

House. School. Temple.



A critical research about the ideological meanings and messages conveyed by Giuseppe Terragni and his Casa del Fascio in Como between 1936-1945

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MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences

Architecture Track

Academic year 2022/2023

AR2A011

Architectural History Thesis

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Table of contents

01	Prologue	06
02	Introduction The what The why The how	10
03	The problem of Terragni	13
	Part 1 - Terragni and Fascism	
04	Fascist art Fascist culture through history Fascist arts issues	20
05	Terragni between Italy and Europe Terragni in the fascist context Terragni and the European references Terragni's contrasts in Italy	24
	Part 2 - Terragni and Casa del Fascio	
06	Casa del Fascio national model Fascist national plan Casa del Fascio's recurrent features	36
07	Innovative Terragni Terragni as an innovator Terragni's innovations of the national model	42
08	Ideological means in Casa del Fascio Urban path Location in the city Square view Front view Interior view	52
09	Conclusion	68
10	Epilogue	70
11	Reference list	72
12	Image reference list	74

Cover picture.

Adapted from Danny Alexander Lettkemann, 2017.

01

Prologue

In recent years, the rise of right-wing ideologies has been a growing concern for me. Across the world, a worrying and alarming increase in support for far-right political parties and movements is taking place. Several signals of a broader shift towards nationalist and populist politics are currently emerging. The recent national elections held between 2021 and 2022 confirmed the rise of right-wing parties such as Alternative for Germany (AfD), the National Front (FN) in France, and Brothers of Italy (Fdi). These political changes have been accompanied by an increase in hate crimes, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment¹.

In addition to that, the current political developments have been followed by a resurgence of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups. These radical and extremist parties, supported by the mainstreaming of far-right politics, usually draw on the symbolism and rhetoric of past totalitarian regimes. Also, they often use architecture and public space as a means of advancing their ideology.

This is the case of CasaPound², an Italian far-right political movement that takes inspiration from Mussolini's fascist regime. To create a sense of belonging among its members, this party has established a network of community centres and social housing projects across Italy. Their buildings are often decorated with fascist slogans and illustrations: there, everything is designed to evoke a sense of nationalist pride, in the footsteps of the fascist credo. This is clear in CasaPound's headquarters in the Esquilino neighbourhood of Rome, which were illegally occupied and whose walls were adorned with images and names belonging to fascist history, as shown in Figure 1.

Why are totalitarian regimes still a reference for a certain portion of the spectrum of political parties? What kind of message, dogma and doctrine did they convey so effectively? And how did these regimes, with their diverse ideologies, demonstrate their power to the public? I believe that to influence the culture and the way of thinking of the population, totalitarian authorities controlled the education, knowledge, and arts of the countries they were governing. These leaders took advantage of architecture as a means of pursuing their goals and demonstrating their control over society. From the Nazis, who presumably³ planned the Reichstag fire in 1933 to incriminate the Communists, to Mussolini, who organised the March on Rome in 1922 to ascend to power. The role of the built environment in political and social events of the first half of the 20th century is clear.

As architects, we must problematise architecture's potential for political extremists, and we must be careful about the messages our projects convey and promote. The ethical responsibility of this profession is at the heart of the dramatic events that have been happening during the last few years. How do we, as architects, advance political agendas and influence the social developments of our countries through our design choices?

By examining the relationships between artistic manifestations in the first half of the 20th century and the legacy of totalitarian regimes, we can better understand the potential dangers of modern political developments. Were architects and architecture victims of political and social upheavals, or were they actively part of the causes that led to the construction of totalitarian regimes?

1. An example of anti-immigrant sentiment is the campaign (currently promoted by right-wing parties in Italy) against migratory flows from Africa

2. CasaPound is a far-right Italian political party, founded in 2003. It is usually considered a neo-fascist party for its association with fascist ideals and values.

3. Although there is no hard evidence of that, it is considered probable that the Nazis planned the Reichstag fire to incriminate the Communists and gain more popular consent. For more information, see "Historians find 'proof' that Nazis burnt Reichstag" on The Sunday Telegraph.



Figure 1. Interiors of CasaPound's headquarters in Rome. It is possible to see Terragni's name decorating the wall. (Masiello, 2018)

02

Introduction

The what

The thesis explores the relationship between architects and the establishment of totalitarianism. This is pursued by examining the contribution of Giuseppe Terragni and his Casa del Fascio in Como to the promotion of fascist ideals in Italy.

The focus of this study is split into two related topics. The attention is put on how both Terragni (as an architect) and Casa del Fascio (as an architecture) mediated and conveyed ideological messages, and how these messages advanced fascist indoctrination in Italian society. In this sense, the main research questions guiding the entire dissertation are:

What was Giuseppe Terragni's contribution to fascist ideology? In what way did he promote and shape fascist ideals through Casa del Fascio in Como?

To investigate the role of this architect and his project in Italian history, the thesis deals with topics related to architecture in the era of the World Wars. In particular, the text addresses, among others, the themes of Nationalism, Rationalism, Stripped Classicism, International Style and Modern Architecture.

The why

The purpose of this research is to question the different interpretations provided so far about Terragni and his oeuvre in the development of fascist ideology. The thesis aims to reverse the usual concept that architecture is a consequence or result of historical events. In my opinion, even nowadays Terragni's contribution to the fascist cause is nonetheless considered secondary and subordinate to the social and political events which occurred¹. In this sense, the reassessment of the literature already written and the personal findings are meant to give an appropriate proportion to the influence of this architect on fascist culture. The goal of this study is not to give new information and notions about this theme, which has already been examined in detail. Instead, the conducted research attempts to re-evaluate the figure of Terragni and the role of his Casa del Fascio in international history, trying to highlight the literature gap² about this topic.

The how

The subject is explored taking into account the interpretative dualism between Giuseppe Terragni and his Casa del Fascio in Como. For this reason, the dissertation is structured into two main parts.

The first part aims to contextualise Terragni inside the Italian architectural debate about fascist style. At the same time, it introduces his different interpretation of this culture in terms of architectural solutions. To do so, the thesis starts with a description of the main key concepts of fascist art. These are explained through a brief delineation of the effects of some historical and political events on fascist culture, as well as through a critical analysis of the issues Italian artists were facing at that time. After that, the positioning of Terragni inside the Italian and European context takes place, making clear how he was dealing with both panoramas and what his relationship with Fascism was.

For this part, the primary sources consulted are historical facts, artistic and architectural works, magazines, photographs, political speeches and statements, competition requirements, and Terragni's texts (or written by other figures of that time). However, the main type of material consulted for the first chapters is secondary sources. Different in-

1. For more information, see chapter 03 'The problem of Terragni'.

2. For more information, see chapter 03 'The problem of Terragni'.

terpretations from different authors are taken into account. To highlight the difference between primary and secondary quotes (and so on, the influence of the authors' interpretations), the first ones are written in red, and the second ones are in blue. Regarding the secondary literature, the texts of Schumacher are the most referred to, since they provide the most complete and specific information. The analysis is also supported by several photos, drawings, manifestos, magazine covers, and examples of fascist works.

The second part is focused on the analysis of the Casa del Fascio, both the typology and Terragni's work in Como. The analysis starts with a description of the national model and how it was developed throughout history. This is followed by a discussion about the recurrent features of this typology and the breakdown of Terragni's innovations, put in relation to his innovative viewpoint about Fascism. In the end, the last chapter investigates critically the architectural solutions adopted by Terragni at different scales of his project to convey fascist ideology. These are addressed concerning the sequencing of a visit I conducted in Como. In this segment, the original interpretation³ of the subject of the thesis is advanced, highlighting the differences between the academic literature already written about Terragni and my personal findings.

The second part makes use of all the primary sources consulted for the first one, but it considers also Casa del Fascio itself, my personal visit annotations, original drawings, and Terragni's sketches. However, the last chapter is based primarily on the comparison between secondary literature's interpretations and my personal findings. The main external references for this were Schumacher's, Eisenman's and Storchi's articles and books since they offer valuable considerations about the building and its symbolical meaning. Their interpretations are compared with my opinions, which take into account (and are sometimes founded on) primary sources, like Terragni's and Bontempelli's texts. In this chapter, both present and past tenses are used, to highlight what presumably was felt at that time and what is felt now by people who come to see the building. Lastly, the text is not only accompanied by photos taken during the visit but it is also centred on representational and symbological studies translated into personal drawings.

03

The problem of Terragni

3. For more information, see chapter 03 'The problem of Terragni'.

Right after the end of WWII, the figure of Giuseppe Terragni was unconsidered by critics and architects. His name is not mentioned in any books about modern architecture written in English before the 1960s, except for Bruno Zevi's 'Storia dell'Architettura Moderna' in 1953 and G.E. Kidder-Smith's 'Italy Builds' in 1955. This initial negligence about Terragni was not due to a lack of interest or curiosity about his works. Instead, the main reason behind this occurrence was his personal belief and the painful association of him with the fascist regime (Schumacher, 1991). He was considered the symbol of fascist architecture, during a period when architects and their countries were still dealing with the damages of the war.

Starting from the 1960s, several voices have emerged to re-evaluate the image of this architect, reckoning his fascist past. In Italy, Bruno Zevi was fascinated by Terragni's works and tried to promote his theory of "enclave". For Zevi, Terragni was a "hero" infiltrated into the regime, a subversive individual struggling from within to resist and fight the fascist doctrine (Zevi, 1980). This theory had already been partly introduced by Leonardo Benevolo, who identified a class in those oppressed artists who apparently worked within the system to act subversively (Benevolo, 1966).

By the end of the 70s, the idea of a "New Vignola of Italian Architecture" (Belli, 1982) started to prevail over the others. Terragni was considered an encoder of styles already existing. As Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola¹ systematized the five classical orders in his 'Canon of the Five Orders of Architecture'² in 1562, Terragni collected all the references he had both from the Italian and the international context and constructed a new modern language from those. In this sense, the Casa del Fascio in Como was defined as the "logarithmic table of generic construction" (Belli, 1982), a sort of vocabulary of forms, proportions, and geometrical rules to follow to build fascist (and Italian) architectures without copying previous works.

Between the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the topic assumed international relevance, especially with Thomas L. Schumacher's and Peter Eisenman's research on Terragni. On the one hand, Schumacher pointed out the "problem of Terragni" (Schumacher, 1991), intended as the post-war negligence towards this architect. In this sense, he drew special attention to his projects' features and hidden meanings, going beyond the aesthetical aspect of the building. On the other hand, Eisenman played a significant role in the promotion of a new image of Terragni, publishing several articles in *Casabella*, *Perspecta* and *Oppositions*³. In these articles, he highlighted Terragni's ideas and works on his own, adopting a critical viewpoint about the analyses conducted before through a Corbusian or Wrightian lens.

Anyways, I believe that the consideration of Terragni within the history of Italian architecture is still problematic. He is commonly described as an artist who successfully attempted to "embody and visualize the spiritual values associated with the new Fascist civilization (...) into a spatial metaphor" (Storchi, 2007). Both from the international and the Italian context, Terragni is currently described just as an architectural interpreter of fascism culture. From the research I have conducted about this topic, I can see that his contribution to the fascist cause is reduced to the links he established between the Italian context, foreign references, and traditional values. The meanings of the innovations he brought up are not taken into account when evaluating his work in relation to fascist ideology.

With this in mind, the historical study of the literature on Terragni as an architect

demonstrates that there has not been one unique interpretation of him as a figure in Italian Architecture and of the value of his projects. What is more, the interpretations were informed by different viewpoints. Some were influenced by political/ethical reasons, excluding him from the discourse due to his personal belief. Others concentrated on the aesthetical aspect of his work relieved from the troublesome association with the "unfortunate episode" of Fascism (as defined by the philosopher Benedetto Croce⁴).

This thesis aims to solve what I personally consider the new problem of Terragni. This is the usual detachment and separation of him and his works from the ideological development of the fascist regime. In this sense, my original interpretation at the core of this research is that Giuseppe Terragni didn't just translate a common doctrine into architectural forms. Instead, he was an exception in the Italian context, a figure in between fascist authorities and international figures, and he actively shaped and promoted fascist ideology through his innovations in Casa del Fascio in Como.

1. Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola was an Italian architectural exponent of Mannerism. Although he designed several projects, he is most famous for his written works.

2. The 'Canon of the Five Orders of Architecture' is a book published by Vignola in 1562. In the book, Vignola describes the five orders of classic architecture (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Tuscan and composite), providing the reader with a thorough graphical analysis focused on proportions, measures and geometrical relationships.

3. *Casabella*, *Perspecta* and *Oppositions* were some of the most famous and influential artistic magazines at the end of the 20th century. *Casabella* is still published monthly.

4. Benedetto Croce was an Italian philosopher, politician, writer and historian, particularly influent in the first half of the 20th century. Although he initially supported Fascism at the beginning, he was one of the main anti-fascist Italian exponents of that time.



Benito Mussolini and the fascist mass, gathered in front of Palazzo Venezia in Rome (Underwood & Underwood, 1940).

Part 1

Terragni and Fascism

04 - 05

04

Fascist art

The first chapter aims to provide a historical background for the Italian context between the wars, highlighting how the political and social events informed and influenced the artistic panorama during the fascist regime.

1. The Exhibition of Rationalist Architecture was organised in Rome in 1928 by Gruppo 7 and Adalberto Libera. It led to the formation of MAR (Rationalist Architecture Movement) in 1930.

2. The Fascist Institute of Culture was an institution focused on "the protection, dissemination, and development of the ideals and doctrine of fascism within and abroad, and of Italian culture in general" (Fascist Institute of Culture, 1925).

3. Mussolini's imperialistic ideals culminated with the proclamation of the Italian Empire in East Africa in 1936 (King Victor Emmanuel III became Emperor of Ethiopia).

4. The Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution consisted of a (subjective) representation of Italian historical events from the beginning of WWI to the March on Rome for propaganda reasons.

Fascist culture through history

To understand how Terragni's work differs from the others in terms of ideological messages, it is essential to deep into the origins of the fascist context. Throughout its whole history, the development of fascist culture was determined by the historical events which occurred before the start of WWII. Since Mussolini's rise to power in 1922, they marked the construction of Italian society between the wars.

The end of the 1920s represented a symbolic period for Italian arts. According to Schumacher (1991), two were the historical and political events that marked fascist architecture. Firstly, in 1928 (the same year the CIAM has founded) the Grand Fascist Council became the supreme organ of the fascist regime and the first Exhibition of Rationalist Architecture took place in the capital¹. In 1932, this event was followed by the inauguration of the Decennale, a series of exhibitions celebrating the anniversary of the iconic March on Rome. These showcases, together with the first Exhibition, brought enthusiasm among intellectuals towards the diplomatic reforms the fascist regime was claiming to operate (Schumacher, 1991). They publicly manifested Mussolini's intentions of pursuing a cultural and social revolution, which symbolically had already started with the establishment of the Fascist Institute of Culture in 1925².

Secondly, three years later Italy invaded Ethiopia and was consequently punished by the League of Nations through economic sanctions. These measures produced a cultural isolation of Italy from the international context. In this atmosphere, Mussolini started to promote the concept of "autarchy" (Bentel, 1979), developing a national strategy whose main goal was to advance the notions of "Italianness" and "Romanness". As highlighted by the terms themselves, Mussolini wanted to enhance the value of the Italian historical background, using it to provide a solid foundation for his political ambitions. These slogans were supposed to become the identifying characters of the "New Roman Empire"³, in opposition to the developments of other European states.

The Duce himself had always paid close attention to his image towards Italian intellectuals. With his encouragement to the first Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution in Rome (1932-1934)⁴, he became a vibrant modernizer in the eyes of the public (Schnapp, 2008) (Figure 1). This was already explicit in 1926 when Mussolini proclaimed:

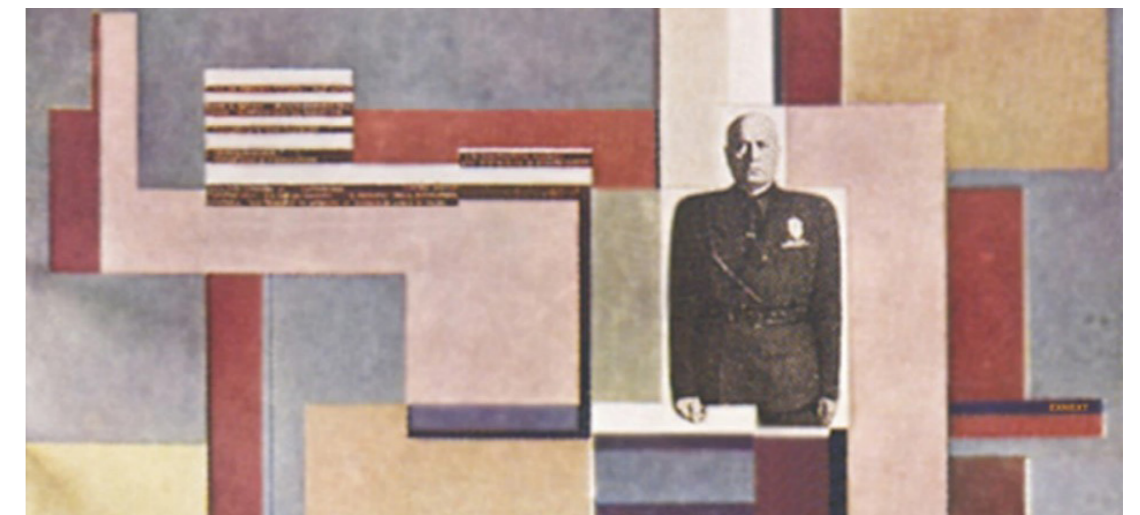


Figure 1. Mario Radice's mural inside Casa del Fascio (Radice, 1936). The figure of Mussolini was removed after the end of the war. This work highlights the influence Mussolini had on Italian modernizers.

We must not remain solely contemplatives. We must not simply exploit our cultural heritage. We must create a new heritage to place alongside that of antiquity. We must create a new art, an art of our times: a fascist art.

According to Schnapp (2008), after pronouncing these words Mussolini started to be seen as the leader of a political force who supported the idea of a new advanced art which claimed to go beyond the cultural boundaries imposed by tradition. The idea of creating a “new heritage to place alongside that of antiquity” (Mussolini, 1926) was compelling for Italian modernizers. After the Exhibition, they started to believe that their exaggerations would be appreciated and rewarded. Although Mussolini was actually favourable to both tradition and innovation, without explicitly taking a clear position, he assumed the role of an opponent of Italian conservatives in the public eye. In this sense, his closeness to Futurism’s key figure Tommaso Marinetti (Figure 2, Figure 3) and publishers of innovative artistic magazines (like *Quadrante*)⁵ was considered evidence that the fascist leader was promoting the avant-gardist fringe in the Italian panorama.

Fascist arts issues

The Duce advanced his desired cultural revolution fostering several artistic competitions in Italy. These were supposed to find an appropriate application of the ideal of autarchy he was advocating⁶ (Bentel, 1979). As demonstrated by the debates taking place in the main architectural magazines of that time, like *Casabella* and *Rassegna di Architettura*, Mussolini’s seek of self-sufficiency generated a new exploratory attitude towards modern materials and sensibility for research and experimentation (Avilés, 2009). However, the main effect of this campaign was the elevation of the concept of Italianness as the most relevant aspect to look for. Everything was perceived, analysed, and judged through the nationalist lens adopted by the regime. Indeed, this had consequences also in the architectural field.

According to Schumacher (1991), the watershed of the history of fascist architecture was the national competition for the Palazzo Littorio in Rome in 1934 (Figure 4). This event highlighted the conflict between the conservative and revolutionary factions in Italy⁷. The relevant issue to solve was the “Problem of Linguaggio”: this title indicates the struggle of architects in finding or creating a new shared national style to convey fascist ideology. This problem was rooted in the uncertainties of the fascist revolution:

The extraneousness of the “foolish” revolutionary ambitions of culture to the fascist revolution, the revolution as an unknown which one cannot account for, and which avoids fixed values and denies a political capacity to cultural advances: this was the struggle of artists who had looked to give life to a second avant-garde after futurism. (Argan, 1969)

During its entire history, the fascist regime never officially chose a specific architectural language or vocabulary (Argan, 1969). In this climate of uncertainty, the overall challenge was not only about defining a contemporary style for the whole country but also about modernizing Italian architectural typologies. This was supposed to be pursued without adopting an aesthetic which would neglect national identity. The study of the historical background of fascist culture proves how the need for an arrangement between traditionalism and avant-gardism was on the agenda of all the Italian architects of that time.

5. Mussolini had strong relationships with Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, leader of Futurism and supporter of the fascist regime. Also, he was supported and promoted by Casabella and *Quadrante*, two of the most important magazines of that era.

6. Through competitions which aimed to highlight Italian values and tradition, Mussolini aimed to “combat the acritical worship of things foreign known as *estereofilia*” (Schnapp, 2008).

7. The competition for Palazzo Littorio pointed out the conflicts between the revolutionary context of Milan (ex. Piacentini) and the conservative faction of Rome (whose main figure was Persico).



Figure 2. Cover 'Zang Tumb Tuumum' (Marinetti, 1914).

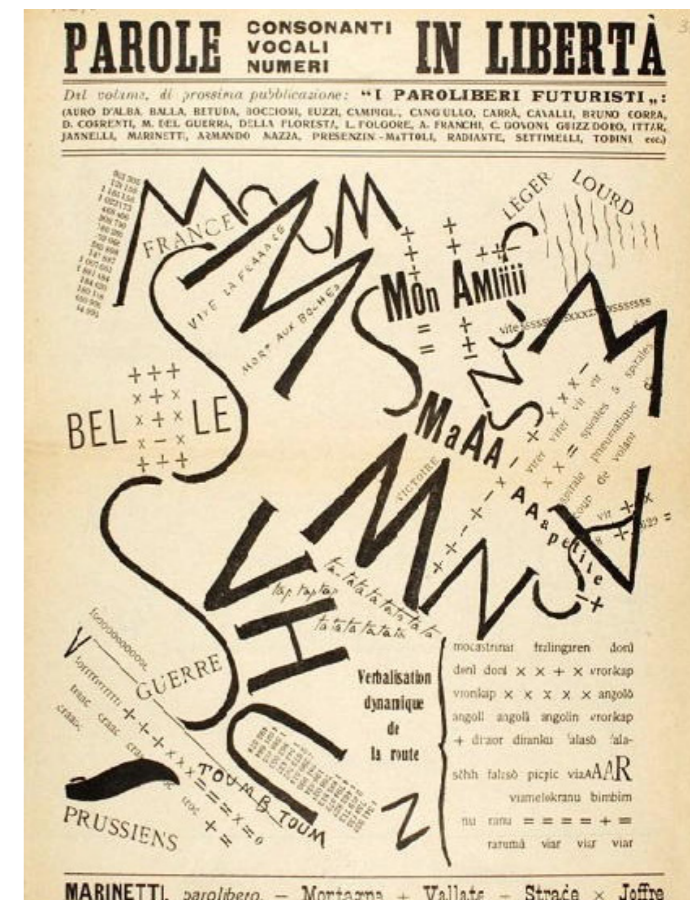


Figure 3. 'Montagne + Vallate + Strade x Joffre' (Marinetti, 1915).

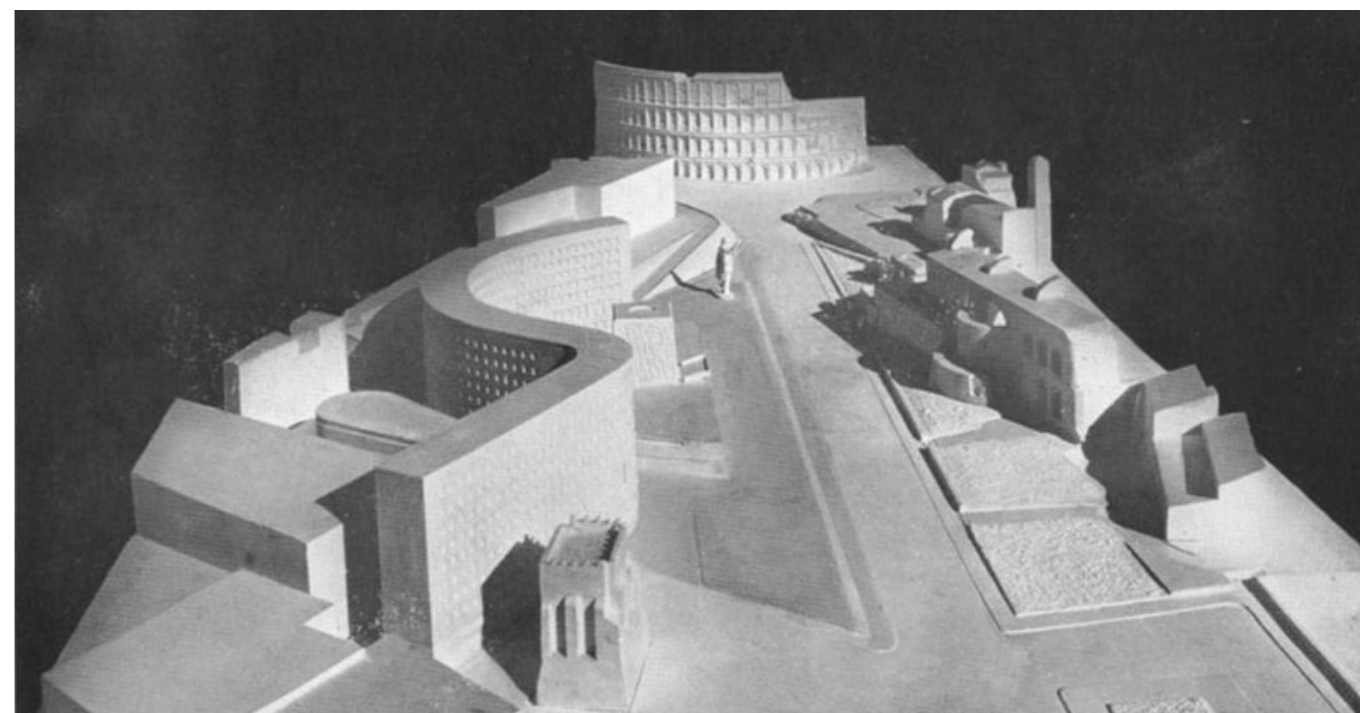


Figure 4. 1st Stage Competition Entry for Palazzo Littorio by Mario Ridolfi, Ernesto La Padula, Ettore Rossi, and Vittorio Cafiero (Ridolfi et al., 1934).

05

Terragni between Italy and Europe

The second chapter focuses on the positioning of Terragni between the Italian and the European contexts, highlighting the contact points and the differences between this architect and the main Italian artistic exponents of that time. This is crucial to understand how Terragni's background and interests influenced the innovations he applied to the Casa del Fascio national model.

Terragni in the fascist context

Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como was considered one of the most appropriate solutions for the national challenges of Italian architecture between the wars (Schumacher, 1991). It is no coincidence that the figure of Terragni (figure 1) was so popular and influent in the regime's context: his fervour towards the fascist cause was deeply rooted in his family, as testified by the role of his brother Attilio in Como (he was Head of the City Administration for the fascist Party between 1934 and 1943) and by the relationships of his patron Margherita Sarfatti¹ with Mussolini (Cima, 2012). The architect himself joined the National Fascist Party in 1928, the same year the first Exhibition of Rationalist Architecture took place in Italy².

According to Schnapp (2008), Terragni didn't only cultivate intense relationships with fascist leaders. In fact, he was also an active part of the Italian artistic panorama. His strong links with the figures of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Antonio Sant'Elia, the protagonists of Futurism, influenced many of his works, like the War Memorial in Como (figure 2)³. Moreover, Terragni collaborated several times with different influential contemporary magazines, including Casabella and Quadrante. The second one was founded in 1933 by interpreters of Novecento, an artistic movement striving for classicism and harmony after the abstractions of Futurism and Cubism.

In the conflictual opposition between tradition and innovation, Terragni's position had always been clear. In almost every text written by the architect, he remarked on Italy's need for a new language, which should have been at the service of the necessities of Mussolini.

We ... now have the great satisfaction of propagandizing and spreading the new architecture in works designed to this order of thought for the regime In this precise political moment the contribution to a renewed architecture is obvious and of vast significance ... It will be the sure testimony of a powerful intellectual effort achieved by the revolution in that entrenched field of art. (Terragni, 1936)

1. Margherita Sarfatti was an Italian journalist and art critic. She was Mussolini's personal biographer (and mistress), as well as one of the main patrons of Terragni.

2. For more information, see chapter 04 'Fascist Art'.

3. Como's War Memorial (also called 'Monument to the Fallen') is a monument in granite and marble that celebrates the memory of the victims of World War I. It was designed by Terragni and his brother Attilio starting from a sketch of the futurist artist Antonio Sant'Elia.



Figure 1. Giuseppe Terragni (Unknown, 1928).



Figure 2. Como's War Memorial (Own work, 2023).

As clear with these statements, Terragni considered the need of communicating the new fascist architecture as a primary necessity for the advancement of the regime. His ideas were shared with many other exponents in Italy, and some of them collaborated with Terragni to pursue this goal. This is the case of Pietro Lingeri and Alberto Sartoris, leading figures of Italian Rationalism, who worked with Terragni on disparate projects, including his proposal for the Palazzo Littorio national competition in Rome⁴ (figure 3).

However, his relationship with the Italian artistic panorama was not limited to the architectural field. In fact, he also worked together with several exponents of other disciplines. Among all of them, his affinity with the painters Manlio Rho and Mario Radice is evident throughout his whole oeuvre, including the design of Casa del Fascio⁵ (figure 4). In this sense, it is no surprise that the completion of this building was promoted and considered by fascist vanguardists as the peak of Italian artistic experimentation (Storchi, 2007). The Casa, in line with the principles and ideals advanced by fascist authorities, became a symbol for this fringe, which celebrated its completion with enthusiastic claims.

A work of architecture among the few truly worthy to represent in time the era of Mussolini ... the sure sign of a propitious era ... the most beautiful result of the long and passionate struggles to inaugurate in Italy the good season of architecture of the time of Mussolini. (Bardi, 1936)

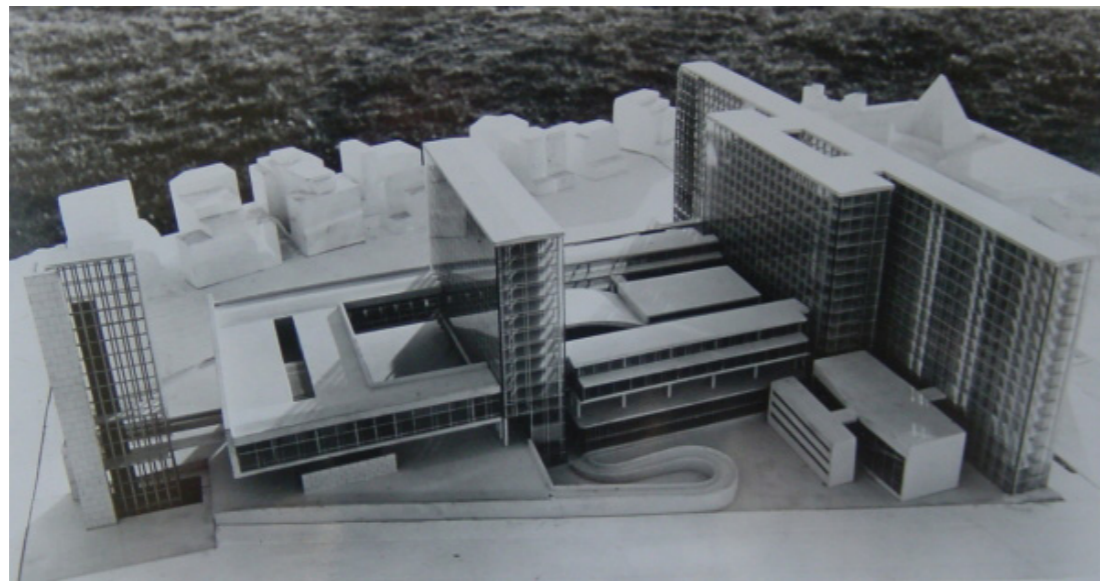


Figure 3. Terragni's project for the competition of Palazzo Littorio, designed with Carminati, Lingeri, Saliva, and Vietti (LombardiaBeneCulturali, 1934).

Terragni and the European references

Terragni's interests and background were deeply rooted in the fascist regime, which he supported till the end of his life⁶ (Schumacher, 1982). However, as resulting from the secondary literature consulted for this research, the origins of his professional and aesthetic experimentations are to be found outside Italy.

According to Schumacher (1991), Terragni was a key figure of Modernism and Modern Architecture in Europe. In fact, he was one of the protagonists of this movement in Italy,

4. For more information, see chapter 04 'Fascist Art'.

5. For more information about Mario Radice's contribution to Casa del Fascio in Como, see chapter 08 'Ideological means in Casa del Fascio'.

6. According to Schumacher (1982), Terragni was a strong supporter of Fascism, although he suffered the consequences of fighting in World War II. In fact, when he became the godfather of Pietro Lingeri's son, he told his friend that he had "given a killer to your son as a Godfather".

7. In 1926, Terragni founded Gruppo 7 together with Ubaldo Castagnoli (replaced the following year by Adalberto Libera), Luigi Figini, Guido Frette, Sebastiano Larco, Gino Pollini, and Carlo Enrico Rava.

8. For more information, see chapter 03 'The problem of Terragni'.



Figure 4. Casa del Fascio in Como (Own work, 2023).



Figure 5. Gruppo 7 logo (Gruppo 7, 1926).

and he applied its principles to the totalitarian needs of the fascist regime. He believed that modernist formalization, rationalization, and abstraction were more than adequate tools to promote the features of the (utopian) society Mussolini was striving for.

The modernist position was supported by extremists of the avant-garde. In 1926, together with other six Italian architects⁷, Terragni founded Gruppo 7 (figure 5), a group of professionals whose main intent was the promotion of rationalist and modernist architecture in Italy. In their manifesto, published the same year as the foundation of the group, the seven members made clear the main principles of their art. These were mainly:

... the acknowledgement of a tradition of the new, in Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies Van der Rohe; their positioning as mediators between the modern tradition and the secular Italian tradition and their consequent interpretation of the Italian artistic and architectural tradition in anti-academic terms; their nationalist position; their disassociation from Futurism and Cubism; and their quest for clarity, revision and order. They identified a 'new spirit' in Italian art that captured the essence of their time and which they aspired to express in architecture. (Storchi, 2007)

In the manifesto, it is made explicit how these architects were looking at references outside Italy, taking part in Modern Architecture debates going on in Europe and America. However, together with the interests in the international scene, the nationalist feeling was highlighted, as well as the affinity of these architects with Fascism. In my opinion, this contradictory relationship between Mussolini's autarchic intentions and the foreign architectural inspirations Gruppo 7 was looking at profoundly informed Terragni's work, between Italy and abroad. In this sense, Terragni was a controversial figure, since he was promoting fascist principles while at the same time breaking the ideal of autarchy promoted by the leader. I believe this is one of the causes that made Terragni a problematic topic in the first half of the 20th century, both too xenophile for fascist authorities and too fascist to be analysed and cited by post-war researchers and critics⁸.

In 1928, Gruppo 7 merged with the MIAR (Italian Movement for Rationalist Architecture), a movement which organised several events to advance modernist architecture. Their first exhibition took place the same year in Rome, where Terragni exhibited the residential building Novocomum, considered by modern historiographers the first real

Italian Rationalist work (Schumacher, 1991). Looking at the facade of the building (figure 6), it is possible to notice several Rationalist features: pure clear volumes dominating the entire mass of the architecture, a visible structure in reinforced concrete columns, a flat roof hosting a terrace, the setback of the facade to give depth and create balconies. Moreover, as evidenced in the detail of the corner (figure 7), the edges of the building are very sharp and clean, emphasizing the strictness of the entire composition. All these characteristics will later play an important role also in the final design of the Casa del Fascio in Como.

Although internationally oriented, MIAR members were all deeply involved in solving the national challenges of fascist architecture. The aim of the Movement was defined clearly in 1930 when Pietro Maria Bardi proclaimed:

Our movement has no other moral goal than to help the (fascist) revolution overcome the unfavorable climate. We are turning to Mussolini for support, which will enable us to achieve this goal of ours.

As stated in Bardi's words, MIAR architects directly confirmed their faith in the emerging fascist revolution and expressed their intention to serve it. In this sense, the goals and ambitions of the Movement were strongly associated with the advancement of fascist dogma through the arts.

With his clear position, Terragni deeply believed in Rationalism and Modernism's potential to create a new language for Italian architecture. Especially after the commission of the Casa del Fascio⁹, he demonstrated his will for a new architecture in most of his works and texts:

A new architectural relationship ... becomes indispensable if you want to achieve a poetic emotion with the exaltation of political facts, military victories, or conquests. (Terragni, 1936)

Terragni was convinced that Rationalist and Modernist architectural styles were appropriate to convey fascist ideology. For him, these new languages would have solved the artistic challenges Italy was facing, if appropriately applied and translated into the local context and culture. The adoption of a totally modern style was for Terragni the best manifestation of the country's will of change (Schumacher, 1991).

Terragni's contrasts in Italy

As Terragni was pursuing the avantgardist line about the modernization of Italian architecture, he evidently clashed with the conservatives and the rear-garde¹⁰. However, according to Schumacher (1991), even the modernizers' front was very varied and diverse. A lot of contrasting positions were emerging. The debate was split between extremists and moderates, especially regarding their relationships with the international context. In particular, the latter believed that the architectural vocabulary of the modern regime should have been constructed starting from Italian historical precedents, avoiding influences from the outer world.

The leader of this group was Marcello Piacentini, a key reference in the experimental context of Milan. Director of *Architettura* magazine¹¹, he is commonly described as "Mussolini's Albert Speer"¹², since his closeness to the fascist leader made him receive

9. Terragni celebrated the commission with great joy, enthusiastic about being able to work for "an exceptional client for a young architect" (Terragni, 1936). This is the first sentence of the *Documentario* written by Terragni in *Quadrante* magazine.

10. One of the main exponents of the rear-garde faction was Edoardo Persico, the key figure in the architectural context of Rome (Schumacher, 1991).

11. *Architettura* magazine was very influential in the context of Milan, where Piacentini used to work.

12. Albert Speer was a German architect, who worked for Hitler during the Nazi regime thanks to his friendship with the Nazi leader.



Figure 6. Novocomum in Como (Burcin Yildirim, 2017). It is possible to notice the sharpness of the building's volume.

Figure 7. Novocomum detail of the corner (Livia Lupi).

the lion's share of architectural commissions in 1923 (Nicoloso, 2018). As part of the moderates, Piacentini was not conducive to cultural and architectural exchange with foreign countries, neglecting many of the issues which were emerging abroad (Piacentini, 1930). He was a real supporter of Mussolini's autarchy campaign, pointing out the Italian extraordinary tradition the fascist leader wanted to connect with.

The contrast between him and Terragni was unequivocal regarding the possible application of Rationalism in Italy (Schumacher 1991). Piacentini believed that Rationalist architecture was too abstract and insufficiently figurative to satisfy Italian needs. He explicitly stated that rationalism was "incompatible with the rhetorical demands of Fascism" (Piacentini, 1930), which required a sense of monumentality, symmetry, rigidity and austerity. In 1930 Piacentini wrote:

We [Italians] ultimately cannot accept the new fixed formulas of completely glass walls and low ceilings; we must defend ourselves against a burning sun and excessive heat six months out of the year. This means we must still use natural and heavy materials, in dimensions that cannot, because of their nature, be differentiated from the old ones.

With his words, Piacentini explicitly positioned himself against Rationalist and Modernist ideals. He was not favourable to several architectural features promoted by MIAR, including the intense use of glass and compact volumetric geometries. For him, the commitment to Italian traditional values and principles was not only appropriate for the necessities of the fascist regime, but also for the characteristic of Italian context, climate, and culture.

By looking at the most relevant fascist works built in Italy between the wars, it is clear how Piacentini's ideas generally prevailed over the others. In fact, as demonstrated by the Palazzo degli Uffici (figure 8) and the Foro Italico in Rome (figure 9), the monumental, rhetorical, and classicistic character promoted by this architect was used as a common standard for fascist architecture. His "Stile Littorio"¹², strongly influenced by ancient architecture and traditional typologies, was considered by Mussolini the most congruous architectural language for the country (Nicoloso, 2018). In this sense, it was not only appreciated by most of the Italian avant-gardists but also shared with fascist leaders and members. For this reason, during the 1930s this dogmatic vocabulary of forms was adopted in a large number of buildings requested by the Fascist Party.

With this in mind, I see how Terragni's role in developing fascist ideology could appear of little relevance inside the Italian context. In fact, he never relied on the Stile Littorio for his projects, adopting solutions which, in my view, were conceived concerning his personal belief.

It has been said that it was not for aesthetic reasons that Hitler closed the Bauhaus. It must be said that it was because of a certain anxiety brought on by aesthetics - and not by politics - that Mussolini preferred Piacentini to Terragni. (Eisenman, 2003)

As highlighted by Eisenman, Mussolini had a clear preference for Piacentini and his reassuring style. Terragni's relationship with Modern Architecture, translated into personal design solutions, was not considered a solid base Fascism could rely on, although Terragni's works were important references for a portion of the spectrum of Italian architects of that time.

Even after WWII, Terragni's opinion on Modernism will be criticised and considered not appropriate in terms of contribution to the fascist cause. In particular, Manfredo Tafuri in his 'Toward a critique of architectural ideology', an essay in the Marxist journal 'Contropiano' (1969), questioned Modernism's suitability for ideological purposes. For him, its abstract works were inadequate for social participation and they represented a withdrawal from the sphere of engagement. In this sense, Tafuri believed that Modern Architecture was emptied of ideology and could not serve the necessities of the fascist regime (Tafuri, 1969).

In my opinion, Tafuri's idea doesn't give credit to the value and the meaning Casa del Fascio had in constructing and developing fascist culture through architecture. In fact, if it is true that, as a result of what had been said so far, Terragni appears as a complex figure in the Italian context (in between fascist prescriptions and international developments), it is also clear how his relevance in influencing the construction of a new language for the fascist regime has never been questioned. In the next chapters, I will describe Terragni's contribution to the fascist cause, proving how he actually conveyed symbolical and ideological messages, influencing Italian society through rationalist and modernist solutions.

12. Stile Littorio was an architectural and artistic language developed by fascist architects for Mussolini's regime. The term "littorio" relates to the tradition of ancient Roman lictors, from where the term "fascio" itself comes.



Figure 8. Palazzo degli Uffici elevation on the fountain square, designed by Gaetano Minnucci (Xavier de Jauréguiberry, 2017).



Figure 9. Interior space of Foro Italico in Rome (MARKA, 2007).



Casa del Fascio in Lissone (Andrea Martiradonna, 2021).

Part 2

Terragni and Casa del Fascio

06 - 07 - 08

06

Casa del Fascio national model

The chapter analyses the Casa del Fascio typology. After describing briefly the history of this architecture and its role in the fascist regime, the focus is put on the recurrent features of the national model and their ideological meanings.

Fascist national plan

Before diving into the description of how Terragni conveyed his personal belief through the Casa del Fascio in Como, it is necessary to understand the value of this typology for the Fascist Party.

According to Ciucci (1987), from Mussolini's rise to power to the beginning of WWII more than eleven thousand Case del Fascio were built across Italy. Originally, they started to emerge for local initiatives taken by the squadristi. They, before fascism was made official and institutionalised, used to gather in illegal headquarters called "covi" ("hidesouts"). With the increase in the number of supporters, the Fascist Party started to feel the need to establish a national model to transfer the regularised covi from private apartments to official buildings.

These headquarters usually occupied a prominent position inside the cities they were hosted by. They represented symbolic centres of authority in the eyes of the citizens, testifying to the systematic organisation and the vigorous propaganda of the fascist regime (Ciucci, 1987). They were not only administrative hubs, but also cultural "loci" ("places"). They could host auditoriums, radio stations, cinema halls and public facilities: everything was designed to be at the service of fascist indoctrination. For example, in the Casa del Fascio in Asciano (figure 1) the cultural aspect of the building is highlighted by the indoor cinema and by its closeness to the football stadium of the city.

On March 12, 1932, a competition for the definition of a common vocabulary for this building typology was launched in the periodical "L'assalto" by the Gruppo di Propaganda del Fascio Giovanile (Bentel, 1979)². The competition, which was reserved for students from all the architecture faculties in Italy, was introduced with this claim:

1. The term "covo" highlights the violent nature of fascist squadrons, who used to gather in illegally occupied buildings in different cities of Italy. This is the same thing CasaPound did in 2003 with a state-owned building located in the neighbourhood of Esquilino in Rome, which became its headquarters.

2. The Gruppo di Propaganda del Fascio Giovanile was one of the several groups promoted by the fascist regime to indoctrinate young Italian students (together with the National Balilla Operation).

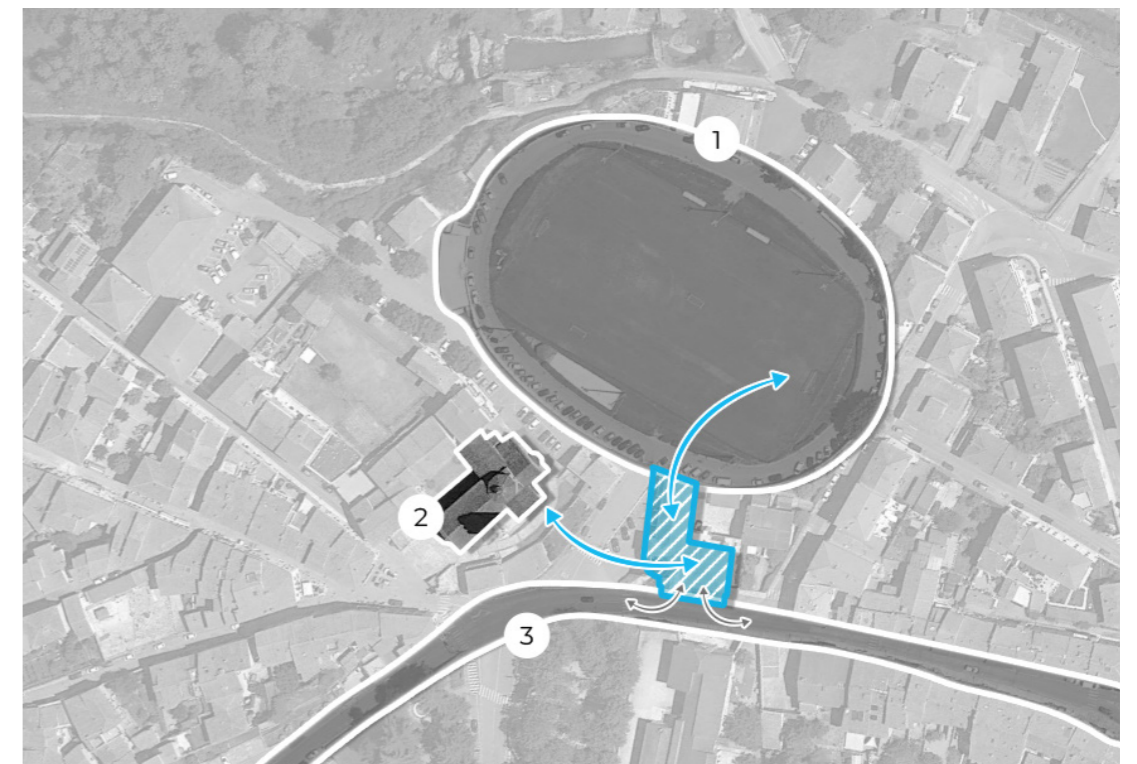


Figure 1. Casa del Fascio in Asciano (Own work, 2023). The placement close to the public stadium (1), the main church (2) and the main road (3) was designed to exalt the publicness of the fascist headquarter.

Casa del fascio is an institution of type, of which no town or fraction, however small, can do without; because in it concentrate the best energies of the place, is discussed of the collective interests, and find generous and friendly hospitality.... it is from the casa del fascio ... that the new spirit of Italy spreads through the measures of the Fascist Government; it is the casa del fascio that is the symbol of a regime in antithesis with many governments of the world and with all the governments of the past. (L'Assalto, 1932)

The text highlights the symbolical role of this typology at different scales, from the local context to the national one, where the comparison of Fascism with other foreign governments takes place. In the article, the Casa del Fascio is presented as the new "House" for the Italian masses, the meeting point between the citizens and fascist leaders, between the individuals and the State. These buildings were not only supposed to be Fascist Party headquarters³ but also public centres of the cities they were located in, sort of political and social cores of the communities (Eisenman, 2003). Moreover, they were a recognisable and supporting standard for the fascist regime, which could count on these buildings as "schools" for the pedagogical and educational role they played in society.

Casa del Fascio's recurrent features

According to Maulsby (2015), the competition launched on L'Assalto gave interesting results in terms of new and modern solutions. The winning project (figure 2), designed by Gian Luigi Banfi and Ludovico Belgiojoso (future founders of the firm BBPR), not only influenced the future model of this typology in Italy, but it also had great international recognition, being published in magazines like 'L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui'⁴ in France. Banfi and Belgiojoso's project is based on three main blocks placed inside a rectangular lot. Apart from the simplicity and clarity of the plan, the design is characterised by the presence of a tower and a balcony. These components were supposed to provide the building with a distinguishing character within the city's context and, at the same time, reinforce the connection of this architecture with the historical surrounding (Maulsby, 2015).

Several solutions presented at the competition were analysed and studied by fascist authorities and architects. One year later many of the recurrent features were integrated into the Casa del Fascio national model, a set of prescriptions collected to guide architects through their design process providing them with a typological standard to refer to. This standard was then applied to many different structures in Italy (figure 3), including the Casa del Fascio in Lissone (figure 4), one of the most famous examples of this Italian typology.

Among the recurrent features of this model, the lictorial tower ("torre littoria") (figure 5) was the most symbolic one (Schnapp 2008). In contrast with the urban campaniles of medieval towns and their churches, the lictorial tower was supposed to propagate fascist intentions of greatness. In fact, its role was to mark the headquarters' buildings in the city's context, making them appear as relevant as churches and town halls. Also, it highlighted the hierarchical order of appearance in the facade's composition. In this sense, the lictorial tower was the most visible and distinctive component of the building and of the city, the symbol of fascist authority in the community of that location.

3. Although having a symbolic meaning, the main function of the Casa del Fascio was still the political garrison of the Fascist Party in Italian cities. For more information, see Bentel (1979).

4. L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui is a French architecture journal, founded in 1930 by André Bloc. It has international relevance and it is still published nowadays. For more information, consult its website <https://www.larchitectureaujourd'hui.fr/>

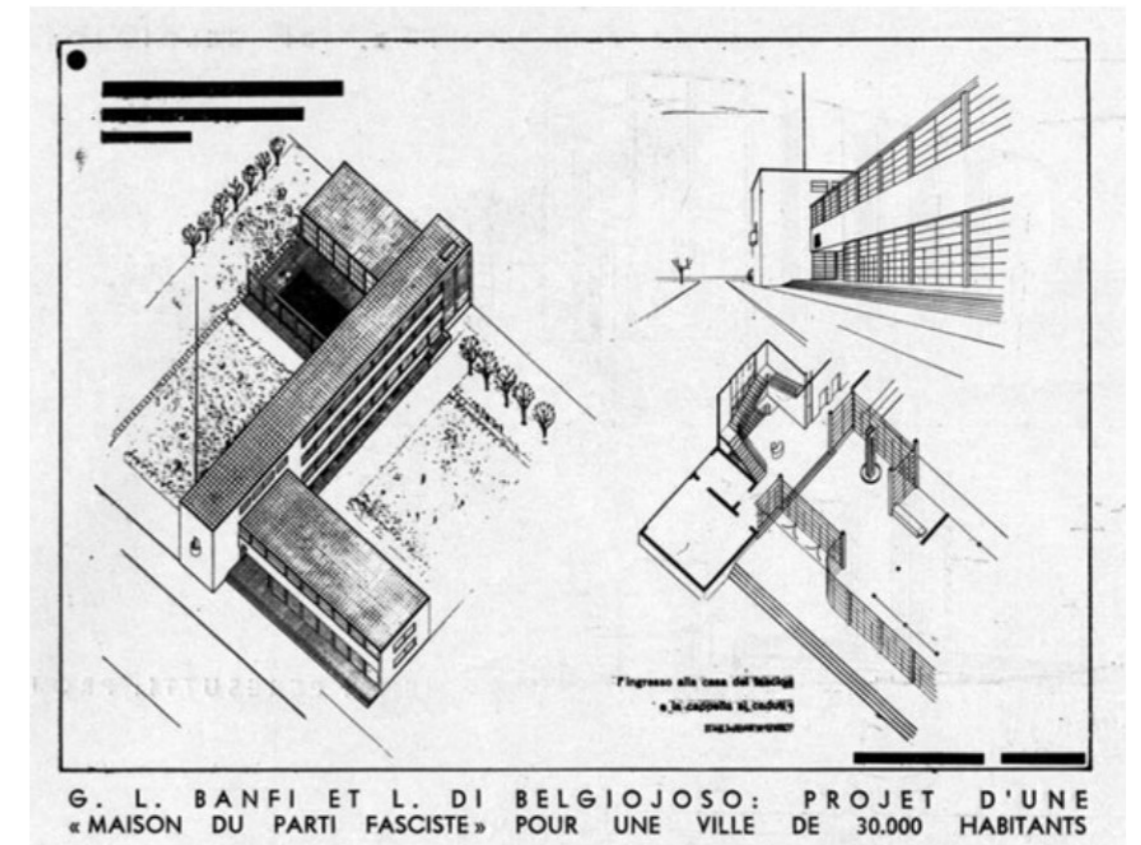


Figure 2. Gian Luigi Banfi and Ludovico Belgiojoso's competition entry for a Casa del Fascio (Banfi & Belgiojoso, 1932).

Together with the tower, the balcony ("arengario") (figure 6) was considered essential for fascist indoctrination. In fact, it let the leader speak to the masses directly from the building. On the one hand, I believe it helped to break the boundary between the inside (the State) and the outside (the people) of the Casa. This feeling of common engagement and participation, which was fundamental in fascist culture⁵, was also enhanced by the main assembly hall (figure 7), which had to be spacious and welcoming to instil a sense of familiarity. On the other hand, the balcony still accentuated the prominent position of fascist leaders towards society by highlighting the difference in height between the two.

Lastly, the shrine ("sacrario") (figure 8) to the "martyrs of the [fascist] revolution"⁶ was the only real prescription regarding the interiors of the building. According to Storchi (2007), the shrine was meant to give these architectures a cult value, linking the political role of Fascism to a spiritual sphere. With this sacred nature, the Casa del Fascio were more similar to temples for people rather than headquarters, playing almost a religious role in the communities.

5. The relationship between Mussolini, fascist authorities and the people was one of the crucial points of fascist propaganda, founded on the direct relationship between the individual and the mass.

6. As it is clear in many different fascist works and architectures, one of the main points of fascist propaganda was to elevate and exalt the people who died for the fascist cause as national victims to venerate. For more information, see Schumacher (1991).



Figure 3. Personal collection of different examples of Casa del Fascio throughout Italy, selected among the case studies shown in the Casa del Fascio in Bologna in 2020 (Own work, 2023). From left to right: Poggio Renatico, Modena, Minerbio, Forlì, Imola, Bentivoglio, Molinella.

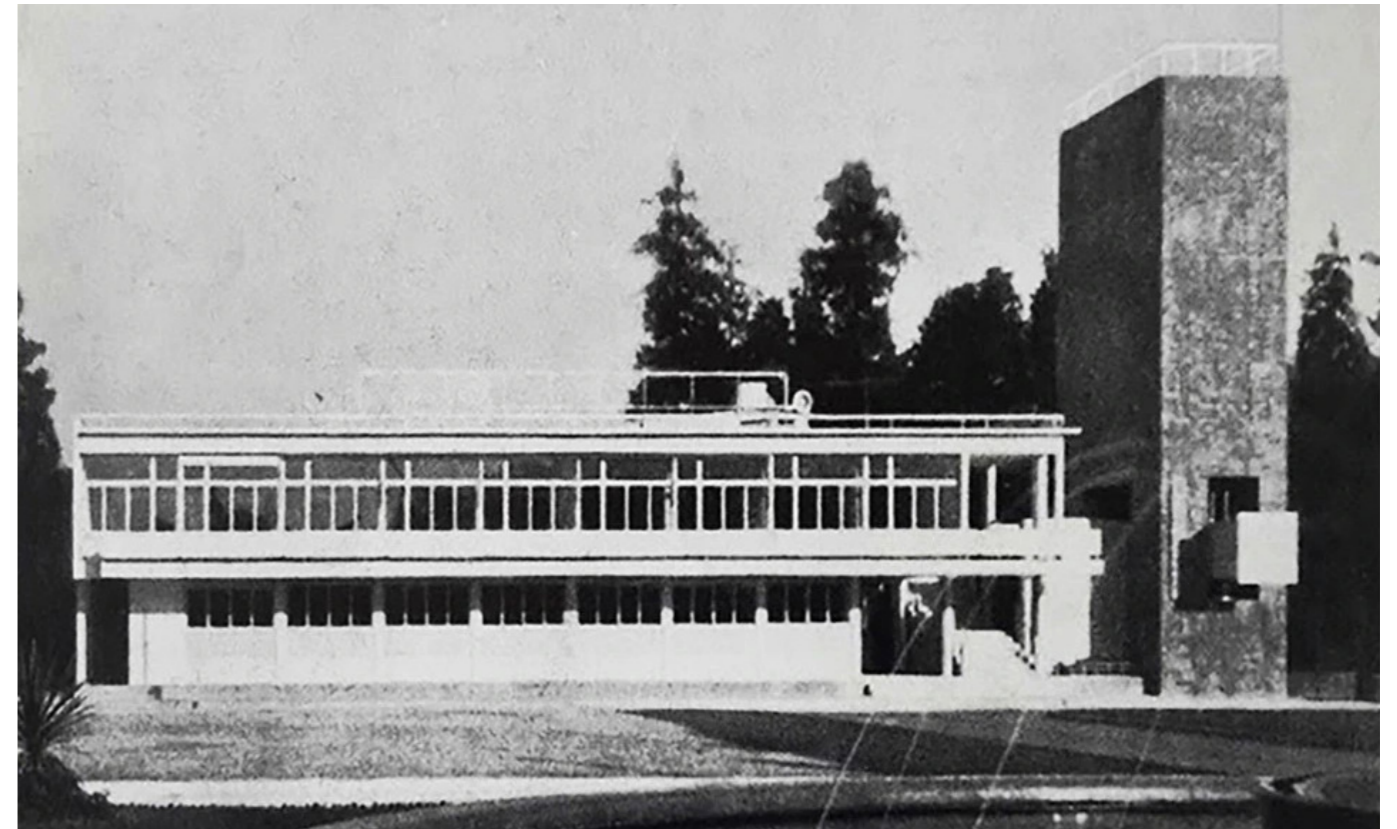


Figure 4. Casa del Fascio in Lissone (Unknown, 1939).



Figure 5. Torre littoria, Casa del Fascio in Grosseto (Sailko, 2020).



Figure 7. Entrance hall, Casa del Fascio in Como (Unknown, 2017).



Figure 6. Arengario, Casa del Fascio in Lissone (Jauréguiberry, 2022).



Figure 8. Example of fascist sacrario, Bologna (Mattis, 2015).

07

Innovative Terragni

This chapter highlights the role of Terragni concerning the Casa del Fascio typology, describing how his personal belief about Fascism and fascist revolution informed his innovations to the national model.

1. Terragni is not only commonly defined as a fascist architect but also as one of the main exponents of Rationalism and Modernism in Europe. For more information, see Bentel (1979).

2. See Arengario's meaning in chapter 06 'Casa del Fascio national model' and glass's value in chapter 08 'Ideological means in Casa del Fascio'.

3. The War Memorial in Erba is a monument to the fallen of World War I designed in 1926 by Terragni, who will later design also the War Memorial in Como. For more information, see chapter 05 'Terragni between Italy and Europe'.

Terragni as an innovator

The regime has offered contemporary architects several fundamental themes for typical jobs However, the job with the most political prestige, propaganda value and revolutionary originality remains the casa del fascio. (Terragni, 1936)

As testified by his words in the *Quadrante* magazine, Terragni knew very well the value and the meaning of the Casa del Fascio in Italy. He considered this Italian typology the symbol of Fascism through arts, advancing the role of these buildings as crucial for the development of fascist culture throughout the peninsula. Terragni was fascinated by the possible political and symbolic implications of a building of this kind, especially in the context of Como. For this reason, before diving into the practical innovations, it is necessary to understand how Terragni differed from other architects also regarding his considerations about Fascism.

Although being part of different groups and movements, both in Italy and abroad¹, Terragni still distinguished himself for his personal belief. According to Schnapp (2008), he saw in the nature of the fascist regime a strong corporative state, "an agent of accelerated modernization and industrialization" (Schnapp, 2008). This corporative character was considered by Terragni the appropriate synthesis between socialism and capitalism: in fact, in his view, it combined the individual with the mass, the people with the State, providing economic and social aspects with a spiritual and metaphorical dimension centred on Italian traditional values. These were mainly national pride, imperial ambitions, economic self-sufficiency, and personal sacrifice in favour of collectivity.

For Terragni, Fascism aimed to accelerate Italian modernization, fighting against the conservatives and embracing people's necessities with a direct relationship between the citizens and the leader². His modernist position found a coherent placement within the artistic challenges Italy was facing between the wars. As highlighted before, he put a lot of effort into trying to formulate a new language for the country without emulating traditional examples or simply copying European references. However, his approach towards innovations is not advanced in his private projects, like the *Novocomum* and *Casa Rustici* (figure 1). In my opinion, in fact, he especially took advantage of his public commissions to promote his ideas about the fascist revolution, the value of the mass, and his new vision of fascist architecture. The *Casa del Fascio*, together with the design for the War memorial of the First World War in Erba (figure 2)³ and the *Danteum* (figure



Figure 1. Casa Rustici (Arbaletto, 2014).



Figure 2. War Memorial in Erba (Maarc).

3), represents a translation of all his ideas, values, and thoughts through architectural terms. The public character of these projects was for Terragni an opportunity to convey several personal messages, even if they were not fully shared by fascist authorities.

For example, the Danteum project is a perfect example of how Terragni used his public commissions to promote his ideas about fascist architecture and revolution. The project was commissioned by the fascist regime to commemorate the 600th anniversary of Dante's birth and was meant to be a monument to Italian culture and Fascism (Schnapp, 2013). However, Terragni took this opportunity to create a visionary project that went beyond the traditional concept of a monument. The building was supposed to be a place of pilgrimage for Fascist intellectuals, where they could immerse themselves in the world of Dante and Fascist ideology. I believe that Terragni pursued this goal while at the same time using the project as a vehicle for his ideas about Fascist architecture, including the use of new materials and technologies, the importance of mass production, and the value of rationality and efficiency.

Terragni's innovations of the national model

To promote and justify his ideas, Terragni didn't miss the chance to make use of the media. In this sense, he advanced his new interpretation of the Casa del Fascio typology through the "Documentario sulla Casa del Fascio di Como" in the 10th edition of the Quadrante magazine in 1936⁴ (figure 4). This is the main primary source we have where Terragni discussed in detail his project, its features, and its meanings.

In his text, Terragni explained the requirements he had to consider for this typology. However, he also described and motivated the changes he applied to it, making clear what was required from the Party and what he actually added to it concerning



Figure 3. Drawing in of the colonnade in the Paradiso Space, Danteum (Terragni, 1938).

4. The "Documentario sulla Casa del Fascio di Como" in the 10th edition of the Quadrante magazine is the main text written by Terragni where he discusses his project, explaining everything related to the commission, the site, the design, and the symbolical value. In the beginning, it was supposed to be correlated with Bontempelli's editorial (later replaced by Bardi).

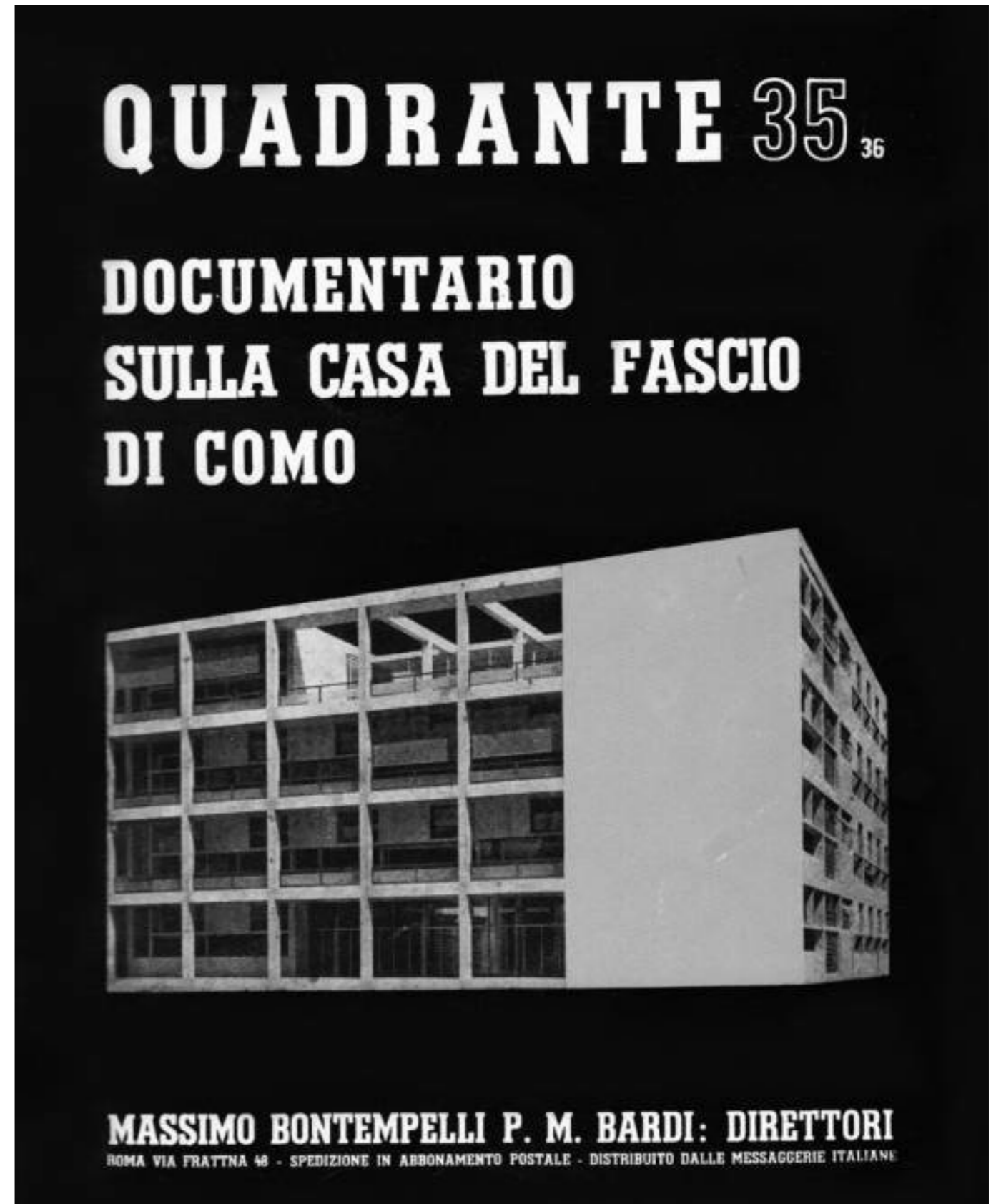


Figure 4. Cover of the 10th edition of the Quadrante magazine in 1936 (Quadrante, 1936).

his personal belief. By carefully reading the text, it is possible to find several reasons why Terragni changed the national model, and consequently conveyed ideological messages through personal design solutions.

According to the Documentario (1936), to highlight his personal interpretation and perspective about fascist indoctrination Terragni needed a “totally modern architecture” (Terragni, 1936). This was based on two main points: the reconsideration of classicism and the reconstruction of monumental spaces. Firstly, classical architecture was not considered a model to faithfully replicate. Instead, it was perceived by Terragni as a spirit, whose language was based on the notions of harmony, proportions, hierarchy, and geometrical balance. These were the main means used to convey the power of the new idea of national identity, descending directly from the classical tradition.

By abstracting the core and principles from ancient architecture, and not reproducing classical forms, I believe that Terragni was already diverging from the other Italian architects of that time. In fact, Piacentini, together with the moderates and the conservatives, was designing new architectures replicating forms and shapes taken from the past: this is clear by looking at his Palace of Justice (figure 5) in Messina, which presents woven elements, classical orders, columns and capitals. On the contrary, the modernisers were neglecting classical buildings, since their interests were completely towards modern structures designed abroad. In particular, Le Corbusier was the main reference for the architects of the Gruppo 7, as testified by most of their projects, which don't relate to classical architecture in any way. One example of this is Luigi Figini's Casa Figini (figure 6), which fully meets the Five Principles of Modern Architecture⁵ developed by Le Corbusier without adopting any traditional or classical stylistic solution.

Secondly, monumentality was supposed to make people and individuals identify with the collective experience of fascist history by interacting with the building. The monument was not something excluded from the social life of the community. Instead, it unified the concepts of the family (house), education (school) and sacrality (temple) together, as Terragni stated:

The Party headquarters can no longer assume the form of a den or a refuge or a redoubt; it must become instead a House, a School, a Temple. (1936)

Monumentality was used by Terragni as a means to express the legacy of Italian politics and highlight fascist achievements, qualities, and power. In this sense, Terragni's monumentality wasn't pointing towards the legitimization of the fascist regime as a State

5. The Five Principles of Modern Architecture is Le Corbusier's architectural manifesto, on which most Modernist architectures are founded on. These were the pilotis, the free design of the ground plan, the free design of the façade, the horizontal window and the roof garden. For more information, see Eisenman (2003).



Figure 5. Palace of Justice in Messina (Paul Lansberg, 2019).



Figure 6. Rendering of Casa Figini (Bojović, 2018).

but, as noted by Storchi, it was “inserting the past into a celebration of [the regime's] present” (2007).

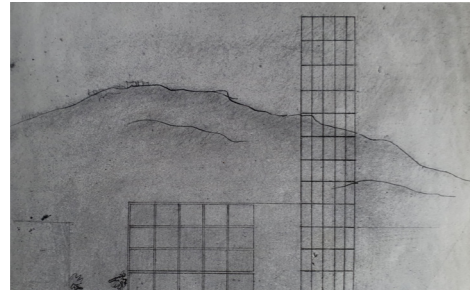
To express his ideas in terms of classicism and monumentality, Terragni went through an interesting design process, described in figure 7. Terragni initially sketched the Casa del Fascio as a “palazzo” with campanile, in line with the national model prescriptions and with the references he had at that time. The presence of the lictorial tower, clearly above the rest of the building and the surrounding structures, was massive in the general appearance of the facade, almost out of scale in terms of proportions.

Later on, the lictorial tower started to lose mass, it became more transparent and it was reduced to a thin layer standing in the middle of the building. According to Schumacher (1991), these changes are part of a logical process of design Terragni had to consider to adapt the national model to the needs of Como's fascist authorities. In my opinion, instead, this transition testifies to the struggles Terragni was facing while applying changes to the fascist standard and, at the same time while trying to provide the building with a modernist character. In the end, in fact, the change is drastic. The final solution displays a pure form in which the tower was completely erased from the strict volume of the building. The balcony, instead, was discarded and absorbed into the negative spaces of the front facade since the beginning, as part of the strict compositional grid.

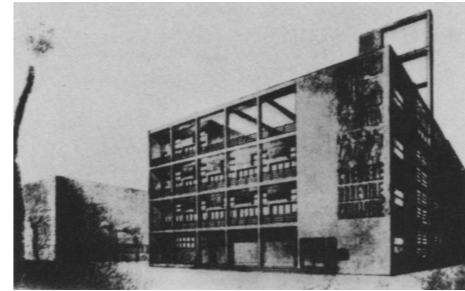
Since the early stages of the project, I believe it is clear how Terragni progressively applied to the project all the modernist features he was looking at in the European context. From the compact volume and the sharp edges to the flat roof and the materiality: everything in the building responded to the rationalist canons of Modernism. According to the movement's principles, the use of reinforced concrete and its consequent grid were exposed to view and enhanced with marble finishes. Visual boundaries from the inside to the outside were destroyed through the use of extensive glazings. Geometrical voids and cuts were designed to show the functions hosted inside the building. All these features are visible from the first to the last solution of the design process. In my opinion, all these innovations were designed to promote Rationalism's claim of being the most appropriate interpretation of fascist dogma and its revolutionary spirit.

Apart from these general considerations, to convey specific ideological messages Terragni applied different distinct changes to the national model at every scale of the project, from the urban location to the interior's configuration. In this sense, I believe that Terragni didn't just change a model which was already there, but he constructed a new narrative in terms of ideology-conveying architectural forms to encourage the idea of progress and modernity. In the next chapter, all these features will be described and critically analysed concerning their meaning and value for fascist ideology, comparing what I personally think and what has already been said by other authors.

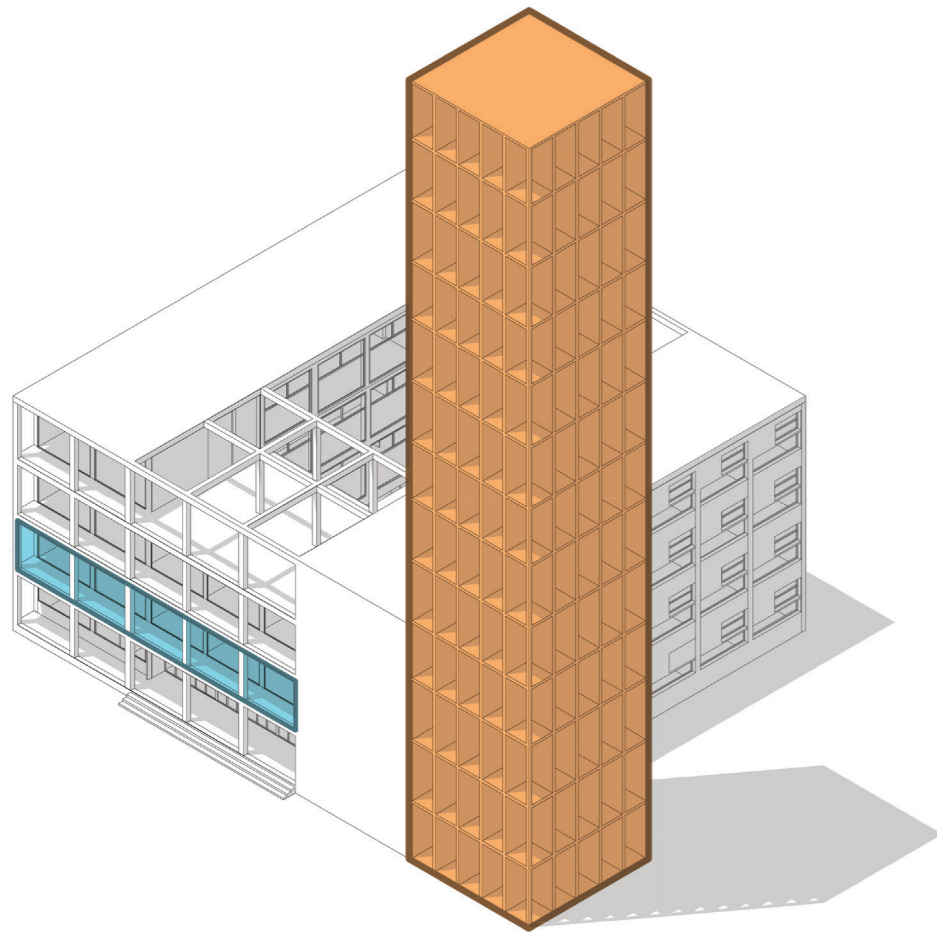
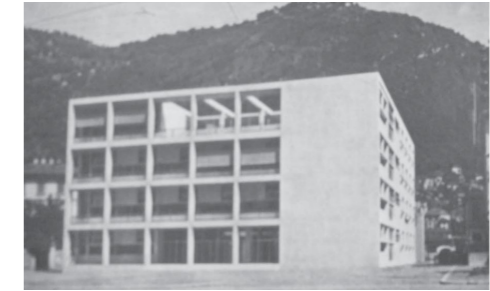
Based on
Terragni's early elevation
(Schumacher, 1991)
1928



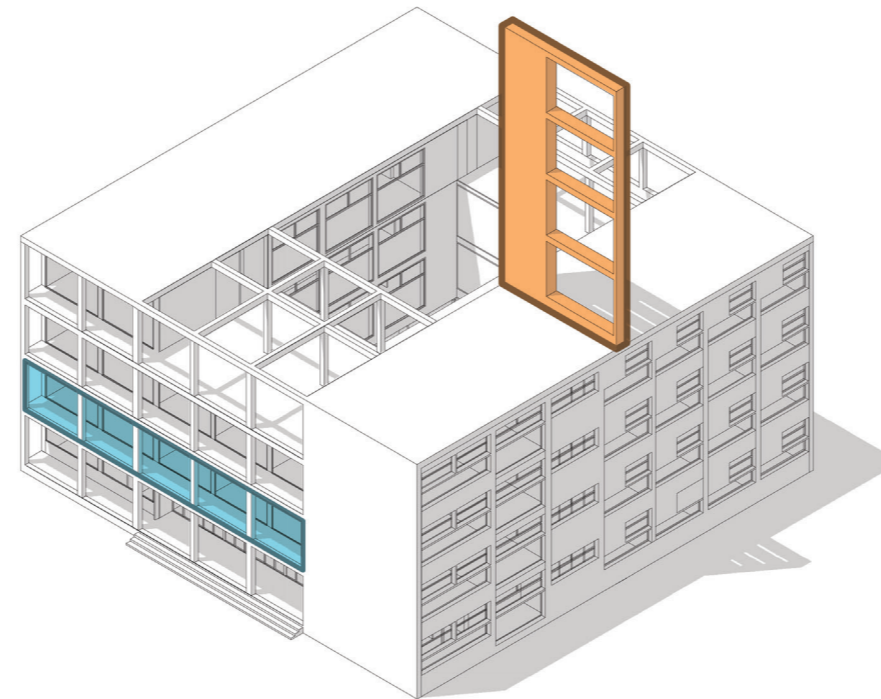
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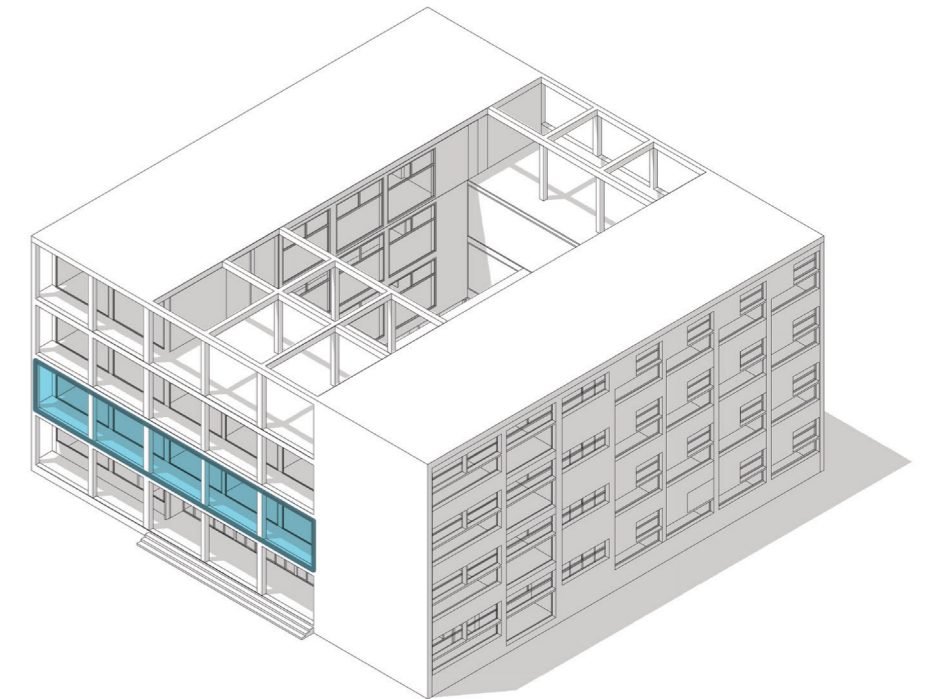
Casa del Fascio's final solution
(Quadrante, 1936)
1936



- The arengario is included in the general volume
- The lictorial tower is an external component and it is 3 times the height of the rest of the building



- The arengario is included in the general volume
- The lictorial tower is an internal component but is just a thin layer with symbolic value



- The arengario is included in the general volume
- The lictorial tower is erased from the volumetric composition and it is not visible anymore

Figure 7. Personal diagram about Terragni's design process, based on two sketches drawn by the architect himself during different stages of the project and on a photo of the final solution (Own work, 2023).



Casa del Fascio in Como (Guillermo Hevia García)

08

Ideological means in Casa del Fascio

The last chapter describes the ideology-conveying architectural solutions adopted by Terragni for the Casa del Fascio. The analysis follows the sequence of a personal visit conducted in Como, highlighting how my personal interpretation differs or coincides with the others concerning specific features.

Urban path

The ideological indoctrination designed by Terragni for the Casa del Fascio influenced every scale of the project, starting from the urban level. Located next to Como's city centre, the political and social core of the community, the building's placement (figure 1) embodies the authoritarian character of this architecture. This positioning confers prestige on the building, which is exalted by the proximity to relevant and historical structures, but it also precisely shapes the urban path of visitors. In fact, the Casa sits opposite the main train station and far enough from the lake, forcing most of the people coming by train to pass through the entire city centre before reaching it.

Although Schumacher (1991) highlights the building's position in relation to the city centre, none of the secondary literature texts mention the walking paths you need to follow to get to the building from the station. In fact, as displayed in figure 2, I believe they implicitly convey a symbolic message: the building is not just a public monument within its context, but it represents the peak of the Como visiting experience. While walking, visitors undergo a climax in terms of architectural relevance and meaning, which elevates the Casa as the highest moment of their journey. Starting from the station (the functional link between the city and the outer world), people cross different streets and spaces, whose historical value increases and culminates in the main square. Here, the Cathedral and the public theatre are the main characters of the view. In my opinion, Terragni imagined the Casa del Fascio at the end of this figurative path, representing the apex of the visit.

Location in the city

Apart from the positioning of the Casa within the urban fabric, the relationship between the architecture and its immediate surroundings plays a symbolic role in



Figure 1. Bird's-eye view of the Casa del Fascio (My Architectural Guide, 2017).



Figure 2. Urban paths to get to Casa del Fascio from the main train station (Own work, 2023). The visitors are forced to pass in front of The Hands Monument (1), Hunters of the Alps Square (2), Alessandro Volta square (3), Cavour square (4), Rome Square (5), the Cathedral (6) and the civic theatre (7).

fascist propaganda. Firstly, the Casa del Fascio is located next to the city's civic theatre¹, a symbol of Como's tradition and culture. In my opinion, this link was specifically designed by Terragni, although this aspect is not mentioned anywhere in the secondary literature. In fact, in every possible view towards the building's facade the mass of the theatre is always visible, as if these two structures contributed together to the cultural development of Como (figure 3).

Secondly, the building is placed in front of the Cathedral, the core of the community's religious life (figure 4). According to Eisenman (2003), the visual and geometrical connection between these two buildings not only emphasizes the relevance of the place but also metaphorically communicates the Church's support for the fascist regime's political program. This aspect is fundamental for fascist propaganda: the link between the political and religious spheres was a delicate topic in Italy. Mussolini knew the role of the Church in Italian society and wanted to get its approval to gain greater consensus from the population. In this sense, I agree with the fact that the alignment of the Casa del Fascio with the Cathedral might represent Terragni's translation of the Lateran Treaty, which was signed by Mussolini and Pope Pius XI in 1929². However, I personally consider this juxtaposition between the Casa and the Cathedral as controversial, since it also emphasizes the contrast between the two institutions. In this way, the two buildings facing each other could also metaphorically represent the opposition and the rivalry between Mussolini and the Church. Through this contrast, I believed Terragni managed to exalt fascist doctrine, raising it to the level of importance of religion.

Casa del Fascio's location is interesting not only for its relationship with the Cathedral but also for the triangular empty space in front of it. While Schumacher describes only

1. The Social Theatre of Como was founded in 1813y. The project for the theatre was designed by the architect Giuseppe Cusi.

2. The Lateran Treaty, part of the Lateran Pacts, was the agreement signed by King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and Pope Pius XI to solve the Roman Question (a dispute concerning the ownership and consequent power of the popes as rulers of the Italian civil territory).



Figure 3. View towards Casa del Fascio, with the civic theatre and the Cathedral visible at the sides of the building (Own work, 2023).

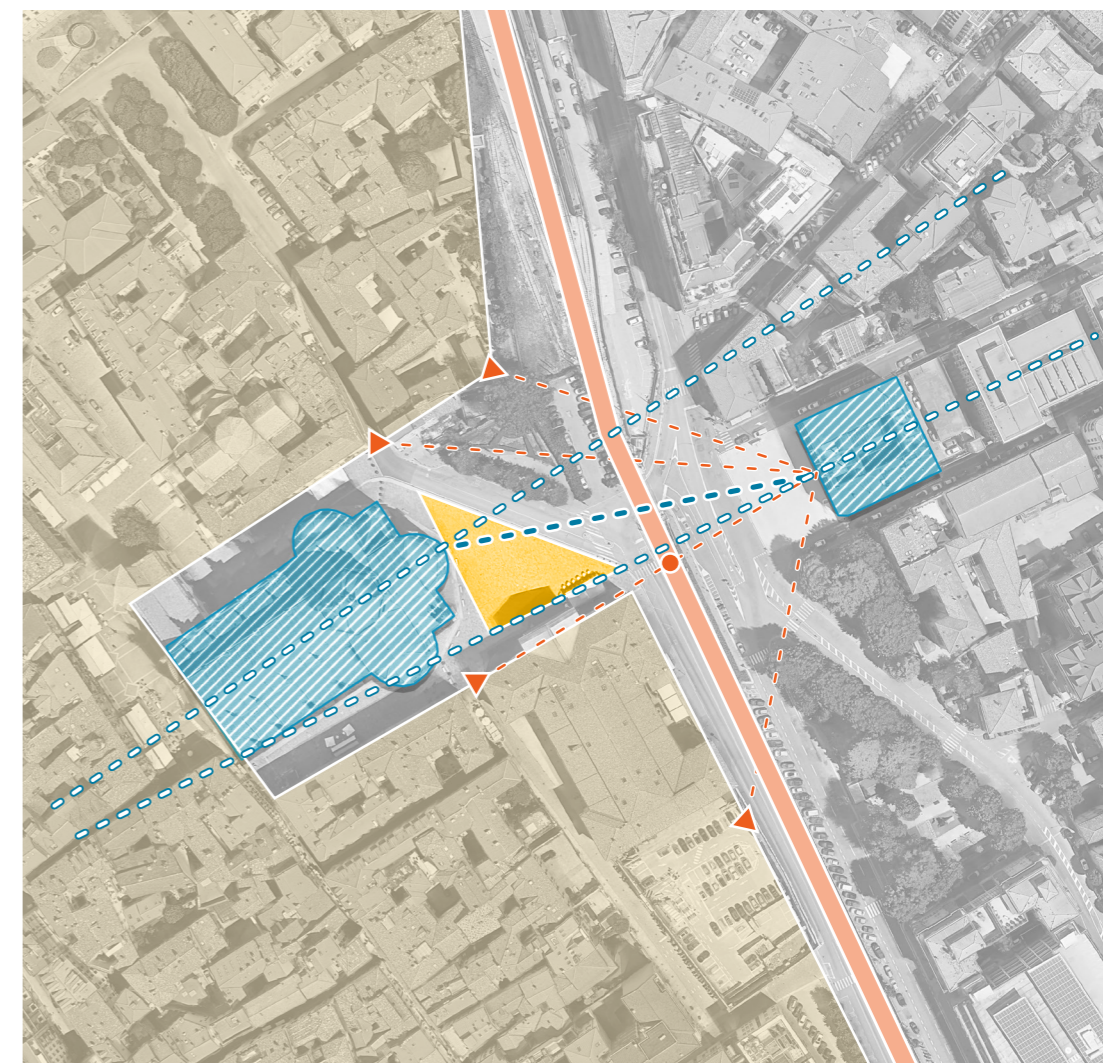


Figure 4. Casa del Fascio's location (Own work, 2023). The diagram highlights the difference in density between the triangular square and the city centre, the building's alignment with the Cathedral, the railway passing in front of the main facade, and the perspective views towards the Casa.

the empty space in front of the facade (1991), focusing already on the building scale, I think the void of the wide square was designed to exalt the built presence of the architecture. On the one hand, the great contrast between the dense city centre and the emptiness of the Casa's position is accentuated, providing almost a baroque effect when entering the square³. On the other hand, through the elimination of obstacles between the Casa and the church, the building is visible from every possible position, as clear in Figure 4. Especially from the narrow streets next to the church, the view is always directed towards the Casa's facade, highlighting Terragni's meticulous study of perspectives. The building's orientation towards the city centre ensures that its front is the first thing seen by the public, while the lateral facades face secondary streets.

Furthermore, I believe that the building's presence influenced the surrounding infrastructure, which takes the Casa as the focal point of the composition. Firstly, the secondary streets directed towards the Casa feature an abrupt transition between tight dark spaces and the open bright area. This difference in exposure and openness draws attention to the architecture. Secondly, a railway pointing towards the lake passes transversally in front of the building. This provides a straight view of the facade for all the passengers of the train. Although it is not possible to know exactly if these future changes were foreseen by Terragni, the ideological reason for this effect would be clear: the building is the manifesto of the city, and visitors must immediately understand the relevance of the fascist regime when entering in Como.

Square view

After crossing the railway, the entire view is dominated by the Casa and its empty plaza. Here, the building's regular volume⁴ and clear shapes (figure 5) provide a sense of perfection, crystallinity, and clarity, as required for modernist architectures. For me, the entire mass of the building looks static and immutable, the symbol of a doctrine whose value and influence go beyond the dimension of time. In fact, the facade's basic geometrical relationships were designed to remind people of the appearance of classical architecture and instil a sense of eternity, as if the value of the fascist revolution was everlasting.

As described by Eisenman (2003), the proportions of the front are harmonious, clear, and understandable. The architecture's overall volume is emphasized as a sharp, compact block with regular spans between pillars and floors. In my view, the square openings within this monochromatic volume not only accentuate the monolithic aspect of the Casa but also make the building look like a block of marble which was carved out. This metaphor was also noticed by Schumacher, who in 1991 stated:

The immediate perception of the composition is one of a solid cube that has been hollowed out or carved away It is a subtractive composition. Material appears to have been removed to create the layers.

However, while for Schumacher the carving metaphor highlights the negative design process adopted by Terragni, for me the use of a single main material (white marble, visible in figure 6) draws special attention to the unitary aspect of the architecture. Rather than resembling a futuristic machine, this architecture is comparable to a statue shaped by an expert sculptor. This is confirmed by Terragni's considerations of white marble as an exemplary autarchic material which perfectly met the demands of modern architecture. It did not only offer blank facades which could host propagandistic

3. A typical feature of baroque architecture was the effect of "surprise" given by the contrast of small tight streets with big wide squares. For example, this was the situation of Via dell'Impero's Neighbourhood close to Saint Peter before 1932, when fascist architects finished the wide street now visible in Rome.

4. The building's sides measure each approximately 33.2 metres. The height of the building is half of this length, so the building itself is exactly half of a cube. For more information, see Eisenman (2003).



Figure 5. Casa del Fascio's main facade (My Architectural Guide, 2017).



Figure 6. Detail of marble finitures (Own work, 2023).

illustrations and images but also created a utopic appearance, a symbol of magnificence and immortality. All of this was pursued by taking advantage of an Italian traditional material⁵.

Italy, exceedingly rich in natural stones (limestone, saccharoid, gneiss, granite, breccia, etc.), finds herself in the fortunate position of being able to offer modern architects an appropriate solution . . . to the problem of the large, naked walls resulting from a rigorous interpretation of modern architecture. (Terragni, 1936)

As described by Storchi (2007), the utopic and rarefied appearance of the Casa is emphasized not only by the marble surfaces but also by the symmetrical form of the building. The pure shapes on the facades (solids and voids) create a visual contrast with the detailed surrounding buildings. In addition to that, the white and empty square in front of the architecture breaks the urban structure of the neighbourhood, exalting the built mass. The overall appearance of the Casa del Fascio is that of a metaphysical painting, resembling one of De Chirico's⁶ works (figure 7).

Moreover, I agree with Storchi's idea that the void of the square itself not only provides the whole with a utopic character but also plays an important role in fascist ideology. Its emptiness, filled by the mass of the crowd during public events, manifests the weakness of the individual in comparison with the power of the collective. The building actively interacts with people and is shaped by them; the boundary between leaders and the crowd is erased, giving a whole different meaning to the architecture. In this sense, the square offers the possibility to showcase masses gathering, military forces exhibitions, and public events, advancing fascist propaganda through built space.

The moving quality of the work ... resides rather in acknowledging the thousands and thousands of black-shirted citizens amassed in front of the Casa del Fascio to hear the voice of their leader announce to Italians and foreigners the advent of the empire. (Terragni, 1936)

These considerations provided by Storchi (2007) seem to be confirmed by some of the criticisms Terragni received from his collaborators. This is the case of Massimo Bontempelli, founder of Quadrante with Pier Maria Bardi. In an article written for the same Quadrante edition of Terragni's Documentario (but replaced before the publication for his too critical tone⁷), Bontempelli described a sense of disquiet he felt for the project's clear intents of mass characterization. For him, the entire design was focused on the annihilation of the individual in favour of the exaltation of the crowd. This totalitarian essence of the architecture was enhanced by the complete lack of dialogue



Figure 7. Giorgio De Chirico paintings, part of the Piazza d'Italia series (De Chirico, 1913).

5. According to Schnapp (2008), marble was "the unassailable autarchic modern material, given its abundance on the peninsula and its importance in ancient Roman, Renaissance, and Baroque architecture".

6. In my view, the similarity between De Chirico's paintings and Casa del Fascio's plaza is very clear. Casa del Fascio could be one of the main characters of De Chirico's paintings for its metaphysical appearance.

7. According to Storchi (2007), Bontempelli's article was considered by Bardi too critical for the inauguration of the building. So, he decided to replace it with an editorial centred on the rhetoric of construction.

between the interior and the exterior of the building, as he described:

In this house everything comes from outside, from the square, from the air; and everything immediately moves and becomes outside again (...). Here every sense of recollection disappears, we see it dissolving in the air in front of our eyes. (Bontempelli, 1936)

However, in my view this perception of the mass can not be isolated from the Casa's rigorous shapes, symbolising fascist authority in society. In fact, I personally consider the strictness of Casa del Fascio's grid as a promoter of a sense of rigidity. The edges are sharp and precise (figure 8), with no oblique or irregular elements. Components are solely horizontal and vertical, with no decorations or ornamentation. The message here is clear: the regime is close to people, but at the same time strict and authoritative, just like the geometries of its architectures. The fascist doctrine is rigorous, especially towards collectivity, and there is no room for individual expression. I consider this value of the architecture's rigidity an important lack of consideration in the academic research conducted so far.

Lastly, one of the consequences of the utopian aspect of the Casa is its detachment of it from its context. In my opinion, the natural background (figure 9) behind the building plays a relevant role in this: the brown and green hill creates a great contrast with the

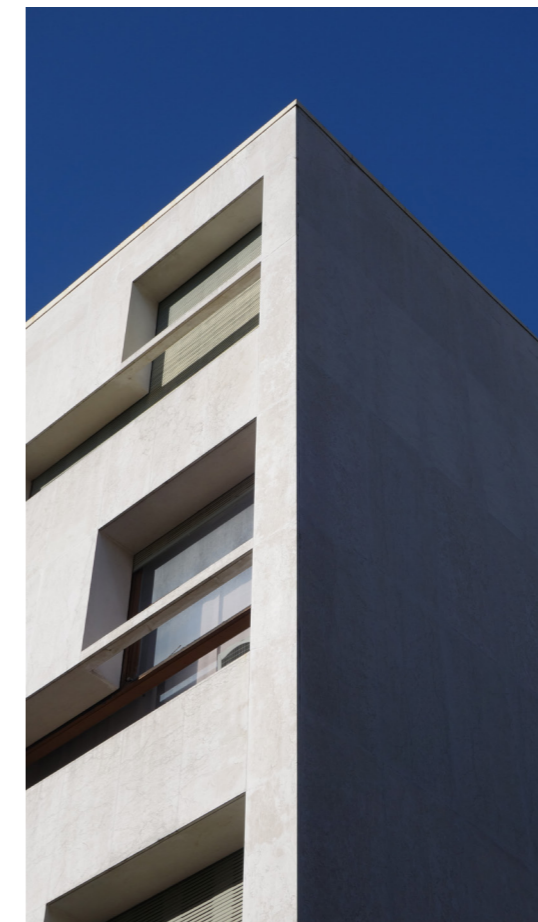


Figure 8. Detail of the corner (Own work, 2023).



Figure 9. Background of the building (Own work, 2023).

white building's volume. The background, which is also visible through the square cuts, creates a link between fascism and classical empires, whose monuments traditionally were built taking advantage of a natural landscape. In this sense, I think that there are a lot of similarities between the Casa del Fascio and ancient theatres and temples, like the Parthenon in Athens and the Athena temple complex in Delphi.

This idea of connecting the fascist headquarters' image with the appearance of historical monuments was one of the main goals of Terragni's design. In fact, the form and the whiteness of the building evoke not only the concept of purity but also the formality of ancient architecture. This formal character inspires the correlation between this building and classical masterpieces, and metaphorically between Fascism and ancient forms of government. In this sense, the fascist regime is promoted in continuity with the Italian political tradition, whose values were admired by Mussolini and advanced through the autarchy campaign⁸.

However, this relationship between the Casa and its background has been neglected so far, since no possible correlation between the two has ever been described in the secondary literature.

Front view

While analysing the building comprehensively, I personally noticed how Terragni deliberately avoided adopting any specific style associated with Como or Lombardy's tradition and context. While trying to formulate a new national style, he came up with an acontextual and atemporal character. In my view, this new model he constructed was considered appropriate to represent the fascist cause throughout Italy. This is evident when comparing the Casa del Fascio with its surrounding buildings (as visible in figure 5): Terragni's project misses several crucial components, such as pitched roofs (important in a location with rain and snow) and balconies. Furthermore, its form does not correspond to any Italian traditional typologies, and the materials used are not local and are imported from other regions. All these features prove how the effects of acontextuality and timelessness were key points of Terragni's building since the very first stages of the project, as they were never altered from the beginning to the end of the design process shown before⁹.

If we take a closer look at the main facade of Casa del Fascio, it is possible to identify several features which promoted and conveyed fascist ideology. In 1936 Terragni wrote:

If Como's Casa del Fascio has been called a 'house of glass' it is no less true . . . where glass walls end, marble begins.

Considering his words, Terragni was well aware that the use of glass was one of the most distinctive features of his building. According to Schnapp (2008), the glass material highlighted the dual character of this architecture, which was simultaneously traditional and modern. Glass was considered the "universal material of brilliance" (*Il vetro*, 1938), the most Italian and fascist material possible, as attested by the cover of the tenth issue of *'Il Vetro'* magazine (figure 10). At once, it combined the traditional national sentiments with the technological advancements of the country, providing the final product with a greater morality and sacrality.

In addition to that, I personally believe that Terragni designed the glazings to underscore the close relationship between the private and public spheres. This

8. For more information, see chapter 04 'Fascist art'.

9. For more information, see chapter 07 'Innovative Terragni'.



Figure 10. Cover of *'Il Vetro'* magazine (*Il Vetro*, 1938).

combination furthered the pedagogical function of the Casa, which was built to forge the next Italian generations in a familiar environment ruled and governed by the regime. The new fascist man, who identified with the collectivity, should have been an active component of the State, taking part in the political life that was unfolding inside the building. My opinion seems confirmed by Terragni himself, who in the Documentario wrote:

That of being able to see what happens inside is the best badge of a House built for the people, in comparison with a palace, a barracks, a bank.... Glass skinning enables "instinctive verification" between the citizenry and the state. (1936)

As explained by his words, Terragni was interested in the public dimension of his project, which was meant to represent a "house" (Terragni, 1936) for the Italian population. To convey the building's publicness, the architect took advantage of glass, the modern material par excellence, to create a sense of transparency (Storchi, 2007): people from outside could see the ones on the inside. This transparency was not only supposed to invite the masses to gather inside but also to symbolise the fascist desire to appear luminous and transparent to the public eye.

However, what is missing in the other interpretations is that glass also strengthened the idea of a government which was always working for the people, without ever taking a break. This idea of hard work was really important for Duce. In fact, in Italy, there has always been a relevant rumour according to which Mussolini's office in Venezia Square in Rome was always lit at every hour. Although we cannot confirm the veracity of this information, this hearsay proves how Mussolini wanted to appear as he was working day and night for Italians, spending his entire life for the country. So, the fascist headquarter of Como should have demonstrated as well the hard work fascist authorities were putting into the city.

This was also observed by Bontempelli immediately after the completion of the building. For him, the visual and symbological transparency of the facades implied that



Figure 11. Palazzo of the Conservators in Rome by Michelangelo (Estate Romana).

the regime was constantly able to see and supervise the population: everything was the State, and nothing was outside the control of Mussolini. In this sense, individuals were not meant to be considered for their personal identities, but just as citizens who "obey and command" (Bontempelli, 1936) inside a mass.

Anyways, I also believe that the excessive publicness of the architecture was also a concern for Terragni, who still wanted to draw special attention to the authority of Fascism. In this sense, the use of reflective opaque materials could be designed to amplify the overall sense of coldness. People were not encouraged to touch the surfaces of the building, which look almost intimidating for their integrity and imperturbability. This effect is pursued to balance the welcoming character of the glass. Metaphorically speaking, the fascist regime was both close and far from the people: in this particular circumstance, the main goal was to make people participate and feel at "home", but at the same time keep fascist leaders at a distance from the masses, highlighting their detachment from the others through a threatening cold appearance.

Furthermore, in my opinion, the square voids and the setback of the facade give the building a certain depth and dramatic effect. This is typical of Roman Renaissance architecture, such as the Palazzo of the Conservators (figure 11) designed by Michelangelo on Capitol Hill. The game of light created by the shadows is the only exception to the building's rigid composition and enhances the strictness of fascist culture.

Interior view

The last scale we can consider for Terragni's ideological solutions is related to the interiors of the Casa. According to Schumacher (1991), upon entering the building the visitor experienced a system of simple and understandable planimetric solutions (figure 12) supposed to promote the idea of a "glass house of Fascism" (Terragni, 1936). In fact, Terragni in 1936 wrote:

That is why this building, more than any other construction of the Regime, can honor the name Casa. One must be aware that a Fascist, a citizen, the enrolled masses, and the assembled populace receive from the outside world the confirmation of entering a house, and they find the organization of the departments logical and simple.

However, I believe the stagnant compartments of the interiors were actually intended to control and limit the flow of people, blocking access to certain areas of the building reserved for the authorities. The apparent openness of the scheme was functional to guide the mass through the symbolic places inside the building, but this was done



Figure 12. Casa del Fascio's Ground floor, first floor, second floor, and third floor (ArchDaily, 2013).

without risking they could have access to private areas.

The feeling of openness inside the building is not only determined by the clear connection between interior and exterior but also by the large meeting hall, a central space around which the other rooms are located. In this sense, I agree with Schnapp (2008) that the continuity of space with the exterior, isolated by only a thin layer of glass, is maintained, avoiding any obstacle between indoor and outdoor areas. While speaking from inside the building, the fascist authorities could be easily heard from outside.

The meeting hall also played an important role in the Casa's cult value, since originally it hosted the sacrario. This was placed at a lower level than the atrium, forcing people to descend to see it (Schnapp, 2013). This movement advanced a "powerful kinesthetic reminder of mortality" (Etlin, 1991), enhancing the spiritual and almost religious value of the place. The unique position of the sacrario made it an important object of devotion for fascist culture. The sacrario was later removed after WWII (Schnapp, 2013), demonstrating how its presence had been so annoying and problematic for Italian partisans.

Nevertheless, in the secondary literature, there is no explanation of how Terragni actually designed every aspect of the interiors in detail, including the furniture. From the tables to the doors, everything was thought to remind us of the values of Fascism. The most important cases of this are the Lariana and Benita chairs (figure 13, figure 14), which are examples of how the ideological sphere influenced also the smallest scale of the project. This is not only clear by their names¹⁰, but also because they are based on innovative materials (including steel and printed wood) and balance the feeling of flexibility with functionality and modernity. Even while seated, users were meant to be reminded of the greatness of the fascist regime.

Lastly, to advance his interpretation of the fascist doctrine, Terragni also collaborated with other artists for the interiors of the Casa del Fascio. This is the case of Mario Radice's mural¹¹, which was placed inside the federal hall. This illustration symbolised Mussolini's omnipresence in spirit when dealing with the interpretation of fascist laws and policies. To strengthen this concept, Radice engraved the motto "order authority justice" on a block of marble (figure 15), three keywords of fascist dogma. I believe this combination of different kinds of art together to advance fascist ideology was something powerful and unique for the time, although it is neglected and discarded by current secondary interpretations.

10. The name "Lariana" means that it comes from Como, while the name "Benita" is a clear explicit reference to Mussolini's name.

11. To see Mario Radice's mural, see chapter 04 'Fascist art'.

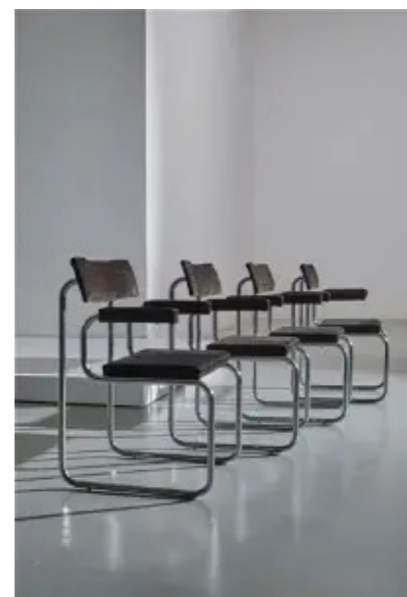


Figure 13. Lariana chair (Liveauctioneers, 2023).



Figure 14. Benita chair (Unknown).

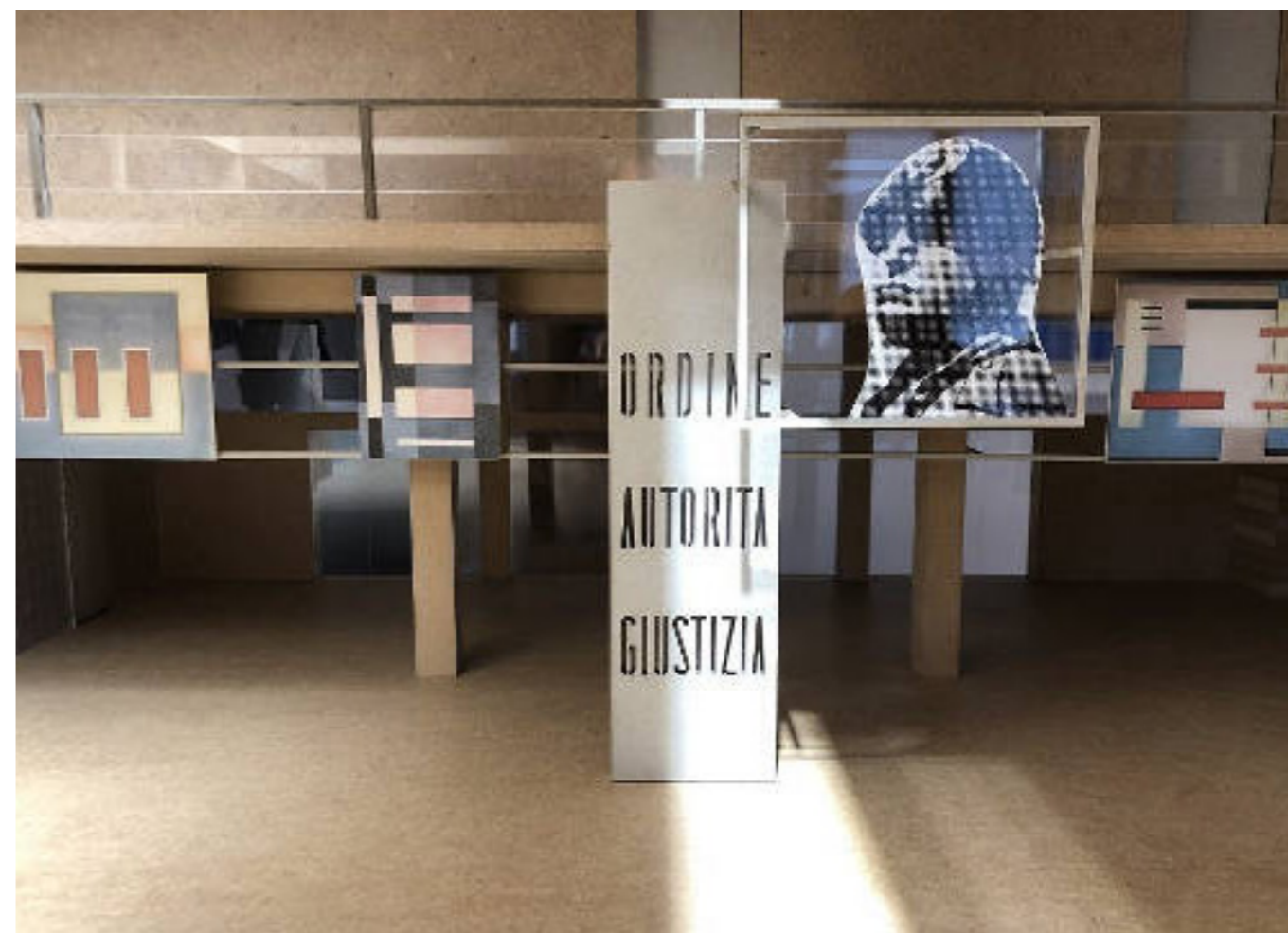


Figure 15. The motto "order authority justice" on a block of marble (Canali, 2019).



Figure 17. The battle of interpretations (Own work, 2023). The diagram summarizes the differences between my interpretation and the others regarding the five different scales in the text (1 urban path, 2 location in the city, 3 square view, 4 front view, and 5 interior view).



Conclusion

Giuseppe Terragni was one of the most influential architects of Italian Rationalism, which emerged at the beginning of the 1920s. While being a reference for a wide spectrum of architects in Italy, he was a controversial architect inside the fascist panorama and he undoubtedly held a unique position within the fascist architecture movement. On the one hand, he actively promoted fascist ideology and supported the regime with his public projects displaying a strong authoritarian character. On the other hand, he was fascinated by international artistic developments, as demonstrated by his fervour towards topics like minimum housing, innovative materials, and political promotion through architecture. Terragni's complex figure has always been difficult to categorize, as he both contributed to the development of fascist ideology while breaking some of the principles of Mussolini's political campaign.

Terragni's approach to architecture was deeply influenced by his fascist beliefs. His works were intended to embody fascist principles and ideals in the public eye. All of his civic commissions displayed (and still remind nowadays) a sense of order, hierarchy, discipline, and authority, central themes of fascist ideology. The Casa del Fascio, in particular, was designed to promote the idea of the fascist state as a powerful, centralized, and strict political system, with the local fascist organization serving as its representative.

At the same time, however, Terragni was also influenced by international artistic developments, particularly in the field of Modern Architecture. He was interested in the work of architects such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe. Throughout his career, he interpreted and applied many of their ideas to his own work, while developing a new language for the fascist regime. For example, the Casa del Fascio incorporates, among others, elements of Le Corbusier's "Five Points of Architecture", but it also goes beyond that, showcasing his value in terms of political indoctrination and totalitarian strength which still represents a unicum in the Italian tradition.

The historiography of Terragni reflects the disorientation of researchers when analyzing his works. Some celebrated him as a visionary architect who pushed the boundaries of Modernism. Others condemned him as a collaborator with the fascist regime. His Casa del Fascio in Como was evidently his most important work, and for this reason, it has been the subject of much debate and discussion since its completion.

This research aimed to provide a balanced perspective on Terragni's contribution to fascist society before WWII, emphasizing his unique approach and design choices. Rather than following standard prescriptions or copying external references, it has been described how Terragni formulated a new vocabulary to promote fascist credo and values. His work was not just a mere product of the culture Terragni was living in, but this architect actively shaped fascist society through his innovative and deliberate choices.

In the future, Terragni's oeuvre will continue to be the subject of debate and discussion. However, there is no doubt that his work had a significant impact on Italian architecture. As such, it is clear how his products and legacy indelibly marked the history of this country between the wars, influencing the success of the ideological campaign advanced by the fascist totalitarian regime.

10

Epilogue

As I come to the end of my research on Terragni and the Casa del Fascio in Como, I understand how this experience has been a fascinating journey for me. Exploring the intersection between architecture and politics, and how Terragni used his craft to convey fascist ideals, has been both intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging. The process has not been free from problems and struggles, but I believe the hardships, in the end, have all been repaid.

Throughout my research on Terragni and the Casa del Fascio in Como, I encountered a wealth of secondary literature that provided valuable perspectives on the topic. However, I also found that the existing scholarship I confronted tended to oversimplify Terragni's role in the fascist regime and his relationship with the political ideology of the time. This pushed me to challenge some of the prevailing interpretations and offer my own original insights and analysis.

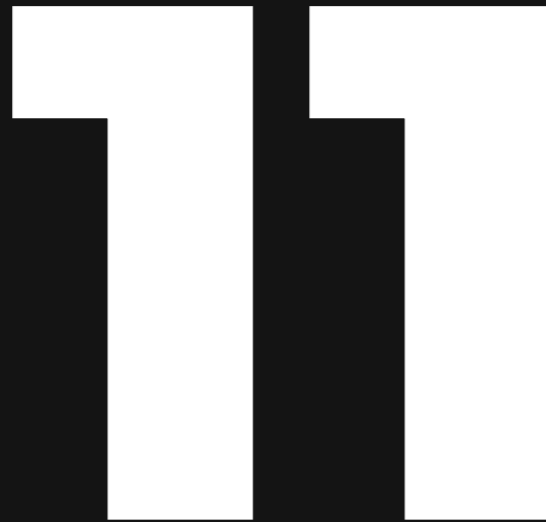
While this process of differentiation from existing literature was challenging, it also allowed me to deepen my understanding of the subject matter and approach it from an unusual lens. Through my personal interpretation, I hope I was able to contribute new insights to the field of architectural historiography, providing a different understanding of Terragni's place in the political and cultural context of the time.

During the writing phase, I have come to appreciate how Terragni's designs embodied the fascist ideology of the time. His use of clean lines, geometric shapes, austere forms, and symbolical material conveyed a sense of order, efficiency, and discipline, all key tenets of fascist dogma.

But beyond the symbolism and aesthetics, what struck me most about Terragni's work was how he used architecture to shape the behaviour of the people who interacted with the building. From the urban location to the interior furniture, Terragni sought to mould the habits and attitudes of the users, fostering a sense of unity and conformity in line with fascist ideals.

Studying Terragni and the Casa del Fascio in Como has been a truly enriching experience, one that has broadened my understanding of architecture's history. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to explore this topic in-depth, not only because I am Italian, but also because I really consider the meaning of our choices in society.

As I close this experience, I will carry with me the lessons that I have learned through this research. The importance of understanding the historical and political context in which architecture is created, the power of design to shape human behaviour, and the need for critical reflection on the role of architecture in society. These are all aspects that I will take with me as I continue to explore the complex and multilayered world of architecture.



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12

Image reference list

General

Cover: Danny Alexander Lettkemann. 2017. Casa del Fascio's facade. Photograph. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Como_-_Casa_del_Fascio_-_27-09-2017.jpg. 05/04/2023.

01 - Prologue

Figure 1. Antonio Masiello. Casa del Fascio's facade. Photograph. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/22/casapound-italy-mussolini-fascism-mainstream>. 28/02/2023.

04 - Fascist art

Cover. Underwood & Underwood. 1940. Benito Mussolini and the fascist mass, gathered in front of Palazzo Venezia in Rome. Photograph. <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2011/jul/13/top-10-historical-landmarks-rome>. 27/03/2023.

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