (Somma 2020, 84). The plan was to organize an exhibition of Italian products and designs based on documents and iconographies, using the latest digital display technology throughout the building. At the same time, it planned to hold a data bank, workshop or educational facility (Pull 2007). In December 2015, the then government led by Matteo Renzi from PD decided to donate more than twelve million euro to this project through a finance bill (Ibid.; Ministero della Cultura 2009). It can be seen that the government was eager to realize this project. However, there were some investors interested in

this building hunting for bargains at the time around the completion of the restoration, and at the same time, EUR SpA faced with default – these two factors made these projects unrealized[40] and lead to a situation for this edifice to search for new private partners (Somma 2020, 83-84). As the first step, in 2013, a fashion show and exhibition was conducted by a fashion designer Giorgio Armani (Ibid., 84; Loncar 2020, 101).

3.2.2. 'De-Politicization' and 'Risemantization' by FENDI

The turning point came one month after Armani's fashion show: an Italian brand, FENDI, decided to move its headquarters to the Palace of Italian Civilization, and since 2015, this building has been used by this private enterprise.[41] As for this relocation and FENDI's approach to this building, Jelena Loncar, the communication coordinator, an editor, and a freelance writer, organizes the context well. Perhaps not surprisingly, at the time of relocation, attention was drawn to the building's relationship to the fascist past. In interviews with the then Executive Chief of FENDI, Pietro Beccari, claimed as follows:

> We are proud of coming back to our city, Rome, and to the world inside the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, which is the symbol of our Roman roots and of the continuous dialogue between tradition and modernity, the value which Fendi has always been dear to. (Pamphili 2015)

> This building is beyond a discussion of politics. It is aesthetics. It is a masterpiece of architecture. (...) For Italians and for Romans, it is completely deloaded, empty of any significance of that period ... there was no political activity that took place here. We never saw it through the lens of fascism. (Kirchgaessner 2015)

From his answers, it is obvious that he and FENDI saw this monumental architecture with

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[40] In fact, an exhibition about "Made in Italy" was realized in 2024: the avenue was not the Palace of Italian Civilization, but the *Palazzo Piacentini* (Piacentini Palace), where the headquarters of the Ministry of Enterprise and Made in Italy is housed. The aim was to evaluate industries, designs, and materials that are valuable for the country, and more than 100 enterprises and 113 brands participated in it (Ministero dell Imprese e del Made in Italy 2024, February 13). From this fact, Italy's eagerness to have an exhibition on this theme can be seen well.
[41] To be precise, the building is leased to LVMH, a multinational luxury goods conglomerate based in Paris, and the parent company of FENDI. (Loncar 2020, 92; Somma 2020, 79).

separating from its political and ideological context, and regarded the fascist memory as one which had already removed from it. In other words, their focus has been on its architectural artistic value.

In fact, as one of the world's leading luxury brands, FENDI uses this iconic building itself, especially its arches, for its branding and marketing strategy to make it an identity of the brand: for example, it took a video series project titled "The Ring of the Future," in which international young artists performed their art at the Palace in order to erase the fascist past from this building eternally (Loncar 2020, 101-102).[42] Also, the brand utilized social media, especially Instagram, to appeal to this building as the brand's identity as well as its home: Loncar mentioned an account @fisforfendi, most of whose posts had an image of the Palace with models, artists, influencers, and celebrities (Ibid., 102-103). Through Instagram, which is the media that is accessed a lot by the younger generation and global people, namely, an audience who does not know the history of this edifice, FENDI intended to show this place as solely 'cool' and 'magical' without knowing the history (Ibid., 102). Unfortunately, now the account @fisforfendi seems to be eliminated[43], but this tendency can be seen in posts on the brand's official Instagram account and YouTube channel as well. On the brand's official Instagram account of @fendi, there are some posts of still/video images shot at this building: for example, one video advertises a collaboration of new eyewear with another brand "the core values of creativity, innovation, and craftsmanship" through images of eyewear manufacturing process and this building (@fendi, July 6, 2021).[44] In another video, a Japanese actor, who is particularly popular among the Japanese younger generation, is shown walking through the

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[42] Some videos are available on YouTube, for example: Harper's BAZAAR Malaysia. 2018. "F IS FOR FENDI: The Ring of The Future," YouTube video, March 2, 2018, https://youtu.be/6ZdPQXqbwX4?si=m5Ft16y0t26U9vKZ. (accessed May 29, 2024); Wonderland Magazine, 2018. "F IS FOR... FENDI presents GRAFFITI | Wonderland Magazine," YouTube video, September 11, 2024, https://youtu.be/4HdgzppD7NU?si=L_O6P-WK3ShEDTu6. (accessed May 29, 2024).
[43] At the time of March 18, 2024.
[44] Fendi (@fendi). 2021. "Style and functionality – no compromise," Instagram video, July 6, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CQ8meiWqucY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link. (accessed May 23, 2024).

Palace and saying as follows: "The streets of Rome are filled with buildings that give me a very historical feel, and I get a lot of new excitement every time I visit. When I first swathe Palace of Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, I was very impressed by the coexistence of history and newness" (@fendi, February 1, 2024).[45] Also, in one video uploaded on the official YouTube channel, a promotion of a new product was shot in this place.[46] Through these contents, the brand's desire to connect this building to its identity, disseminate it to a wide audience, and make this building and its arches its symbol is obvious.

Related to this point, in 2022, an event that celebrated the signing between Argentine football player Paulo Dybala and AS Roma was held at this Palace. At the event, the building was lit up with the club's logo, and more than ten thousand people gathered to see him. Also, the live-streaming video of the event was viewed more than fourteen million times (AS Roma 2022). On the occasion of this ceremony, FENDI posted three images on its Instagram account, in which the player has total coordination with its products. The caption (which is the same text in all three posts) states "A meeting point between the sports and fashion world through a common denominator: Roma roots and a strong link to the eternal city" (@fendi, July 27, 2022).[47] This event showed FENDI's challenge to use this building impressively for the masses as well. At the same time, an attempt to emphasize Romanity is well seen.

This intention to make the arches the brand's identity and symbol can be seen in its flagship and pop-up stores around the world as well. Starting from the opening of Manhattan

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[45] An interview with Ren Meguro. Fendi (@fendi). 2024. "Fendi is pleased to welcome new #FendiAmbassador Ren Meguro," Instagram video, February 1, 2024,
https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2zFpBhtPx_/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link. (accessed May 23, 2024).
[46] Fendi. 2022. "Fendi Peekaboo Campaign by Luca Guadagnino," YouTube video, April 7, 2022,
https://youtu.be/KzG2jwe2FgY?si=dLj19_IxYvOiAj2U. (accessed May 23, 2024).
[47] All of three posts are available on Fendi's official Instagram account, and have the same text in the caption with different images. Fendi (@fendi). 2022. "A meeting point between the sports and fashion world through a common denominator," Instagram photos, July 27, 2022,
https://www.instagram.com/p/CghXUMvqf5_/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet;
https://www.instagram.com/p/CghmQEcqwY2/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet;
https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cghf1qBKscq/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet. (all accessed May 23, 2024).

on Madison Avenue in 2015, various stores have adopted this design (Loncar 2020, 103-105).

figure 27: A flagship store of FENDI in Tokyo Ginza, Japan (author's photograph, 2023)

On the occasion of opening a pop-up store in Harrod's in London, Beccari commented in an interview as follows: "We wanted to tell the story of the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana and this new chapter in the history of Fendi. Sharing the message and our 'Roman-ity' around the world is important in this new stage of our brand's evolution" (Marfil 2015). Through these marketing strategic practices, the attitude of FENDI towards this architecture and its arches, that is, the reluctance to recognize the building's historical background and the utilization for its branding, are clearly seen (Loncar 2020, 103). By using advertisement purposes, the Palace was aestheticized, and at the same time, consumerism ideology began to be symbolized, replacing the totalitarian one (Ibid., 99).

What is interesting is that, for FENDI, a series of these practices were attempts to interpret the Palace in the brand's own way. Loncar mentioned a comment by Karl Lagerfeld, the German designer and photographer, who had been directing the brand's creative vision from

1967 until 2019, in the press release for the opening of the new headquarters as follows: "The past and history here are beyond 'good and evil' as Nietzsche would have said. For us the inspiration is like the desire of the Italian heart. But it has to be filtered and transgressed. It's an interpretation we should now try to explain" (Fendi 2014, quoted in Locar 2020, 108).[48] It means that from the beginning of this relocation, FENDI intended to erase the fascist past, re-interpret this building from it, and construct an appropriate narrative for this brand by using it. In this process, a new symbolism of consumerism and capitalism was realized (Loncar 2020, 108).

In this sense, the 'de-politicization' of FENDI can be regarded as a kind of 'risemantization.' However, as Loncar advised, the history of this building cannot be concealed, forgotten and erased (Ibid.). In fact, after 2015, the discussion about this edifice and its historical and political background is not ending, but even accelerating (recall that Ben=Ghiat's argument was posted in 2017).

As an interesting use of this building in a pop culture scene, the Italian band, Zen Circus, used the image for the cover of their album "*Andate tutti affanculo*," released in 2009, and for one of the novels of the same name published ten years later. This music album was reviewed as a piece that condemns the virtue and vice of Italy, which tried to change but never do (Natale 2019). Also, in the "anti-biographic" novel, the growth of the main characters, who are the members of the band, is told through a mixture of reality and fiction as they look at a changing Italy during the 1990s under the emergence of counter-culture and berlusconism, and the 2000s with G8 at Genova and 9.11 (Mondadori n.d.; Redazione Libri Mondadori 2019).

At the same time, as a result of this 'risemantization,' the 'FENDI-ness' that FENDI expected of the Palace became the imposition and spread of Romanity, the same as fascism.

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[48] The original document is: Fendi. 2014. "Fendi and the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana," 2014. www.fendi.com/uploads/us/press/opening- events/fendi_palazzo_della_civilta_italiana.pdf. It is now unavailable online (at the time of March 18, 2024), so here referred the quotation in Loncar, 2020, 108.

Ironically, in this sense, it could be said that this brand is following the same path as the regime (Loncar 2020, 104). This may be one of the reasons for the debate surrounding this architecture that continues to this day.

Through FENDI's attempt and this band's practice, what was seen about the dilemma of 'de-politicization' in the previous chapter is also reflected: the practice to 'de-politicize' and 'a-politicize' something paradoxically results in making it more political. However far FENDI tries to regard the Palace as important from the artistic perspective, and to connect its aesthetic feature with the brand's identity, the suspicion of using this architecture that represents the era and ideology of fascism itself has not disappeared. The use for the cover of the album and the novel by the band shows this point well: regarding the concept and story of them, it can be thought that this band intentionally chose this building to use as a symbolical image of unchanging Italian society. In this sense, FENDI's attempt to reinterpret the Palace and 'de-politicize' failed (indeed, the album was released before the relocation, but the band did not change the cover image when it published the novel in 2019).

Then, what kind of approach can/should the local authorities take toward this fascist-era architecture? Drawing on the findings from the case studies in Chapter II and based on some other precedents around the world, the following section explores the possibilities.

3.3. Means for Critical Preservation of the Palace of Italian Civilization
3.3.1. The Way to Critical Preservation: Peculiarities and Issues of Roman Case

Based on the idea of 'risemantization,' this thesis would like to seek a way not to cancel the past but to add something to EUR and the Palace for its critical preservation. The problem this edifice has faced from historical and political points of view is that it has been preserved and used without critical perspectives toward the past. This tendency might cause 'heritagization' of fascist-era monumental architecture, and it would make a discursive and physical space "for the re-emergence of illiberal, xenophobic and nihilistic currents"

(Arthurs2010, 124) in Italian society. For critical preservation, to reiterate, it is required to provide a tool to interpret the history to the public through a form of labeling, panels, or museum display, for instance, in order to criticize and recognize the inherent political message in architecture (Arthurs2010, 125; Belmonte 2022, 90). Thus, this section presents an idea of how to preserve this building by contextualizing it.

Before that, one thing should be mentioned: the peculiarities and characteristics of the Roman case. Here, it focuses on two points that are different from the three cases of Bolzano/Bozen, Forlì, and Perugia: firstly, as for the Palace of Italian Civilization, a certain degree of recognition of artistic value cannot be ignored; and secondly, this building is leased to a private and global company until 2028.

figure 28: A poster image of 2016 Roma Pride (retrieved from 2016 Roma Pride's official website)[49]

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[49] Roma Pride. 2016. "chi-non-si-accontenta-lotta-4-V," May 27, 2016. https://www.romapride.it/2016/roma-pride-2016-parte-la-campagna-comunicazione-sabato-11-giugno-la-grande-parata-le-vie-della-citta/chi-non-si-accontenta-lotta-4-v/ (accessed and retrieved the image on May 25, 2024). There are four types of poster images for the same event, all of which can be seen on: Roma Pride. 2016. "Roma Pride 2016; parte la campagna di comunicazione. Sabato 11 Giugno la grande Parata per le vie della città," May 27, 2016.

Regarding the second point, it is worth mentioning a complicated issue about the management of public goods by private actors. This problem was, for instance, exposed in a case regarding the 2016 Roma Pride poster [figure28]. Roma Pride is an event for the rights of LGBTQ people, organized by a club, *mariomieli*. For the one in 2016, this event used the image of the Palace of Italian Civilization in its poster. FENDI protested this as "an inappropriate use" (Kirchgaessner 2016; Marsala 2016) of its image, and asked the organization to remove the ad and withdraw the advertising campaign. Roma Pride opposed this protest since this building is a public city symbol. It also accused the brand of using the term "inappropriate use," which it claimed was discriminatory referring to LGBTQ people. Facing this opposition, at last, FENDI issued a joint statement with Roma Pride, expressing its support for the use of the image and the event itself (Natella 2016; Kirchgaessner 2016; Marsala 2016). From this case, the question about the legitimacy of the management of public interest by the private sector appears. Legally, the use of images or names of cultural heritage can be constrained only by the administration by applying the copyright act (Marsala 2016). However, in the case of the Place of Italian Civilization, the right of custody of property was owned by the brand due to the contract between FENDI and EUR SpA. The contract attributed the name and image protection of the building to the brand. Looking at this point, it would seem legally justified for FENDI to permit or deny the use of images. However, managing public interest by private actors might lead to the taking of public goods away from citizens: in other words, the freedom of use of the image would be deprived of, and public good might become non-'public' (Natella 2016) – actually, this was one of the very points Roma Pride opposed to the FENDI's protest. In this meaning, the use of image and name should not be exclusive to one sector (Ibid.).

As seen here, for the management of public goods by the private sector, there is a

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https://www.romapride.it/2016/roma-pride-2016-parte-la-campagna-comunicazione-sabato-11-giugno-la-grande-parata-le-vie-della-citta/ (accessed May 25, 2024).

space for discussion from the perspective of legitimacy. What is inevitable for private enterprises to consider is economic profit: sales are the source of action for their businesses. In fact, the reason FENDI changed its mind about Rome Pride was to avoid consumer boycotts due to the image of the brand that disregards diversity (Marsala 2016). It could lead to the privatization of public property. In other words, even the right to disregard the ethical value of the property's 'public nature' could be passed on to the private sector. Therefore, in the case of the Palace of Italian Civilization, contextualization should be required as part of the process of making this building a sphere for reflecting on the past and promoting discussion and dialogue.

When it comes to thinking about 'critical preservation,' the issue of the Palace of Italian Civilization is that its context needs to be clearly presented to the public. As seen above, today, a 'de-politicized' interpretation is being made, while the political aspect has not been removed, and it has been a subject of debate. In other words, while it has an inextricable relationship with the fascist past, this point is not broadly recognized. Therefore, a clear contextualization is called for, as in Bolzano/Bozen. Through it, the Palace should be a medium to recognize the fascist past critically for Italian people and those who visit it. In order to fulfill this purpose, it should provide an opportunity and a hint to know the historical background, namely, what kind of meaning was initially intended for this building, or how the meaning has changed after the *ventennio*, and to think about the past for the public.

3.3.2. Concept of 'Palimpsest'

Before thinking about how to realize 'critical preservation' of the Palace of Italian Civilization, it is interesting to consider the application of the concept of 'difficult heritage' to the fascist-era architecture. 'Difficult heritage,' drawn by Macdonald, is "a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity" (Macdonald 2009a, 1). In other words, it represents a past which is troubling and uncomfortable for current identity of

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each nation, rather than a past which is celebrated as a part of its history (Macdonald 2009a, 2; Belmonte 2023, 11). While difficult heritage often emerges as a contested and problematic object in terms of connection with history, it is too significant not to be demolished, ignored, or dismissed (Malone 2023, 47-48). In this sense, Italian fascist-era architecture can be regarded as a typical example of difficult heritage. However, Malone argued that more than this concept needs to be considered for its 'critical preservation': according to her, in general, the meanings which architecture have are variable, and changes depending on observers, or local, national or international context, and so on (Ibid., 54). Yet, applying this label may cause limited perspectives and interpretations since the focus would be on the aspect of 'fascism' of architecture (Ibid., 54; 63). In short, only political and ideological characteristics of fascist-era architecture will be emphasized, and it may be hard to interpret it comprehensively.

Therefore, this chapter will follow an alternative approach, 'palimpsest,' which is a metaphor suggesting "a stratification of meanings and memories that evolve to suit different sets of conditions" (Ibid., 59). By applying this concept, Malone argued that various and multilayered meanings and memories, which fascist-era architecture possesses, may be explained so that narrative can be interpreted inclusively (Ibid., 59-60). In doing so, it is required to focus on not only the aspect of 'fascism,' but also others, such as references to other periods and economic, practical, aesthetic, or heritage values (Ibid., 59-63). It will be key when it comes to thinking about 'critical preservation' of fascist-era architecture: namely, it is possible to position architecture within a broader historical context. The same thing can be said in the case of the Palace of Italian Civilization. For the contextualization of this building, it is necessary to consider an artistic value that is admitted at a certain level, a change of its image after the regime, or the use by FENDI as a part of its context. Therefore, in this thesis, the method of 'critical preservation' will be considered by applying the concept of 'palimpsest.'

3.3.3. Proposal for Installing a Panel of Explanation

For critical preservation, this section proposes an idea to install a series of panels around the building. One of the thinkable ways is to install a panel, museum, exhibition, documentation center, or equivalent, which utilizes the historical background this Palace already has as an essential context. However, regarding the fact that its interior is essentially closed to the public, it is not easy to create a museum or exhibition here. Therefore, by installing panels outside the building, hopefully around it, the explanation can be accessible not only to those who use this place on a daily basis but also to people who visit there, as a practice taken in the *Piazza del Tribunale*, Bolzano/Bozen. What is more, in this explanation, the artistic value of this edifice, that is, the architectural and architectural-historical perspective, should be mentioned so that it can contextualize the characteristics of this Palace inclusively. To prepare an explanation, cooperation with local historians and experts is effective and inevitable, as seen in Perugia's case. The context of this building itself should be categorized and explained with cooperating with local authorities.

Here, two examples of exhibitions in other European countries are presented, which might be helpful for plotting the paneling. The first example is the Royal Museum for Central Africa (hereinafter the AfricaMuseum) in Teruvuren, Belgium. This museum embodies the 'de-colonialism' of the exhibition with the colonialist color. Initially, it was inaugurated for an exhibition of the 'colonial section' for the World Exhibitions Brussels in 1897. Under the order by then king Leopold II, the exhibition was intended as a propaganda tool for the colonialist project of Belgium (AfricaMuseum n.d.b). In 1898, after the World Exhibition, it became a permanent exhibition. Since then, the name has frequently been changed to reflect the changing times, and at last, the five-year renovation was completed in 2018. With this renovation, it became the museum presenting a modern, 'de-colonialist' vision of Africa by using the building designed as an architecture in the colonialist period (Ibid.). The collection has also been reused, that is, the existing collection has been utilized to re-interpret it.

In Nuremberg, Germany, as another example, the Nazi Party Rally Ground has been an object of an interesting practice of confronting the dictatorship past. This place neutralized and erased the sanctity of the Nazi place and offset the past. There are two leading practices in this place. The first one is "calculated neglect" (Arthurs 2010, 125) of the stadium on this site. Leaving this stadium semi-disrepaired and using it for 'banal' uses such as for storage and sports activities, it was intended to make this building 'de-mythified' (Macdonald 2006, 19; Macdonald 2009b, 125-126). With doing so, the Nazi agency and the 'heritagising' consciousness of this place were removed, and its function of identity-making under the Nazis was offset (Macdonald 2006, 16; 19). The other practice was the inauguration of a document center in the Zepplin Building, which had a speaker's podium from which Hitler made speeches to the masses. As a performative statement of recognizing and learning from the past, here an approach to see critically this place not as 'heritage' but as 'history' is offered to the public (Ibid., 14; 22).

Referring to these two examples and what was seen in the previous chapter, what is at least required from the Palace of Italian Civilization can be assumed to provide an explanation and an interpretation of the past from various aspects as a form of exhibition. In fact, there is a similar attempt to realize this kind of operation in Rome, but it exposed the difficulty of realizing it. In 2024, the Italian government enacted legislation to authorize the establishment of a museum of the memory of Foibe and of exodus (*un museo del Ricordo delle foibe e dell'esodo*) in Rome. Yet, while praising the initiative to establish a museum that refers to these pasts, the historian, Eric Gobetti, questioned its content, which this museum will remember – precisely, he feared that it would not mention the perpetrator aspect of Italy (Gobetti 2024). Therefore, he sent an open letter to the prime minister Meloni proposing the museum's contents. He aimed to make citizens adequately aware of these issues through this museum: thus, in his proposal, Italy's perpetrator side of perspective is clearly mentioned. By

realizing the idea, he argued that "such a structured museum would provide tools to understand the history, to understand the dynamics of violence, and thus be able to locate it in our present and future" (Gobetti 2024). In short, he supported the idea of creating an exhibition that tells a comprehensive historical perspective, which was lacking in the original plan by the government.

Moreover, there is a doubt whether the municipality of Rome itself wants to look back to its fascist past or not. On the official tourist website of Rome, there is a page introducing the Palace of Italian Civilization. Yet, there is no direct reference to the fascist regime and Mussolini, though it mentions the architect Piacentini, the text of the inscription, and the event E42 (and the same thing can be said for the district of EUR).[50] However, at the same time, EUR SpA, which manages this district with funds from the government and the municipality, shows a need to know the history to understand EUR correctly on its official website.[51] This thesis supports this need, and from the following, it proposes three points for its contextualization, which should be mentioned and focused on.

The key to remembering is that the uncomfortable past, which may be unfavorable for Italy today, should also be clearly mentioned, not to beautify the memory. In particular, the artistic value of this edifice can be easily deified. However, while it may be admired from an architectural and architectural-historical point of view, it must be avoided to regard the Palace as a completely sacred site from a historical and political point of view. For that, it is needed to recognize its history and historical narrative through practice, as the in AfricaMuseum in Teruvuren. In other words, the exhibition or paneling should offer a shared interpretation made through cooperation with local historians and experts as much as possible.

In the paneling, this thesis proposes that there may be three points which should be clearly shown. Firstly, the way how the Palace was created is to be explained. As seen in the

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[50] See, for the Palace of Italian Civilization: https://www.turismoroma.it/it/luoghi/palazzo-della-civilt%C3%A0-italiana; for EUR: https://www.turismoroma.it/it/quartieri/eur (accessed April 22, 2024)
[51] See https://www.eurspa.it/en/about-us/profile/our-history (accessed April 22, 2024)

first section of this chapter, this building and the whole part of the district of EUR was planned and constructed totally with the political intention of the fascist regime and Mussolini. That is the very point at which the Palace cannot be separated from the historical perspective. At the same time, it is worth mentioning why the regime intended to host the event in Rome in 1942, as this plan was also made with a clear political purpose. For this point, the AfricaMuseum is thought of as an interesting role model. By referring to the reproduction of the original exhibition planned for this Palace in E42, or at least just a part of it, the purpose of E42 and the construction of this Palace may be clarified.

The second point is related to one of the peculiarities of this case, that is, the explanation of its design. This Palace is thought to be one of the most notable examples of fascist-era architecture, which has been preserved because of its artistic value (Malone 2017, 457). It represents "the most innovative and successful periods in Italian architecture" (Ibid.), with the fusion of monumental neoclassicism and cutting-edge modernism. In other words, fascism is considered as an actor which could realize the Italian modernist aesthetic of Rome (Ibid.; Arthurs 2010, 124). As seen above, FENDI also admitted the aesthetics of this building so that it uses the Palace as the headquarters. Thus, in this part, this Palace will be valued from an architectural and architectural-historical perspective. However, at the same time, it is necessary to explain what political intentions the regime and Mussolini put into each part of the design. For example, classical essences throughout were the representation of continuity from the ancient period; the imperialistic ambition was inscribed in a clearly visible way; and praise for the *Duce* was shown metaphorically through the numbers of arches. It is appropriate to refer to this point explicitly to avoid uncritical evaluation or unjustified glorification of the building.

For the last point, uses of the Palace of Italian Civilization since the regime, or since the cancellation of E42, until today should be explained. In other words, information about not only how the fascist regime wanted to utilize it during the dictatorship period but also how this

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building has been understood, accepted, and utilized after that is offered. Based on the concept of 'palimpsest,' it is necessary to contextualize this building from various multi-layered perspectives. In this sense, focusing on only the aspect of 'fascism' too much may result in emphasizing the 'fascist' phase too much. This is the very limitation of the approach of 'difficult heritage.' In other words, it has a risk of reflecting political and ideological issues in physical remains of fascism, which are not necessarily problematic for local people (Malone 2023, 54). Rather than that, for 'critical preservation,' other meanings and memories should be presented as well.

By adding the second and third explanations, not only what the fascist regime expected of this architecture during the *ventennio*, but also purely artistic points of view and the change of use and meaning after the regime can be clearly shown. Thus, it avoids too much focus on the fascist aspect, and other aspects, meanings, memories, and their impact on the public are considered. In addition, for this explanation, it should be meaningful to use archival photo images. Actually, EUR SpA has a photo archive, which is accessible online.[52] Also, there is a private archive, *Roma Sparita*, which has images of EUR and the Palace a lot.[53] They have the image of the Palace not only during the fascist period (namely, during the construction) but also of the post-war period. Thus, it can help to understand the environment surrounding this building after the *ventennio*. These explanations and visual images may make the perception and interpretation of the Palace of Italian Civilization diversified, and a tool and support for critical thinking and understanding will be offered to the public.

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[52] Accessible from: https://www.eurspa.it/it/asset-property/patrimonio/archivi-fotografici/archivio-storico-fotografico-eur42 (accessed April 22, 2024)
[53] Accessible from: https://www.romasparita.eu/ (accessed April 22, 2024)

3.4. Conclusion – Most Feasible Critical Preservation of the Palace of Italian Civilization So Far

As seen in this chapter, the Palace of Italian Civilization was constructed for the E42 with a clear political intention by the fascist regime and has been used for several occasions since the post-war period. Of particular note is the utilization by FENDI as its global headquarters. This brand 'risemantizes' the Palace in its own way, converting the ideological and political implication to that of consumerism by attempting to connect its design to the brand's identity. However, its way of 'risemantization' is closer to the de-politicization of this building. As a result, the debate about its political background and historical context has not been settled, and appropriate contextualization and critical preservation are considered necessary.

Indeed, it is not so easy – this building is currently governed by a private enterprise, which causes a problem with the management of public goods by the private sector. Also, the government may be reluctant to contextualize the difficult past in the capital city of Rome. Yet, this is why 'critical preservation' is considered necessary to activate the debate at the public level. The Palace of Italian Civilization can also be contextualized for critical preservation by clearly presenting the historical explanation to the public. To realize this, this chapter provided three points that should be presented in the surrounding area of the building based on the concept of 'palimpsest': the background of the construction, the artistic and architectural value, and the use after the regime. For the paneling, it may be possible not only to explain it through text but also to use some archival images possessed by the EUR SpA.

A backlash against this practice from the FENDI side is, of course, to be expected. However, this attempt is also in line with the brand's intention to de-politicize the building and give it a new meaning while focusing on the artistic aspects. In the first point, there may be explicit mention of the regime and the dictator, but the whole challenge would strongly focus on avoiding emphasizing only on the fascist aspect of this building. At the same time, originally,

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this building was a public good, though currently it is managed by private enterprises. The debate on Roma Pride 2016 was limited to the use of images for the advertisement. However, the Palace itself should be kept as public property, and its use also should be controlled by administrative powers. In this sense, it is meaningful for the local authority to lead the attempt to make this monumental architecture a place for discussion and dialogue.

It should be noted that this approach would not be the ultimate solution for the contextualization of the Palace of Italian Civilization, as the situation surrounding it will continue to change. The contract between FENDI and EUR SpA, for instance, is for fifteen years and will expire in 2028. The subsequent owner/tenant is uncertain at this time, and it is not difficult to imagine that the feasible measures will vary depending on whether the building will again be effectively under administrative ownership under the management of EUR SpA, whether FENDI will renew the contract, or whether other actors will acquire ownership or management right. However, in the current situation in which the whole building is used as an office and is closed to the public, this approach of paneling may be the most feasible solution. At the same time, the practice should continue to be updated with changes in the situation in the future.

Conclusion

This thesis considered the question of how the fascist past is and can be perceived through fascist-era architecture in today's Italy. To think about this question the role of Italian local authorities in confronting the past of fascism has been focused on. Regarding the historical background and debates after the regime, this architecture cannot be separated from the political context, even though the artistic value is recognized in some cases. As seen in Chapter I, fascist-era architecture has been an object of debate from the perspective of politics and memory since the post-war period until today. In particular, preservation and use of them without 'critical preservation,' that is, preservation with some devices to contextualize the place, have been controversial. In this situation, the thesis proposed what local authorities can take into practice to come to terms with the fascist past and to provide an occasion to know, understand, and interpret the past critically for the public, focusing on the case of the district of EUR in Rome, especially on the Palace of Italian Civilization.

To think about the measure possibly attempted in Rome, the thesis discussed cases in three cities, Bolzano/Bozen, Forlì, and Perugia, as examples that have been done with the initiative of local authorities. From the first case, the actual practice of 'risemantize' fascist-era monumental objects was seen well. The installation of light in front of the bas-relief of the Palace of Finance Offices, and the permanent exhibition inaugurated under the Monument to Victory, gave a new meaning to these monumental works without erasing or ignoring the fascist past. Also, through documentation and panel explanation, practices in this city provided a tool to interpret and understand critically the fascist past, as well as the past of being occupied by the Nazis and the tension between Italian-speaking and German-speaking people. By seeing some critics from academic and journalistic fields and reviews on Google Map and Tripadvisor from the visitors, it turned out that this intention would have been more or less realized in this

case. For the second example of Forlì, some architecture, including a monument and a street, were constructed by the regime in the city. Today, under the initiative of the municipality and the organization ATRIUM, they have become objects of the city's tourist industry. By doing so, fascist-era architecture and monuments play a new role as places of discussion and dialogue about the fascist past today. The third example of Perugia focused on the *facsi littori* in the Covered Market. The debate on whether to cover this fascist symbol or to leave it visible occurred at the local governmental level. In this debate, the insight that 'a-politicization' and 'de-politicization' of fascist-era architecture, as well as monuments and symbols, resulted in a political debate is illustrated. The mayor firstly was eager to 'a-politicize' the problem, arguing that the *fasci littori* did not have a political meaning anymore. However, as the debate intensified and its political nature was questioned, he changed his position, which led him to organize the working group. At the same time, in the series of discussions, the importance of the local authority taking the initiative and flexibility is presented. This debate was not only discussed in the local parliament but also evoked an active dialogue between the local government and the local communities, and a performative action from the locals. The final decision to cover the symbol as part of the Market's redevelopment work was made in the unofficial working group, organized by four city council members in cooperation with organizations. From these attempts, it can be said that it is meaningful for the local authority to lead the discussion involving local communities and hearing local voices.

Based on these findings, this thesis tried to propose a way of 'critical preservation' of the Palace of Italian Civilization in the district of EUR, Rome. In this case, there are two peculiarities that are different from those of the other three cases: a recognition of a certain level of artistic value, and the temporary situation of being managed by a private company. Considering these points as well, Chapter III proposed an idea of including an explanation through paneling around the building. In this explanation, the thesis argued that three points

should be clearly shown: the historical background of the construction of the Palace, the characteristics from artistic and architectural points of view, and the use of the Palace from the post-war period until today. These practices lead to 'risemantize' the building without 'de-politicization.' Through a series of explanations, the Palace may be contextualized, and it provides a tool to re-interpret the architecture for the public. By preparing these panels under the local authority's initiative, with collaboration with the local historians, this public property may not be privatized, and it can provide a shared memory for the public.

For the proposal of the paneling in the Palace of Italian Civilization, this thesis applied the concept of 'palimpsest.' By applying this concept to the proposal, totally erasing any history related to this building can be avoided, even if there is some revisionist manipulation of it in the future. In other words, every history and practice, however uncomfortable they are, can be memorized and contextualized so that buildings may be interpreted critically. In conclusion, this thesis tries to re-analyze the case studies in Chapter II by adopting this concept – that is, what can be said about these practices in the three cities from the perspective of 'palimpsest.' The interesting aspect of applying this concept is that even history and memories that were thought to be hidden are left behind at the level of connotation. The practices in Bolzano/Bozen can be partly regarded as good examples reflecting this concept confronting the Italian fascist past. In the case of Bolzano/Bozen, the historical contexts in which the bas-relief and the Monument to Victory have not only fascist aspects but also other pasts, such as the Nazi occupation and the tension between different language groups, are shown through panel explanation and exhibition clearly. Meanwhile, in Forlì's case, the current role as touristic objects is newly 'written' on its fascist-era architecture and monuments' history. This practice utilizes the fascist past as a characteristic, so its focus is on this aspect. In this sense, the concept of 'palimpsest' does not work. However, it cannot be considered as imperfect or problematic: in the case of Forlì, the point that cannot be ignored is that the city has sublimated

these buildings as a tourist and educational resource by paying particular attention to their fascist past. This point is the very peculiarity of Forlì, which other cities mentioned in this thesis do not have. In the third case, the *fasci littori* at the Market in Perugia, the final decision was to cover it and make it invisible from the public space. It is impossible to assess whether this practice can be considered sufficient or problematic now. However, the fact that this symbol was firstly covered, then found and left visible, and finally concealed again is engraved in the history and memory of the symbol when the concept of 'palimpsest' is applied. In this sense, no matter how it fades, this symbol will remain a mark of history, and no matter what steps are taken in the future, its memory of fascism cannot be erased.

Of course, there is a limitation to the practice that can be used in the case of the Palace of Italian Civilization. Since the situation surrounding the building will keep changing, the practice of paneling should not be the ultimate solution. Continuous updating is required to keep up with the changing times and society. However, the fact that this practice has been attempted will also remain a mark of this Palace's history. In other words, this practice may be an indelible factor in this building, no matter how much it is 'de-politicized' or becomes a target for 'historical revision' in the future. Based on this aspect regarding the concept of 'palimpsest,' as well as the current situation surrounding this building, that is, it is not opened to the public, and while sometimes its de-politicization is called for, the political debate has not ceased, so the idea of the panel explanation may be one of the most feasible and realizable practice for today's Palace of Italian Civilization.

Lastly, one limitation should be mentioned as a further research issue. Among fascist-era architecture, two types of buildings can be included in this category: monumental and functional. The former includes cases that have clear fascist symbols or are obviously expected to visualize fascist ideology – such as the Monument to Victory in Bolzano/Bozen and the Palace of Italian Civilization in Rome. On the other hand, the regime also constructed numerous

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functional and infrastructural facilitations, such as schools, stations, and post offices all over the country. Many of them have been utilized in the way the regime originally expected still today. However, it may be nonsense to treat both of these kinds of buildings similarly. This thesis dealt with only the monumental buildings. Some architecture in Forlì indeed included schools, post offices, or streets, but this case focused on only the fact that they were built with the regime's intention, and this thesis did not analyze their function. It can be assumed that the reasons for the preservation and utilization of monumental and utilitarian architecture are different today, and the discussion surrounding each case is also different. Therefore, it is necessary to take other approaches to thinking about the fascist past and memory, which are present in practical buildings. That is an area that could not be treated in this thesis, and requires further study if necessary.

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