

TEXMAT

A Workshop Companion to Regimescape

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REGIME SCAPE

This book serves as a comprehensive companion to the Blended Intensive Programme Regimescape: Rethinking the Environmental Legacy of 20th-Century Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes. It brings together critical essays, field notes, maps, and architectural analyses that complement and enrich the workshop experience. It is part of an educational project that seeks to explore the characteristics of the collective landscape shaped by totalitarian political regimes of the 20th century, not only in Italy but also in Spain, Germany, Portugal, and Russia, from urban, landscape, and environmental perspectives. Due to their inherently controversial nature and the oppressive contexts from which they emerged, these urban plans and territorial arrangements remain subjects of ongoing debate and controversy. These radical transformations of the early twentieth century present a significant challenge today for both conservation and historical analysis. In this context, to "rethink" means to undertake a critical examination and reinterpretation of these constructed landscapes and urban spaces. Rather than simply rejecting, preserving, or erasing them, the term suggests a deliberate process of reconsideration and reflection on their physical and symbolic dimensions. This involves a measured commitment to understanding the historical and cultural significance of these sites, aiming to interpret—or even reconfigure—them in response to contemporary and future needs. At the same time, it acknowledges their past associations with totalitarian and authoritarian regimes through a comparative historical analysis with other European contexts.



€ 13,00

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This book was published as a companion to the Blended Intensive Programme *Regimescape: Rethinking the Environmental Legacy of 20th-Century Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes*, funded by Erasmus+ and coordinated by Tor Vergata University of Rome, Italy.

Cover image: Courtesy Archivio Centrale dello Stato,
Opera Nazionale Combattenti Archive.

Proprietà letteraria riservata

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A Workshop Companion to Regimescape

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and Lorenzo Grieco

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Regimescape: Rethinking the Urban and Environmental Legacy of 20th-Century Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes

Rome, Pomezia, Sabaudia and Latina
May-June 2025

[illegible]

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Programme Presentation

the project

Regimescape: Rethinking the Urban and Environmental Legacy of 20th-Century Authoritarian and Totalitarian Regimes is an educational project that explores the collective landscapes shaped by totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, not only in Italy but also in Spain, Germany, Portugal, and Russia. Adopting an urban, landscape, and environmental perspective, the project examines how these regimes transformed space and territory.

Due to their controversial nature and the oppressive contexts in which they emerged, the urban and spatial planning initiatives of these regimes remain subjects of debate. The radical transformations of the early 20th century present a significant challenge today, particularly in terms of historical preservation and critical analysis. In this context, rethinking entails a critical reassessment of these constructed landscapes and urban spaces. Rather than merely denying, preser-



ving, or erasing them, the project advocates for a deliberate reconsideration of their physical and symbolic dimensions. This approach fosters a nuanced understanding of their historical and cultural significance, aiming to interpret or even reconfigure them to meet contemporary and future needs, while acknowledging their associations with totalitarian and authoritarian rule through a comparative European analysis.

This objective will be pursued through site visits, contextual study of bibliographic references, and direct observation. Methods will include surveying, drawing, photography, filmography, and the use of the latest visual communication techniques.

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lectures (online)

May 5 - 6 pm, online **Maria Grazia D'Amelio**, *Welcome and Opening Remarks*

Lorenzo Grieco, *Programme Introduction*

Opening Keynote **Roberta Biasillo**, *From Conservation to Reclamation: The Trajectory of the Pontine Marches of Central Italy across liberal and fascist regimes*

May 6 - 6 pm, online **Carmen Enss**, *Historic City Centers in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: Urban Conservation and "Sanitization"*

May 13 - 6 pm, online **Christine Beese**, *New Town Foundations under National Socialism. Wolfsburg and Salzgitter in Comparison*

May 20 - 6 pm, online **Christian Freigang**, *Vain art, Monumental Architecture, and National Unity: Franco-German Discourses against Modernism around 1930*

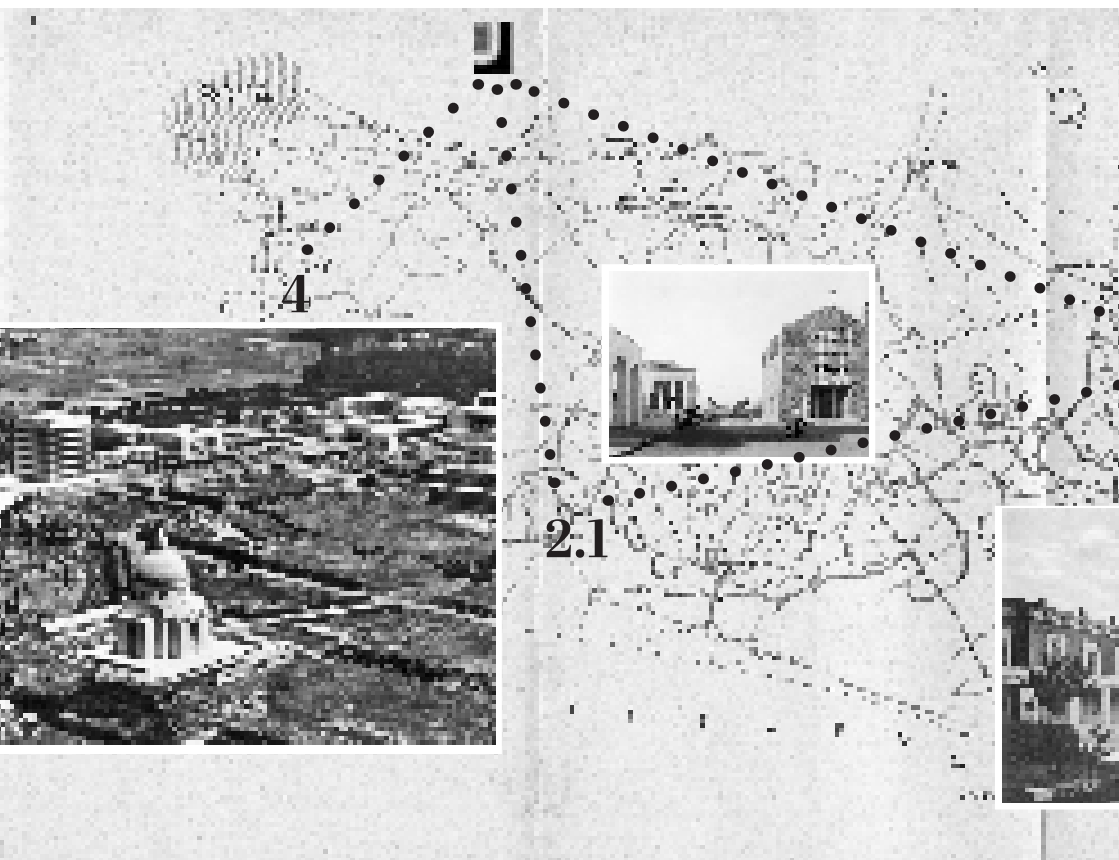
May 27 - 6 pm, online **Francisco Salvador Ventura**, *Public spaces in the Francoist narrative of the NODO*

May 28 - 6 pm, online **João Mascarenhas Mateus**, *The 'Improvements' and Public Works of the Estado Novo*

onsite schedule

	June 16	morning	afternoon
1			Official opening Introducing Lectures Welcome cocktail
2	June 17	Transfer by bus to Pomezia Pomezia: Museo della Città Pomezia: The city centre	Transfer by bus to Sabaudia Sabaudia: The city centre
3	June 18	Night in Sabaudia Sabaudia: Feliciano Iannella Library Transfer by bus to Latina Latina: Museo Cambellotti	Latina: The city centre Latina: Casa dell'Architettura Transfer by bus to Rome
4	June 19	Rome: Archivio Centrale dello Stato	Rome: EUR architectural tour
5	June 20	Rome: Workshop and presentation Rome: Delivery of Course Certificates	

locations



Pomezia

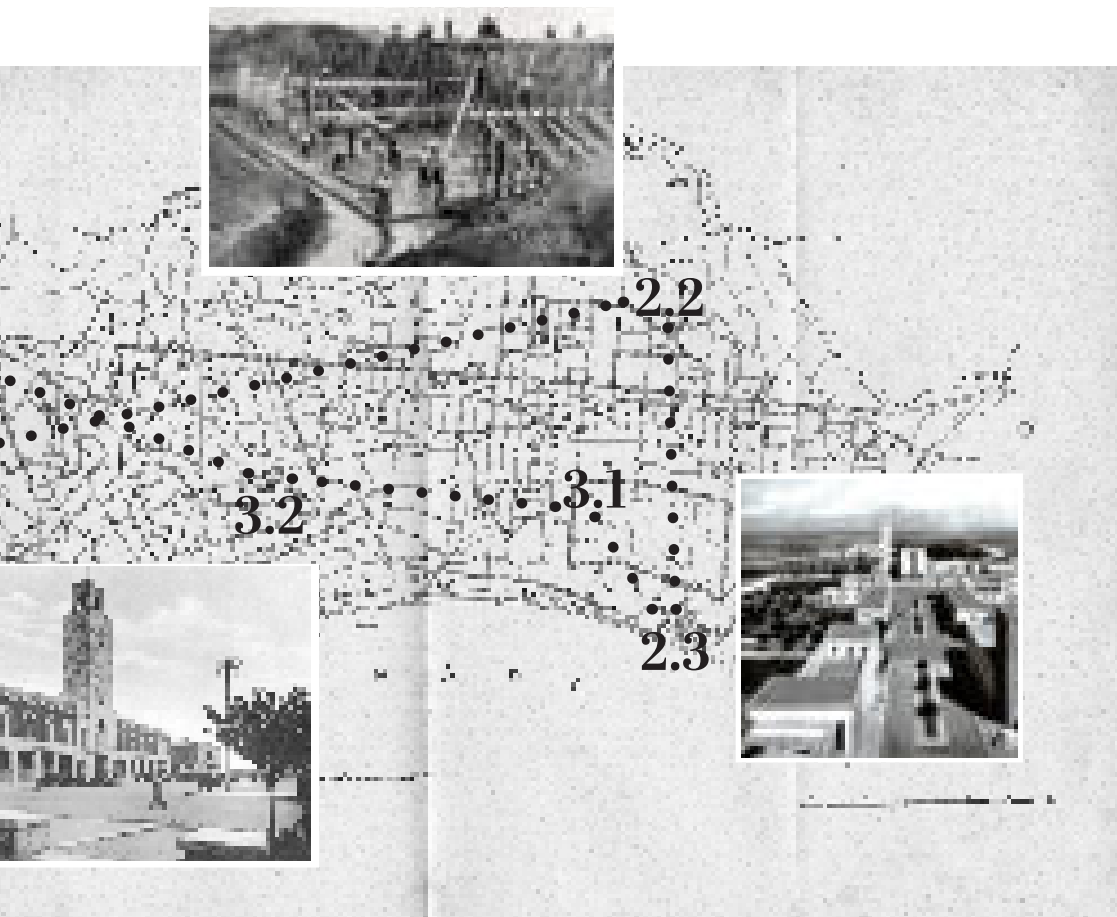
Pomezia, designed through a competition, features a more traditional aesthetic compared to other new towns in the Agro Pontino. Initially an agricultural settlement, it later developed an industrial vocation after World War II. During the workshop, you will visit the Museo Città di Pomezia to explore its history, urban design, and transformation

Mazzocchio

The Mazzocchio pumping station in Pontinia is a key example of the large-scale drainage system that enabled the Agro Pontino's reclamation. Designed with both functional and monumental intent, it reflects the regime's engineering ambitions. Visiting the site offers insight into the hydraulic infrastructure that shaped the region's landscape and development.

Sabaudia

Sabaudia, designed through a 1933 competition, is a prime example of Italian Rationalist urbanism. Its geometric layout, functional zoning, and coastal setting give it both a modernist and touristic vocation. As a workshop case study, it highlights the fusion of ideological planning, architecture, and contemporary evolution.



Latina

Littoria, now Latina, was the first and most emblematic new town of the Agro Pontino, blending Rationalist and classicist aesthetics. Its design reflects both ideological and functional goals. During the workshop, you will visit the Museo Cambellotti and the Casa dell'Architettura to explore its architectural and historical significance.

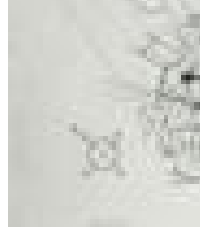
EUR

EUR, conceived for the 1942 Universal Exposition, represents Fascist Italy's vision of modernity through monumental Rationalist architecture. During the workshop, you will visit the Archivio Centrale dello Stato to explore the ONC archives and examine key buildings of the exhibition quarter, analyzing their urban and ideological significance.

Tor Vergata

The University of Rome Tor Vergata will serve as the base for the workshop, hosting activities in the Macroarea di Ingegneria. Here, you will engage in discussions, project work, and presentations, providing a theoretical and methodological synthesis for the field visits and case study analyses.

important information



who?

Bachelor's and Master's students, PhD students and Faculty

Preferably from architecture and construction engineering, history, art history, geography

where?

Italy, in Rome and across the cities of the Agro Pontino

A region shaped by 20th-century totalitarian regimes, featuring large-scale urban and environmental transformations. Rome highlights monumental planning, while the Agro Pontino showcases reclamation projects that continue to influence memory and urban development.

how?

- **Online** – Short virtual seminars will provide theoretical insights and discussions, preparing students for the in-person activities
- **On-site fieldwork** – Taking place in Rome and the Agro Pontino, allowing participants to analyze, document, and critically engage with the legacy of these landscapes

what?

- Critical analysis of urban, landscape, and environmental transformations shaped by totalitarian regimes
- Debate and discussion on preservation, reinterpretation, and adaptation of these contested spaces
- On-site visits and direct observation, using methods such as surveying, drawing, photography, videos
- Teamwork in diverse, international groups, fostering cross-cultural collaboration
- Development of soft skills, including leadership, public speaking, critical thinking, research and visual analysis
- Enhancement of English-language skills through academic discussions and project-based work
- Strengthening institutional ties between universities and fostering new academic collaborations
- Exploring the relationship between history, memory, and the built environment

when?

Online lectures **5-28 May 2025**

In-person activity **16-20 June 2025**



Practical information

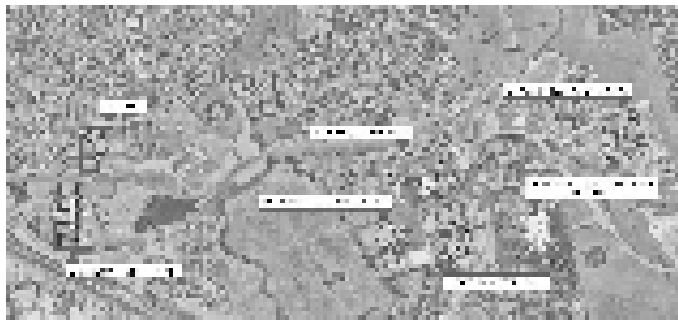
Accommodation is arranged independently by each university. For the overnight stay in Sabaudia, shared rooms have been reserved at a local hotel (Hotel Le Palme).

Lunch will be packed and is included in the program. Dinners will be at the students' own expense. For the dinner in Sabaudia, we will likely try to organize a group meal at a single location.

Please let us know as soon as possible about any allergies or specific dietary requirements, so we can plan the lunches accordingly.

You can bring with you everything you need to prepare your final presentation (sketchbooks, cameras, tablets, laptops, etc.)

The University of Rome Tor Vergata can be reached via Metro line A to Anagnina, followed by a bus, or via Metro line C to Torre Nova, also followed by a bus (though bus connections from there are less frequent). The activity will take place in the 'Macroarea di Ingegneria'.



Essays



1. From top left, clockwise: Covers of *Le opere del fascismo: decennale*, edited by Arturo Tofanelli, 1931; Araldo di Crollalanza, *Le opere pubbliche nel primo decennio fascista*, 1933; Araldo di Crollalanza, *Le opere pubbliche nell'anno X*, 1932; Arturo Marpicati, *Opere del regime*, 1934; *L'azione del governo fascista per la ricostruzione delle zone danneggiate da calamità*, edited by Domenico Romano, 1933; *Les travaux publics exécutée pendant les dix premières années du régime fasciste 1922–1932, 1934*.

Public Works in Fascist Rome: Political Spectacle and Urban Reality on the Eve of the Decennial

Maria Grazia D'Amelio and Lorenzo Grieco

Introduction

During the years of the Fascist regime, architecture and urban planning served as powerful instruments of political propaganda, particularly in the redefinition of the capital of the State. Historians have often highlighted the critical issues and contradictions inherent in the programme designed for the *Urbe*, which drew inspiration from the imperial Rome of Augustus. However, there has been little critical exegesis of the writings produced in that period that celebrated the new Fascist Rome, and especially of its portrayal in 1932, the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome—namely, Mussolini's rise to power.

This paper seeks to strip away the rhetoric from the publications dedicated to the Capital and aims to investigate the correspondences and divergences between the 'narrated' Rome and the real city. By analysing the ekphrastic descriptions of modern Rome presented in printed publications and exhibitions around 1932 (necessarily limited in number for the purposes of this contribution), the objective is to distinguish the rhetorical devices employed by regime-aligned intellectuals to affect the emotions of Italians from the actual substance of the infrastructure and architectural works completed in the Eternal City during the first decade of Fascist governance.

The year 1932 was intentionally seized upon by the regime as an opportunity to take stock of the activities carried out by the administrative bodies responsible for architectural, urban, and infrastructural interventions across the peninsula. The programme's intent was to remove each work from the episodic nature of previous 'parliamentary governments', following a precise political strategy identified by the regime from the moment it took power.

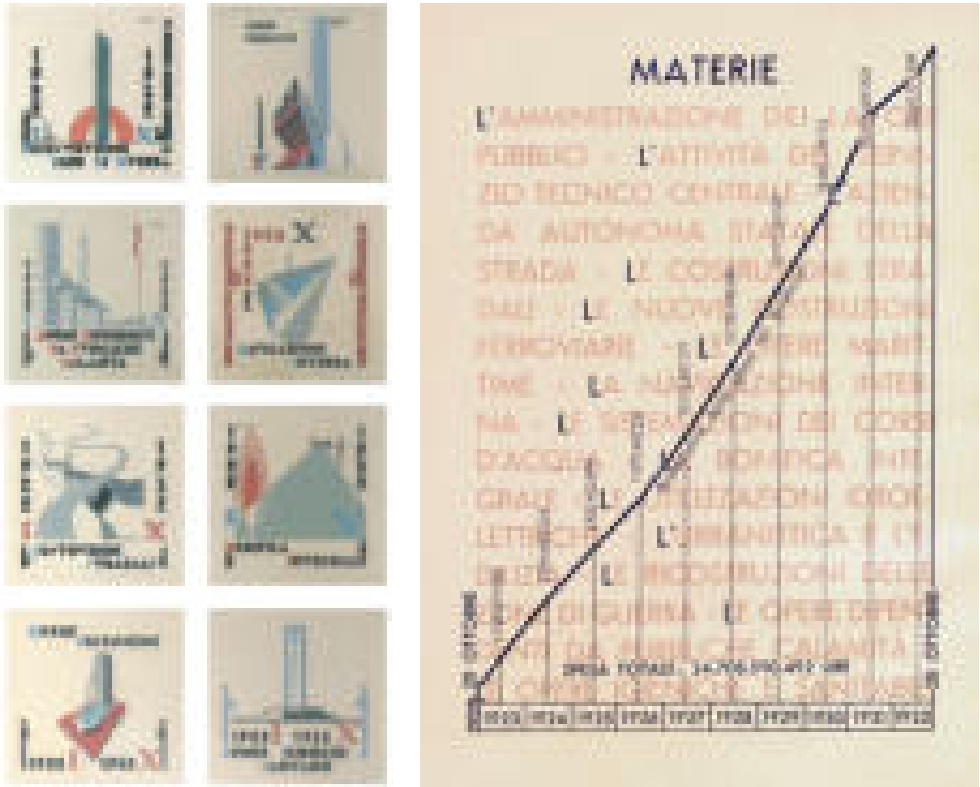
This image of vitality—or presumed vitality—at the time of the 1932 celebra-



tions was constructed using highly skilful propaganda techniques. These included the mediation of numerous specialist journals, such as *Annali dei Lavori Pubblici* and *Opere Pubbliche*,¹ as well as the systematic actions of daily newspapers and the grandiose eloquence of exhibitions and public events, such as the *National Exhibition of Land Reclamation* held in Rome in 1932, immortalised by the ever-present *Luce* newsreels.²

Public works in publishing

Among the monographic volumes, *Le opere del fascismo* (The Works of Fascism) from 1931, edited by journalist and writer Arturo Tofanelli (1908–1994), is particularly rich in images.³ The professional background of the author reflects the regime's choice to entrust communication experts, rather than the engineers or architects involved in the modernisation of the country, with the task



2. Attilio Calzavara, design for the cover of *Opere pubbliche 1922–1932, 1933*; Attilio Calzavara, chapter headers from *Opere pubbliche 1922–1932, 1933*; Attilio Calzavara, summary of *Opere pubbliche 1922–1932, 1933*, inside back cover.

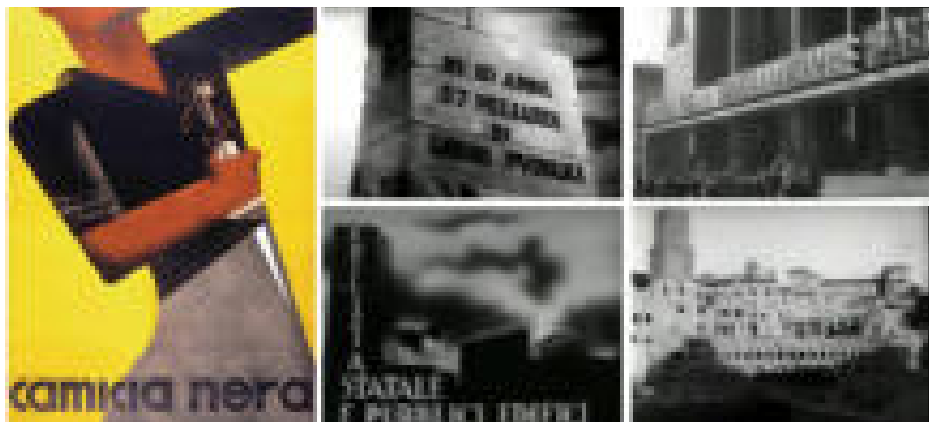
of representing these works. On the one hand, this decision was aimed at reaching a general, non-specialist audience; on the other, it exemplifies the political system's attempt to claim complete authorship of the interventions—often at the expense of the artistic and creative contribution of individual designers, whose names are frequently omitted.

A similar objective is pursued by other monographic volumes (fig. 1), such as *Le opere pubbliche del primo decennio fascista* (The Public Works of the First Fascist Decade) and *Le opere pubbliche nell'anno X* (Public Works in Year Ten), both published on the occasion of the tenth anniversary and signed by Araldo di Crollalanza (1892–1986), Minister of Public Works from 1930 to 1935.⁴ The fact that this crucial ministry was entrusted to a member of the party with a broad journalistic back-

ground—collaborator with *Corriere delle Puglie* (renamed *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* in 1923) and correspondent for *Il Popolo d'Italia* from 1915—demonstrates that media narrative was far from a secondary concern for the ministry.

By contrast, the space dedicated to public works in the volume *Opere del Regime* (Works of the Regime), published in 1934 and authored by journalist and Italian literature lecturer Arturo Marpicati (1891–1961), is significantly shorter.⁵ Most of the book describes the numerous bodies, associations, and institutions created by the regime. In the section on public works, Marpicati highlights mainly land reclamation projects and public works, but without delving into the specifics of the cited cases, limiting the description to just three pages. The text is not accompanied by images, as the author claims that “a mere glance at the face, the visage of the Fatherland is enough to demonstrate the futility of further illustration.”⁶ This limited space should not be interpreted as a lack of attention to the topic; on the contrary, it underscores its importance, as the theme is introduced with its own dedicated section even in a volume more broadly concerned with the regime’s social, economic, and cultural reforms.

The monumental volume *Opere pubbliche 1922–1932* (Public Works 1922–1932), published in 1932 (fig. 2) and designed with a refined editorial approach by Attilio Calzavara (1901–1952), documents—straddling the line between the real and the plausible—the rapid modernisation of the peninsula through the use of hundreds of photographic images in support of the textual narrative.⁷ The volume was curated by the *Servizio Tecnico Centrale* (Central Technical Service), the body operating within the newly established *Consiglio Superiore dei Lavori Pubblici* (Higher Council of Public Works). The various chapters describe the construction of roads, railways, maritime works, river engineering projects, land reclamation, water systems, cities and buildings, post-war and disaster reconstruction, and healthcare and hygiene infrastructure. The section on post-earthquake reconstruction aligns with another publication from the Ministry of Public Works, *L'azione del governo fascista per la ricostruzione delle zone danneggiate da calamità* (The Action of the Fascist Government for the Reconstruction of Disaster-Stricken Areas), also published in 1932.⁸ This volume retraces, through numerous photographic illustrations, graphs, and tables, the reconstruction efforts in various towns and villages—from those in Sicily following the 1908 Messina earthquake and in Irpinia after the 1930 Vulture earthquake, to those in Val Camonica after the 1923 Gleno disaster, caused by the collapse of a recently completed dam.



3. Paolo Federico Garretto, poster for the film *Camicia Nera* (1933), directed by Giovacchino Forzano, 1933; frames from the same film.

Returning to the 1932 *Opere Pubbliche 1922–1932*, the volume must be understood as an assessment of the first ten years of Fascist rule, as announced in the introduction by Minister Crollanza, and accompanied by a photographic repertoire of immediate visual eloquence. Its translation into French for the 1935 Brussels International Exhibition is emblematic of the image the regime sought to project, both domestically and abroad.⁹

Public works through cinema, exhibitions, and expositions

Indeed, the close link between architecture and power is clearly evident in foundation ceremonies, inaugurations of public works, celebratory exhibitions, and trade fairs—events captured in film footage (screened across the peninsula via the Istituto Luce's vans), photographic records, and newspaper articles, all designed to amplify their impact. This was a propaganda programme that anticipated today's communication strategies, presenting images of a world no longer merely aspired to but, according to official narratives, already achieved within just a decade.

Cinema played a central role in these strategies, fully expressing its propagandistic nature in the film *Camicia Nera* (*Black Shirt*, 1933, fig. 3), directed by Giovacchino Forzano (1883–1970).¹⁰ Conceived to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the regime, the film recounts—through the story of a peasant family—the regime's emphasis on the creation of the new Fascist state, integrating the



4. Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista, Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1932–33. View of the Transport Achievements Room wall, installation by Gerardo Dottori.

revival of public works into its cinematic narrative. This theme appears towards the film's conclusion, where a caption claims: "in 10 years, 37 billion lire of public works."¹¹ These scenes are accompanied by captions that translate the public works programme into clearly defined numerical quantities, though the figures are not contextualised and are deliberately ambiguous. This is part of a precise communication strategy that uses the supposed precision of numbers as indisputable evidence, as also revealed in Mussolini's speech at the inauguration of the city of Littoria (now Latina) on 18 December 1932.¹² The quantitative data in the film relating to public works follow the syncopated rhythm of the imagery, whose continuous flow on screen embodies the concepts of speed and vigour conveyed by the regime's communication of its achievements.

Among the featured public buildings are several in the capital, including the Ministry of the Navy, the Ministry of the Air Force, and the Ministry of Education. Footage also shows demolition sites in the city, particularly around Tra-



5. Littorio Pavilion at the International Exhibition in Brussels, 1935. View of the wall dedicated to building construction.

jan's Markets and the Theatre of Marcellus. The film ends with events and mass gatherings celebrating the tenth anniversary, including the grand parade on the newly opened Via dell'Impero in Rome.

The film also features the large triumphal arch adorned with fasces, designed by Mario De Renzi (1897–1967) and Adalberto Libera (1903–1963) as a temporary installation, which redefined the façade of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome for the *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* (Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution) of 1932. This exhibition was strongly backed by Dino Alfieri (1886–1966), president of the organising committee, who would later become Minister of Press and Propaganda in 1936 and Minister of Popular Culture from 1937 to 1939.¹³ The exhibition design, coordinated by Adalberto Libera and Antonio Valente (1894–1975), dedicated rooms A, B, and C on the upper floor to Fascist achievements, decorated by painters Antonio Santagata (1888–1985), Gerardo Dottori (1884–1977), and Enrico Prampolini (1894–1956). In these three large rooms, “all the conquests in the political, social, and economic fields, the increase given by Fascism to agriculture, industry, and commerce, the development of trade, transport, and production—everything is documented through the sober yet eloquent figures of official statistics” (fig. 4).¹⁴

These rooms were originally intended as a prelude to the *Mostra delle real-*

izzazioni del regime (Exhibition of the Regime's Achievements), scheduled for the following year but later cancelled. That exhibition was intended to present the accomplishments of the regime's first decade "in spectacular form, that is, lively and evocative, using above all means of comparison and contrast, and not shying away from the most modern forms of propaganda and publicity. The visitor should be made to grasp—almost without realising it—the most important aspect of what is being demonstrated."¹⁵

This unrealised exhibition was effectively carried forward by the Italian, or Lit-torio, Pavilion at the aforementioned 1935 International Exposition in Brussels. Coordinated by Giuseppe Volpi (1877–1947), president of both the Venice Bien-nale and Confindustria, the pavilion's layout aimed to represent "the most com-plete and panoramic view of the regime's accomplishments."¹⁶ The exhibition design by Attilio Calzavara, with architectural plans once again by Adalberto Libera, exemplified the totalitarian government's communication strategies.¹⁷ In the central hall, a giant photomontage recalled the founding of the Fasci di Com-battimento in 1918 and the March on Rome, evoked by the slogan *Vers Rome* and an image of the monument to Victor Emmanuel II, beside which the Via dell'Impero—completed in 1932—was built. Along the band beneath the image were displayed the main publications on the regime's history and activities, pro-viding a literary support to the Fascist epic, promoted by the *Agenzia Generale Italiana del Libro*. In other sections of the exhibition, the regime's public works were illustrated through a dense sequence of photographic enlargements and diagrams. These showed how the regime's building initiatives—typologically classified—corresponded, from 1922 onwards, to progressively increasing bud-get commitments (fig. 5). Thus, in the section dedicated to the *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, photographs of stadiums and sports facilities were displayed, including the *Foro Mussolini* complex in Rome. Similarly, the depiction of the *Istituto Na-zionale Fascista di Previdenza Sociale* was accompanied by images of hospitals and sanatoriums, and so on.¹⁸

At the same exposition, a second, independent pavilion was dedicated to Rome. The building, designed by architect Antonio Muñoz (1884–1960) and divided into four rooms, housed artefacts unearthed in recent excavations in the capital. One room displayed thirty large watercolours by Ettore Roesler Franz (1845–1907), depicting views of the city around 1880. Roesler Franz's pictur-esque representations, which blend ancient Roman ruins with humble popular dwellings, served the purpose of drawing a "comparison between the city of fifty years ago and today's, renewed by Fascism," according to the most basic pro-paganda technique of juxtaposing different genres and attributing political and



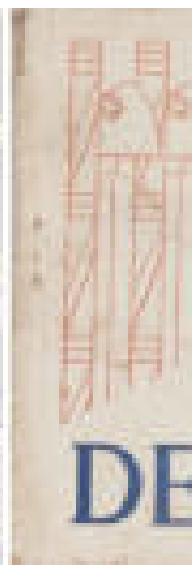
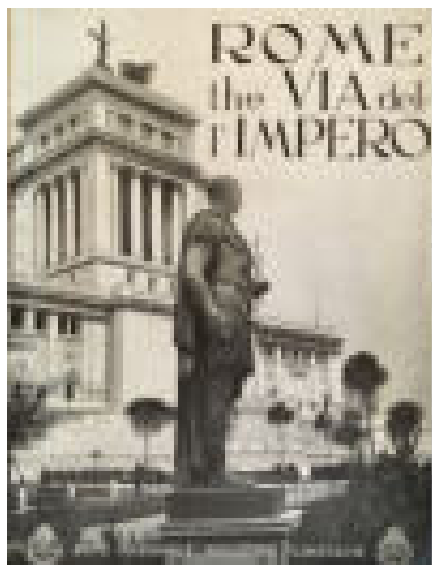
6. *Emporium*, special issue dedicated to Mussolini's Rome, October 1933. Cover and pages from Antonio Muñoz's article "La Roma di Mussolini".

moral values to the city.¹⁹ The display of such cityscapes thus had the same intent as the *Roma che Sparisce* (*Vanishing Rome*) exhibition, organised by Muñoz in 1927 at the *Associazione Artistica Internazionale* in Via Margutta, which featured paintings by artists who, while preserving "at least the memory of the relics of the past," in fact celebrated the formidable modernisation of the city.²⁰

Rome in the Decennial

Rome held a privileged place in Mussolini's imperial imagination, a vision that was symbolically fulfilled by the conferment of *Roman citizenship* upon the Duce in 1924, and frequently reaffirmed in official speeches—particularly those concerning the 1931 Master Plan—with the exhortation to "liberate" ancient monuments and promote development towards the hills and the sea, even accommodating the interests of real estate companies.

However, the myth of Rome is devoid of reactionary nostalgia, serving instead a political function projected towards the future. The very works and infrastructures necessary for the development of a modern capital were to contribute to the city's grandeur, envisioned as "marvellous, orderly, powerful as it was in the time of Augustus."²¹ This greatness was to be revealed even through the massive demolition of urban fabric—operations that were necessarily selective and often inconsistent. Indeed, some thinning and demolitions had already been identified before 1922. Without delving into planning details, even the commercial



map *Rome Present and Future*, at a scale of 1:8000 and published by Antonio Valardi in 1891, recorded the city's transformations in terms of buildable areas and demolitions, including the planned interventions in the Borgo with the removal of the Spina, the opening of Via Zanardelli, etc. Yet it was precisely during the Fascist years that the very concept of demolition became metaphorically aligned with the idea of "freeing the trunk of the great oak from everything that still shadows it"—that is, the liberation of the city from "everything that grew around it during the centuries of decline."²²

In this dizzying *mise en abîme* of allusions and references, converging into the creation of an ideological universe of strength and glory, Rome had to appear as a futuristic capital yet deeply rooted in its historical consciousness. The city became a literary topos of a renewed political and cultural project, to which the regime's newly erected monuments referred, as well as those works already begun but completed and "fascistised" with inscriptions and symbols.

This illegitimate claim of authorship stemmed from a precise political awareness, also seen in other endeavours—for instance, in the shameless appropriation of victory in the Great War, including the commemoration of the fallen by constructing monumental *Sacrari* (war memorials), a term chosen to soften the mournful image of the ossuaries.

The refiguration of Rome unfolded through works promoted by the regime



7. Covers of: *Roma. The Via dell'Impero*, brochure by the National Tourist Industry Board, 1930s; *Roma Mussoliniana. Two Days in Rome, 30 September – 1 October 1933*, brochure, 1933; *Roma nel decennale*, illustrated pocket album, 1932; Corrado Ricci, Antonio M. Colini, Valerio Mariani, *Via dell'Impero*, 1933.

via direct control of municipal activity, which from 1925 onwards was replaced by the Governorate of Rome. This involved not only new projects, but also the completion of works previously started, enabled by a legislative framework tailored to the regime's desire to appropriate what had already been planned or partially built in previous decades. This tacit appropriation, typical of every political shift, appeared particularly discordant in the transition from a democratic government to a totalitarian regime that made revolutionary political discontinuity its banner.

Indeed, regime propaganda was replete with comparisons designed to emphasise the distance from previous parliamentary governments. According to official claims, compared to the previous sixty years of unified rule, economic investment had been multiplied (36 billion in 10 years versus 11 billion from 1862 to 1922), as had the works and results achieved.²³

Following the approval of the Master Plan on 29 December 1931, the Governorate of Rome financed, with 60 million lire, a general programme titled *Public Works to Commemorate the Decennial, March on Rome*. Ten months ahead of

the anniversary, a series of works were approved, mainly demolition projects, some of which were continuations of earlier initiatives.²⁴ The interventions are described in a report attached to the Governor's resolution, articulated in eight points, which highlight the benefits for the capital and the nation as a whole, based on the presumed touristic appeal such archaeological and urban interventions would have for "foreign tourists in particular."²⁵

Among them, the following were planned: isolation of the Capitoline Hill through demolition of buildings in what was then the Foro Italico (the *Foro d'Italia*, i.e. Piazza Venezia) and Trajan's Forum, alongside the planting of tree-lined exedras framing the Vittoriano; numerous demolitions toward the Tiber to free the Forum Holitorium and create an *archaeological platform* in which the Theatre of Marcellus and adjacent Roman temples would be "grouped," their remains rendered more imposing by isolation. In the Largo Argentina area, the last houses at the corner of Via Florida and Via San Nicola dei Casarini were to be removed to isolate the medieval Tower of the Calcarari and define the fencing of the archaeological zone. The Forum area was also heavily involved: the isolation and arrangement of the House of the Knights of Rhodes, the Tower of the Militia, and the upper part of the Markets of Trajan toward Via di Magnanapoli were planned, including the restoration of the ancient path of Via Biberatica. Not far away, demolition of the buildings along Via della Croce Bianca was expected, as they obstructed the connection between the Forums of Augustus and Nerva, along with the completion of the retaining wall on Via Alessandrina. Further demolitions were set between Via Cremona and Via Marforio to open the final stretch of Via Cavour, and along Via delle Marmorelle to free Caesar's Forum, as well as around the Church of Saints Luke and Martina in the Roman Forum.

It was also proposed to landscape the slopes of the Aventine between the Lungotevere and Via Marmorata up to Porta San Paolo, including the demolition of buildings adjoining the latter and the construction of a retaining wall at the base of the Benedictine convent. The elimination of entire blocks and major excavation works were planned for the opening of a new road between Piazza delle Carrette and the Colosseum. This route was not conceived as an isolated stretch but as infrastructure integrated within a wider supra-municipal network: a broad road that would connect Piazza Venezia with the Castelli Romani, linking—via San Giovanni in Laterano—to the Appian Way. The report emphasised the panoramic value of this axis, stretching between the urban poles of the Foro d'Italia and the Colosseum, as well as the added value brought by demolishing buildings between Via Cremona and Via Alessandrina, and by excavating the



8. *Roma Mussolinea*, 1932: Cover; plate 30, Monument to Guido Baccelli at Piazza Salerno; plate 33, Altar to the Fallen Fascists at the Capitoline Hill.

massive trench at the foot of the Basilica of Maxentius. The same plan included provision for housing the vast number of people expected to be evicted due to the demolitions: the construction of 2,500 new dwellings was established, although their precise location within Rome was unspecified. The only additional indication concerned the possible placement of some of these units within the cleared demolition areas.

The Paper Rome

These works of Rome's transformation, captured in films and photographic stills, were disseminated through publications aimed at different audiences, ensuring greater effectiveness and pervasiveness of the regime's communication strategies.

For example, some texts were intended for a specialist readership, particularly interested in technical aspects. This is the case with the lengthy essay by Engineer Arturo Bianchi, head of the Master Plan Office of the Governorship of Rome, entitled *The Centre of Rome: The Layout of the Foro Italico and the New Roads to the Sea and the Hills*, which appeared in 1933 in the journal *Architettura* (fig. 5).²⁶ In it, the junction at Piazza Venezia (with its associated asymmetry issues facing the Vittoriano) is described—albeit with the expected emphasis—by retracing the genesis of the projects concerning the area. It begins with the tentative solution proposed in the 1909 Master Plan; continues through the more decisive work of the Royal Commission of 1919 and the project with porticoed

exedras included in the 1930–1931 Plan; and culminates in the year X (1932) layout featuring tree-lined exedras with “columnar” stone pines, as suggested by Corrado Ricci.²⁷ The narrative, supported by expertly composed snapshots, is structured across multiple interpretative levels. It delves into construction choices—such as the use of new paving techniques—as well as execution challenges: one notable example being the imperceptible slope of the piazza, resulting in a 73 cm difference in level between the entrance to Palazzo Venezia and that of the Assicurazioni building, resolved through a careful progressive levelling. The essay also outlines urban furnishing and lighting design choices, including a new electric lighting system akin to that devised by Marcello Piacentini for Piazza della Vittoria in Brescia, using powerful spotlights aligned along the cornice of the Assicurazioni tower.

More popular and propagandistic in nature are the four essays featured in the special issue of *Emporium* dedicated to Mussolini’s Rome (1933, fig. 6). Distributed both in Italy and abroad, the issue was made available in the reading rooms of the most exclusive—and evidently elite—“grand hotels of Italy,” listed across two pages within the magazine.²⁸ Two of the four essays, *Mussolini’s Rome* and *Via dell’Impero*, written by Antonio Muñoz, link the redesigned city of the past decade to the grandeur of antiquity.²⁹ In particular, the piece on Mussolini’s Rome is composed almost entirely of long quotations from the Head of Government’s speeches on Rome and the continuity between the ancient and modern city. The texts are illustrated with photographs, skilfully employed to portray the vigorous activity of excavations, the care given to precious remnants—such as the anastyloses of Trajan’s Forum and that of Augustus—the recovery of ancient architectural complexes like the Republican temples of Piazza Argentina, and the forced isolation of ancient buildings in the Forum Boarium, among others.

Even the captions, accompanying photographs taken by renowned photographic studios such as Anderson, Reale, Del Papa, and Bruni, are carefully composed, including in their choice of words. Their message is conveyed through a comparative communication strategy. For example, on one page of the essay, two photographs are shown side-by-side—before and after the works—depicting “the hovels that concealed Caesar’s Forum” and the “liberated Caesar’s Forum.”³⁰

Muñoz, who had been Director of Monuments in Rome for the Royal Superintendency since 1921 and Chief Director of the Department of Antiquities and Fine Arts of the Governorship of Rome since 1929, is also the author of the volume *Via dei Monti and Via del Mare* (1932).³¹ The book, which discusses the two roadways guiding the capital’s expansion, is rich with photographs documenting the excavations and construction of the new roads. Their realisation becomes an occasion to

celebrate Fascist activism ten years on from the March on Rome, as underscored by the cover, which bears the emblematic date of 28 October 1932–XI.

Finally, 1932 witnessed the release of a veritable anthology of volumes, guide-books, postcards, albums, and booklets (fig. 7), all published to mark the first Decennial of the Fascist Revolution. These works depicted the capital in black-and-white photographs and promoted the image of the *Third Rome* as envisioned by Mussolini.³²

***Roma Mussolinea* by Luciano Morpurgo**

Among the many ink descriptions of the Urbe is the ‘pocket-sized’ volume (17.5 x 12 cm) *Roma Mussolinea. Anno Decimo dell’Era Fascista (Mussolini’s Rome. Tenth Year of the Fascist Era)* from 1932 (fig. 8), published by Luciano Morpurgo (1886–1971) and printed in four languages.³³ This small guide was conceived based on an effective editorial and communication strategy that features brief texts, drawing from mutual news sources such as *Capitolium*, *Il Messaggero*, and *Il Giornale d’Italia*, as well as information provided by the Governorship and the Civil Engineering Corps, accompanied by a very rich iconographic collection, including photographs taken by Morpurgo himself. Programmatically, the book “reproduces a pause, a moment: the present,” in order to crystallise “the face of Mussolini’s Rome both through the camera lens and explanatory notes.”³⁴ At the opening, two very brief speeches by Benito Mussolini are included: the already mentioned *For the Greatness of Rome*, delivered in the Capitol on 31 December 1925 on the occasion of the inauguration of the city’s first governor, Filippo Cremonesi; and the speech on *The Master Plan of Rome* presented to the Senate on 19 March 1932, almost seven years after the first.³⁵

According to Mussolini’s words, the dual problem of the city’s “necessity” and “greatness” had already been tackled by the Royal Commissioner starting from 1922, through interventions that were supposed to have brought about noticeable changes by 1925. However, when comparing these statements with the list of works undertaken, only a few had in fact been executed and completed. The same dual problem is reiterated in the 1932 speech on the master plan, whose primary objective — “respect for ancient Rome and the needs of modern Rome” — is pursued by “moving the population towards the hills and the sea,” as well as through “decongestion” and thinning out for alleged hygienic purposes.³⁶

Morpurgo was evidently aware of the power of images, as these few pages of text are followed by no fewer than 298 photographs, thematically grouped, which carry most of the storytelling of the *Third Rome*. The visual account of the city’s



9. *Roma di Mussolini. Decennale*, edited by G. di Castelnuovo, special issue of *Opere Pubbliche*, year II, XI (October 1932): Dust jacket; title page; portrait of Mussolini by Studio Fotografico Caminada.

transformation begins with 29 snapshots of parks, gardens, fountains, and public drinking fountains. This thematic choice may appear unexpected as an opening to a catalogue of the regime's works, but it effectively continues Mussolini's speeches' narrative and, in particular, echoes the programme to give "sun, light, and air to the people."³⁷ The aim is to present a city which, according to the regime's intentions, "revitalised by the green of the pines; should be a great park, a flowering garden, in which we want to see thousands of Italian children every day coming to drink from the glories of the past and the happy sun of Rome."³⁸

The images that follow are of monuments, intended with educational aims; notably the monument to Guido Baccelli by sculptor Attilio Selva (1888–1970) in Piazza Salerno, in the Nomentano district; the monument to Anita Garibaldi by Mario Rutelli (1859–1941) on the Janiculum; and the altar to the fallen Fascists at the Capitol. These three monuments are particularly symbolic, embodying the direction the regime imposed on the capital's urban development, which sought to reclaim its Latinity. While the Altar, inaugurated and dismantled after the war in 1946, symbolises Fascism's control over municipal power, as emphasised by Vittorio Vidotto, the monument to Anita, holding her son Menotti in her arms, embodies the regime's promotion of maternity and also reaffirms the continuity of Fascist politics with Risorgimento ideals.³⁹ However, it is especially the monument to Baccelli that epitomises the complex political re-signification operations carried out by the regime. A doctor and Minister of Public Educa-

tion, Guido Baccelli (1830–1916) was one of the leading figures of the Italian Historical Left.⁴⁰ As also responsible for cultural heritage, he promoted the isolation of Roman antiquities, including the Pantheon, as well as the creation of an archaeological promenade crossing the Forums, the Colosseum area, the Baths of Caracalla, and the Appian Way. It is significant that the monument's first placement, made to celebrate the centenary of his birth, was in Piazza Capena, right in the middle of the archaeological promenade — a site probably chosen by Mussolini himself. Baccelli's influence on the regime's vision for the centre of Rome is made explicit in the inscription adorning one of the monument's three façades, celebrating him as a sort of noble father of urban policies for the capital: ORATORE CLASSICO QUASI PRESAGO DELL'AVVENIRE RIEVOCÒ L'ANIMA DI ROMA PERCHÉ FOSSE ISPIRATRICE DELLA NUOVA ITALIA (classical orator, almost a seer of the future, he revived the soul of Rome to inspire the new Italy). It is Baccelli's own son Alfredo (1863–1955), a writer and senator affiliated with the Fascist Party, who several times suggested a filiation of Baccelli's ideas with Mussolinian programmes,⁴¹ as reiterated in the inauguration speech by Giuseppe Brucchiatti.⁴²

Subsequently, consistent with the narrative, the opening of roads and the isolation works on monuments are illustrated. The construction of museums—specifically the Museum of the Empire, the Museum of Rome, and the Mussolini Museum at the Capitol—precedes the Casa Madre dei Mutilati e delle Vedove di Guerra, realised from a project by Marcello Piacentini (1881–1960) at the Prati di Castello district, a fundamental piece in the triad Empire–Rome–Fatherland promoted by the Duce. Following are buildings of ministries, air and river ports, headquarters of national bodies, sports facilities, stations, road infrastructures, hospitals, schools, bridges over the Tiber, reclamation works, social housing, and more.

Many of the buildings depicted in this extensive catalogue were actually promoted and initiated by previous governments.⁴³ Their pre-Fascist history is not mentioned in the brief entries at the back of the volume, written by archaeologist Giuseppe Lugli (1890–1967) and engineer R. Ricci. The year indicated in Roman numerals of the Fascist Era in the entries almost always refers to the inauguration year. Only in rare cases are the starting years of construction and interruptions due to the outbreak of the First World War noted. These are certainly not included to highlight project continuity with previous governments; rather, they serve as a narrative device to celebrate the regime's decisive action in recovering unfinished buildings, such as the Ministry of Grace and Justice, which, as the texts suggest, might have otherwise become urban ruins.⁴⁴



10. *Roma di Mussolini. Decennale*, excerpts: p. 38, The Ministry of the Navy; p. 39, The Littorio Bridge.

The monographic issue of *Opere Pubbliche* on *Roma di Mussolini*

A formal portrait of Rome seems to be presented in the monographic issue of *Opere Pubbliche* dedicated to Mussolini's Rome: *Decennale* (1932), edited by the magazine's chief editor Giacomo di Castelnuovo.⁴⁵ The volume's alignment with the regime's programmes is confirmed by Mussolini's imprimatur printed on the title page, accompanied by his portrait on the following page, revealing the total control exercised over this editorial project: "BMussolini approvo questa documentazione della volontà costruttrice del fascismo I.X.IX" (fig. 9).⁴⁶

The structure of the volume differs from the previously mentioned publications, where fascism's construction activity is organised by sector—roads, land reclamation, electricity, industry, urbanisation—without further distinctions. In contrast, the fifteen chapters of *La Roma di Mussolini: Decennale* describe the interventions of both state and local authorities operating simultaneously within

the municipal territory. Two chapters, for example, focus on works conducted by two peripheral state bodies: the Genio Civile⁴⁷ and the Governatorate of Rome⁴⁸. The latter was established between 1923 and 1925 as a “state body with municipal aims and functions” directly subordinate to the head of government.⁴⁹

Other chapters concentrate on the work of the Institute for Public Housing; hospital assistance; the infrastructure of the Governatorate’s Tram and Bus Company; the Rome-Viterbo railway and the seaplane base at Lido di Roma; the Foro Italico, then under construction for the Opera Nazionale Balilla by order of Renato Ricci (1896–1956); and also on individual structures such as ministries, motor parks, garages, and so forth.

Accompanied by an extensive photographic campaign (with photos from agencies such as Sciamanna, Reale, Luce, Vasari, etc.), each work is presented with concise summaries. As in the contemporary volume on Mussolinea Rome, the information is conveyed so as to highlight certain facts while concealing others. For instance, in the description of the Ponte Littorio, which Mussolini ordered to be paid for by the State rather than the municipality of Rome as the regulations required, technical and economic data are provided alongside the date the first stone was laid by the Duce on 31 October 1924 (just days after the second anniversary of the March on Rome). Conversely, the brief note on the nearby Ministry of the Navy building mentions only the inauguration date of 1928, omitting the start of construction in 1912 as well as architectural and construction choices (fig. 10).

Only for some buildings are the start dates indicated, perhaps to distance the regime from architectural styles deemed outdated, such as the Ministry of National Education by Bazzani with its “Roman Baroque-inspired” architecture.⁵⁰ These exceptions can be read in light of trends emerging in 1931 with Pietro Maria Bardi’s presentation of the ‘Table of Horrors’ at the Second Exhibition of Rational Architecture in 1931. This table, shown to Mussolini during a visit to the exhibition, is a collage that caustically portrays a backward Italy, juxtaposing excerpts from contemporary novels and newspapers, postcards, and 19th-century photographs with works considered evidently passé by academic architects such as Armando Brasini, Marcello Piacentini, Cesare Bazzani, Antonio Barluzzi, and others.

Returning to the special issue of *Opere Pubbliche*, attention to chronology—what is convenient to note or omit—is apparent on a first reading. Other data are more subtly manipulated as part of a careful strategy to reinforce architecture as a ‘state art,’ demonstrating that public works are among the regime’s most powerful propaganda tools, even becoming its paradigm of assertion.

The opening chapter, *Rome in the Glory of the Centuries*, swiftly but grandiosely recounts the city's history from its foundation to 1920.⁵¹ From that date, the narrative becomes detailed, illustrating the relationship between remnants of the past and the redesigned city fulfilling its role as capital. Historical memory is distorted to serve a pedagogical function and to establish continuity between Octavian Augustus and Mussolini. For this reason, the material traces of ancient Rome are loaded with new political meaning and sacralised according to fascist state ethics.

In line with this construction, the four temples at Piazza Argentina, the Mausoleum of Augustus, the Theatre of Marcellus, the temples of the Forum Boarium, the tetrapylon arch of Janus, the Pantheon, the Fora, and the Capitol, to name some of the major Roman buildings, are isolated with the aim of enhancing their monumental presence. These operations are carried out by demolishing everything adjoining the monuments—consider, for example, the earthen houses in Caesar's Forum or the buildings in Trajan's Forum—that might obstruct their distant view. Often, the missing portions left visible by demolition are supplemented and rebuilt with invented solutions, as are urban contexts evidently lacking philological basis.

Conclusion

The analysis of the numerous editorial projects of 1932 allows us to read between the lines the propaganda strategies employed to solemnise the Decennial of the March on Rome and, in particular, the guided narrative constructed around the capital. The artistic and cultural experience, deliberately planned, is one of the most effective tools of control used to engage and mobilise the masses. It is no coincidence that the regime's major events and grand parades are set against the backdrop of reshaped spaces of ancient Rome and the modern city that directly draws inspiration from it.

On one hand, these operations instil the political values of the fascist state into the city and its material transformations; on the other, the city itself becomes a tool used to culturally legitimise the social, political, and administrative revolution of fascism. To understand this dual relationship between politics and the city, it may be helpful to recall the thesis put forward by the German philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) in his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility* (in its various versions 1935–1939).⁵² Benjamin writes that “Fascism consequently tends to an aestheticisation of political life. To the violence exerted on the masses, who are crushed in the cult of a leader, corresponds

the violence of an apparatus which it uses for the production of cult values.”⁵³ As demonstrated by the events organised for the Decennial of the March on Rome and the accompanying publications, the regime’s propaganda inseparably links politics and public spectacle. Indeed, the ancient remains became, during the fascist twenty years, visual markers in an urban topography radically altered to create a theatrical stage set on a city-wide scale, to be viewed along major thoroughfares, first and foremost Via dell’Impero, whose works were completed in less than a year. The demolitions, now re-examined, show not only the regime’s scant respect for the archaeological heritage it claimed to value but also its disregard for the palimpsest of constructions built over subsequent centuries, which were razed to the ground to build the Third Rome at any cost. The regime’s plans, often developed more on paper than with bricks, profoundly shaped the city’s urban memory to the extent that today it is not perceived as artificial: an “interrupted Rome” that still bears the scars and remnants of fascist urban policy—a real city far from the flourishing garden portrayed by propaganda.

Notes

This paper was conceived by the authors, who jointly discussed all aspects of it. It is confirmed that the writing of the sections from The Paper Rome to Conclusion is attributed to Maria Grazia D'Amelio, while the sections from Introduction to Rome in the Decennial were written by Lorenzo Grieco.

¹ In particular: *Capitolium*, monthly magazine of the Governatorate, vol. 8, nos. 1–2, January–February 1932; *Opere Pubbliche: edilizia-idraulica-strade-ferrovie-porti-archeologia*, vol. 11, October 1932 (= *La Roma di Mussolini*); *Annali dei Lavori Pubblici* (formerly *Il Giornale del Genio Civile*), vol. 61, no. 1, January 31, 1923.

² Istituto Nazionale Luce, *Giornale Luce*, *La mostra dell'agricoltura e delle bonifiche*, A102401.

³ *Le opere del fascismo: decennale*, edited by A. Tofanelli (Milan, 1934).

⁴ Araldo di Crollalanza, *Le opere pubbliche nell'anno X* (Rome, 1932); —, *Le opere pubbliche nel primo decennio fascista* (Milan: 1933).

⁵ Arturo Marpicati, *Opere del Regime* (Rome, 1934), 66–68.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷ *Opere Pubbliche 1922-1932* (Novara, 1932).

⁸ *L'azione del governo fascista per la ricostruzione delle zone danneggiate da calamità*, ed. D. Romano (Terni, 1933).

⁹ *Les travaux publics exécutés pendant les dix premières années du régime fasciste 1922–1932*, ed. Ministero dei Lavori Pubblici del Regno d'Italia (Rome, 1934).

¹⁰ Giovacchino Forzano, dir., *Camicia Nera* (Italy, 1933), 1h40', full version, accessed April 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-aCzRpbYjQ>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1:18:12.

¹² Benito Mussolini, *Discorso per l'inaugurazione della città di Littoria*, 18 December 1932: “Non saremmo fascisti se già sin da questo momento non precisassimo con la esattezza che è nel nostro costume, con la energia fredda e spietata che è nel nostro temperamento, quelle che saranno le tappe future”.

¹³ The literature on the exhibition is extensive. Among the notable titles are: Gigliola Fioravanti, “La Mostra della rivoluzione fascista,” in *Partito Nazionale Fascista. Mostra della rivoluzione fascista. Inventario*, ed. Gigliola Fioravanti (Rome, 1990), 15–56; Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio: La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Rome/Bari, 1993), 189–201; Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Anno X: La Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista del 1932* (Pisa/Rome, 2003).

¹⁴ Luigi Freddi, “Guida della Mostra [Roma 1932],” in *Partito Nazionale Fascista. Mostra della rivoluzione fascista. Inventario*, 279.

¹⁵ ACS, PNF, DN, Servizi Vari, sez. II, b. 332, fasc. Dino Alfieri, *Relazione di Alfieri a Starace*, Rome, 28 June 1932, cited in Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del littorio*, 191, n. 45.

¹⁶ Dino Alfieri, *La prova dei fatti*, in *Esposizione universale ed internazionale di Bruxelles 1935*, edited by Commissariato Generale dell'Italia (s.l., 1935), 11.

¹⁷ *Tra futurismo e visual design: Attilio Calzavara e il progetto grafico di opere pubbliche 1922-1932* (Reggio Calabria, 2005).

¹⁸ The social welfare activities of the regime had already been celebrated at the first International Exhibition against Tuberculosis (Rome 1928), which affirmed the regime's commitment to combating the disease, reiterated also at the Exhibition of the Colonies (Rome 1937). For these two events, see Simonetta Ciranna and Patrizia Montuori, "Politica sanitaria e propaganda dalla mostra contro la tubercolosi a quella delle colonie. Roma 1928 e 1937", *in_bo*, vol. 15, no. 19, *Verso nuove estati. Passato, presente e futuro delle colonie per l'infanzia in Europa* (2024): 128–145.

¹⁹ *Il padiglione di Roma*, in *Esposizione universale ed internazionale di Bruxelles 1935*, 12.

²⁰ From the introduction to *Mostra della Roma che sparisce*, exhibition catalogue (Rome, Associazione Artistica Internazionale, May 1927), edited by Antonio Muñoz, Rome 1927.

²¹ Benito Mussolini, speech delivered at the Campidoglio for the inauguration of the first Governor of Rome on 31 December 1925, in *Roma Mussolinea. Anno Decimo dell'Era Fascista* (Rome 1932), VIII.

²² *Ibid.*, IX.

²³ The expenditure is illustrated on the inside back cover of *Opere Pubbliche 1922-1932* (Novara 1932).

²⁴ Governatorato di Roma, *Deliberazioni del Governatore*, year 1931–X, Fourth Quarter, Rome 1931, resolution 8932, 459–62. The report on the Master Plan works concerning archaeological zones to be carried out for the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome follows, 463–66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 463.

²⁶ Arturo Bianchi, "Il centro di Roma: la sistemazione del Foro Italico e le nuove vie del mare e dei monti," *Architettura* 12, no. 3 (March 1933): 137–56.

²⁷ Paola Getuli, "Le esedre arboree di piazza Venezia e i giardini dell'area dei Fori," in *Raffaele de Vico architetto e paesaggista: Un consulente artistico per Roma*, edited by Alessandro Cremona, Claudio Crescentini, and Sandro Santolini (Rome, 2020), 458–75.

²⁸ *Roma di Mussolini*, special issue of *Emporium*, rivista mensile illustrata d'arte e di cultura, year XXXIX, no. 10–vol. LXXVIII, no. 466 (October 1933–XII), XI–XII.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 203–22, 236–47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

³¹ Antonio Muñoz, *Via dei monti e via del mare* (Roma, 1932).

³² See, among many others, Paolo Saverio Pascone, *L'immagine di Roma. Le carte dell'Ufficio del cerimoniale e dei servizi della propaganda e dell'Ufficio studi del Governatorato di Roma* (Roma, 2021).

³³ *Roma Mussolinea. Anno Decimo dell'Era Fascista* (Roma, 1932).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, VI.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, VII–XV.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, XII.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, XIV.

³⁸ Umberto Guglielmotti, speech to the Camera dei Deputati, *Atti Parlamentari* CLIII, Legislatura XXVIII, 1st session, Discussions, sitting of 1 March 1932, 5953.

³⁹ Vittorio Vidotto, "I luoghi del fascismo a Roma," in *Dimensione e problemi della ricerca storica* 2 (July–December 2005), 41. For the ara also see Sylvia Diebner, "Le trasformazioni di un blocco di granito," in *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* 112 (2011): 153–70; Alessandro Cremona, "'L'opera intelligente ed efficace che Ella va svolgendo...': L'ascesa di Raffaele de Vico durante il Segretariato Generale di Alberto Mancini (1923–1926)," in *Raffaele de Vico architetto e paesaggista*, 58–59.

⁴⁰ Anne-Christine Faitrop-Porta, "Guido Baccelli, un Latino di Roma," *Strenna dei Romanisti* 56 (1995): 217–32.

⁴¹ Alfredo Baccelli, *Mio padre* (Rome, 1923).

⁴² Giuseppe Bruchietti, *Guido Baccelli*, commemorative speech delivered by Giuseppe Bruchietti on the occasion of the inauguration of the monument (Rome, 1931).

⁴³ Among these, by way of example, are: the Ministry of Public Works, designed by Pompeo Passerini (1858–1947) and approved in 1909; the Viminale Palace, whose design by Manfredo Manfredi (1859–1927) was approved in 1912; the Ministry of Grace and Justice, begun in 1914 based on a design by Pio Piacentini (1846–1928); the Ministry of Education, construction of which started in 1916 from a design by Cesare Bazzani (1873–1939); the Office of Securities at Piazza Verdi, built from 1914 following a design by Garibaldi Burba (d. 1925); Porta San Paolo station, begun in 1919 from a design by Marcello Piacentini; and the Mamiani High School by Vincenzo Fasolo (1885–1969), constructed from 1920.

⁴⁴ *Roma Mussolinea. Anno Decimo dell'Era Fascista*, 22.

⁴⁵ *Roma di Mussolini. Decennale*, edited by Giacomo di Castelnuovo, special issue of *Opere Pubbliche, Rassegna Mensile Illustrata*, year II, no. XI (October 1932), with an introduction by E. Cingolani.

⁴⁶ Frontispiece of *Roma di Mussolini: Decennale*, Rome 1932, in *Opere Pubbliche*, special issue, year II, no. XI (October 1932).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27–52.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 57–144.

⁴⁹ R.D. 28 October 1925 no. 1949.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵² Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media, 1936–1939*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 48.

Reclaiming the Marsh: Fascist Agrarian Colonisation and the Transformation of the Pontine Landscape

Lorenzo Grieco

Devouring the water

The reclamation of the malarial marshlands that once plagued the southern Lazio countryside—stretching southwards from the Alban Hills to the Gulf of Terracina, and westwards from the Lepini Mountains to the Tyrrhenian Sea—forms the prelude to the founding of Italy's fascist new towns, which came to triangulate the Pontine Plain, as will be more fully explored. The effort to sanitise and return these lands to agricultural productivity had long been on the agenda, with a series of well-intentioned but largely ineffectual attempts dating back to the pontificate of Pius IX, under the Papal States. It was only during the 1920s and 1930s, under the fascist regime, that land reclamation finally achieved its intended results.

On 19 December 1934, Benito Mussolini presided over the inauguration of the Mazzocchio pumping station, completed just a few months earlier in July. The event, captured and widely broadcast by the Luce newsreels, presented the project as a marvel of modern engineering—one of the largest of its kind in Italy—and emphasised the speed with which it was completed, in just ten months.¹

The hydraulic complex, designed as a tripartite ensemble, consists of a central block housing the modern water-lifting machinery, a structure containing sluice gates to regulate water flow, and a smaller building serving as a caretaker's house. The principal building—essentially a single-volume machine hall—sits between two symmetrical three-storey wings arranged at right angles. These accommodate offices, workshops, reception rooms, and the quarters of the chief engineer.

The composition is simple and direct, governed by a clarity of line and an essential geometrical rigour. A high travertine plinth, punctuated by narrow horizontal windows, provides the base, while a pale cornice runs uninter-



I. Pontinia, Mazzocchio pumping station. Photo courtesy of the Lazio South West Land Reclamation Consortium.

ed along the eaves, echoing the stone below. The walls are rendered in a pale rose-coloured plaster, with rectangular windows evenly spaced on the side towers and tall, vertical openings along the central hall to allow full-height illumination of the machinery within. The sculptural quality of the forms, together with their stark tonal contrast, underline the building's status as a landmark within the landscape—an effect clearly intended by the engineer, Leone Terzi, and dramatically reflected in the surrounding waters. The prominence of the structure in its setting serves more than a functional purpose: it acts, quite consciously, as propaganda. As was his habit, Mussolini made use of the rhetorical power of architecture to bolster the regime's image. Here, as elsewhere, modern technology and the drama of form were deployed to visualise fascism's capacity to master and remake nature.

Technologically advanced for its time, the system devised by Terzi employed seven powerful centrifugal pumps, produced by the Franco Tosi company of Legnano and Riva di Milano.² Each pump, fitted with submerged impellers, could draw an astonishing 6,000 litres of water per second.³ The pumps were driven by 600-horsepower electric motors, manufactured by the Compagnia Generale Eletticità di Milano and Pellizzari di Arzignano. The plant was designed to regulate water that, flowing down from the surrounding hills, was responsible for the historic marshiness of the area. Collected into a main conduit, the waters were directed into the pumping station, where they were lifted into a holding basin.

From there, a system of channels carried them to the Ufente stream, which in turn discharged them into the Tyrrhenian Sea. This system formed a critical part of the broader reclamation plan for the Pontine Marshes—specifically, the Quartaccio basin, soon to be the site of Pontinia. Here, land lay as much as two metres below sea level.

The regime's propaganda celebrated the reclamation process in no uncertain terms, often with rhetorical excess verging on the mythic. It was cast as a heroic struggle between man and nature, in which fascism emerged triumphant. A typical pronouncement from the time declared:

“The final [pumping station] is now under construction at Mazzocchio and will serve nearly 9,000 hectares. The lowest-lying area, known as ‘Quartaccio’, will by the end of this year be freed forever from the periodic flooding of winter. Thus, the last vestiges of marshland in the Pontine territory will have disappeared. In this fully reclaimed zone, Pontinia will rise—a new centre of civilisation that will stand for centuries as a testament to the creative power of the Regime.”⁴

Integral reclamation and propaganda

As we have already suggested, the genesis of Pontinia is inextricably bound up with the reclamation of the Pontine Marshes, from which the town takes its name and whose disappearance defines its very purpose. The foundation of the town is inseparable from the great territorial transformation undertaken in this period.

The Pontine Plain is shaped by natural boundaries: to the north, the Astura stream and the southern slopes of the Latium Volcano (the Alban Hills); to the east, the limestone ridges of the Lepini and Ausoni mountains; and to the south and west, the Tyrrhenian Sea. The area's physical geography made it particularly prone to waterlogging, a problem that had afflicted the plain for centuries. From Roman times onward, attempts at reclamation had been made—mostly by diverting and channelling water—but these were only ever modest and short-lived. Traces of these efforts remain in artificial channels such as the Rio Martino and the Linea Pio, and even more poignantly in the street names of Pontinia itself. As one would have found walking the town soon after its inauguration, names of historical figures associated with past reclamation efforts—from the Roman consul Appius Claudius Caecus to Pope Pius VI—appear as part of its urban fabric.

The true leap forward came in the wake of the First World War, when Gi-



2–3. Pontinia, Mazzocchio pumping station under construction. Photo from *La Bonifica delle Paludi Pontine*, Rome, 1935.

useppe Marchi, an engineer from the Civil Engineering Corps in Rome, produced a comprehensive study of the marshes. His plan, which involved dividing the water into three categories—high, middle, and low—alongside the excavation of a network of canals and the introduction of mechanical pumping, became the prototype for later reclamation efforts. The marshland was subdivided into two sections: the left bank of the Sisto River fell under the jurisdiction of the Consorzio della Bonificazione Pontina, while the right was assigned to the newly formed Consorzio di Bonifica di Piscinara, later renamed the Consorzio di Littoria. The latter oversaw the creation of the *Canale delle Acque Alte*, a drainage canal based on the Pancini-Prampolini project, later known as the *Canale Mussolini*. This same canal would lend its name to Antonio Pennacchi’s award-winning 2010 novel—a gritty homage to the epic of the Pontine lands.

In the broader rethinking of technical, scientific, and social paradigms that marked the post-war period, the concept of reclamation itself was radically reconceived. What had previously been a question of hydraulics was now broadened into a more ambitious notion: *bonifica integrale*—or “integral reclamation.” This was the term advanced by Arrigo Serpieri, one of the leading architects of fascist agrarian policy. Appointed Undersecretary for Agriculture in 1923, Serpieri played a key role in drafting the landmark legislative framework for land improvement, culminating in the Royal Decree-Law No. 3267 of 30 December 1923—a watershed moment in the management of marshland. A second key



4. Map of reclamation works in the Agro Pontino, 1939.

statute, the Royal Decree-Law No. 753 of 18 May 1924, introduced the concept of integral reclamation for the first time, tying land drainage to broader objectives of agrarian colonisation. This law gave the State the power to expropriate land from owners who failed to meet obligations of improvement or productive use. Implementation was entrusted to the *Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti* (ONC), which undertook land development projects in a spirit more akin to entrepreneurial enterprise than charitable assistance.⁵

In 1932, as president of the organising committee of the First National Exhibition of Land Reclamation—held as part of the tenth anniversary celebrations of the March on Rome—Serpieri gave voice to the ideological and social significance of reclamation, framing it as a vital instrument of national consensus. A year later, his efforts bore further fruit with Royal Decree No. 215 of 1933, which formalised the State's direct involvement in reclamation schemes. The decree also authorised State funding—some of it non-repayable—for the infrastructure and services required by the newly reclaimed areas.⁶ The ultimate aim was to stimulate rural development and boost agricultural productivity, making reclamation central to the fascist vision of national modernisation.

The 1933 law refined and expanded the notion of integral reclamation first hinted at in the 1924 statute and tentatively revisited in a 1928 draft.⁷ It established a multi-pronged programme: not only draining marshland, but also

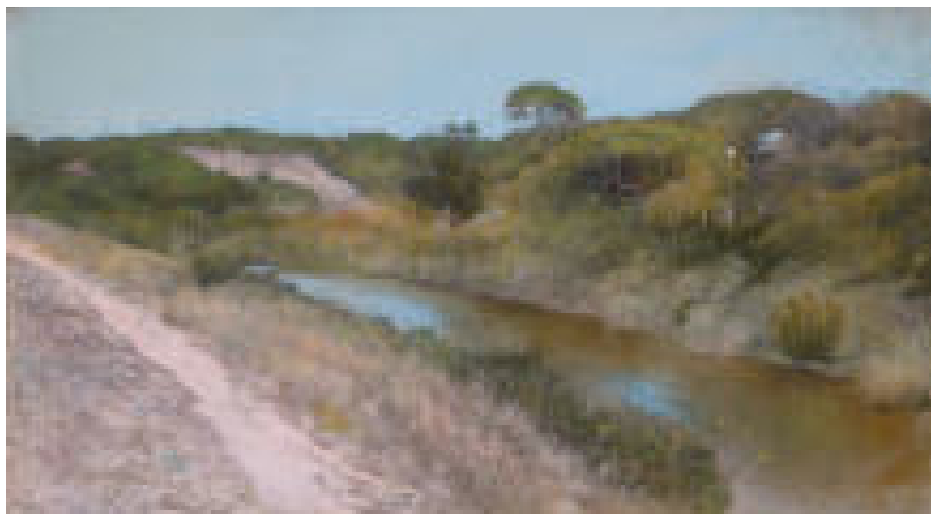


5. Pontine Land Reclamation Consortium's exhibit at the Naples Reclamation Exhibition, 1925. Photographic Archive of the Venice Giulia Reclamation.

ensuring proper hygienic conditions and encouraging agricultural and social development in the reclaimed zones. In the Agro Pontino, this took the form of a threefold approach. Hydraulic reclamation was carried out by the consortia; public health was overseen initially by the Italian Red Cross and later by the newly formed Pontine Anti-Malaria Institute; and agrarian reclamation was directed by the ONC, which distributed the reclaimed land and promoted its productive use.

Hydraulic reclamation focused on water management: draining surplus water and preventing future inundation. Water from the surrounding hills—referred to as *acque alte*, or “high waters”—was guided toward the sea via engineered channels. *Acque medie*—including rainfall and springs at intermediate elevations—were similarly diverted using gravity-fed systems. In the lowest-lying areas, where *acque basse* collected, whether from rainfall or springs, mechanical lifting by electric pumps was required. Here the Mazzocchio pumping station stood out for its sheer scale and efficiency.

The electric-powered pumps were transformative, not merely in function but in significance. It was the advent of electrical power that made the constant, uninterrupted operation of such pumps possible—a critical factor in the success of



6. Giulio Aristide Sartorio, *Agro Pontino*, 1894. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

the fascist reclamation where previous efforts had failed. Electricity thus marked the turning point: the decisive element that enabled the sustained control of water, and in doing so, accelerated the region's development and modernisation.

The environmental legacy of reclamation

The comprehensive reclamation of the Pontine Marshes—formally inaugurated in 1924, effectively begun in 1927, and concluded in 1939—left a transformative imprint on the region, one whose consequences would continue to unfold well into the post-war period. While public enthusiasm was largely buoyed by notable improvements in public health and a general sense of progress—carefully amplified by a regime eager to trumpet the triumph of modernity—the limitations and costs of the enterprise were already apparent during its execution, though concealed beneath the obligatory unanimity of acclaim. As is often the case in moments of dramatic environmental change, it was artists and scientists who first began to sense the deeper implications of the transformation.

Among Rome's landscape painters, drawn to the atmospheric practice of *en plein air* popularised by the French Impressionists, a distinctive circle emerged—the so-called *XXV of the Roman Countryside*—who turned their attention to the Campagna and the Pontine plain.⁸ Figures such as Giulio Aristide Sartorio, Fili-

berto Petiti, and Dante Ricci, active in the years preceding the great reclamation works, distanced themselves from the imperatives of territorial modernisation. Instead, they cultivated a romantic, elegiac vision of the marshlands—depicting them not simply as stagnant and inhospitable, but as repositories of historical depth and rural memory.⁹ Their work evokes a quiet resistance to the grandiose narratives of the fascist regime, suffused with the melancholy awareness of an ancient landscape slipping away.¹⁰ Sartorio, particularly attuned to the social unrest of the time, contributed to the broader debate on reclamation, seeking in the land's disappearing features the traces of archaic myth and civilisation, and with them, the argument for protection.¹¹

By contrast, the response of Duilio Cambellotti was more visceral and expressive. Through his engravings, illustrations, and posters, he captured the hardship of rural life in both the Roman and Pontine countryside—an elemental world of thatched huts, wandering buffalo, and mounted herdsman. For Cambellotti, the land was a site of mythic struggle: the drama of reclamation became an epic of human conquest over untamed nature, with all the heroic fervour that such a vision implies.¹²

Yet this victory over the wild was not without ecological cost. Alongside the loss of a layered and storied landscape came a profound disturbance of environmental equilibrium. The works did not simply reconfigure the visual and practical character of the territory—they disrupted entire habitats.¹³ The dredging of lakebeds, aimed at increasing depth and eliminating the mosquito-laden reeds, irrevocably altered aquatic ecosystems. Natural ponds and seasonal wetlands, once rich in herbaceous flora vital to pastoral economies, were drained or filled. Characteristic species such as *sphagnum* moss vanished completely from the region.¹⁴

The wooded patches that interspersed the marshes—already partially depleted before the First World War—suffered further losses, with venerable oak stands felled to make way for arable land. The felling went beyond mere cutting; once the trunk was sawn through, explosives were inserted to obliterate the roots entirely.¹⁵ One of the most emblematic of these threatened landscapes was the ancient forest near Terracina, now within the bounds of the newly founded municipality of Sabaudia. It narrowly escaped obliteration with the creation of the Circeo National Park in 1934—an initiative personally endorsed by Mussolini, following a proposal by physician and senator Raffaele Bastianelli. The park's establishment carried both conservationist and propagandistic aims: on the one hand, preserving a notional fragment of antique Roman landscape; on the other, showcasing it as a foil to the regime's sweeping modernisation elsewhere.¹⁶

Nevertheless, even the preserved areas did not remain untouched. Under-



7. Tree eradication works using explosives. ACS, Opera Nazionale Combattenti, Photographs, no. 1611.

brush was cleared, depriving both fauna and local populations of vital resources. Cement-lined drainage canals improved sanitation but altered hydrological dynamics irreversibly. New, non-native species—most notably eucalyptus, imported from Australia—were introduced for their perceived utility in combatting malaria, though their broader ecological effects remain questionable.¹⁷

Among the few scientific voices raised in caution was that of the botanist Augusto Béguinot. Between 1898 and 1900, he undertook a comprehensive study of the Pontine flora, when the landscape remained largely intact. Publishing his findings in 1935, Béguinot produced what amounted to a botanical memorial, an archive of an ecosystem then on the verge of disappearance.¹⁸ In the preface to his work, he writes with a quiet urgency: the transformation underway, driven by the “The profound transformation that this vast territory is undergoing as a result of comprehensive reclamation and the subsequent parcelling out of land undertaken by the National Government for the complete agrarian and human redemption of the region. This will inevitably lead to alterations in its ancient floral structure, and to the disappearance or marginalisation of species once commonly found

there.”¹⁹ Despite describing the Pontine plain as a “wasteland largely abandoned to the wild and inhospitable forces of nature,” Béguinot’s photographic plates tell another story.²⁰ They capture scenes already marked for extinction: pools now drained, forests before their thinning, landscapes in the midst of canalisation. The images speak not only of scientific observation but of impending loss.

A similar awareness is found in the reflections of the botanist Fabrizio Cortesi. In a lecture delivered during the 1933–1934 academic year as part of a series on the reclamation, later published in 1935, he acknowledges both the achievements and the ecological price of the enterprise.²¹ Without discounting the benefits, Cortesi notes the inevitable sacrifice entailed by the disappearance of native flora—a necessary consequence, in his view, of the demands placed by territorial modernisation.

Colonisation and social transformation

Within the concept of *bonifica integrale*—or comprehensive land reclamation—hydraulic and sanitary works were regarded as necessary preliminaries to agrarian reclamation, that is, the transformation of uncultivated land into productive farmland. Yet, despite its ambition, the 1933 legislation encountered various limitations at the national level, not least technical difficulties and issues surrounding the management of labour. Agricultural results often proved disappointing, due in part to the large-scale cultivation of crops unsuited to the land—particularly wheat, a key commodity in the so-called “battle for grain” promoted by the Fascist regime. Matters were further complicated by the resistance of large landowners, who in some cases refused government funding and withdrew their estates from reclamation schemes.

In the case of the Agro Pontino, the objective was to turn the area into a strategic breadbasket for the capital. However, the technical challenges of such a task required specific solutions. To address the difficulties posed by crop adaptation, experimental farms were established, tasked with developing innovative agricultural methods. The aim was to optimise yields—especially of wheat—on land that was, more often than not, ill-suited to such cultivation.²²

A central role in the management of labour and in the agrarian transformation of the Agro Pontino was played by the *Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti* (National Institution for Combat Veterans).²³ Originally founded as a welfare body during the First World War, the ONC evolved by 1926 into a key agency for the allocation and management of reclaimed land.²⁴ Large estates were subdivided into smaller farms, which were then granted to veterans of the war. These set-

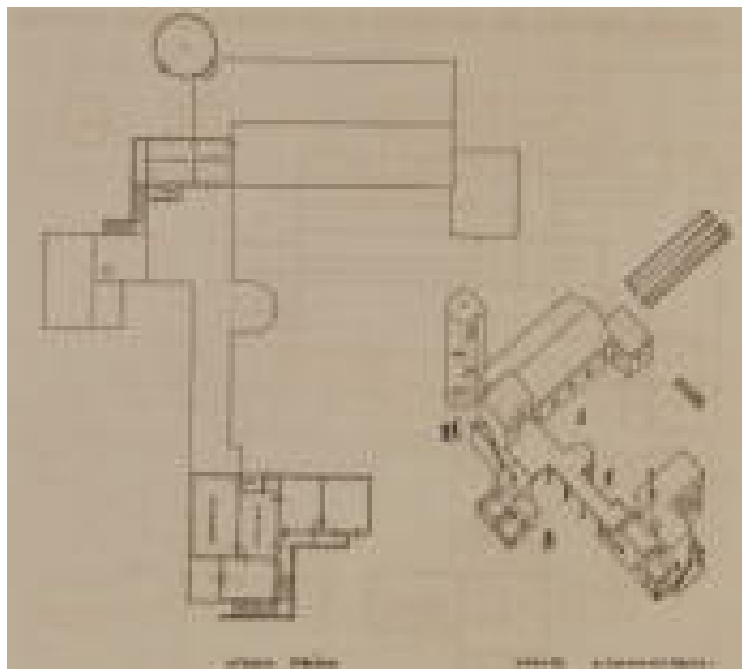


8. Wheat threshing at Farm 917, 1937. Archive of the Agro Pontino Reclamation Consortium.

tlers—farmers, drawn primarily from the north-east of Italy—especially the provinces of Ferrara and Veneto—brought with them long-standing agricultural expertise, particularly in sharecropping, a system almost unknown in central and southern Italy, where day labour had traditionally prevailed. Their mission was not only to cultivate the land intensively, but also to foster a broader economic and social transformation of the area.

The recruitment of such skilled labour also served the regime's aim to rationalise internal migration. In 1931, Law no. 358 introduced the post of a commissioner tasked with overseeing and guiding internal labour migrations. The legislation aimed to redistribute the workforce from regions where agricultural mechanisation had reduced the need for labour—such as Veneto and Emilia—to rural areas like the Agro Pontino. This policy aligned with the wider Fascist economic agenda, including the 'battle for the lira' and the so-called 'Quota 90', a forced revaluation of the currency against the pound sterling that had curtailed exports and significantly lowered wages. In these northern regions, mechanisation rendered many agricultural workers redundant. For many, the opportunity to relocate to the Agro Pontino represented a means to improve their economic circumstances, allowing them to transition from landless labourers to smallholders.

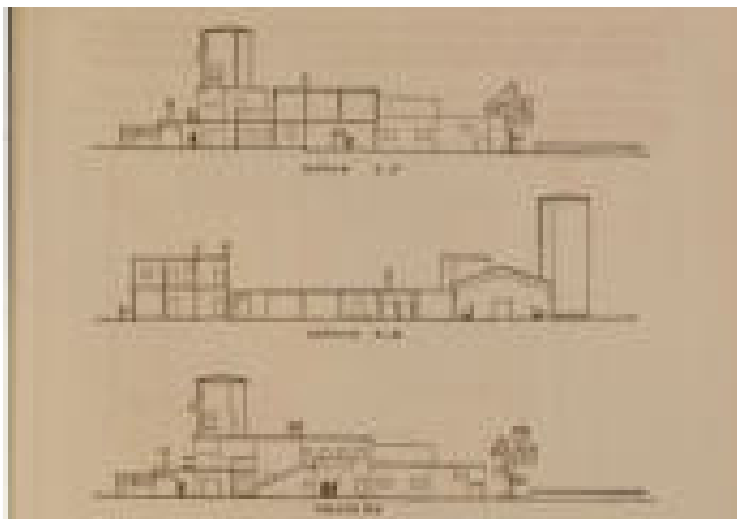
In order to ensure the sustainability and permanence of the reclamation ef-



9. First floor plan and axonometric view of a farmhouse in the Agro Pontino, from D. Ortensi, *Edilizia Rurale*, 1941.

fort, it was deemed essential to settle the colonists permanently on the newly reclaimed land. Around 3,000 farms were distributed, with approximately 1,800 allocated to settlers from Veneto and Friuli. These holdings, scattered across the landscape, formed a network of territorial control and were organised around a central farmhouse or *casale*. The design of these farmsteads combined elements of vernacular architecture with functional solutions tailored to rural life.²⁵ Each *casale* typically included bedrooms, a kitchen, storage space and, connected via a portico, a stable. Over 18 variations of *casale* were built, all derived from a standard model designed for a single-family unit, led by a war veteran. Their size and internal layout varied depending on the number of inhabitants and livestock, with corresponding changes in storeys, area, and spatial arrangement.

These farms followed the alignment of strategic infrastructure—canals, elevated roads, and drainage systems—vital for the ongoing maintenance of the reclaimed territory and the continuity of the agricultural project. At the same time, they contributed to the development of a dispersed settlement pattern, consistent with the regime's urban and territorial policies. From 1926 onwards,



10. Elevations of farmhouse designs in the Agro Pontino, from D. Ortensi, *Edilizia Rurale*, 1941.

to combat urban unemployment and foster rural development, the regime adopted a policy of *disurbanamento*—the deliberate ‘de-urbanisation’ of the population. This was intended to “remove the unemployed from the major urban centres, ensure a fair distribution of productive labour across the national territory, and enhance the natural resources of the soil.”²⁶ The strategy was formalised in the 1928 law on *bonifica integrale*, which offered state subsidies of between 30% and 70% for reclamation works, depending on land quality.²⁷ In 1934, Law no. 1092 introduced further measures to curb urbanisation, promoting agriculture as a key solution to unemployment while severely restricting the geographic and social mobility of workers.²⁸

Alongside the farms, new settlements were constructed—at first modest in scale. At key road junctions, rural hamlets known as *borghi* were established. These bore the names of towns from northern Italy or of notable battles from the First World War.²⁹ Each *borgo* was equipped with a church, a school, a canteen, an infirmary, and a Carabinieri barracks, as well as workers’ housing intended for labourers drawn from all parts of Italy. These houses were designed to be adaptable: once the land reclamation works were completed, they could be converted to serve agricultural purposes. Dormitories could be repurposed as stables or granaries, while the homes originally meant for site foremen and assis-

tants could become the dwellings of farming families. Each settlement also featured a *Dopolavoro* building—a recreation hall with cinema and radio—offering workers both leisure and cultural engagement during rest hours. A dedicated post office linked them to families left behind in their regions of origin.

Following the construction of these initial rural hamlets, the Fascist regime embarked on a far more ambitious venture: the foundation of Littoria. Planned as a larger agricultural settlement for 5,000 inhabitants, Littoria was inaugurated in 1932. This was no mere exercise in town planning; it was conceived as a propaganda tool through which Mussolini sought to portray himself as a modern-day Romulus—the founder of new cities. Littoria, built rapidly on land recently drained and turned to productive use, came to symbolise the regime's purported success and attracted attention both domestically and abroad. Its importance grew to the extent that the regime declared it a provincial capital, transforming it into a key hub for the agricultural colonisation of the region. Between 1933 and 1939, four more towns were established to complete the settlement of the Agro Pontino: Sabaudia, Pontinia, Aprilia and Pomezia. Each was conceived to express the Fascist ideal of a new Italy, founded on order, discipline, and agricultural self-sufficiency.

These new settlements did not merely alter the landscape by their physical presence—they initiated a profound human transformation of the area. The building of towns, villages and homes entailed the development of a network of roads and transport infrastructure that expanded in step with the urban footprint. The *Consorzio di Bonifica di Piscinara* secured a rail link to the Sermone-ta-Bassiano station, where temporary workshops for blacksmiths and carpenters were established to facilitate the arrival and assembly of materials. From this hub, a 40-kilometre-long electrified Decauville railway extended to the major work sites. Additional temporary rail branches, powered by steam or petrol, ensured the transport of construction materials directly to the workyards.

The two consortia involved in the works were equipped with an impressive array of machinery, including Decauville tracks, electric and steam locomotives, petrol-powered railcars, mechanical excavators, dredgers, pile drivers, pumps, concrete mixers, and both petrol and electric motors.³⁰ Quarries were opened at Monticchio and Mezzomonte for stone, while others for tuff, pozzolana, and limestone were activated across various sites, all connected by the consortia's rail lines. Workyards were equipped with maintenance workshops to keep this fleet of machines in operation.

A vast electrical distribution network was also constructed—essential not only for the operation of drainage and irrigation systems, but for the running of con-

struction machinery, the lighting of buildings, and the broader electrification of agriculture itself.

Conclusion

In this whirlwind of transformation—part engineering feat, part ideological conquest—the Pontine Marshes were not merely drained; they were symbolically *redeemed*, bent to the will of a new order forged in the image of the fascist man. The stagnant, pestilential waters that for centuries had rendered the region uninhabitable were banished, supplanted by a landscape rigidly controlled and meticulously ordered. Nature, long untamed, was now disciplined—marsh subdued, land apportioned, every furrow and canal echoing the regime's fixation on hierarchy, utility, and obedience.

This new order was not abstract. It was visible—inescapably so—in the geometric precision of the towns that rose from the mud. Their urban layouts, unwavering in symmetry and line, projected a vision of discipline and efficiency, a concrete metaphor for the fascist ideal: a society mechanised, compartmentalised, and resolutely vertical. What had once been a hostile, ungovernable terrain now bore the mark of ideological intent: fields ploughed with precision, roads laid with purpose, canals dug like ruled lines on a page.

Here, every ditch, every dwelling, every metre of track carries a dual weight—as infrastructure, yes, but also as narrative. These are not merely feats of civil engineering; they are artefacts of a political mythology that exalts mankind's ability—under fascism—to remake the world in its own image. The reclamation of the Pontine Marshes, then, becomes more than a public works project. It becomes the very emblem of a national rebirth—bodily, moral, and above all, orchestrated.

Notes

¹ AL, *Giornale Luce* B / B0599, December 1934.

² See Simone Bove and Elena Morgante, “Idrovoro di Mazzocchio, Pontinia (LT)”, in Chiara Visentin, ed., *Gente d’acqua: Itinerario attraverso le architetture per le bonifiche agricole in Italia*, supplement to *do.co.mo.mo Italia giornale*, XVI, no. 31 (November 2012), entry no. 8 and the related bibliography.

³ E. Negri, *La ruota ad elica usata come pompa: La sua applicazione nel grande impianto idrovoro di Mazzocchio*, in *L’energia elettrica*, vol. II, XV (February 1938).

⁴ See Natale Prampolini, *La bonifica idraulica delle Pianure pontine*, in Istituto di Studi Romani, *La Bonifica delle Paludi pontine* (Rome, 1935), 153.

⁵ Simone Misiani, “Serpieri, Arrigo,” entry in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 92 (Rome, 2018).

⁶ For an overview of the law, see Arrigo Serpieri, *La legge sulla bonifica integrale nel primo anno di applicazione* (Rome, 1931); and Arrigo Serpieri, *Legislation on Reclamation*, Quaderno no. 2 of the Opera Nazionale Combattenti (Rome, 1943).

⁷ See Law no. 3134 of 24 December 1928, *Provvedimenti per la bonifica integrale*.

⁸ *La Campagna Romana de “I XXV”*, Exhibition catalogue (Rome, Accademia di San Luca, 10 March – 24 April 2005) (Rome, 2005).

⁹ On their works set in the Pontine Marshes, see Renato Mammucari and Paolo E. Trastulli, *Immagini delle Paludi pontine* (Velletri, 1981); *Dalla campagna romana alle paludi pontine* (Rome, 1987); Renato Mammucari and Rigel Langella, *I pittori della malaria: Dalla Campagna romana alle Paludi pontine* (Rome, 1999); and Vittorio D’Erme, Renato Mammucari, and Paolo E. Trastulli, *Le paludi pontine: un mondo scomparso* (Rome, 2007).

¹⁰ Fausta Cataldi Villari, *Giulio Aristide Sartorio: Immagini dell’Agro Pontino*, exhibition catalogue (Rome, 2 February – 11 March 1989) (Rome, 1988). Their approach can be compared to the watercolours by Ettore Roesler Franz in *Roma Sparita* (1878–1896), where the artist depicts the poorest and most humble parts of Rome, which the city’s new role as Capital would replace with new buildings more suited to the Eternal City’s emerging European status.

¹¹ Francesca Petrucci, “Scenari naturali della civiltà moderna. Il paesaggio come sfondo di eventi e drammi sociali, come mezzo di propaganda socio-economica, come documento del progresso” in Carlo Sisi, ed., *La pittura di paesaggio in Italia: L’Ottocento* (Milan, 2003), 54.

¹² Ada Fichera, *Un alito di infinito: Il mito nell’arte di Duilio Cambellotti* (Florence, 2021).

¹³ Roberta Biasillo, *Una storia ambientale delle Paludi pontine: Terracina dall’Unità alla bonifica integrale (1871–1928)*, (Rome, 2023).

¹⁴ For the plant species that inhabited the Agro Pontino before reclamation, see Augusto Béguinot, “Prodromo ad una flora dei bacini Pontino ed Ausonio e del versante meridionale dei monti limitrofi (Lepini-Ausoni),” in *Annali del Museo Civico di Storia naturale di Genova*, ser. 2, vol. XVII (1897), 189–341.

¹⁵ *L’esplosivo Geoclastite Stacchini nella bonifica agraria*, advertising pamphlet, 1932.

¹⁶ Marco Armiero, Roberta Biasillo, and Wilko Graf von Hardenberg, *Mussolini’s*

Nature: An Environmental History of Italian Fascism, trans. James Sievert (Cambridge, MA, 2022), originally published as *La natura del duce. Una storia ambientale del fascismo* (Turin, 2022), especially chap. 4.

¹⁷ At that time, it was mistakenly believed that their smell repelled mosquitoes; in reality, their ability to absorb vast amounts of water reduces stagnant pools, thereby eliminating the mosquitoes' breeding habitat.

¹⁸ Augusto Béguinot, "Flora e Fitogeografia delle Paludi Pontine studiate nelle condizioni anteriori all'attuale bonifica incluso il settore Terracina – lago di Fondi (in collaborazione con la dott. C. Ravano)," *Archivio Botanico*, vol. X, nos. 3–4 (October–December 1934), 329–382; vol. XI, nos. 2 (June 1935), 125–168.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 331.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 330.

²¹ Fabrizio Cortesi, "La vegetazione e la flora della regione pontina," in *La Bonifica delle Paludi pontine*, Istituto di Studi Romani (Rome, 1935), especially 118–19.

²² Giuseppe Tommasi, "Sperimentazione agraria per la valorizzazione dell'Agro Pontino," in *La Bonifica delle Paludi pontine*, Istituto di Studi Romani (Rome: Casa Editrice Leonardo da Vinci, 1935), 173–200.

²³ Erminia Ciccozzi, "L'attività agraria dell'Opera nazionale per i combattenti nel Lazio," in *Gli Archivi dell'agricoltura del territorio di Roma e del Lazio: Fonti per la storia agraria e del paese*, edited by Stefano Lepre (Rome, 2009), 393–408.

²⁴ Erminia Ciccozzi, "L'Opera Nazionale per i Combattenti," in *Opera nazionale per i combattenti: Progetti / Archivio centrale dello Stato; inventario*, edited by Floriano Boccini and Erminia Ciccozzi (Rome, 2007), IX–XLIII.

²⁵ Simona Salvo, "I casali della Bonifica Pontina (1932–1943): Un patrimonio architettonico dimenticato," in *I paesaggi della riforma agraria: Storia, pianificazione e gestione*, edited by Fausto Carmelo Nigrelli and Gabriella Bonini (Gattatico, 2017), 261–76.

²⁶ Alberto Calza Bini, "Il 'Piano territoriale' come strumento della politica fascista del disurbanamento," *Urbanistica* 1 (1941).

²⁷ Law no. 3134 of 24 December 1928, *Provvedimenti per la bonifica integrale*.

²⁸ According to the law, it is forbidden to transfer one's residence to a city with more than 25,000 inhabitants, unless for justified reasons and with proof of adequate means of subsistence. Restrictions are also imposed on workers assigned to municipalities other than their place of residence, establishing that only the Commissariat for Migration and Colonisation may authorise the temporary relocation of groups of workers from one province to another. Furthermore, agricultural workers who have abandoned the land to which they were assigned are not permitted to register with employment offices for jobs in a different category.

²⁹ Antonio Pennacchi and Massimiliano Vittori, *I borghi dell'Agro Pontino* (Latina, 2001).

³⁰ Natale Prampolini, "La bonifica idraulica delle paludi Pontine," in *La Bonifica delle Paludi pontine*, Istituto di Studi Romani (Rome, 1935), 153, 155.

Notes

A Small Guide to the New Towns of the Agro Pontino

Notes



Latina

Littoria, renamed after WWII as Latina, was the first of the new towns founded in the reclaimed Pontine Marshes under the Fascist regime. Designed in 1932 by Alfredo Pappalardo and Oriolo Frezzotti, the city followed a radio-centric layout focused around key civic buildings. Initially conceived on a modest scale to serve a rural

community, the town was rapidly elevated in status and symbolism. Indeed, recognising the propagandistic potential of reclamation and urbanisation, Mussolini transformed Littoria from a rural outpost into a provincial capital. The city was intended as a lasting monument to the regime's ideals and its "regenerative power." Lit-

toria thus became a prototype of Fascist territorial renewal, carefully designed to embody the regime's ideological and aesthetic values. The urban plan centres on Piazza del Littorio, surrounded by monumental public buildings such as the Town Hall, with secondary nodes including Piazza Savoia, home to the cathedral, and Piazza XXIII Marzo, intended for the Palazzo del Governo. The style of its buildings combines rural functionalism with classical monumentality. The facades, often clad in travertine and inscribed with institutional declarations, reinforce the symbolic authority of the state and express the regime's vision of a new, orderly society anchored in both tradition and modernity.

General Bibliography Riccardo Mariani, *Fascismo e città nuove*, Milano 1976; Pietro Cefaly, *Littoria 1932-1942: Gli architetti e la città*, Roma 1984; Alessandra Muntoni, *Latina*, Roma 1990; Claudio Galeazzi, Giorgio Muratore, *Littoria Latina: La storia, le architetture*, Latina 1999; Carlo Fabrizio Carli and Massimiliano Vittori, eds., *Oriolo Frezzotti, 1888-1965: un architetto in territorio pontino*, Latina 2002; Ferruccio Bianchini, Marcello Trabucco, eds., *Latina: Architetture e progetti della città di fondazione 1927-1944*, Latina 2022.

Main archives ONC Archive, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome; Oriolo Frezzotti Archive, Museo Cambellotti, Latina; Casa dell'Architettura, Latina.

I. Town Hall

Address Corso G. Matteotti, 145

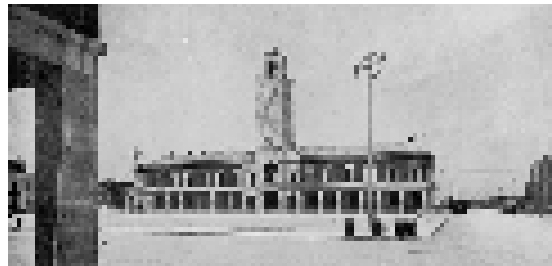
Designers Alfredo Pappalardo, Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932

Original use municipal offices, Fascist Party headquarters, art gallery

Current use municipal offices

Located on the northern side of Piazza del Popolo—the central civic space of Latina—the Town Hall is one of the earliest and most significant buildings of the city's foundation. Designed by Oriolo Frezzotti and completed in record time, it reflects the ideological and formal principles of Fascist-era architecture. The building occupies a full block and extends longitudinally between Via Emanuele Filiberto and Corso della Repubblica. It is a two-storey structure, with a pitched roof covered in Roman tiles and a restrained cornice. Constructed in reinforced concrete, its exterior is clad in limestone and brick, with travertine detailing used prominently throughout. The principal façade is symmetrically arranged around a central axis marked by a monumental triumphal arch in travertine, framing the loggia-arengo, from which Mussolini proclaimed the foundation of new cities in the Pontine region. Rising above it is the civic tower, also clad in travertine, with vertical slit windows lighting the internal staircase and an open loggia at the top. The tower serves both a symbolic and functional role, recalling medieval Italian town halls while housing the clock and bells. The ground floor is defined by a portico with travertine-clad columns and pav-



ing, behind which windows are rhythmically placed between the structural bays. The first floor features a brick façade with stone-framed windows and a continuous stringcourse marking the transition between levels. Internally, a courtyard garden leads to the main staircase, offset from the central axis. Originally designed as a multipurpose government building, the Town Hall housed municipal offices, the National Fascist Party, and a modern art gallery. Before the construction of the Palazzo M, it served as the Casa Littoria of the city, as indicated by the original “PNF” inscription on the façade. The architectural language combines rationalist planning with vernacular references, notably the low, arcaded form reminiscent of barchesse from Veneto farm estates—echoing the cultural background of many of the settlers in the Pontine region. The building stands as a key example of rural Littorio architecture, balancing ideological expression with regional continuity.

Additional Bibliography Lorenzo Grieco, *L'architettura dei palazzi comunali del Lazio durante il ventennio fascista*, in Andrea Longhi, ed., *Urban Processes of Adaptation and Resilience Between Permanence and Precariousness*, Torino 2024, 342-355; Lorenzo Grieco, Antonia Lo Rillo, *I palazzi delle amministrazioni a Littoria*, in M.G. D'Amelio, L. Grieco, G. Nicolò, eds., *Palazzi pubblici tra le due guerre mondiali*, Bari 2025, in press.

2. San Marco Cathedral

Address Piazza Regina Margherita, 6

Designers Alfredo Pappalardo, Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932

Original use church

Current use church

The Cathedral of San Marco stands on Piazza San Marco (originally Piazza Savoia), one of three foundational squares outlined in Oriolo Frezzotti's 1932 masterplan for Littoria. Alongside the church rose key civic buildings, such as the Opera Nazionale Balilla and the Casa del Combattente, reinforcing the square's civic



role. Yet, the radiocentric layout—focused on Piazza del Littorio (now Piazza del Popolo)—reflects the church's subordinate position to state authority, in line with the regime's secular planning principles. Designed for a modest rural center, the church strikes a balance between monumentality and simplicity. Frezzotti drew on Northern Italian Romanesque traditions, employing basic materials—brick, stucco, and cut stone—while reserving marble for symbolic elements. This formal vocabulary was intended to evoke familiar references for settlers from Northern Italy and root the new community in shared cultural imagery. The façade, raised on a shallow podium, features three round arches supported by tall square pillars clad in alternating bands of tuff and travertine—a reference to the Romanesque ablaq technique. Above, a pediment bearing the papal arms of Pius XI crowns the structure. Flanking buttresses house the statues of the Four Evangelists by Francesco Barbieri and reinforce the visual mass of the composition. Initially conceived with more slender proportions and a direct connection to the nave, the final façade introduces a transitional portico and emphasizes horizontality through revised volumes and contrasting materials. The result blends tradition with modern restraint, using familiar forms—tripartite entrance, round arches, decorative brackets—to convey an image both solemn and accessible. Inside, the church follows a single-nave plan with lateral chapels, eventually unified into a continuous side aisle. The nave culminates

in a deep, semi-circular apse, where the presbytery is covered by a barrel vault and lit by four tall windows. The altar, placed on a raised podium, is framed by marble-clad walls and flanked by cantoria balconies above side doors leading to the sacristy and campanile. The 37-meter-high bell tower, positioned beside the apse, features an open travertine belfry and is topped with a bronze replica of Milan's Madonnina, connecting the structure to broader national Catholic symbolism. One-storey auxiliary parish buildings—housing the rectory, oratory, and nursery—flank the cathedral, their low volumes enhancing the church's visual prominence through contrast. The overall composition reflects the regime's pursuit of an architecture that merges rural modesty with ideological monumentality.

Additional Bibliography Clemente Ciammaruconi, *I Salesiani a Littoria tra accordo e consenso al regime fascista. Contributi da una ricerca in corso*, in "Ricerche storiche salesiane", 45, 2004, pp. 471–486; Clemente Ciammaruconi, *Un clero per la «città nuova». I Salesiani da Littoria a Latina, Volume I: 1932–1942*, Roma 2005; Rosanna Del Duca, *L'Agro Pontino e Romano (1930–1940)*, in Pasquale Culotta, Giuliano Gresleri, Glauco Gresleri, eds., *Città di fondazione e plantatio ecclesiae*, Bologna 2007, 58–86; Luigi Monzo, *Croci e fasci: Der italienische Kirchenbau in der Zeit des Faschismus, 1919–1945*, Karlsruhe 2017.

3. Law Court

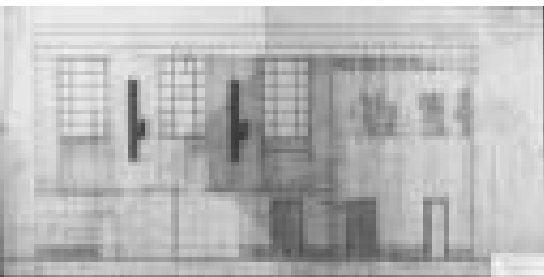
Address Piazza Bruno Buozzi, 1

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1933–36

Original use law court

Current use law court



The Palazzo di Giustizia in Latina was designed as part of the city's establishment as a provincial capital. In 1933, architect Oriolo Frezzotti was commissioned to plan key institutional buildings—including the courthouse, government offices, and financial administration—between Piazza del Littorio (now Piazza del Popolo) and Piazza Dante. Initially planned for Piazza Roma, aligned with Corso Vittorio Emanuele III, the courthouse site was moved after construction was contracted in 1935 to the newly developed Piazza dell'Impero (now Piazza Bruno Buozzi), an undeveloped area chosen to isolate the building and emphasize its civic authority. The courthouse faces Piazza Bruno Buozzi, aligned with Viale Giuseppe Mazzini (formerly Via Adua). The courthouse's monumental presence contrasts with the modest surrounding buildings and terminates a major urban axis that includes Piazza del Quadrato, Viale Italia, the Post Office, Piazza del Popolo, the Financial Offices, and Viale Mazzini, reinforcing its role as a symbol of authority in the provincial capital. Its main façade features a five-bay portico supported by six full-height brick pillars, framed by a trilitic travertine-clad system topped with a modest cornice. The central section is emphasized externally to reflect the internal hierarchy, with the Latin inscription *Iustitia* above the entrance. The building is three stories tall, with a symmetrical rectangular central block flanked by two smaller wings at the rear. Two courtyards flank the central courtroom on the ground floor; the upper floors house the civil and criminal courts. The lateral wings mirror the main block's rhythm but with heavier brick pilasters. Large windows alternate with pillars, and white travertine cladding lends the structure an elegant, solemn character. Interior details, also designed by Frezzotti, include bas-reliefs by Duilio Cambellotti in the Courtroom of Assizes, depicting *The Centaur*, *Justice*, and *The Lion*, alongside symbolic references to Dante and the Gospel.

4. Consorzio di Bonifica

Address corso Giacomo Matteotti, 101

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932

Original use offices and headquarters of the Reclamation Consortium

Current use offices and headquarters of the Reclamation Consortium

The former headquarters of the Consorzio di Bonifica, the public body responsible for land reclamation and water management in the Pontine region, is located along Corso Matteotti and presents a compact, symmetrical volume clad in exposed brick and resting on a travertine base. Organised over two main floors and a semi-basement, the building is defined by a recessed corner entrance set between the main façade and the left-side elevation. This double-height concavity, sheltered by a slender cantilevered canopy, features a large vertical bas-relief depicting the reclaimed territory of the Agro Pontino and the interventions carried out by the Consorzio. Full-height windows emphasise the vertical scale of the entrance and create continuity between levels. The rear elevation is marked by a projecting semicylindrical staircase tower with vertical glazing. Window openings are regularly spaced and framed in travertine, providing contrast against the brick cladding. The right elevation is wider than the left and includes a secondary entrance with an independent stairwell. At the junction with the main façade, the uniform brick surface is interrupted by plastered balconies with aluminium railings that project from the corner. Inside, the staircase is characterised by radial floor patterns, curved wooden handrails, and custom-designed metal balustrades. Large vertical windows in the stair tower ensure continuous natural light and a direct visual connection to the surrounding garden.



5. Opera Nazionale Combattenti

Address piazza del Quadrato, 22

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932-33

Original use offices, meeting spaces

Current use museum

Designed by Oriolo Frezzotti and completed in 1932, the building of the Opera Nazionale Combattenti—responsible for the reclamation works and the construction of Littoria—was one of the city's earliest architectural achievements. The two-storey structure is organised along a central axis. The central body, slightly elevated and accessed via a flight of steps, features five symmetrical columns of windows: brick-framed portals at ground level and arched frames above. The main entrance replicates the design of the ground-floor portals but replaces brick with travertine, lending a more refined appearance. This entrance also supports a balcony at the upper level. Crowning the central portion of the façade are two reclining statues with cornucopias—allegories of abundance—sculpted by Egisto Caldana. The building's side wings, also two storeys, are slightly lower in height and marked by simpler fenestration. Originally, stables for the horses used in land reclamation work were located at the rear of the building, along with vegetables gardens and structures used as market spaces. Today, the structure houses the Museo della Terra Pontina, which documents the transformation of the region through the extensive land reclamation campaigns.

6. Opera Nazionale Balilla

Address piazza San Marco, 1

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932–33

Original use offices, meeting spaces

Current use museum

Located in Piazza Savoia—now Piazza San Marco, named after the adjacent Cathedral of—this building occupies one of the city's most significant civic spaces. It was constructed in 1932 to house the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), a fascist youth organisation established in the 1920s, which converged in 1937 into GIL (Gioventù Italiana del Littorio) barracks. During the Second World War, following bomb damage to the nearby cathedral, it served temporarily as a place of worship and as a shelter for displaced residents. Between the 1950s and 1970s, it functioned as a gymnasium for the adjacent Palazzo Emme school, and in the 1980s it became a satellite facility of Santa Cecilia in Rome. Since 2005, it has housed the Duilio Cambellotti Museum—curated by architect Franco Ziliotto—and the archive of drawings by Oriolo Frezzotti. The building's plan is based on a longitudinal axis of symmetry, along which various volumes are arranged. Facing the piazza is a prominent two-storey semicircular block containing office spaces.



The main entrance, framed by a tall, recessed portal clad in tuff and crowned by a large window with a travertine parapet, leads into a double-height hypostyle hall supported by six columns and connected to a longitudinal volume originally used as a gymnasium (40m x 12m). Flanking this core are two lower wings set back from the main front, housing a fencing hall, storage, changing rooms, and sanitary facilities. The building is raised above street level and accessed via a short flight of steps that aligns with the base course of the façade. When first completed, two statues stood on plinths flanking these steps. The façades are rendered and articulated by a double row of regularly spaced windows. Inside, an upper-level gallery overlooks the entrance hall and offers views into the former gymnasium, now covered by a pitched roof supported by timber trusses. Today, the longitudinal hall hosts the permanent exhibition of Duilio Cambellotti's cartoon for *The Redemption of the Pontine Marshes*, the hypostyle space serves as an information and reception area, and the semicircular block contains a variety of smaller exhibition rooms.

7. Casa del Contadino (demolished)

Address corso Giacomo Matteotti

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932

Original use headquarters for agricultural unions and rural welfare services

Current use residential and commercial tower on the site of the demolished building

The Casa del Contadino (House of the Farmer) once occupied an entire city block bounded by the present-day Corso Giacomo Matteotti (formerly Via Principe di Piemonte), Via Adua (formerly Via G.B. Vico), Via

Don Morosini (formerly Viale Luigi Razza), and Via Carlo Pisacane (formerly Via Lago Ascianghi). The land was acquired in 1935, with design work beginning in 1937 and construction starting the following year under the direction of the Nicola Arcieri & Sons firm. The building was officially inaugurated on 4 December 1938. Architecturally, the building was defined by an irregular hexagonal volume, flanked by two wings. One of these contained a large double-height assembly hall designed to accommodate up to 3,000 people; the other housed the health mutual fund offices, medical clinics, and administrative spaces. The main façade, facing what was then Corso Principe Umberto, featured a portico that led to two small interior courtyards. Four sculptures by Ulderico Conti (1884–1966), representing agricultural themes—*The Sower*, *The Rural Mother*, *Bread*, and *The Worker*—stood along the front. The vestibule was decorated with panels by Walter Roveroni, while the assembly hall featured wall paintings by Ugo Ortona, depicting *The Redemption of the Soil from Swampland*. A central panel by Tommaso Cascella portrayed *Mussolini as Rural Leader*. In May 1961, the property was purchased by Cesare Pennacchi, and the original structure was demolished in 1963. The Pennacchi skyscraper, completed in 1970, now occupies the site.



8. Palazzo del Governo

Address piazza della Libertà

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1934

Original use administrative headquarters

Current use administrative building

Palazzo del Governo is located in Piazza della Libertà, a square crossed longitudinally by two roads and marked at its centre by a fountain. The square is bordered by prominent institutional buildings of the provincial administration, including the former Bank of Italy and the Carabinieri barracks. The Palazzo rises three storeys and features a monumental façade defined by large arches, prominent pilasters, and a projecting central bay. The lateral wings, clad in terracotta brick and travertine, are more compact in volume. The main entrance opens onto a spacious atrium that provides access to internal corridors and staircases. Constructed to house the administrative headquarters of the newly established Province of Latina—created in 1934—the building served as the official seat of the prefecture and provincial offices, reflecting the city's strategic role in the Fascist regime's programme of territorial and institutional expansion in the Agro Pontino. The façade is tripartite and framed by travertine bands bearing commemorative inscriptions. Four interior pilasters articulate the sequence of openings, including large glazed windows that illuminate the Council Chamber and highlight the mural

decorations executed by Duilio Cambellotti in 1934. The two lateral wings align with the adjacent streets: the one on Via Costa includes a secondary entrance and internal stairway, while the wing facing Via Malta is punctuated by evenly spaced windows framed in travertine. Architect Oriolo Frezzotti also designed much of the building's interior furniture and decorative elements, including those in the Council Chamber (formerly the Assembly Hall). In this space, Cambellotti's mural frieze *La Redenzione dell'Agro* (The Redemption of the Land) integrates seamlessly with the architectural setting, underscoring the close collaboration between artist and architect. The Council Chamber—commonly known as the Sala Cambellotti—is among the most significant interior spaces of the city's foundational period. Symmetrically aligned with the building's main axis, the hall expresses a coherent relationship between architecture and urban space. Though modernised with reversible systems such as climate control and audio-visual equipment, the room retains its original artistic integrity. Cambellotti's mural remains the focal point, framed in oak wood panelling and lit with diffuse lighting that enhances its scenographic effect.

Additional Bibliography Lorenzo Grieco, Antonia Lo Rillo, *I palazzi delle amministrazioni a Littoria*, in M.G. D'Amelio, L. Grieco, G. Nicolò, eds., *Palazzi pubblici tra le due guerre mondiali*, Bari 2025, in press.

9. Casa del Combattente

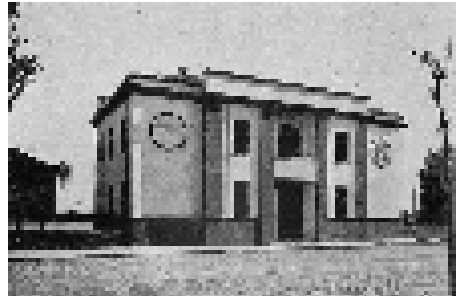
Address piazza San Marco, 4

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932

Original use home to various national associations for veterans, military corps, and war victims

Current use home to various national associations for veterans, military corps, and war victims



The Casa del Combattente is one of the original buildings of Littoria, constructed in 1932 as part of the foundation of the new town.

It was designed by Oriolo Frezzotti within a masterplan featuring a radiocentric layout, with Piazza del Littorio (now Piazza del Popolo) at its core and civic functions arranged along radial axes—religious and educational buildings around Piazza Savoia, and agricultural institutions near Piazza del Quadrato. The building originally housed several veterans' associations established in the aftermath of the First World War, including the Associazione Nazionale Combattenti, the Associazione Madri e Vedove dei Caduti in Guerra, and the Associazione Mutilati di Guerra. The building presents a symmetrical layout, with a linear façade facing the square that echoes the architectural language of the adjacent ex-ONB building, sharing similar volumes, materials and finishes. The main elevation is distinguished by a central projecting volume marked by a deeply recessed entrance portal and an upper balcony. The façade, clad in tuff, is rhythmically divided by pilaster strips framing the windows and entryway, above which sits a loggia. Four sculptural roundels by Egisto Caldana, located on the front and side façades, allegorically depict scenes from the First World War: a soldier's farewell, departure, combat, and injury. Inside, the plan is arranged along a central axis, leading from the entrance hall to a large double-height assembly hall terminating in an apse with a coffered barrel vault. The central hall distributes

access to offices on either side, with a staircase leading to the upper floor originally designed for accommodation. The building also houses meeting rooms, exhibition spaces, and historical memorabilia. Notable features include a large marble slab engraved with General Diaz's "Bollettino della Vittoria" (Victory Bulletin) dated 4 November 1918, and a plaster maquette of the eagle sculpture crowning the city's Monument to the Fallen, also designed by Frezzotti between 1959 and 1965. Today, the Casa del Combattente remains the seat of several national associations, continuing to serve a commemorative and civic role within Latina's urban and institutional landscape.

10. Casa del Fascio

Address corso della Repubblica, 238

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1938-42

Original use home to the Fascist Party

Current use offices for the State Police and the Guardia di Finanza

When, in 1934, Littoria became a provincial capital, a new bigger home for the Fascist Party, once in the town hall, was needed. Designed by architect Oriolo Frezzotti, the new Casa del Fascio, also known as Palazzo M for its M-Shaped floorplan, an homage to the initial letter of Mussolini himself, building symbolised the regime's ambition to assert power

and control through imposing design.

The building's massive footprint, shaped roughly like a giant "M," measures approximately 90 by 87 metres.

Constructed of reinforced concrete with travertine cladding, the four-storey structure presents a stern and authoritative façade. The design contrasts a heavy, compact ground floor with lighter upper levels featuring projecting pilasters and expansive glazing. Though originally planned with decorative bas-reliefs depicting heroic male figures and Fascist symbols such as the fasces and eagle, these were never executed. The principal entrance leads to an apsidal hall with concealed side passages for dignitaries, reflecting the regime's hierarchical control. A prominent feature was a planned 40-metre tower crowned by a travertine eagle—intended as a powerful Fascist symbol—but it was demolished post-war. Internally, the building included a sacrario dedicated to Fascist martyrs, designed to evoke solemnity with marble and mosaic decoration and subdued lighting from an oculus. This space, like much of the interior ornamentation and furniture—such as ebony chairs and a grand marble relief of the Duce—remained unfinished due to wartime austerity.

Additional Bibliography Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta, eds., *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio nella Regione Lazio*, Firenze 2006; *La Guardia di Finanza e Palazzo «M» a Latina*, Latina 2014.

11. Stadium

Address piazzale Natale Prampolini, 1

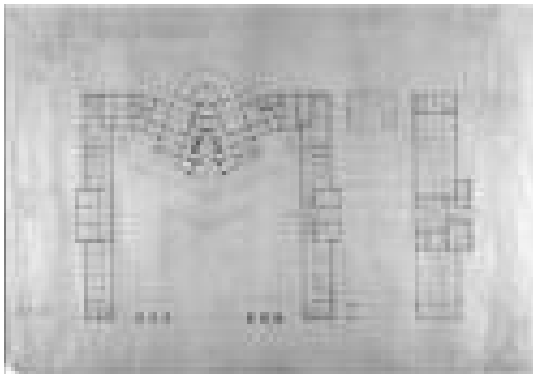
Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1932-35

Original use stadium

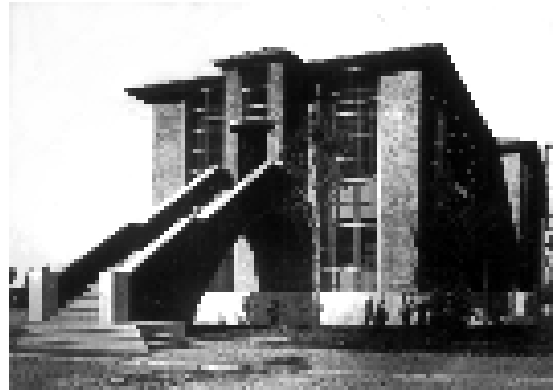
Current use stadium

Sport held significant importance during the fascist era, promoted as a means to foster physical fitness, discipline, and national pride, with facilities like this stadium embodying the



regime's emphasis on athleticism as a social and political tool. The stadium's origins date back to the 1932 city master plan of Littoria (now Latina), designed by architect Oriolo Frezzotti. Initially planned as a "campo sportivo" enclosed within a hexagonal structure, the design evolved by 1935 into a trapezoidal layout. The monumental building comprises two apsidal wings with flat terrace roofs across two floors, connected by a tall seven-bay portico. The portico is marked by six semi-cylindrical pilasters, each housing staircases and topped with flagpoles. The lateral wings feature rhythmic walls with horizontal slit windows resting on a continuous sill. The upper floor recesses to form a loggia. Originally, the interior included changing rooms, restrooms, an official's lounge, and a caretaker's apartment. The structural system combines tuff masonry, bricks, reinforced concrete, and iron beams supporting the floors. The complex includes a prominent water tower behind the central stand, part of the municipal aqueduct system. Construction began in 1932, with the main entrance completed for the city's inauguration by Mussolini in December 1932. The athletic track and a single western stand were finished by 1935. Damaged during World War II, the stadium underwent major repairs in the late 1940s. Over the decades, various modifications expanded and modernized the stands, entrances, and facilities. The stadium was renamed "Domenico Francioni" in 1996, honoring the president of Latina Calcio.

Additional Bibliography Gerardo Doti, *L'architettura per lo sport come tema urbano: lo stadio Domenico Francioni di Latina, dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, in "Bollettino del centro di studi per la storia dell'architettura", 4, 2020, 80-82.



12 Post Office

Address piazzale dei Bonificatori, 8

Designer Angiolo Mazzoni

Dates 1933-35

Original use post ant telegraph office

Current use post office

The Provincial Post and Telegraph Office, located near the Town Hall Square and close to the church, was originally a simple two-story building with a gently sloping tiled roof. Its façade was notably characterized by semi-circular metal grilles that acted as mosquito screens over the windows, giving the building a distinctive appearance. Before Littoria became the provincial capital in 1934, architect Angiolo Mazzoni was commissioned to design an expansion. His initial proposal, which included an autonomous volume connected by a bridge, was rejected, and the final project added a perpendicular wing that altered the building's original proportions and its relationship with the surrounding urban environment. The building was part of Mussolini's vision for the new city and was inaugurated on December 18, 1932, with Mussolini, Ciano, and Marinetti in attendance; from here, Marinetti sent the first telegram to King Victor Emmanuel III. During the expansion, Mussolini ordered the removal of the expressive mosquito grilles, which diminished the building's unified archi-

tectural character. Subsequent modifications in 1969, including the removal of the external staircase, resulted in only the narrow northern side of the original structure remaining intact today.

Additional Bibliography *Angiolo Mazzoni (1894-1979): architetto nell'Italia tra le due guerre*, Bologna, 1984; *Angiolo Mazzoni (1894-1979): Architetto ingegnere del ministero delle comunicazioni*, Milan 2003; Edith Neudecker, *Gli edifici postali in Italia durante il fascismo*, Latina 2007; *Palazzo delle poste e telegrafi di Sabaudia. Contributi per un restauro*, Rome 2010; Katrin Albrecht, *Angiolo Mazzoni : Architekt der italienischen Moderne*, Berlin 2017.

13. Railway Station

Address piazzale Leila Caetani

Designer Angiolo Mazzoni

Dates 1932-34

Original use railway station

Current use railway station

Located in an outer district, the station occupies a strategic site along the historic road from Latina to the Appian Way, once known as Via dell'Epitaffio—named after the commemorative inscription celebrating Pope Pius VI's land reclamation. Originally built with a rural and domestic character, the station played a crucial role in supporting the reclamation of the Pontine Marshes by facilitating the transport of essential materials. The early structure featured a pale hazelnut-coloured plaster finish, an external staircase leading to staff quarters on the upper floor, and a modest layout. At ground level, the entrance stood on a stepped base and was marked by a semi-circular apse with five radial reinforced concrete columns clad in Cisterna travertine. Inside, the layout included a ticket hall, baggage deposit, restaurant area, and waiting room, with access to the platforms through a rear entrance. Following the establishment of Littoria as a provincial capital in 1934, the station was significantly expanded. The project, again en-

trusted to architect Angiolo Mazzoni, reflected his evolving architectural language influenced by Futurism. Unlike the original load-bearing masonry structure, the extension was built in reinforced concrete and clad entirely in Cisterna travertine. A flat roof replaced the former gabled one, and curved anti-malarial grilles were added to the windows. External staircases were removed, and new canopies were installed. The interiors were updated to meet the standards of a provincial station. Enhancements included long glass ribbon chandeliers by Vannini in the ticket hall and cipollino marble finishes in the station master's office. On 9 April 1945, by Lieutenant's Decree no. 270 issued by Umberto of Savoy, Littoria was officially renamed Latina, and the station took the new name Latina Scalo. In 2018, the station underwent a comprehensive refurbishment.

Additional Bibliography Sara di Resta, *Architettura moderna come palinsesto: la stazione di Littoria [Latina] di Angiolo Mazzoni (1932-2022)*, in "Lexicon", 34, 2022, pp. 49-60.



Notes



Sabaudia

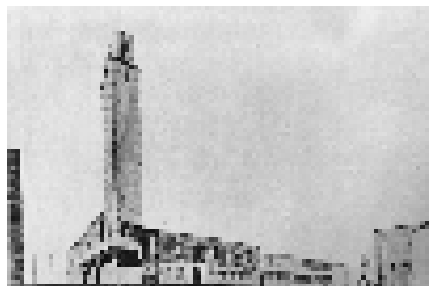
Founded in 1933, Sabaudia was the second of the planned cities in the Agro Pontino, following Littoria. Dedicated to the House of Savoy, it stands out from the other foundation towns for its striking natural setting—positioned between lake and sea, and protected by the nearby Circeo National Park, established in 1934. The city

is uniquely located: embraced by the arms of Lake Paola and set just behind the coastal dunes, it connects with the sea without directly overlooking it. Though initially intended to support agricultural development, its position and layout quietly anticipated its later transformation into a sea-side resort. The city's masterplan

emerged from a national design competition won by young architects—Luigi Piccinato, Gino Cancellotti, Eugenio Montuori, and Alfredo Scalpelli—who organized the town around two intersecting orthogonal axes. At their crossing point lie two main squares: Piazza del Comune, framed by arcades and flanked by a cinema, hotel, and shops, and the former Piazza delle Adunate (now del Parco), which opens scenically toward the lake. The original plan already included a bridge to the coast, later built after WWII by Riccardo Morandi—an early sign of Sabaudia's future as a destination for leisure and tourism.

General Bibliography Luigi Piccinato, *Il significato urbanistico di Sabaudia*, in “Urbanistica”, III, 12 (gennaio-febbraio 1934), 10-25; *Criteri generali e caratteristiche del Piano Regolatore di Sabaudia*, in “Architettura”, 6 (June 1934); Riccardo Mariani, *Fascismo e città nuove*, Milano 1976; Giuseppe Pasquali and Pasquale Pinna, eds., *Sabaudia, 1933-1934*, Milano 1985; Alessandra Muntoni, *Sabaudia*, Roma 1988; Eugenio Lo Sardo, ed., *Divina geometria: modelli urbani degli anni Trenta*: Asmara, Addis Abeba, Harar, Olettà, Littoria, Sabaudia, Pontinia, Borghi, Siena 1997; Giorgio Muratore, Daniela Carfagna, Mario Tieghi, ed., *Sabaudia, 1934: il sogno di una città nuova e l'architettura razionalista*, London 1998; Giorgio Pellegrini, Massimiliano Vittori, eds., *Sabaudia 1933-1943: l'utopia mediterranea del razionalismo*, Latina 2002; Paolo Micalizzi and Alfredo Passeri, eds., *Sabaudia nei disegni del fondo Cancellotti*, Latina 2010.

Main archives ONC Archive, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome; Centro Documentazione Angiolo Mazzoni, Sabaudia; Archivio Luigi Piccinato, Rome.



I. Town Hall

Address Piazza del Comune, 1

Designers Gino Cancellotti, Eugenio Montuori, Luigi Piccinato, Alfredo Scalpelli

Dates 1933-34

Original use offices, residential

Current use offices, museum

The Town Hall of Sabaudia stands as both the civic nucleus and a powerful symbol of the city's political identity during the Fascist era, when elected mayors were replaced by state-appointed podestà. Strategically sited between the town's two main squares, its civic tower asserts a commanding presence over the urban landscape. A long balcony—*arengario*—extends from the administrative offices, conceived specifically for public addresses and mass gatherings. The façade facing Piazza della Rivoluzione is composed and monumental, with a solid travertine base and brick-clad upper section. In contrast, the elevation towards Piazza delle Adunate opens up with a portico and a sweeping balcony that visually connects the tower to the adjacent wings. The building adopts a C-shaped plan that embraces a central courtyard, open towards Lake Paola and framed by an elegant elevated walkway linking the lateral wings. The internal organisation reflects a rigorous functional and hierarchical layout: the ground floor accommodated health services, veterinary offices, local police, and tax administration. The piano nobile hosted the town's principal offices, including those of

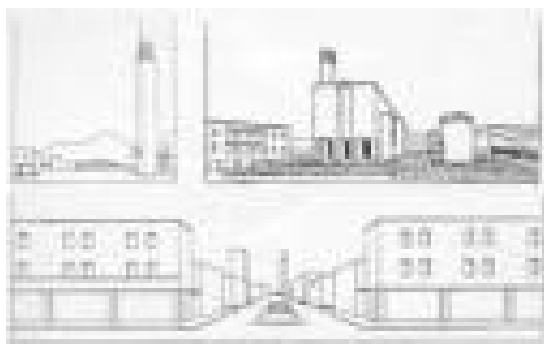
the podestà, civil registry, accounting, and secretarial services. The offices of the podestà and his deputy had direct access to the arengario, reinforcing their role in public ceremonial life. The top floor was reserved for residential quarters, housing the secretary and the building's custodian. The civic tower, placed at the corner of the building, served a dual function: it housed the town's clock and acted as a symbolic platform for public speech—an arengo. Its prominent location made it a visual landmark for anyone arriving from Via Roma, functioning as what architect Marcello Piacentini described in 1934 as an “urban beacon.” The structure is entirely modern in its construction: a reinforced concrete frame with brick infill and travertine cladding. Vertical circulation is provided by both stair and lift. Early architectural drawings reveal that the tower was originally conceived as the intersection of two volumes: a lower, compact travertine block facing Piazza della Rivoluzione, and a taller, articulated brick volume at the rear, pierced with openings and containing the staircase to the rooftop terrace. In a later design phase, to enhance its monumental character, the tower was revised into a more unified composition—its shaft entirely clad in travertine. A loggia was added at the top, drawing on traditional Italian bell tower forms to lend the structure a more ceremonial silhouette. Particular attention was paid to surface finishes, especially flooring. In the courtyard, alternating bands of cobblestone and travertine define the space. Inside, a rich variety of polychrome marbles was used to distinguish different rooms and functions: red porphyry from Nord Carrara in the council chamber; Lipos marble from Vicenza in the podestà's offices; Valdagno marble in waiting areas; and deep red Magnaboschi marble on staircases and landings. Skirtings and door surrounds were executed in Nord black, Reale grey, and Chiampo onyx—materials carefully sourced from Carrara and the Vicenza region, underlining the building's institutional and representational role.

Additional Bibliography Lorenzo Grieco, *L'architettura dei palazzi comunali del Lazio durante il ventennio fascista*, in Andrea Longhi, ed., *Urban Processes of Adaptation and Resilience Between Permanence and Precariousness*, Torino 2024, 342-355.

2. Santissima Annunziata Church

Address Piazza Regina Margherita, 6
Designers Gino Cancellotti, Eugenio Montuori, Luigi Piccinato, Alfredo Scalpelli
Dates 1933-34
Original use church
Current use church

Located in Piazza Regina Margherita, alongside the baptistery, parish house, and nursery, the Church of the Annunziata occupies a somewhat secluded position compared to Sabaudia's town hall. The piazza itself is named after Queen Margherita of Savoy, who visited the town in 1904. The church rests on a broad stepped base, with a façade pierced by a portico and clad in travertine slabs arranged in alternating horizontal bands of two tones. Above the portico of the main entrance is a large mosaic (14.4 by 3.8 metres) commissioned from Ferruccio Ferrazzi by Orsolino Cencelli, commissioner of the Opera Nazionale Combattenti. The mosaic depicts the Madonna of the Annunciation beneath a blessing angel, set against a landscape representing the



reclaimed land, Sabaudia's town square, and the "Battle of the Grain," featuring an iconic image of Mussolini threshing wheat. The external side walls are faced with red brick. On the left side of the church rises the 46-metre-high bell tower, entirely clad in travertine and housing four bells cast in 1934 at the historic Luceno foundry in Rome. To the right of the church's forecourt stands a detached circular baptistery, also clad in travertine. The church measures 55 metres in length, 29 metres in width, and 22 metres in height. The structure is in reinforced concrete. Inside, a single central nave extends towards a semicircular apse flanked by three semicircular chapels on each side. Natural light floods the interior through large side windows. In 1967, six new polychrome stained-glass windows were installed in the apse. Over the entrance is a lofted space for the organ and choir. The raised presbytery is accessed by gentle ramps, with two marble pulpits at its sides. Beneath the presbytery are entrances to the crypt. To the left is the royal chapel, with wooden cladding relocated from the chapel (1901) of Palazzo Margherita in Rome; to the right, the sacristy and convent facilities. The adjoining rectory overlooks the cloister's upper level and contains parish offices, catechesis classrooms, and association rooms on the ground floor, with clergy quarters, refectory, and related services above.

Additional Bibliography Daniela Carfagna, Clemente Ciammaruconi, Augusto Martellini, *La SS. Annunziata tra palude e città: Fatti, documenti, immagini e testimonianze per la storia di Sabaudia*, Sabaudia 1996; Clemente Ciammaruconi, Augusto Martellini, *La SS. Annunziata. 70 anni di storia e di fede 1935-2005*, Sabaudia 2005; Rosanna Del Duca, *L'Agro Pontino e Romano (1930-1940)*, in Pasquale Culotta, Giuliano Gresleri, Glaucio Gresleri, eds., *Città di fondazione e plantatio ecclesiae*, Bologna 2007, 58-86.



3. Post Office

Address Via Piemonte 4

Designer Angiolo Mazzoni

Dates 1933-34

Original use postal distribution and hub, also offering telegraph services

Current use municipal library and documentation centre

Designed by Angiolo Mazzoni, a prominent architect of the Transport and Communication Ministry during the Fascist period, the Post Office of Sabaudia is a significant example of Italian Rationalism. The structure stands on a slightly elevated platform, accessed by a striking travertine and red marble staircase, and clad in Blue Savoy mosaic tiles, giving the building a distinctive chromatic identity. The layout is organised over two levels. The ground floor housed the public counters, postal services, and administrative offices. The upper floor, more modest in scale, was originally the caretaker's residence. Characteristic features include integrated mosquito screens, custom-designed handrails, and a clear internal distribution of spaces reflecting Rationalist ideals of order and efficiency. The 2011 restoration carefully preserved the building's original materials and finishes, reinforcing its architectural integrity and reaffirming its role as a civic landmark. Today, it hosts the "Angiolo Mazzoni" Documentation Centre and the "Feliciano Iannella" Municipal Library.

Additional Bibliography Angiolo Mazzoni (1894-1979): *architetto nell'Italia tra le due guerre*, Bologna, 1984; Angiolo Mazzoni (1894-1979): *Architetto ingegnere del ministero delle comunicazioni*, Milan 2003; Edith Neudecker, *Gli edifici postali in Italia durante il fascismo*, Latina 2007; *Palazzo delle poste e telegrafi di Sabaudia. Contributi per un restauro*, Rome 2010; Katrin Albrecht, *Angiolo Mazzoni : Architekt der italienischen Moderne*, Berlin 2017.

4. Casa del Fascio

Address Piazza del Comune, 3

Designers Gino Cancellotti, Eugenio Montuori, Luigi Piccinato, Alfredo Scalpelli

Dates 1933–34

Original use local headquarters of the Fascist Party

Current use headquarters of the Guardia di Finanza

Built in 1933 by the four architects who won the planning competition, the former Casa del Fascio forms part of a larger urban block with mixed functions. It stands out in volume and design, creating a visual dialogue with the town hall and aligning with the axial perspective that culminates in the Church of the Annunziata. The façade is defined by a three-part portico, accessed via a stepped travertine base, and by a 19-metre-high tower, which rises as a sculptural element on the square. The tower was not part of the original design and was added later, replacing a vertical windowed stairwell. Material choices reflect the constructive ethos of the town. The main structure is in reinforced concrete, with travertine cladding the portico columns and steps. The upper surfaces are finished in plain plaster, while the tower features a brick facing that adds texture and contrast. Elements of iron and glass are used where transparency or structural lightness is required, contributing to the building's overall sense of functional clarity and austerity.

Additional Bibliography Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta, eds., *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio nella Regione Lazio*, Firenze 2006.

5. Piezometric Tower

Address Via degli Aquilani

Designer Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1933–34

Original use water tower and silos

Current use the water reservoir is now disused; the structure is currently used for transmissions, as its height allows for signal reception.

Standing just over twenty metres above sea level, the piezometric tower of Sabaudia is located on Via degli Aquilani. Travelling along Migliara 53 from the inland towards the coast, the tower appears to the left—on the threshold between farmland and urban fabric. Its form evokes a watchtower, marking the transformation of the Pontine Marshes through reclamation and planning. The structure served primarily as an elevated water reservoir, using gravity and Stevino's principle of communicating vessels to supply pressurised water to the town. With a 5-metre diameter and height of over 25 metres, it was placed at Sabaudia's highest point to maximise water pressure. Water was pumped from wells or aqueducts into the 360 m³ tank, then distributed through a dense pipe network. The lower portion functioned as a grain silo, with a machinery room at its base and a large rectangular fountain basin fed by three ground-level nozzles. Architect Oriolo Frezzotti designed the tower in harmony with Sabaudia's architectural language—rural austerity shaped by classical rationalism. The fluted shaft recalls a giant column, and the exterior hints at the internal layout through subtle horizontal divisions. A hidden terrace crowns the top. Internally, a staircase runs through a 70 cm annular cavity, reinforcing the structure by linking the silo to the outer shell. Materials were modest but deliberate: travertine clads the exterior, while the fountain once featured blue mosaic tiles, echoing those in Sabaudia's former post office.

Additional Bibliography Aleksa Korolija, *Architetture del tuttotoondo. Le torri dell'acqua nelle città di fondazione dell'Agro Pontino*, in "Festival dell'Architettura Magazine", 62–63 (March 2023), 38–52.

Notes



Pontinia

Founded in 1935, Pontinia was the third new town established in the Agro Pontino, following Littoria and Sabaudia. Conceived as part of the fascist regime's rural colonization plan, Pontinia exemplified the anti-urban ideals promoted by Mussolini: small, functional centers embedded in the agricultural landscape, meant

to disperse urban populations and reinforce the connection between land and labor. Unlike Sabaudia, which was awarded through an open architectural competition, Pontinia was designed directly by the technical office of the Opera Nazionale Combattenti (ONC), with engineering oversight by Alfredo Pappalardo and urban

contributions by architect Oriolo Frezzotti. The site—chosen in secret to avoid land speculation—was located between Littoria and Sabaudia, on recently drained land engineered to resist future flooding. Although intended to be more modest than its predecessors, Pontinia maintained the symbolic and spatial elements common to fascist planning: a central piazza framed by public buildings such as the Casa del Fascio, the town hall, and the church, with less emphasis on residential blocks. The result was a compact town that reflected the regime's ambition to reshape rural Italy in a blend of architecture, ideology, and engineered landscape.

General Bibliography Riccardo Mariani, *Fascismo e città nuove*, Milano 1976; Silvio Buffoli, *Dalla palude a Pontinia: raccolta di testimonianze dei veri artefici di Pontinia*, Pontinia 1980; Claudio Galeazzi, *Pontinia: tra storia e cronaca*, Pontinia 1985; Eugenio Lo Sardo, ed., *Divina geometria: modelli urbani degli anni Trenta: Asmara, Addis Abeba, Harar, Oletta, Littoria, Sabaudia, Pontinia, Borghi*, Siena 1997; Claudio Galeazzi, *Pontinia*, Latina 2004; Lorenzo Grieco, *Modernità Agreste: Pontinia e l'architettura moderna nell'Agro Pontino*, Bari 2025.

Main archives ONC Archive, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome.



I. Town Hall

Address piazza Indipendenza, 1

Designers Alfredo Pappalardo, Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1934–35

Original use municipal offices

Current use municipal offices

Pontinia's town hall is the symbolic and visual centerpiece of the city, designed by Oriolo Frezzotti and Alfredo Pappalardo as the most prominent building of the original urban core. Located just south of the main civic square (Piazza Indipendenza, formerly Piazza 28 Ottobre), the building anchors the axis of the city's main approach, now Via Italia. The composition is marked by a powerful central tower—square in plan (10×10 m) and nearly 28 meters high—that projects from a horizontally developed base. This tower, set on the building's axis, features a monumental travertine portal and a ceremonial balcony above. Flanking the tower are two symmetrical wings, each 27×11 m and about 12 m high, giving the building a tripartite composition of one vertical and two horizontal volumes. The form echoes Frezzotti's earlier design for the Littoria town hall but emphasizes horizontal massing and a strong material unity through the consistent use of exposed brickwork. Unlike Littoria's clear material contrasts, here the restrained use of travertine underscores key elements like the base, cornices, balconies, and the sculptural entry portal. The design expresses an austere, monumental modernism with agricultural undertones—reflecting the rural mission of Pontinia. The masonry, modest interiors (except for a few representational rooms finished in marble), and low construction costs (approx. 65 lire/m³) all signal economic pragmatism. Travertine is used selectively and symbolically, especially in the central portal that forms a stylized reference to Renaissance palazzi. Above it, an inscription quotes Mussolini:

"It is the plough that draws the furrow, but it is the sword that defends it..." This slogan encaps-

ulates the dual ideology of agrarian renewal and militaristic nationalism promoted by the fascist regime.

Completed rapidly between March and October 1935 by the Genoese firm Carena & Figli, the building reflects pre-autarchic construction practices, featuring reinforced concrete, iron-framed windows, and metal-mesh floors—all materials soon to be banned under autarchic policies. The tower's upper cornice bears Mussolini's quote from the inauguration of Littoria, paired with the "Sword and Plough" emblem of the Opera Nazionale Combattenti beside the entrance. These elements reinforce Pontinia's identity as a model of fascist rural reclamation, blending civic pride with propaganda. The façade also carries a marble plaque denouncing the League of Nations' sanctions, linking the town's founding to the broader geopolitical context and mythologizing its construction as an act of resistance and national pride.

Additional Bibliography Lorenzo Grieco, *L'architettura dei palazzi comunali del Lazio durante il ventennio fascista*, in Andrea Longhi, ed., *Urban Processes of Adaptation and Resilience Between Permanence and Pre-cariousness*, Torino 2024, 342-355.

2. Sant'Anna Church

Address piazza Papa Pio VI, 10

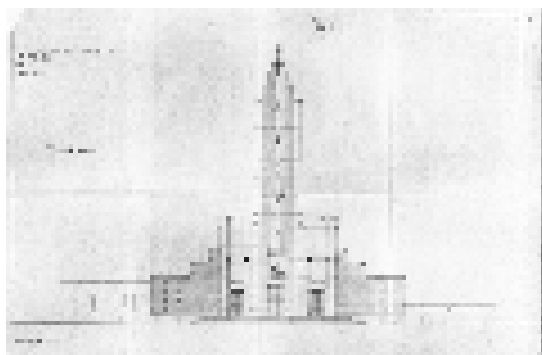
Designers Alfredo Pappalardo, Oriolo Frezzotti

Dates 1934-35

Original use church

Current use church

Located in Piazza Pio VI, just behind the Town Hall, the parish church of Pontinia anchors the town's original layout. Built on marshy ground, the site was stabilised through the excavation of a drainage canal and the use of black locust (robinia) piles, chosen for their durability in wet conditions. The church terminates the town's main visual axis—formerly Viale del Duce (now Via Ca-



vour and Via Cesare Battisti)—which served as the primary approach from Migliara 48. At the end of this axis, a tall, double-pitched travertine façade rises, crowned by a striking central bell tower. While the façade is clad entirely in travertine, the sides are finished in exposed brick with stone used only for plinths and cornices. At 42 metres, the bell tower is a prominent landmark, significantly taller than the adjacent municipal building. Uncommon in Italian ecclesiastical design, its composition recalls northern Gothic architecture, and has been described as Novecento style with Norman influences. A comparable precedent is the Church of Notre-Dame du Raincy near Paris (1922–23) by Auguste and Gustave Perret—a modern take on Gothic architecture in reinforced concrete. Initial plans by Alfredo Pappalardo featured a contrasting material palette: brick for the tower and travertine for the lower wings, resembling Littoria's church. The original tower was pierced by windows and decorated with stepped cornices, but the result was visually dense and unbalanced. In the final version by Oriolo Frezzotti, the tower became blind, and the cornices extended vertically into a stepped gable topped by a cross—referencing Art Deco and northern European forms. Reliefs of the Evangelists and a sculpture of Saint Anne with the Virgin child (by Elvio Petrioli, 1940) animate the central axis above the main portal. The interior comprises a single nave (17 × 25 metres) flanked by side chapels, designed to accommodate 1,000 worshippers based on demographic projections. The presbytery at

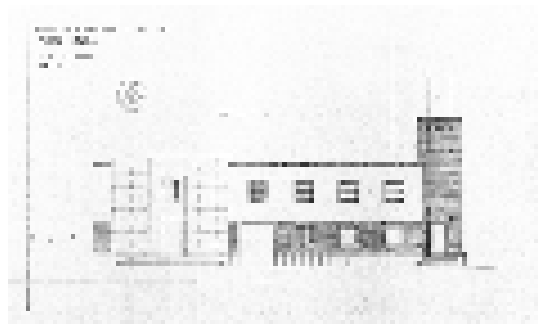
the east end—elevated and enclosed by a marble balustrade—features cantilevered pulpits and a detached high altar with a polychrome marble dossal. A post-Vatican II altar enables celebration versus populum. Side chapels originally clad in travertine were later decorated with mosaics. A small organ loft sits above the entrance, and the sacristy, accessed from the choir, houses storage, offices, and the priest's residence. The structure is built in reinforced concrete: the bell tower rests on a raft foundation; the nave on a perimeter beam. Walls are in mixed stone and brick. A curved concrete ceiling includes recessed bays originally meant for lighting. Windows are metal-framed with coloured glass, creating a subdued, mystical atmosphere. Materials reflect austerity: brick, plaster, and limited use of coloured marble, reserved for liturgical elements. Adjacent to the church is the former Rosa Mantoni Mussolini nursery school, managed by the municipality and run by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Jeanne-Antide Thouret. Designed for full-day care, it included classrooms, a kitchen, and a refectory capable of transforming into a chapel via a mobile partition.

Additional Bibliography Rosanna Del Duca, *L'Agro Pontino e Romano (1930-1940)*, in Pasquale Culotta, Giuliano Gresleri, Glauco Gresleri, eds., *Città di fondazione e plantatio ecclesiae*, Bologna 2007, 58-86.

3. Casa del Fascio

Address via Camillo Benso Conte di Cavour, 24
Designers Alfredo Pappalardo, Oriolo Frezzotti
Dates 1934-35
Original use home to the Fascist Party
Current use library

In Pontinia, the Casa del Fascio occupies a prominent position along Viale del Duce, reflecting its symbolic role in the Fascist regime. It housed the National Fascist Party offices, affiliated unions, and the M.V.S.N. (a paramilitary force), with the building's layout and



architecture expressing ideological symbolism. Its elongated rectangular plan, with projecting elements and dual wings, subtly recalls the fascio littorio. The eastern wing served the M.V.S.N., while the western housed various party-affiliated organisations. The contrasting entrances—one austere, the other monumental with travertine detailing—reflect hierarchical functions. Materials and finishes reinforce this symbolism: exposed brick, limited use of travertine, and modest interiors, with Carrara marble reserved for the ceremonial staircase. Structurally conventional, the building features rubble masonry, reinforced concrete bands, varied floor systems, and mosquito-screened windows, all pointing to a mix of pragmatic and representational concerns.

Additional Bibliography Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta, eds., *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio nella Regione Lazio*, Firenze 2006.

4. Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro and Cinema

Address piazza Indipendenza, 9
Designers Alfredo Pappalardo, Oriolo Frezzotti
Dates 1934-35
Original use leisure spaces, cinema
Current use theatre, restaurants

The OND building in Pontinia served as the local headquarters of the Fascist workers' lei-

sure organisation, designed to structure free time and reinforce social control. Strategically located between Piazza 28 Ottobre, Viale del Re, and Via Sisto V, it anchors the urban fabric of the agrarian new town and faces the hotel–post office block across the square, completing a formal symmetry. The building’s mistilinear plan responds to the irregular geometry of the site, with a main entrance placed diagonally at the corner intersection. This entrance is marked by a curving travertine stair and canopy bearing the initials OND, above which three large windows provide vertical emphasis. A vestibule with a curved rear wall acts as a distribution hub between the two main wings: the northern volume houses a cinema-theatre; the southern wing contains leisure and club spaces. A centrally located bar serves both areas. The cinema, accessed separately from Viale del Re, is preceded by a marble-clad portico with porthole windows. Inside, a horseshoe-shaped auditorium evokes the Italian theatre tradition, with a tall, drum-like roof lantern pierced by angled windows—classical in inspiration, modern in treatment. The southern wing includes offices, games rooms, reading rooms, a billiard room, and a ballroom. The latter, paved in Venetian mosaic and opening onto a garden via three full-height windows, was both a social centre and a tool of ideological conditioning, in line with Fascist control over public entertainment. Materials are modest but carefully composed: rendered walls, travertine and bardiglio marble detailing, and restrained decorative elements. The architecture balances rational planning with symbolic visibility, embodying the regime’s intent to fuse leisure, propaganda, and civic life.

5. Post and Telegraphs

Address piazza Indipendenza, 13

Designers Alfredo Pappalardo, Oriolo Frezzotti

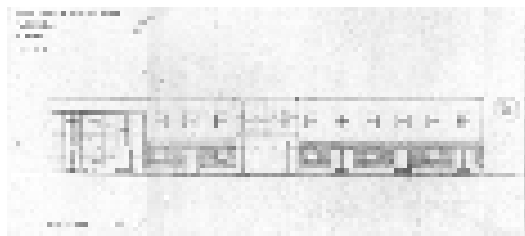
Dates 1934–35

Original use post and telegraph offices

Current use post office

Crucial for communication in the vast Agro Pontino, the Post and Telegraph Offices in Pontinia were originally designed in 1934 as a standalone building. Later, they were incorporated into a larger complex on Piazza 28 Ottobre that also includes a hotel, following Pappalardo’s masterplan and built by the Tironi company. The building occupies a prominent corner at Viale del Re and Viale del Duce, arranged on an M-shaped plan with clean, squared volumes reflecting restrained modernism, distinct from the local rural vernacular. Facades alternate between brick and render, with travertine highlighting the hotel and postal entrances along the central axis. The Post and Telegraph Offices form an L-shaped wing at the piazza and Viale del Re intersection. The ground floor features a spacious double-height public hall with service counters, telephone booths, telegraph offices, staff rooms, and the director’s office, accessed from both the piazza and avenue. Separate entrances lead to sorting areas and staff apartments. Built with traditional techniques—rubble foundations, tuff and brick walls, reinforced concrete lintels, and Miozzi-style floors—the building’s modernity shines through its refined materials and detailing. Travertine cladding contrasts with brick and render, while large windows with ribbed glass and duraluminium frames create a dynamic texture and colour interplay.

Additional Bibliography Edith Neudecker, *Gli edifici postali in Italia durante il fascismo*, Latina 2007.



Notes



Aprilia

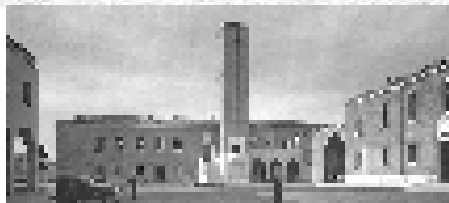
Founded in 1937, Aprilia was the fourth and most significant new town established in the Agro Pontino as part of the fascist regime's rural colonization efforts. Designed by the architectural group 2PTS—Petrucci, Tufaroli, Paolini, and Silenzi—, the project won a competition in 1935 and was built in just 18 months. The city was laid

out following the ancient Roman principles of the *cardo* and *decumanus*, positioned strategically between the Nettunense road and the future Mediana (SS 148). At its core stood Piazza del Municipio (now Piazza Roma), framed by the Civic and Bell Towers, symbolic vertical elements that blended medieval Italian tradition with

modern architectural language. Aprilia's urban plan featured a regular grid of homogeneous blocks, interspersed with public and green spaces, reflecting the regime's emphasis on order and social cohesion. Residential zones radiated semi-circularly from the centre, with terraced houses and villas designed to ensure sunlight access and community well-being. The use of local materials, particularly red brick, earned Aprilia the nickname "La Fabbrica" from Allied forces during World War II. Though heavily damaged by bombings, key landmarks such as the church of San Michele, the Casa del Fascio, and the town hall survived. Post-war reconstruction and industrial growth transformed Aprilia from a planned rural settlement into a dynamic industrial city.

General Bibliography Concezio Petrucci, Mario Tufaroli, Emanuele Filiberto Paolini, Riccardo Silenzi, *Un centro rurale dell'Agro Pontino: Aprilia*, in «L'architettura italiana», XXXIII, 8, August 1938, 237-249; Riccardo Mariani, *Fascismo e città nuove*, Milano 1976; Giovanni Papi, ed., *Aprilia: città della terra: Arte Architettura Urbanistica*, Roma 2005.

Main archives ONC Archive, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome.



1. Town Hall (demolished)

Address piazza Roma

Designers 2PTS

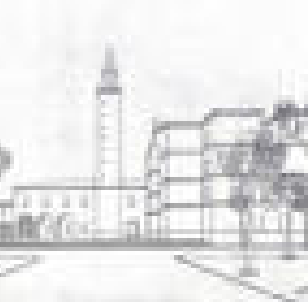
Dates 1935-36

Original use municipal offices

Facing the piazza, Aprilia's Town Hall was a traditionally styled brick building, contrasted by a rationalist, geometric civic tower. Key architectural features included a monumental staircase leading to the first floor, a tower with a balcony-arengo, and a portico with three arches connecting the building to the nearby Carabinieri barracks. These prominent elements were clad in travertine up to the first floor, emphasising their civic importance, while the tower above was faced with tufa slabs arranged in a rectangular grid, highlighting verticality and modularity. The building's L-shaped plan opened onto the piazza, with the main entrance at ground level housing public offices such as health, registry, treasury, customs, and taxation. A small guardroom sat beside the entrance, and a garage was located at one end. The first floor, accessed by the grand staircase beside the tower, contained a large representative hall, technical offices, and the accounting department. In the wing facing the barracks were the offices of the podestà (mayor), vice-podestà, and secretary; the podestà's office and adjacent lounge had private access to a balcony above the corner arches. These arches formed the façade of a quadriportico extending deep into the building's rear, opening onto a market space reminiscent of traditional merchant loggias and historic Italian market squares.

Additional Bibliography Lorenzo Grieco, *L'architettura dei palazzi comunali del Lazio durante il ventennio fascista*, in Andrea Longhi, ed., *Urban Processes of Adaptation and Resilience Between Permanence and Precariousness*, Torino 2024, 342-355.

2. San Michele Arcangelo Church



Address piazza Roma

Designers 2PTS

Dates 1935-36

Original use church

Current use church

The Church of San Michele Arcangelo and Santa Maria Goretti is set in the central Piazza Roma. The church is oriented with its altar facing east. The building measures approximately 22 metres in height, 14 metres in width, and 35 metres in depth, covering an area of 490 square metres. Its exterior showcases a principal façade marked by horizontal stripes, contrasted by the verticality of the bell tower. Inside, the church is characterised by simple forms and an abundance of natural light, creating a serene and contemplative atmosphere. The interior walls are largely unadorned, save for a few notable artworks. A baptismal font originally decorated with the symbols of the four Evangelists was later converted into an altar in 1974. The church once housed fourteen ceramic Stations of the Cross by Alessandro Monteleone, which were lost during the war. The original bell tower was destroyed in 1944 during World War II and rebuilt in 1999 maintaining the tower's original proportions. Prominently positioned in front of the façade stands a 3.2-metre bronze statue of Saint Michael the Archangel, mounted on a travertine base. Created between 1936 and 1937 by the esteemed sculptor Venanzo Crocetti, Saint Michael wields a drawn sword and holds the severed head of a defeated dragon, symbolising the fascist regime's use of art as propaganda to glorify Christian civilisation against contrary forces.

Additional Bibliography Sergio Iezzi, Antonio Muraro, *Chiesa arcipretale di San Michele Arcangelo e Santa Maria Goretti nel 65° (1937-2002)*, Aprilia 2002; Rosanna Del Duca, *L'Agro Pontino e Romano (1930-1940)*, in Pasquale

Culotta, Giuliano Gresleri, Glauco Gresleri, eds., *Città di fondazione e plantatio ecclesiae*, Bologna 2007, 58-86; Isa Pomezia, *La statua di San Michele Arcangelo ad Aprilia 1936-'37*, Roma 2013.

3. Casa del Fascio (demolished)

Address piazza Roma

Designers 2PTS

Dates 1935-36

Original use home to the Fascist Party

Spanning a rectangular footprint measuring approximately 37.8 by 18.7 metres, the two-storey building featured large windows to maximise natural light and three ground-floor entrances positioned on different façades. Inside, the upper floor contained 13 rooms, while the ground floor comprised eight halls connected by corridors. A distinctive curved section included a large balcony overlooking the piazza. Stylistically, the Casa del Fascio reflected the rationalist aesthetic with clean lines and simple geometric volumes, such as rectangles and cubes, deliberately avoiding unnecessary ornamentation. The primary construction material was reinforced concrete, complemented by marble and travertine cladding that referenced classical traditions while emphasising the regime's solidity and authority. Originally serving as the headquarters of the Fascist Party and the Fasci di Combattimento, the building also hosted social and cultural activities including craft courses, political education, recreational programmes, and a first aid station. This multifunctional use demonstrated the regime's intent to exert political control and shape citizens' everyday lives. The building suffered severe damage during Allied bombings in the Second World War and was ultimately demolished in the 1970s.

Additional Bibliography Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta, eds., *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio nella Regione Lazio*, Firenze 2006.

Notes



Pomezia

Founded in 1938, Pomezia was the final and southernmost of the planned towns in the Agro Pontino, created under the fascist regime's rural reclamation programme. Its name recalls the ancient Volscian city of Suessa Pometia, cited by Virgil and revived to symbolise continuity between classical heritage and modern identity.

The town's plan resulted from a 1937 competition, which required a town hall and medical dispensary. The winning proposal by the 2PTS group—Petrucci, Tufaroli, Paolini, and Silenzi, also designers of Aprilia—was implemented with some modifications the following year. Pomezia was conceived as a compact, functional settlement

aligned with rationalist ideals. The plan followed the natural terrain while establishing a central civic axis, anchored by the piazza and key public buildings: the Casa del Fascio, church, and town hall. Compared to earlier foundations like Littoria and Sabaudia, it had a more pragmatic role, serving the agricultural economy over stylistic experimentation. Yet the town retained a monumental quality, with simple geometric volumes, travertine finishes, and axial symmetry articulating order and authority. Though transformed by war and post-war industry, Pomezia remains a telling example of late fascist town planning, where ideology shaped space.

General Bibliography Riccardo Mariani, *Fascismo e città nuove*, Milano 1976; Antonio Pennacchi, *Guidonia, Pomezia città di fondazione*, Latina 2003; Claudia Montano, ed., *Piano del colore del centro storico di Pomezia: studi storici e rilievi diagnostici*, Roma 2008; Daniela De Angelis, ed., *Agricoltura ed edilizia sullo sfondo della bonifica e della nascita di Pomezia*, Roma 2012.

Main archives ONC Archive, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome.



I. Town Hall

Address piazza Indipendenza

Designers 2PTS

Dates 1939

Original use municipal offices, water reservoir, medical outpost, water reservoir

Current use municipal office, exhibition space

The Palazzo Comunale of Pomezia, designed as part of the original town plan during the fascist regime, occupies a prominent position overlooking Piazza dell'Impero—renamed Piazza Indipendenza after the war. The building exemplifies the restrained monumentality of rationalist civic architecture, constructed as a two-storey parallelepiped volume clad in squared tuff blocks, with windows set at regular 3.9-metre intervals and framed in travertine. The compositional clarity is enhanced by a strongly axial layout and measured symmetry. Dominating the square is the detached civic water tower, also faced in tuff, which rises to approximately 30 metres and serves both infrastructural and symbolic purposes. A single-storey travertine-clad portico links the tower to the main body of the Palazzo Comunale, creating an L-shaped configuration that defines the edge of the square. Mirroring this gesture, a second portico on the opposite side connects the town hall to the adjacent Palazzo delle Poste, reinforcing the unity of the civic complex. Access to the town hall is via a broad



Trani stone staircase that leads to the central entrance, above which sits a bas-relief by Francesco Coccia depicting the coat of arms of Pomezia, flanked by two Roman eagles—an overt symbol of fascist iconography and imperial aspiration.

Internally, the ground floor originally housed essential municipal functions: the registry office (anagrafe), conciliation office, treasury, tax and customs services, and administrative archives. From a rear entrance, or directly beneath the portico of the tower, one could access an annexe that contained a medical dispensary, including the public health office, doctor's consulting room, and two bedrooms for patients or staff. The piano nobile (first floor) was dedicated to the more representative and administrative functions: a large reception room, the technical and accounting offices, secretariat, and the offices of the vice-podestà and podestà. At the centre of the upper floor was the great assembly hall, with a fresco by Ferruccio Ferrazzi titled *The Triumph of Earth*. The hall opened onto a terrace above the tower portico. This terrace functioned as a kind of arengario, or public rostrum, from which speeches could be addressed to the square below—an element deeply rooted in the regime's performative approach to civic space.

Additional Bibliography Daniela De Angelis, *Ferrazzi e l'opera perduta di Pomezia. 1938-41*, Roma 2015; Lorenzo Grieco, *L'architettura dei palazzi comunali del Lazio durante il ventennio fascista*, in Andrea Longhi, ed., *Urban Processes of Adaptation and Resilience Between Permanence and Precariousness*, Torino 2024, 342-355.



2. San Benedetto Church

Address piazza Indipendenza

Designers 2PTS

Dates 1939

Original use municipal offices

Current use theatre, restaurants

The parish church of San Benedetto stands at the heart of Pomezia, adjacent to the town hall. Dedicated to the patron saint of land reclaimers, the church adopts a more traditional and compact appearance, drawing from Romanesque models. Its robust façade, clad in rough-hewn tuff blocks, reinforces this historicist approach. The church is a single-nave structure with five integrated chapels on each side, marked externally by buttresses and a lowered roofline. Unlike the more articulated volumes in Aprilia's church, here the chapels are embedded within the main body of the building, creating a unified spatial rhythm. The gabled façade is composed of a central band slightly projecting from the side wings, emphasising the internal nave. Three stone-framed portals lead into the church, above which a sculpted architrave in Trani stone by Venanzo Crocetti depicts Saint Benedict handing down his Rule—also serving as the external expression of the choir loft. Above this, a four-tiered array of arched windows with travertine supports evokes Romanesque loggias, yet reinterpreted with modern sensibility. This vertical rhythm recalls the sacred architecture of Dominikus Böhm, particularly his use of arcaded facades to lighten and animate ecclesiastical volumes. The church complex is seamlessly integrated into the urban block, with ancillary buildings flanking the nave and linking religious and civic functions through continuous architectural language. Designed to hold up to 1,000 congregants, it remains one of the key monuments of Pomezia's rationalist foundation.

Additional Bibliography Rosanna Del Duca, *L'Agro Pontino e Romano (1930-1940)*, in Pasquale Culot-

ta, Giuliano Gresleri, Glauco Gresleri, eds., *Città di fondazione e plantatio ecclesiae*, Bologna 2007, 58–86; Daniela De Angelis, *Arte sacra a Pomezia. La questione dell'intitolazione della Chiesa della quinta «città nuova» a San Benedetto (1938–1939)*, Roma 2011.

3. Casa del Fascio

Address piazza Indipendenza

Designers 2PTS

Dates 1939

Original use house to the Fascist Party

Current use Local Police station

The Casa del Fascio in Pomezia is a two-storey building constructed with mixed masonry of tuff and brick. Its exterior is clad in horizontally laid tuff blocks of varying heights, while around the lintels, windows, and sills, the blocks are arranged vertically for contrast. Door and window surrounds, the crowning cornice, and the main entrance portal—set amid decorative sculptural motifs—are all crafted in travertine. The principal entrance is marked by a tall travertine portal adorned with fasces, topped by a semicircular balcony, underscoring the building's authoritative presence. Originally, the raised ground floor housed various institutions and services, including the Voluntary Militia for National Security, the Association of Veterans and Disabled Combatants, the National Recreational Organisation (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro), offices, a conference room, and a bar. The first floor contained the Party's meeting hall, the office of the Political Secretary of the Trade Unions, and additional administrative offices. The meeting hall was once enriched by a now-lost mural celebrating the founding and design of Pomezia, painted by Peppino Piccolo in collaboration with Eugenio Fegartotti. This fresco, presumed concealed after 1947 to create subdivided rooms for displaced residents, depicted Mussolini surrounded by fascist officials listening to architect Concezio Petrucci presenting a model of the new city. To Mussolini's right stood Araldo di Crollalanza,

president of the National Construction Organisation (O.N.C.), highlighting the propaganda and ideological significance embedded in the building's design.

Additional Bibliography Flavio Mangione and Andrea Soffitta, eds., *L'architettura delle Case del Fascio nella Regione Lazio*, Firenze 2006.

4. Post and Telegraphs

Address piazza Indipendenza

Designers 2PTS

Dates 1939

Original use post and telegraphs

Current use post office

The raised ground floor houses the double-height public hall, the telephone office, the director's office, and all spaces dedicated to mail sorting and storage. Two staff apartments occupy the first floor, accessible via a staircase at the rear of the building. Constructed with a mixed masonry of tuff and brick courses, the building features a pitched roof covered with traditional Roman tiles. The first-floor slab is composed of reinforced concrete combined with brick. Externally, the façades are lime-plastered and painted, while key architectural details—such as the entrance portal, external stairs, plinth, window sills, and cornice—are finished in travertine, lending an understated elegance. The original windows were made of larch wood externally, with retractable metal grilles protecting the three portal openings, while the interior joinery combined fir and plywood. Inside, the public hall's flooring is grès tile with polished travertine skirting, and the walls are painted with tempera. Office and residential floors are covered with terrazzo tiles, and the walls throughout are lime-washed, reinforcing the building's simple, clean aesthetic.

Additional Bibliography Edith Neudecker, *Gli edifici postali in Italia durante il fascismo*, Latina 2007.

Prompts for Critical Exploration

Cross-cutting prompts

How do photographs, films, archival materials, and oral histories reshape our understanding of these places?

What feelings do these environments evoke today?

How can critical documentation challenge or reaffirm historical narratives?

Landscape and Urbanism

How does the urban layout reflect the political ideology behind the foundation of the city?

What is the relationship between architecture, open space, and surrounding landscape?

In what ways were natural elements (land, water, vegetation) transformed to serve the regime's goals?

Can we still perceive the intended symbolism in the spatial organization today?

Architecture

What architectural elements convey power, control, or order in these buildings?

How do form, material, and decoration reflect the values of the regime that built them?

Do the buildings still fulfill their original function? If not, how has their meaning or use changed?

What tensions exist between standardization and local identity in architectural design?

Art and Applied Arts

What artistic languages are used to communicate political messages?

How are the figures, symbols, and motifs represented in public artworks?

In what ways does art reinforce the ideological narratives of the regime?

Can we consider these artworks as mere propaganda, or do they have artistic merit beyond ideology?

Memory

How are these spaces remembered or forgotten by local communities today?

Is the regime's legacy visible, removed, or reinterpreted in these urban and architectural contexts?

What role do these cities and buildings play in shaping collective memory or historical amnesia?

How should we deal with the architectural and artistic heritage of totalitarian regimes?

Notes

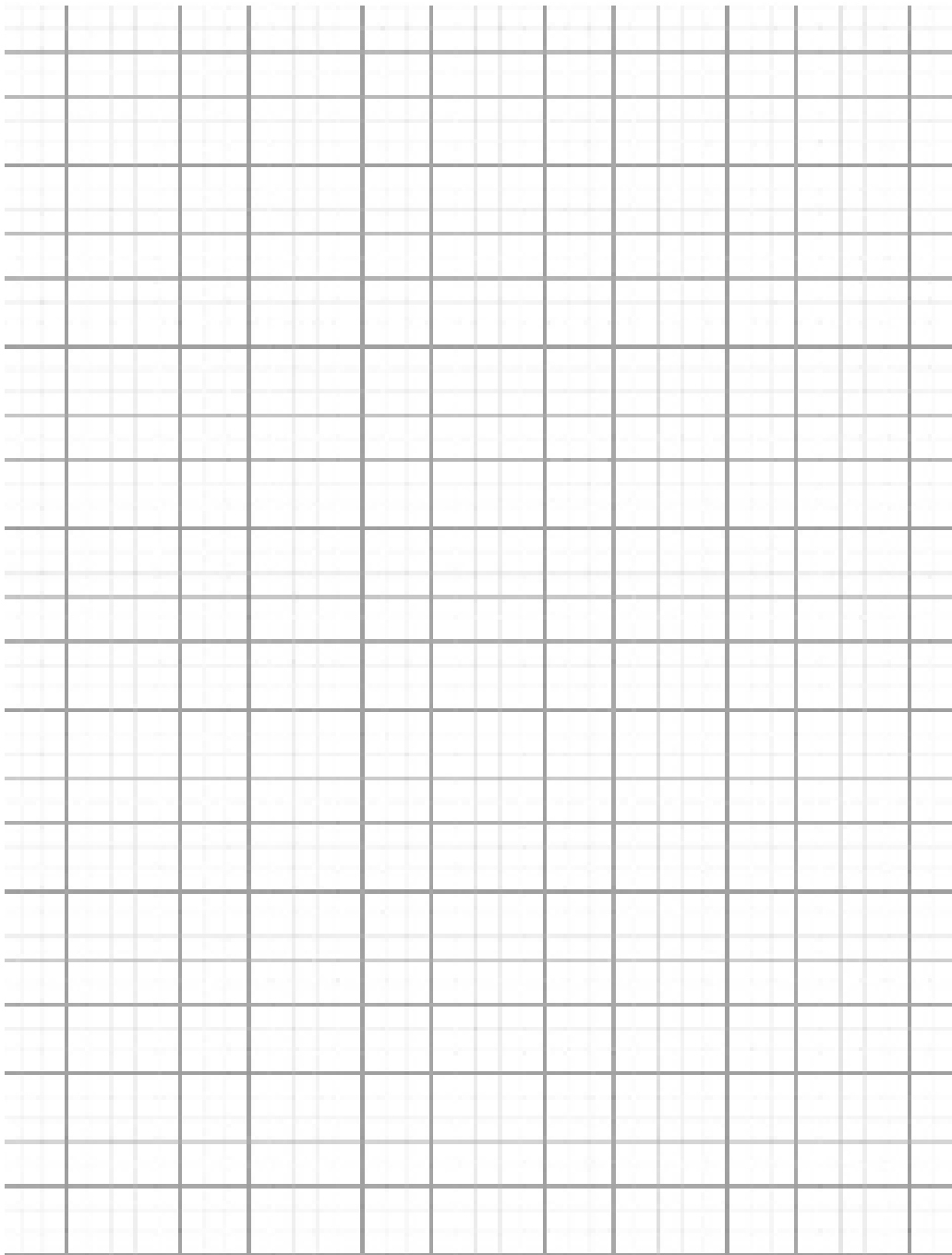




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13, 46, 53

Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere thanks to Professor Nathan Levialedi Ghiron, Rector of the Tor Vergata University of Rome, for his institutional support and early recognition of the project's value. We are also grateful to Professor Armando Calabrese, Director of the Department of Enterprise Engineering, for his consistent guidance and encouragement. Our warm thanks go to the academic coordinators from our partner universities—Christine Beese, Carmen Enss, Christian Freigang, João Mascarenhas Mateus, and Francisco Salvador Ventura—whose collaboration and shared vision were essential in shaping the project's international scope. We deeply appreciate the support of the Mayors of Latina, Pomezia, and Sabaudia, whose engagement helped root the project within the local context and strengthen ties between academia and civic life. Special thanks are due to the external experts who generously contributed their time and expertise: Raffaella Barbacini, Ferruccio Bianchini, Alfonso Di Cosimo, Antonia Lo Rillo, Claudia Montano, Roberta Biasillo, Helena Pérez Gallardo, Gaetano Petraglia, and Vittorio Tomassetti. To all of them, we express our heartfelt gratitude. Their contributions have been vital to the success of this initiative and exemplify the value of collaboration across institutions and disciplines.

Finito di stampare in proprio
nel mese di giugno 2025