Continuità: a response to identity crises.
Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Italian architectural culture after 1945

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This research is the complex and partial result of fifteen years spent studying and attending conferences in Italy, Europe and the United States. But it also the expression of a personal need to investigate a subject that I believe to be of great importance when considering 20th Century Architecture and the contemporary scene.

My encounter with Ernesto Nathan Rogers, first at the Architecture Department of the Politecnico di Milano and later at the history course given by Professor Alexander Tzonis at the Bouwkunde at TU Delft in Winter 1989, provided the starting point for a long research process.

Good fortune meant that in 1992, I had the unique possibility to order and reorganise a good part of the BBPR archive and, in particular, Rogers’ own personal archive. These years spent in tiny locations, the contents of which were destined for the BBPR archive, and in the BBPR studio on via dei Chiostro were decisive moments in my own personal story and served as a unique training ground for historical research into late 20th Century Italian and international architecture.

None of this would have been possible without the generosity shown by Alberico Belgioioso, member and co-founder of BBPR, and his son Lodovico Belgioioso.

During this same time, the study groups, workshops, seminars and meetings I have been able to attend as a member of the DKS group (since 1994) have been crucial to the gradual formation of a notion of historical methodology as a complex, problematic, inquisitive and transversal form.

The idea of history that I have progressively built up and that has accompanied me throughout these various experiences is the fruit of this time, and of the generosity and patience shown by Alexander Tzonis, who I consider to be one of my masters.

Continuing with the DKS group, the continual debates and exchanges with Liane Lefaivre, S.J. Doorman, John Heintz, Peter Scriven have been moments when I fully understood the meaning of teamwork, as we openly confronted one another about the research being undertaken and reading relevant to continuing our projects.


Of particular importance are a series of publications on the theoretical work of Ernesto Rogers and that have been partially re-used in this research project. The most significant of these are the re-issue of “Esperienza dell’architettura” published by Skira in 1996 and the publication of “Lettere di Ernesto e viceversa” by Archmto editore in 2000. The help and contributions provided by Michelangelo Sabotino were central to the publication of the latter. It was Sabotino who found the manuscript at the Bonfanti archive and gave me a copy. The Skira re-issue was made possible thanks to the help of its president Massimo Vitta Zelman at the Skira publishing house, as well as the advice given by Paolo Nicoloso; a person I consider one of the greatest contemporary historians of Italian Fascist Architecture.

A recent experience of researching and curating an exhibition has been central to understanding the early years of Ernesto Rogers’ life and the architect’s education. It corresponds to work carried out at the Fondazione Portaluppi, that I had the honour of being involved with between 2001 and 2003, and for this I am eternally grateful to the clients of the Fondazione Portaluppi, Piero Maranghi and Letizia Castellini, and also to the people with whom I worked, including Ferruccio Luppi, Massimo Martignoni, Jeffrey Schnapp, Cristina Bianchetti and Alessandro Scandurra.

Since the mid-1990s I have carried out a number of lengthy interviews and meetings with some of Ernesto Rogers’ friends and work colleagues who had the generosity to aid me in this difficult research. These include Vittorio Gregotti, Gillo Dorfles, Guido Canella, Alberico Belgioioso, Giancarlo De Carlo, Luciano Semerani and in particular Giulia Banfi, with whom I spent many an unforgettable and mournful afternoon discussing the life of “Ernesto”.

Over these past fifteen years I have been able to expand my research into Italian post-war architecture through publications and, in particular, university courses of which I would like to cite those given in the history of contemporary architecture at the architecture departments in Ascoli-Camerino between 1999 and 2002, and later the workshops on the Architecture of today held in 2004 at the “Vanvitelli” Architecture department of the Seconda Università di Napoli, in whose history department I have had the honour of being associate professor since 2006.

For these years of teaching, I would like to thank professors Mario Fosso, who has been my adviser
for the Erasmus programme in Delft, and Mara De Benedetti at the architecture department of the Politecnico di Milano; professor Pippo Ciorra at Ascoli-Camerino; professors Alfonso Gambardella and Cettina Lenza – “my” two heads of faculty when I joined the “Vanvitelli”.

Over the years, this research project has become a real tour de force for all of those colleagues and close friends with whom I have discussed Rogers and 20th Century Italian architecture. I would like to offer my deepest affection and gratitude to: Cristina Bianchetti, Andrea Boschetti, Maria Vittoria Capitanucci, Paolo Castiglioni, Pippo Ciorra, Giovanni Damiani, Annaluigia De Simone, Fabio Della Torre, Marco De Micheli, Leopoldo Freyrie, Fabrizio Gallanti, Cherubino Gambardella, Stefano Guidarini, Chiara Ingrosso, Elena Manzo, Pierluigi Nicolin, Fabio Novembre, Stefano Mirti, Laura Miotto, Mary Lou Lobsinger, Michela Morgante, Sara Protasoni, Fabio Mangone, Roberta Pasinetti, Italo Rota, Annig Sarian, Paolo Scrivano, Beniamino Servino, Vincenzo Trione, Mirko Zardini, Cino Zucchi, Guido Zucconi.

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The translation from Italian to English has been perfectly done by Alice Kilgariff; The propositions has been translated from English to dutch from one of my best friends: Jeroen Ruitenbeek who was the real first, Dutch friend I had when I was a student at the TUDelft (Olè De Klokl); the graphic design was generously offered by Sara Ronzoni.

Last but not least, I would to thank the people in my very full family life who have supported, put up with and loved me despite this great obsession: my parents, Anusc, Marta and our magnificent children; Simone, Lorenzo Rosso and the newly-arrived Ettore Giuseppe.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my brother Matteo, to whom, on 19th November 1999, I promised that I would finish this project.
Contents

Preface and acknowledgment

List of abbreviations

0 - Problem and Methodology
  0.0 Subject: Continuity and crisis, a modern conceptual dichotomy
  0.1 Rogers and the definition of continuity: a Case Study
  0.2 The Methodological framework
  0.3 The sources
  0.4 Outline of the dissertation

1 - “The tragedy of my life”. Family and Rogers’ early personal and cultural experiences
  1.0 Introduction
  1.1 The family
  1.2 Conclusion

2 - “Tradition is a “constant” in the life of a nation”. Modernity, History and Style, 1933-1938
  2.0 Introduction
  2.1 Italian Modern architecture: rational, functional, tradition, 1932
  2.2 Europe in the 1930s. Architecture between modernity and tradition
  2.3 Rogers, Portaluppi and the School of Architecture, 1933
  2.4 BBPR: a generation entre deux guerres between Quadrante and Casabella, 1933-1936
  2.5 Stile. 1936
  2.6 “Un architetto di quasi trent’anni”, 1938
  2.7 Conclusion
3 - “The acronym BBP will always be heard but the R will be lost to this solitary world”. Anonymity and self awareness: from BBPR to Ernesto Nathan Rogers 1938-1945

3.0 Introduction

3.1 November 1938. The Racial Laws: BBP without R

3.1 “Letters from Ernesto to Ernesto and viceversa”

3.2 After “The letters”. 1939-1943

3.3 Fledding the war: Switzerland 1943-1945

3.4 Milan 1945. The BBPR’s Monumento ai Caduti nei Campi di Concentramento.

3.5 Conclusion

4 - “Modernism needs a magazine”. From Domus. La casa dell’Uomo (1946-1948) to the Ciam Congress in Bergamo (1949)

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Milan/Italy 1944-1947

4.2 Domus La casa dell’uomo, 1944-1948

4.2.1 Milan

4.2.2 Domus La casa dell’uomo, 1946


4.4 Conclusion

5 - “Continuità e crisi”. The experience of Casabella-continuità (1953-1964)

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Ernesto Nathan Rogers, 1953.

5.1.2 Aix-en-Provence 1953

5.2 E.N. Rogers 1953. Casabella-Continuità

5.2.1 “Continuità”

5.2.2 The Legacy of Pagano and Persico.

5.2.3 The Masters

5.2.4 Continuity and crisis

5.3 The international debate on continuity

5.4 Conclusion
6 - Working with the "preexisting conditions" as "Building for everyone": Torre Velasca and the new Museum for the Castello Sforzesco

6.0 Introduction
6.1 Pre-existing Conditions
6.2 New Museums in post-war Italian architecture: the BBPR Castello Sforzesco in Milan, 1948-1956
6.2.1 Italian reconstruction and the debate on historical centres.
6.2.2 New museums for Italian cities: the debate on pre-existing conditions and contemporary building practices.
6.2.3 The BBPR's design for the Museum of Castello Sforzesco, Milan
6.3 The Torre Velasca
6.4 Conclusion

7.0 Introduction
7.1 "Esperienza dell'architettura"
7.2 "dear MrRogers"
7.3 "Editoriali di architettura"
7.4 "A turbulent, inner dialogue"
7.5 The last book

8 - Conclusion

9 - Bibliography

Appendix:
Archives index
Ernesto Rogers, book list, 1933
BBPR, original list of works

Summary
About the author
The term "enlightenment" is often used to describe the societal and intellectual changes that accompanied the transition from the pre-modern to the modern era. The Enlightenment was a period in European history marked by a shift in thinking from the religious and mystical to the rational and scientific. It was characterized by a belief in the power of reason and progress, and a focus on the individual rights and freedoms.

The Enlightenment was not a single event, but rather a gradual process that took place in different countries at different times. In France, the Enlightenment was associated with the reign of Louis XV and the rise of a new social and political elite. In Britain, it was associated with the scientific revolution and the rise of the middle class. In the United States, it was associated with the founding of the country and the development of a new democratic form of government.

The Enlightenment had a profound impact on the way people thought about the world and their place in it. It encouraged the questioning of traditional beliefs and the search for new ideas. It led to the development of new scientific theories and the establishment of new institutions of learning. It also laid the foundation for the democratic ideals that would later become central to the development of modern societies.

In many ways, the Enlightenment continues to influence our thinking today. It has provided the basis for much of the intellectual and social progress that has taken place over the last few centuries. Its legacy is evident in the way we think about science, politics, and society, and in the way we approach the challenges of the modern world.

Despite its many positive aspects, the Enlightenment also had some negative consequences. It contributed to the rise of rationalism and the neglect of the emotional and spiritual aspects of human experience. It also contributed to the development of a new form of individualism that emphasized the rights of the individual at the expense of the common good.

In conclusion, the Enlightenment was a complex and multifaceted period in European history. It had both positive and negative effects, and its influence continues to be felt today. It is a testament to the power of ideas and the human capacity for change that the Enlightenment is still relevant and important in our modern world.
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Continuity is a key word for post-war modern Italian culture and arguably continues to be one of the terms most associated with the country today. It is a complex and rather ambiguous concept that is subject to diverse historiographical and ideological readings. The term becomes particularly ambiguous when used to describe an opposition to change; the conservative element of the status quo, that part of an identity that stands the passing of time and an antidote to trauma and crisis.

The term 'continuity' is often used in modern Italian historiography in reference to key players and structures which have transcended change within political systems; for instance, that experienced by Italian public administration under the monarchy, Fascism, and when the country became a republic. However, the term is also used to describe the complex relationship with, and resistance to, the sudden modernisation experienced by the country throughout the 20th Century.

The term 'continuity' offered an antidote to the violence of radical change to both the social, cultural and creative structures deeply rooted in a highly traditional, age-old system, and the disjointed political will to modernise Italy, whilst illustrating the resistance of a large section of society to the same.

Italian history has been marked by a tumultuous relationship between sense of history, tradition and modernity; first during Fascism and later in the years following WWII, a period in which Italy witnessed the most radical process of change and modernisation it had seen for centuries in just thirty years: increasing the number of cities tenfold, attacking its coasts and landscape,

1 According to Alexander Gerschukran there are two possible ways of reading the term 'continuity': as "the stability of particular elements in a reality which, from other points of view, is rapidly changing", or as "the permanence of something that is, in essence, present throughout history." La continuità storica. Teoria e storia economica”, Gerschukran, Alexander (Torino: Einaudi editore, 1976), 6.

2 See: Pavone, Alle origini della Repubblica, 70-160; Daneo, La politica economica della ricostruzione, 59-99; (ed.) Castronovo, L'Italia contemporanea, 145-190; Ginsborg, A history of contemporary Italy, 72-121 (hereafter cited as Contemporary Italy); Lanaro, Storia dell'Italia repubblicana, 5-128 (hereafter cited as Italia repubblicana); AA.VV, Storia dell'Italia repubblicana, vol. 1.
causing the immigration of a fifth of the Italian population and definitively modernising the Italian ways of life.

Continuity is often associated with the concept of crisis - a category generated by the idea of modernity as change, a traumatic yet inevitable transformation of the status quo that generates an instability (crises) which can be resolved through the continuity of certain pre-existing characteristics.

And yet it is in light of these historical events that the term continuity acquires both symbolic and ideological relevance, thus uniting cultural and artistic experiences that are, otherwise, unrelated. For example, it can be found in the fatalistic notion of "change without change", illustrated in Tommasi di Lampedusa’s book The Leopard, as well as in the bitter reproach shown in Bernardo Bertolucci’s film The Conformist for the lack of change experienced before, during and after the war. It can also be seen in Realist art as a contrast to Abstract art, and the experience of Ernesto Nathan Rogers who, as editor of Casabella between 1953 and 1964, added the suffix "continuity" to the magazine’s title, thus indicating a clear cultural and ideological choice.

This decision had a critical impact upon Italian architectural culture of the 1950’s. It affected both its prospects and its international image, in part thanks to the cultural prestige that enjoyed by Casabella and, more specifically, the central role played by Rogers within the national and international network of Modernists between the mid-1940s and the end of the 1960s.

It was this basic political and cultural use that transformed the term continuity into a word of confrontation and debate. A word that illustrated the complexity of the relationship between modernity, history, local traditions and humanity, whilst suggesting a highly idiosyncratic way of interpreting Italian and European architecture, its direction and future development.

Thus, from the mid 1950s onwards, the term took on an ideological dimension and was used by Rogers as an antidote to the crisis experienced by modern Italian and European culture at that time.

The aim of this work is to consider the significance of the term “continuity” by looking at the case of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, because through his experiences that this historically generic term becomes a cultural and projectual tool with which he could intervene with reality.

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5 The Italian opposition at that time was marked by the PCI (Italian Communist Party) decision to act in continuity with Soviet directives given during the same period. See Barocchi, Storia Moderna dell’arte in Italia; 3-130.
Terms such as “continuity” and “compromise” are central to understanding Italian post-war history and its unique nature with regards to broader European history during the same period.

Continuity is seen as a category that defines an ongoing conflict between conservatives and change.

It is usually during the crisis that contradictions come to the surface, expressing a generalised state of conflict and dissatisfaction. The concept of “continuity” is understood as one of the ways in which many contradictory conditions can be resolved through a redefinition of concepts such as identity and context.

The use of one specific “case study” allows us to reflect upon the importance one particular experience places upon the creation of tools used to examine this condition.

Furthermore, my interest centres on the relationship between “continuity” and the post-war Italian and international architectural spheres, as a condition that produces works, objects, environments, writings and theories capable of having an effect upon reality and its transformation.

I am particularly interested in how this subtle bond is gradually formed between a key term like “continuity” and the ability of such a culturally and socially influential individual (like Rogers) to transform it into an ideological and creative tool, capable of influencing the practice of architecture, the networks which act as its reference points and the various contexts in which it exists.

It is my aim to understand why the term “continuity” became so significant and met with such success in this particular historical period, and to ascertain what is left of this condition today and the value it holds.

I do not, therefore, wish solely to delve into the various ideological, philosophical and cultural views expressed by Casabella-continuità between 1953 and 1964 (particularly during Rogers’ first years as editor between 1953 and 1958). Nor will this research focus solely on the significant impact Rogers had upon Italian and international architecture. Instead its objective is to identify within Rogers’ definition of continuity, a final moment of this complex journey which had a profound effect upon modern Italian and European architecture during the second half of the 20th Century; a moment that also addresses a central question at the heart of the relationship between history, modernity, tradition and crisis that remains unanswered to this day.

The use of the term continuity within national and international debates will be analysed together with the political, cultural and ideological reasons that led Rogers to become one of the most influential post-war figures of the Modernist networks.

At the same time I endeavour to use this research to demonstrate how Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ definition of the concept continuity combines cultural and ideological stimuli with a number of
personal and private issues, thus rendering the term a fascinating cognitive representation of the author's view of the world.

I believe that one cannot, and indeed should not isolate the various public and social debates regarding a creative and cultural direction from the more profound, private ones, as they inevitably influence each other.

An analysis of Ernesto N. Rogers' private archive of unedited correspondence that dates from 1919 to the mid-1960s has led to certain facts being uncovered from which we can draw some very interesting hypotheses.

Continuity was a personal theme for Rogers long before it began to inform his intellectual development.

Continuity also illustrates modern Italian culture's considerable need to use Rogers' work as a bridge between an uncertain European modernist model and the deep-rooted traditions of Italian society.

It is in this way that Continuity was born as a cultural and social antidote to the crisis modern culture found itself in after the Second World War, and into which Western society was plunged with the loss of ancient traditions and fears of nuclear war.

0.1 - Rogers and the definition of continuity: a Case Study

At the heart of this study is the post-war period, spanning the 1950s and 1960s – the time at which the term “continuity” started to be publicly developed and used by Rogers.

It was also during this period that, thanks to its ideological use by Rogers, the term became especially relevant to the general debate within Italy and abroad, marking a very specific phase in the cultural history of Italian architecture.

It was in this same period that Rogers was at his most culturally and politically influential, holding sway over the CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture) Modernist networks, magazines, and national and international cultural institutions. This influence was gained both through his ten-year appointment as editor of Casabella-Continuità and as a member of the BBPR architectural studio based in Milan from 1933 whose works, such as the Torre Velasca in Milan, had a significant effect upon Italian and international architecture.

I believe that the final definition of this term is derived from a complex developmental process that combines Rogers' personal and cultural experiences with key events in the evolution of Italian Modernism throughout its complex, often ambiguous relationship with the city's history, culture and artistic/architectural traditions.

The first part of my research will focus on Rogers' family and education from the turn of the...
century to the early 1930s; the “heroic” phase of the young BBPR members in the 1930s and the outbreak of war - a particularly traumatic time for Rogers' as it heralded the passing of the Racial Purity laws.

In this way I hope to expand upon the conceptual and historical complexity assumed by the term continuity at the end of the Second World War; touching upon some of the reasons why Rogers was placed at the centre of the ensuing debate. This approach should also serve to broaden my work's methodological appeal by moving away from the concept of biography or a catalogue of written (and otherwise) works, choosing instead to construct a cognitive “biographical” history viewed as the narration of certain significant instances in Rogers' life which pinpoint a characterising and universal element of his projects and theoretical work in the term “continuity”.

Here the author's private and public worlds are combined in order to gain a deeper understanding of how an idea is constructed and the social and cultural success of the concept.

0.2 - The Methodological framework

When dealing with an artist's story and choices, most architecture monographs and general history books tend to omit the early years of his life, his family and the events that link his evolution to the various paths followed and developed in later life'. Often this is due to a lack of

6 "The search for a comprehensive understanding of the individual remains a utopian one. With this type of research more than any other, it is crucial to know how to deal with blanks, lack of documentary material, to not want to reconstruct that which silence hides (.), the discontinuity and disjointed passages that destroy the story and apparent unity of a life". On the concept of bibliography within contemporary historiography, the comments made by Le Goff in the opening chapter of his recent biography of Saint Luigi are particularly illuminating. Here, biographical analysis is directed at a definitive triumph over of individual/social opposition: Le Goff, Jacques, "San Luigi", Einaudi editore, Turin, 1996, XVIII-XXIX.

7 There are few modern biographies of 20th Century architects if we exclude traditional monographs which can, for the most part, can be considered little more than catalogues of their works accompanied by brief biographical notes offering varying degrees of detail.

See: Schulze, Philip Johnson life and work (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). This publication offers detailed family-related biographical notes, particularly with regards to homosexuality and his obsession with Nazism, without the author allowing these elements to influence the creative process or final product. A similar approach is used in the same author's biography of Mies Van der Rohe: Schulze, Mies van der Rohe (Milano: Jaca book, 1989). In Fest's recent biography of Albert Speer, the author immediately raises the issue of relationships within the family unit and Speer's education in relation to the political decisions he made at the beginning of the 1930s: Fest, Speer. Una biografia (Milan:Garzanti editore, 2004). Two biographies have been published recently on the thoughts and works of two of modern culture's masters, Henry Russell Hitchcock and Rayner Banham. However, the biographical dimensions of both books, to-
documented material. More frequently, however; it is the result of a lack of interest in a subject that appears to distract the scholar from the body of work of the artist under consideration. Usually the study begins with the subject's first contact with discipline and education, their first books and school projects thus reducing the first twenty years of their life to mere anecdote, or worse. Even when details about family life are provided, these are often used to set the scene rather than seriously considered as motivating factors in defining the subject's view of the world; his approach and subsequent choices which were all developed during the early years of his life. However; this period should not be reduced to a mere backdrop for the history of an author's great achievements. It is particularly important if one considers architecture or; quite simply, creativity as a complex form of dialogue through which the subject can be placed in a perpetual


8 “It is important to note that emotions (not to be confused with those simple automated reactions to the outside world) have their own particular characteristics which cannot be viewed in an abstract way when they refer so directly to the social life of their counterparts. They imply a collective relationship, a link between two people. They are borne from the natural depths of the individual involved when an event takes place that effects this person and no-one else (.) But they are expressed in this way, or rather their expression is the result of such a series of experiences of human interaction (.) that quickly take on the power to provoke an emotional motor complex in all present, which correspond to the event experienced by an individual. In this way, emotions slowly unite the various participants who are, in turn, initiators and followers, leading to the construction of a system of inter-individual incitements that diversify according to the situation and circumstances. Established many times, this concordance (.) soon leads to the constitution of a true emotional system. This become an institution. They are regulated in much the same way as a ritual”: Problemi di metodo storico, Febvre, Lucien (Turin: Einaudi editore, 1966),55.

9 “Infection presupposes two factors: generations of microbes (subject) and a favourable environment the moment the disease attacks (context and conditions)”. Apologia della storia, Bloch, Michelle (Turin:Einaudi editore, 1950),47-48; “Its originality, its individuality mark it out against a background made up of the collective mass of language resources, accepted literary forms and cadences; of knowledge that it reactivates, criticises and adds to. There are also layers and folds where the work chooses its environment (.) a world is added to the work (.) and in this foreign terrain, the work (.) and in this foreign terrain, the work lays down its roots, revealing its dependent wealth”, in, La letteratura: il testo e l'interprete, Starobinsky, Jean, in, AA.VV., Fare storia, (Turin, Einaudi editore, ),196; For more information on the concept of context and clues, see: Ginzburg, Miti, emblemi e spie (Turin:Einaudi editore, 1986).
dialectic with many different networks. We can also see creativity as a natural form of "listening" to reality and to others through tools that are gradually identified by the subject. The individual is the subject because he is in constant dialogue with the world.

This period represents the birth, evolution and formation of a personal view of the world and a context understood as a series of active realities that interact on different levels. The life and choices of the individual are inextricably linked and permeate his entire body of work.

This research into the relationship between continuity and crisis in the thoughts and works of Ernesto Nathan Rogers uses this hypothesis as a starting point.

I wish to consider this study as part of that rich, complex body of work that is the history of ideas as developed by the Annales school from the 1930s onwards, and therefore also the work of Carlo Ginzburg with his concept of micro-history.10

For research's sake, I believe it imperative to consider family and emotional background as being fundamental to the construction and definition of an intellectual approach and the choices subsequently made by the individual in question.

As Lucien Febvre so insightfully puts it, "intellectual activity presupposes social life. Its indispensable tools - first and foremost, language - imply the existence of a human environment within which these have had to be constructed."11. It implies comparison, conflict, conformism and imitation with regards to a recognised system of social and institutional rules, which when considered by an individual become their way of viewing the world.12 This dimension, affected by each of the above elements, is linked to and often invades the subject's darkest emotional spheres.

This reflection upon the creation of an individual's history of ideas succeeds thanks to an ongoing connection between the individual's internal and external dimensions. That is, the relationship between self-consciousness (the unconscious ideology seen as the individual's key to understanding their own reality)13 and their mentality; that which an individual manages to


11 Febvre, Problemi di metada, 124.

12 "Human beings regulate their behaviour according not to their actual condition but to the image they have of themselves. Needless to say it is never a faithful representation. They try to conform this image to behavioural models produced by a particular culture that can be adapted over the course of history (more or less effectively) to various material realities.". Storia sociale e ideologie della società, Duby, George, in, (ed.) Le Goff and Nora, Fore storia, 118; on the concept of limited rationality, see: Dairokuno, Kusaku, Value learning and the problem of limited rationality, manuscript.

13 Michel Vouvelle, like many authors of the French School, takes on the definition given by Althusser; "ideology as an imaginary relationship between individuals and their true conditions of existence." Vouvelle,
find in common with his or her peers. Furthermore, exchange and dialogue between an individual and a network finds in this flow of ideas, language and works something concrete against which success and failure, confrontation and conflict can be measured. We can also consider events within their diachronic timeframe, where the time taken for the individual to establish a personal view of the world and the timing of the stories constantly overlap and influence each other, thus creating a complex system of cross-references.

The highly dynamic relationship between change and conservationism is particularly affected by time, especially when it comes to the individual. The genesis of an author's intellectual and creative activity; the evolution of his emotional relationship with the world; that unique viewpoint from which the subject continuously (though not methodically) compares and contrasts everything around him with his experience of different worlds. These worlds can accept or refuse him but are always knowingly used to create a system of exchanges based on shared (or at least negotiated) language, models and rules.

The temporal dimension establishes a long-term, complex connection between the “événementiel” focus and the wider context; a situation in which one can experience moments of change and clarity, especially in times of crisis or trauma, as a kind of “revelation”. This is due not only to its ability to smash through convention, rules and well-established traditions, but also to its power to significantly change an individual’s chosen path, the choices he makes and how

Ideologie e mentalità”, Michelle (Napoli: Guida editore, 1997). On the concept of ideology, see also: Duby, Storia sociale, 118-123.
14 “mentality as history of ways of seeing the world” Ibidem, p. 6. “The mentality of a historical being, perhaps even a great man, is precisely that which he has in common with his peers”, in, Le Goff, Jacques, “La mentalità”, p. (ed.) Le Goff-Nora: Fare stona, 239-255.
15 On the continual dialogue between “designer” and “multiple actors” as a kind of political treaty and continual reconfiguration of the content discussed see: Schon, Gardner: Frame reflection (New York: Basic Books inc., 1994), 165-188.
16 Ibid. p.
17 On the relationship between crisis situations and history, see Chastel’s highly informative introductory chapter on the Sack of Rome in 1527, in which the link between collective traumatic event and relative personal choice regarding taste and culture is seen as a moment which unleashed the changes that followed: Chastel, Il sacco di Roma, 1527 (Turin: Einaudi editore, 1993), XVIII-XXXIV; On the relationship between crisis and personal choice also see: Redondi, Galileo eretico (Turin: Einaudi editore, 1983); but on the fundamental relationship between conceptual systems, value learning and crisis see: Tzonis, Freeman, Lefavivre, Salama, Berviek, De Cointet, 1650-1800. Les systèmes conceptuels de l’architecture (Paris: C.O.R.D.A., 1975); Berwick, The cognitive tension: value learning as cognition and computation, manuscript (Delft:); Bosnak, Revaluation, manuscript (Delft:).
he interacts with the world around him. Central to our research is the definition and success of the concept of continuity within Ernesto Rogers' work both as an intellectual and an architect. The term's development takes place on both a personal and cultural level and achieves notable public success in the post-war period whilst becoming increasing significant to Rogers' private life. By examining the relationship between the individual's development of an idea, its conceptual and emotional content and his interaction with the various networks he encounters and represents, the research becomes a case study. The channels through which the author and networks communicate are cultural, visual and linguistic and it is through this bond that the author is accepted into these networks as an active subject. The progressive definition and acceptance of content is processed by a series of dialogic, relational filters which determine the gradual acceptance or rejection of this basic content so important to the political strength of a community.

I believe that when carrying out research, one should adhere to the approach defined by Chastel as "entire life." This sentiment is very much in keeping with one of Ginzburg's statements: "Though the pretexts of systematic knowledge seem to be increasingly fanciful, it is not for this reason that the idea of totality must be abandoned. On the contrary: the existence of a profound link that explains superficial phenomena is reaffirmed in the very moment direct knowledge of such a connection is impossible. When reality is opaque, devices exist – spies, clues – which allow us to decipher it." In this specific case: Architecture, its models and products are therefore analysed as the...

18 "It is these times of conflict, dispute, recovery and integration that provide the plot for the history of ideologies, but some social spheres play a more central role than others. History should pay attention to those who, given their professional situation, find themselves thrust to the front line, revealing them as the principal agents of the forces of conservation, resistance or conquest - they are the people who create the necessary conditions. These are first and foremost specialists to whom society delegate the task of teaching and educating. They are also those who act as spokespeople for a particular social group", in, Duby, Storia sociale, 123. Whilst this very reference lends itself very well to this case study of Rogers, this declaration is part of a wider reflection on the sourcing and verification of documents. An analysis of those who create and organize sources and content can help us examine the social and cultural success of particular issues that have become dominant over time, and the reasons for this. Carlo Ginzburg's studies similarly demonstrate how a microhistorical approach, using "secondary" and "minor" sources, is capable nonetheless of revealing the social, psychological and emotional dimensions of a person who is not in a dominant position, evaluating the invaluable relationship between document, ideology and mentality.

19 Chastel, Il sacco Roma, XXXIV.
20 Ginzburg, Miti, emblemi, spie, 191.
complex result of a dialogic condition, itself the product of political conflict and unrelenting social dialogue between the architect and the various networks with which he is associated. Architecture is seen as the result of a dialogue and a certain condition to which the architect is expected to give permanent form.

The relationship between "continuity" and "crisis" is subsequently analysed in this research from two, distinct points of view: both from a methodological standpoint and as a specific historical case.

As a study of Ernesto Nathan Rogers's own research (which led to the development and confirmation of continuity as a concept), this work aims to demonstrate how the term continuity, beyond being a fundamental cultural concept, also takes on a very personal resonance for Rogers.

In this case, the gradual development of a cultural reference becomes intertwined with a deeply personal subject, thus blurring the boundary between the author's public role as an intellectual and his own psychological state.

I do not wish to prove a kind of mechanical determinism between cultural decisions and the author's "psychological" journey, but instead reinforce a reading of cultural and social choices as a given entity which cannot solely consist of biographical facts.

However, it is particularly useful if we consider some of the larger elements that mark the first two decades of Ernesto Rogers' life in isolation, such as: his relationship with his father Romeo, his mother Ida and brother Paolo; their family values and life style; Rogers' feeling towards his hometown, Trieste; the choices taken by his parents and the subsequent psychological and material difficulties in their early relationship with their sons; a consequent makeshift, fragile perception of material life; the mother's role as protector and the consciousness of Rogers' own diversity due to his British nationality and Jewish faith.

Each of these elements overlap with Rogers' schooling, the social environment his family was part of, and the values of middle-class Italy at the beginning of the 20th century.

We also have a major, unedited archive at our disposal which holds a significant amount of Rogers' correspondence with his family. The letters date from 1919 (the year in which he sat the Italian equivalent of the I I+) to the mid 1940's, the time at which his parents died.

It is a fascinating collection of letters that gives us an insight into Rogers' relationship with his family, the sequence of events in his life at the time, the choices he made and suggested to others, and the values upheld by the Rogers' family.

I recognise that one cannot limit psychological and family spheres to mere epistolary material, no matter how rich it might be. However, I see this archive as a unique opportunity to open a complex methodological front full of potential.
In the first chapter I will therefore attempt to shed light on the events that took place between Ernesto Nathan Rogers’s birth in 1909 and 1939, the year in which the Racial Purity laws were passed in Italy marking a moment of great change in the author’s life.

I will try to demonstrate how continuity becomes an almost psychological necessity for Rogers who is subject to incessant family crises and a great deal of (predominantly economic) instability. At the same time I will try to show how the relationship between Rogers and his native city, Trieste, became another significant element of this personal continuity.

The fragile, rather tumultuous relationship between continuity and crisis in Rogers’ life reaches a decisive moment of change between 1939 and 1943 with the passing of Racial Purity laws and his forced ‘disappearance’ from civil and cultural life. This period also constitutes a critical moment for Rogers on a personal level. The trauma provokes him to reflect upon his own life, distancing himself both physically and symbolically from the BBPR, which until that time he had used to negate his own individuality. This experience takes Rogers from being an active member of the BBPR group to being an individual with his own cultural autonomy, able to assert his own personality and choices even outside of his own design group.

We have two more exceptionally interesting archive materials from this period to examine. The first is a collection of letters that Rogers and his studio colleagues exchanged between 1938 and the end of the Second World War. The second is a manuscript written by Rogers in the form of an introspective dialogue.

“Letters from Ernesto to himself and vice versa” is indeed a particularly exciting text thanks to its contemplative quality, the issues it considers and the cultural perspective it gives to his approach. This perspective is sustained throughout the war by his escape to Switzerland in 1943—a journey that brings him into direct and autonomous contact with the Swiss CIAM and a number of the individuals who go on to lead the institution once the war ends.

This period, in which personal issues and cultural choices are so closely interlinked, is analysed in chapter 3 and directly linked to chapter 1.

At the end of the post-war period, Rogers began to occupy key positions within the international Modernist network, thus becoming the definitive reference point for the Italian Modernist community, especially in Milan. The culture and experience he brought to the table seem to be ideal for the development of post-conflict Modernism. Reflections upon the link between history and design, tradition and functionality, which had been debated within Italian architectural circles in the late 1930s once again became hot topics for the CIAM (from the heart of the city to the human condition as a whole). Furthermore, the definition of the concept of continuity took place as an almost natural process within Italy and the rest of the world.
When Rogers added the term continuity to the name of the magazine Casabella, it was as if he was heralding the end of a long journey - a trajectory composed of personal history, architectural culture and other conditions emerging from the post-war period.

What is particularly striking about Ernesto Nathan Rogers's story is his capacity to transform a personal condition, a personal and cultural obsession, into a universal cultural and projectual tool. This choice also led to his growing success until his definitive acceptance in the 1950s. For Rogers “Continuity” becomes an operative and cultural strategy against the concept of crisis; a continually changing tool that opposes to stylistic intransigence and is capable of building an active dialogue with reality in order to give form to an individual identity of places and new instruments with which to interpret them. The concept of continuity is significantly linked to that of the individual's identity, overlapping with Rogers' personal experience.

In the early 1930s when he founded the BBPR with Banfi, Belgioioso and Peressutti, Rogers sang the praises of anonymity as a quality capable of surpassing stylistic individualism and planning a new mass of modern individuals. The Racial Purity laws of 1938 forced anonymity upon Rogers, plunging him into the dramatic experience of a nameless individual in a sea of anonymity. This personal journey transforms his perception of reality and individuals from an idealised condition into an understanding of real life in which he is able to conceive of contact with places full of identity and individuals with desires.

In the post-war era, Rogers' response, embodied by the development of “continuity”, focused on the project as an object with a strong new personality capable of creating an identity for a place suitable for a mass of anonymous individuals who have their own scale and tangible desires.

Personal history and a consideration of the universal individual in Rogers' work seem to combine and develop a mutual dialectic thanks to his ability to interpret a widespread condition and create the necessary tools with which it can be understood. The value, success and significance of Rogers' “continuity” lies in this very process. The reason for this research is to discuss these passages and their consequences.
0.3 - Sources

In line with its methodology, this research has been carried out through the comprehensive use of archive material. This ranges from the material found at the BBPR studio (personally examined and organised by myself between 1994 and 1998) and other potential archives in the hope of determining Rogers’ system of networks and relationships.

It is fair to say that this research has been inspired by the discovery of material linked to Rogers’ family life and the studio’s activity, which up until now has neither been studied nor edited in any way. This central core of material, found in a number of folders in BBPR studio’s headquarters in via dei Chiostri and the studio’s archives in via Maddalena, had clearly only been analysed at a later date. The personal material, together with that taken from the studio, had been systematically catalogued as testified by the itemisation of each folder in the general catalogue. The studio’s correspondence was originally filed in alphabetical and chronological order by the BBPR secretary. Some letters, however, fell out of sequence following various changes of office and secretarial staff.

Personal materials seem to have been filed in a different, more fragmented way. The letters, consisting of personal and family correspondence with the first letter dating from 1919, the last circa 1949, had been ordered irrespective of content and there were jumps in the chronological order. It is likely that these materials were kept at Rogers’ home and moved to the studio only after his death; they were therefore subject to selection by the author from the outset.

Another very interesting find was the studio library’s catalogue, in which the books are logged alphabetically. The catalogue shows that the books often originally belonged to the partners and not all volumes can be found in the studio today. However, there is enough material to give us a clear picture of Rogers’ personal library as well as the different paths followed by the studio itself.

Using the BBPR archive as a starting point, I made a conscious effort to map out the paths

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21 The BBPR’s office underwent numerous moves during the 1930s, only taking up permanent residence in Via dei Chiostri around 1938. The studio itself has undergone many changes over the years with extensions and the consequent movement of archive materials. Only recently were the archive materials (designs and correspondence) taken to be stored at the Politecnico di Milano where at this time they cannot be consulted.

taken by relationships and special exchanges between Rogers, BBPR, the different institutions (i.e. Politecnico di Milano, CIAM, MSA, Casabella) and informal networks, such as the Modernist Italian group, as well as his relationship with Quadrante, Domus and Casabella, and the alliances and informal relationships built around the CIAM environment over the years.

As it was not possible to build up a complete picture from the leads provided by the archive, I tried to follow the strongest evidence in order to establish an account of the flow of correspondence, key words, exchanges that had taken place and issues discussed. In short, a mapping out of the human relationships as a necessary support to the cognitive analysis of Rogers’ intellectual activity, whilst determining the many cultural relationships he had accumulated.

In addition to archive materials, there are also a series of interviews with people who had long-lasting and active relationships with Rogers. Due to the rather delicate nature of this source (memories often unable to be substantiated by a witness), this material is used to corroborate the information offered up by other sources.

For a full list of archives utilised, please see appendix n.1.

For biographical references, the list of publications and works by Ernesto Nathan Rogers and various members of the BBPR studio, I used the second edition of “Città, museo e architettura. Il gruppo BBPR nella cultura architettonica italiana 1932-1970” written by Ezio Bonfanti and Marco Porta in 1973 as a reference point as, even today, it is the most detailed and serious source of information about their work.

This research takes account of a series of publications I wrote and conference papers I have given on Ernesto Nathan Rogers in the last fifteen years in Italy, Europe and the United States. This text is ultimately a collection of published and un-published writings and conference papers, and an original reconsideration of archive materials discovered over the course of the last decade.

I see this final text as an attempt to discuss different research, theories and reflections surrounding the authors’ biography as a complex and impossible history that has not yet been defined.

I would liken this biographical approach to a journey through a vast archipelago where each time it is possible to find something new which will help you draw up a definitive “map”. The search for “continuity” became, in the Rogers’ case, the chance to gauge how private obsessions and experiences interact with a changing cultural milieu allowing for the creation of an innovative, theoretical tool with which to design contemporary realities.
0.4 - Outline of the dissertation

0- Problem and Methodology
Here I define the dissertation's central themes and questions, as well as the main issues regarding choices of methodology. A list of sources and a general outline of how the research was carried out is provided.

1- "The tragedy of my life". Family and Rogers' early personal and cultural experiences
This chapter chronicles the period from Rogers' birth in Trieste (1909) up until 1939, when the Racial Purity laws were passed in Italy. It explores the family environment, the role models and the involvement of various family members in Rogers' cultural formation.
It also examines elements that highlight how Rogers' difference to the environment he was brought up in; differences that play a decisive role in determining the direction he took in both his personal and private life.
Rogers establishes his own path within that secular, middle-class framework typical of urban Italy at the turn of the century. However, aspects of his family life already stand out: being Jewish, dual Italian and British nationality, and the events linked to his father’s profession.
His father, Romeo, worked at Assicurazioni Generali (a major Italian insurance company) and his employment led to a great deal of upheaval for the family: they spent the years between 1909-1914 in Trieste; with the outbreak of the first world war (1914-1917) they moved to Zurich where Rogers attended primary school and learned German. Between 1918 and 1921 they were in Rome where Assicurazioni Generali had moved its head office, and it was only in 1921 that Ernesto went to live in Milan where he attended the liceo classico. These tensions were however progressively resolved by Rogers through his public choices. He led a secular life (his father did not practise and Rogers was not circumcised) and was always reserved when it came to religion. He also renounced his British passport in order to fully assume Italian nationality, choosing to enrol for military service not as a recruit but as an official student. These choices are typical of a young man from the naturalist fascist generation, characterised by a superficial following of Futurism (as apprentice of the painter Anselmo Bucci) and Fascism, choosing Modernism as their battleground.
Up until his thirties (when the Racial Purity laws were introduced) Rogers had tended to negate the anomalies in his identity - anything that could distance him in any way from his peers following the 'traditional' path of young, avant-garde artists full of ambition and personal motivation.
Over the course of these years a great deal of correspondence was exchanged between Rogers and his family, who in the meantime had moved to Venice and fallen upon hard times. This
abundance of letters allows us to fully investigate a very interesting phase in the development of Rogers' personality, his fears and his life choices. Trieste remained particularly special for Rogers. Despite the fact that his family had moved away, he continued to return to the city and maintain both personal and professional relationships there.

The chapter follows this personal narrative to November 1939, a significant turning point in Rogers' public and private life.

2. "Tradition is a "constant" in the life of a nation". Modernity, History and Style. 1933-1938

Modernity and style: two elements that are of utmost importance to modern Italian architecture and the young Rogers.

"Stile" (Style), the name of the first book published by the young members of the BBPR studio (1936) and one of the many ambiguous keywords used by those within the architectural culture of Italian rationalism - from editors and Persico in his essays in Casabella, to the various reflections upon the style of modern architecture made by Piacentini and Portaluppi (the professor tutoring the young members of the BBPR studio).

Style is a term used in a broad national debate along with ethics, modernity and history, all brought together by the fraught rapport between Rationalism and Fascism in a time of great public contests which saw the Regime actively exploit Modern architecture.

This chapter focuses on this initial, intense phase of the BBPR's growth and self-assertion. It was within this group that Rogers tried to neutralise himself renouncing any individual creativity for the sake of a group of friends - for him, a second family.

The BBPR, together with Rogers' contemporary work as a critic, slavishly followed the path laid down by first generation Rationalists. They also tried at this time to reinforce their own presence within Modernist networks (from the magazine, Quadrante, to the CIAM, from the Triennale to the GIL and the PNF) by submitting essays which, though not particularly innovative, focused on particular concepts raised by scholars such as: Bardi ("corporate urbanisation" in Quadrante), Persico (Style and Modernity), Portaluppi and Venturi (history vs modernity), Pagano (rural architecture, tradition vs modernity) and Ponti (Mediterraneanism).

This chapter will examine Rogers and the BBPR's cultural journey from their time at University until 1939, as well as the networking which led to the BBPR's post-war success.

This is of great cultural importance because it reveals a criticism of Le Corbusier's mechanistic Functionalism in favour of its plastic and formalist dimension (style). This is because they viewed history as more important than the contemporary yet contradictory experiences of the Dutch and Bauhaus tabula rasa, and because they had identified a deeply rationalist element which
establishes a dynamic rapport between rationalism and tradition within rural and traditional architecture, emphasising their continuity.

Particular attention will be paid to the BBPR's editorial experience at Quadrante that offered them a way into the complex rationalist networks between Como, Milan and Rome. Thanks to their work with Quadrante the BBPR enter into the CIAM, and are introduced to Gropius and Le Corbusier. They also meet Olivetti (who commissioned them for the Valle d'Aosta project) and the publisher Bompiani who helped them with their bid for the E42's competition in 1936.

3- “The acronym BBPR will always be heard but the R will be lost to this solitary world”. Anonymity and self-awareness: from BBPR to Ernesto Nathan Rogers 1938-1945

The Racial purity laws passed in November 1939 provoked an existential crisis in Rogers, transforming him from a member of the BBPR into a key public figure of the post-war period. This chapter will deal with the period between 1939 and 1945 and the complex, often painful personal journey made by Rogers, first in Italy and later to Switzerland (1943-1945). It is here as a refugee that he, thanks to the invaluable of M.me Mandrot, was able to build up an invaluable network of personal relationships which accompany him into the post-war period. It is at this point that he joins the CIAM's Reconstruction Council and becomes the new international point of reference for the Modern Movement in Italy, following the death of Pagano and Bardi's emigration to Brazil.

This chapter will look at Rogers' life on two distinct levels. The first, “private”, that tells of anonymity, rejection of public life, self-awareness during wartime and a need for proximity and continuity within the family unit. The second, a public one: his “salvation” from the clutches of Fascism which led to an active support of the Resistance, but most importantly, the creation of strong international ties which revolve around the Swiss CIAM (namely Roth, M.me Mandrot, Bill and most notably Giedion). It will also contain an analysis of the manuscript “Letters from Ernesto to Ernesto and vice-versa” (1939) and the Monumento dei caduti (1945) in Milan, a monument to those who died in the concentration camps.

4- “Modernism needs a magazine”. From Domus. La casa dell'Uomo (1946-1948) to the CIAM Congress in Bergamo (1949)

The previous chapter considers the direction taken in 1939 with his increasing self-assertion on both a personal and international level. It also looks at Rogers and the BBPR's growing awareness of the need to find a means of communication capable of transmitting the CIAM's cultural and ideological dimensions and tools to a wider audience.

This chapter begins from Rogers' work with Domus between 1946 and 1948, leading to the
rebirth of Casabella-continuità. It will analyse the political and cultural role played by Rogers within the Italian MSA and the CIAM (summer school, trip to Tucuman, the CIAM congress in Bergamo) where the criteria for conservation and continuity, together with the masters of the Modern Movement's lesson, are laid down. It is also at this time that the reflections on the Modern Movement developed during the war by Giedion and Sert are reinforced by Rogers' editorial work (his series of monographs on the masters of the Modern Movement) and the BBPR's involvement in numerous projects, such as the Monumento dei caduti in Milan, 1945. The criteria for ideal continuity with regards to post-war experiences within CIAM are strongly defended by Rogers who maintains an ambiguous and rather difficult stance at the CIAM throughout the 1950s.

Together Rogers and Giedion develop a historiographical reflection and critique which identifies a crucial element in history, in the construction of a coherent timeline that runs through the trials and tribulations of the Modern Movement and their relationship with various active continuities in Art and Architectural history.

5- "Continuità e crisi". The experience of Casabella-continuità (1953-1964)

This chapter brings the thesis to a close as when the term was added as a suffix to the name of the publication Casabella a personal and cultural journey (one that has been both dense and complex) was officially brought to an end.

This chapter examines the various operative, cultural and ideological modifications that Rogers made to the term continuity both through his work with Casabella and the many modernist networks in which he plays a central role.

I aim to analyse the role played by Rogers' ideological and public activity in defining Italian architecture's direction in the 1950s, with particular regard to the concurrent violent process of modernisation that would transform the country forever.

6- Working with the "preexisting conditions" as "Building for everyone": Torre Velasca and the new Museum for the Castello Sforzesco

The debate on pre-existing conditions became an extraordinary ideological and cultural platform for Italian architecture and determined the characteristics of this stage so fundamental to their future development.

In this chapter I aim to analyse the complex and rather ambiguous facets of the concept of pre-existing conditions through a reading of the two contemporary projects developed by the BBPR studio between 1948 and 1958: the museum in the Castello Sforzesco and the Torre Velasca, both in Milan.

Here, we will try to understand what defines such a cultural tool and how it can be used in the project of modernisation and its cultural impact on the city of Milan.
project stages, considering its merits, dissemination and limitations. Putting continuity into practice entailed a consideration of context and a mediation between its cultural and environmental history, capable of making the modern project something to every man, to the world of nameless individuals searching for an identity in Italy during the economic boom.


Einaudi’s publication of Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ two volumes, Esperienza dell’architettura and Editoriali di architettura, between 1951 and 1968, was a reminder of the need to understand these works as a single entity, and a narrative expedient with which Rogers’ conceptual development could be appreciated, with particular regards to its relationship with the debate slowly enveloping Casabella-continuità and Italian architectural culture of the 1950s and 1960s.

By discounting Esperienza dell’architettura and Editoriali di architettura as two important collections of writing, as is often done, one runs the risk of underestimating the complexity and vibrancy of the slow, intimate mental process that led to the selection, organisation and revision of the two texts produced at different times and in different ways. These two books are not simply a well-assembled collection of heterogeneous material, but a carefully created montage that moves between a conscious reconstruction of Rogers’ own biography and a reading of events that preceded this personal and intellectual journey. These publications are the final step in Rogers’ re-evaluation of his own experience, marked by reconsiderations, uncertainties about the role played by himself and his generation, comparisons with friends and colleagues and a subtle bargaining over content, which led to an imperceptible weariness present in each of his works.
1 - “The tragedy of my life”. Family and Rogers’ early personal and cultural experiences

1.0 - Introduction

When dealing with an artist’s story and the cultural choices they made, most architecture monographs and general history books tend to omit the early years of the persons’ life, family and the events that link their evolution to the various paths followed and developed in later life. Often this is due to a lack of documented material. More frequently, however, it is the result of a lack of interest in a subject that appears to distract the scholar from the body of work of the artist under consideration.

Usually the study begins with the subject’s first contact with the discipline and their education, their first books and school projects thus reducing the author’s first twenty years to mere anecdote, or worse.

Even when details about family life are provided, these are often used to set the scene rather than seriously considered as motivating factors in defining the author’s view of the world, his approach and subsequent choices all developed during the early years of his life.

However, this period should not be reduced to a mere backdrop for the history of the artist’s great achievements. It is particularly important if one considers architecture or, quite simply, creativity as a complex form of dialogue through which the subject can enter into perpetual dialogue with many different networks. We can also see creativity as a natural form of “listening” to reality and to others through tools that are gradually identified by subject. The individual is the subject because he is in constant dialogue with the world.

As a study of Ernesto Nathan Rogers’s own research, which led to the development and confirmation of continuity as a concept, this work aims to demonstrate how the term continuity, beyond being a fundamental cultural concept, also takes on a very personal resonance for Rogers.

In this case, the gradual development of a cultural reference point becomes intertwined with a deeply personal subject, thus blurring the boundary between the author’s public role as an intellectual and his psychological background.
I do not wish to prove a kind of mechanical determinism between cultural decisions and the author’s psychological journey, but instead reinforce a reading of cultural and social choices as a given entity which cannot solely consist of biographical facts.

However, it is particularly useful if we consider some of the larger elements that mark the first two decades of Ernesto Rogers’ life in isolation, such as: his relationship with his father Romeo, his mother Ida and brother Paolo; their family values and life style; Rogers’ feeling towards his hometown, Trieste; the choices taken by his parents and the subsequent psychological and material difficulties in their early relationship with their sons; a consequent makeshift, fragile perception of material life; the mother’s role as protector and the consciousness of Rogers’ own diversity due to his British nationality and Jewish faith.

Each of these elements overlap with Rogers’ schooling, the social environment his family was part of, and the values of middle-class Italy at the beginning of the 20th century.

We also have a major, unedited archive at our disposal which holds a significant amount of Rogers’ correspondence with his family. The letters date from 1919 (the year in which he sat the Italian equivalent of the I I +) to the mid 1940’s, the time at which his parents died.

It is a fascinating collection of letters that gives us an insight into Rogers’ relationship with his family, the sequence of events in his life at that time, the choices he made and suggested to others, and the values upheld by the Rogers’ family.

In this chapter I will therefore attempt to shed light on the events that took place between Ernesto Nathan Rogers’s birth in 1909 and 1939, the year in which the Racial Purity laws were passed in Italy marking a moment of great change in the author’s life.

I will try to demonstrate how continuity becomes a kind of psychological necessity for Rogers who is subject to incessant family crises and a great deal of (predominantly economic) instability. At the same time I will try to show how the relationship between Rogers and his native city, Trieste, became another significant element of this personal continuity.
The headquarter of Lloyd Adriatico Insurance Company, Trieste, 1905
1.1 - The family

Ernesto Nathan Rogers was born in Trieste on 16th March 1909 to Ida Manni and Romeo Nathan Rogers. His father was a British national and an insurer by profession\(^1\).

The Rogers family belonged to the urban Jewish middle-class; Ernesto’s father was employed by Assicurazioni Generali (a major Italian insurance broker) and his mother was a housewife. During the same period other members of both families also lived in Trieste. Ernesto was the couple’s first-born, followed a short time later by his brother Paolo. The brothers always remained very close despite following two very different paths in both their professional and private lives\(^2\). Trieste was at this time still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but the Jewish community, which in 1858 already represented 2% of the total population\(^3\), used Italian as its main language and exhibited widespread pro-Italian sentiment.

The Jewish community had a very particular relationship with the city of Trieste, as commented upon by Angelo Ara and Claudio Magris: “In the absence of an established urban middle-class, (...) the Jewish immigrants played an essential role in forming this strata of Trieste’s society and contributing to its unmistakable cosmopolitan character. However, whilst the majority of Trieste’s Jewish inhabitants were fully integrated into the city’s social fabric, (...) Trieste society ensured that Jewish traditions came second to the cultural values shared by the city’s entire population”\(^4\).

Trieste, where the middle classes were just finding their feet, was one of the most internationally significant cities in Italy at that time.

It was also the centre of a dynamic, entrepreneurial and commercial middle-class that, in the 19th century, established the two insurance giants Assicurazioni Generali and Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà. Both of these companies proved to be indispensable for the economy of the Austrian Empire whilst establishing their place within Trieste society.

However, by the beginning of the 20th century Trieste was living its final glory-days. The once aggressively commercial middle-class was becoming increasingly provincial and introverted, giving a sense of impending crisis and the end of an era. This marked the beginning of social and economic decline, when the “analytical” and introspective worlds of Saba and Svevo detached themselves from a widespread sense of stagnation and provincialism of social customs.

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1 From the list of Jews resident in Milan held at Milan Police Headquarters: Nathan Rogers Romeo, born Trieste 22nd December 1878; Ida Manni was born in Trieste on 16th April 1882.
2 Idem, Paolo Nathan Rogers, born Trieste 23th December 1910. He studied in Trieste and Venice, then, after WWII, he moved to Washington working first as a consultant to the Italian Government and later for private Italian industry.
The Jewish community, the second largest in Italy at the time of Trieste's annexation in 1918, represented one of the most dynamic sections of the city's middle-class. The community's "Italianisation" took place very rapidly, proof of their desire to "identify with a group of values that epitomised the meaning of modernity with no apparent quid pro quo".

The speed of this assimilation to the Italian way of life led to the transformation of and reduction in participation in Jewish religious life, as if "the Jewish sentiment is of more relevance to identity than social life".

This process of secularisation moved at the same pace as lay customs and culture, so much so that "at the end of the 19th century (...) most Jews considered both their working life and philosophy exclusively within the framework of the nation, uti singulis, rather than as a member of the Jewish collective. They followed politics, the arts, philosophy and schools which better suited their own way of thinking, whilst others rejected outright the religion of their fathers and abandoned the community, proclaiming the secularity of their philosophy and life".

Such attitudes can be found in the lives of Romeo Nathan Rogers and Ida Manni, and thus helped to shape the environment in which the young Ernesto grew up, at least until 1914. That year, following the outbreak of the First World War, the family moved to Zurich.

Despite never returning to live there on a permanent basis, Trieste remained a constant reference point for Ernesto Rogers on both an emotional and personal level. It remained a place where he could seek (and find) refuge.

Stable employment at Assicurazioni Generali, society life, the theatre, bridge circles and the Rotary club are a few of the references found in family correspondence to the rituals and habits of Trieste's urban middle classes.

One can also sense an intensely secular view of religion and their Jewish roots in these letters, particularly from Rogers' father - an attitude shared deeply by much of the Jewish urban middle-class at the time. This led to a "loss of strong Jewish religious identity (...) in the younger generations, leading to a rise in the secularisation and modernization of liberal society (...) and the diffusion of integrative and substitutive elements and values. (...) Faced with this pressure from society, Jewish identity wavered. Strong religious sentiment appeared to be an archaic residue, traditional culture did not look to be capable of modernization or adaptation, and the advent of modernity meant the loss of one's roots".

6 Ibid.,7.
7 Ibid.,8.
8 Ibid.,13.
9 Toscano, "Gli ebrei in Italia dall'emancipazione alle persecuzioni", in, Storia contemporanea (October, 1986).
There are, in fact, no direct references to Jewish culture or relations with the Jewish community to be found in either Ernesto’s private correspondence or that exchanged with his family. Only one such reference is made in a letter from Rogers’ maternal uncle Vittorio in May 1922 about the bar mitzvah ceremony. He wrote: “The religion of your ancestors requires that when boys reach thirteen years of age they celebrate that day with a special ceremony after which they are considered mature enough to take part in religious functions at the temple. These days, except in a few cases, there remains nothing more than a memory of these ceremonies and the date is celebrated in another way so as not to forget the old traditions altogether. Everything our elders did was based not upon dogma or orthodox canons but common sense, and boys of 13 were granted the honour (at that time it was considered an honour) of taking part in religious functions. This meant that age represented the point of passage between infancy and youth and it is certainly an important moment in life because, everything else aside, it is the period in which one begins to think seriously about one’s future career... it is the moment when one definitively abandons childish games in order to dedicate oneself with greater care to one’s studies and better suited interests.”

A few years later, whilst he was studying in Milan, his father sent him a bunch of grapes out of season and wrote, “I’ve sent you the desired grapes. Eat them religiously (the only such thing I advise you to do)”

In the entire body of correspondence analysed, there is only one reference made by Rogers to his complex relationship with the Jewish faith, and this can be found in a 1937 exchange with Carlo Belli, friend and fellow member of the Quadrante editorial team. Between the end of the 1920s and the 1930s he marked himself out with his insistence on the necessary symbolic and moral link between Fascism and Catholicism in the affirmation of Modern culture in Italy. Unfortunately we do not have the first sequence of correspondence; however there is a letter from Rogers that clearly shows the limits of the issue in reference to an article written by Belli in which he discussed conversion to Christianity with Rogers. Rogers, responding to Belli somewhat embarrassed, wrote: “Today I have received the drafts and at first I understood nothing, then afterwards I realised. What a rogue, that Belli. But please do me a favour; don’t publish them. The reason is very simple: the entire first half of the letter concerns a subject which for reasons of my ‘marital status’ is alien to me, and on which I would be unable to respond on equal terms to potential attacks and spiteful people would end up...

10 Vittorio Rogers to ENR, 29 May 1922, BBPR, Old correspondence.
11 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 25 January 1928, BBPR, Old correspondence.
getting the better of me (though not necessarily of my ideas). These are, I believe, expressed
with clarity and it pleases me that a friend like you should have appreciated them (and that’s
enough for me).’’ However, after this brief introduction, Rogers addresses the issue with a
frankness that he does not usually use when discussing his private life: ‘‘The second part of the
letter, concerning a subject more peculiar to my culture and profession, allows me to go into
more detail. In fact, if you want, and only if you say so, I’ll develop the argument for a future
edition. I have no doubt that you have completely understood me. However, please know that
it pains me to write this to you because I was in doubt all day before resolving to write in such
a defeatist tone. Had my parents baptized me (I would be able to defend myself) even absent-
mindedly, today I would be better equipped than most false gurus to defend a moral idea which
I feel very strongly about it, but as it is I cannot. And I cannot even achieve this equality with my
own forces because I am loathe to do this solely for convenience and I don’t have enough faith
in religion to undertake an act of total sincerity. This is one of the tragedies of my life. Now you
know something about me that I have perhaps never openly admitted to anyone.’’

The link with traditional religious life was only partly restored by Rogers’ mother who, in private
correspondence with her son, often alludes to visits to the Temple on Saturday mornings, but
she gives the impression that this was more out of long-held social habit than profound religious
sentiment.

So Ernesto was born into a family environment in which a cultural and social metamorphosis
had already taken place. The family had swept away traditional religious ideals and teaching,
filling the void with a modern ethical-moral vision of living and working, and a specific national
identity.

We find copious references to this, even in the letters exchanged between the father and
his eldest son; correspondence that increased significantly in emotionally intensity during the
dramatic economic crisis suffered by the family in the 1930’s.

The pleas for Rogers’ to be “a wise and serious young man who prepares for a life of work
for his own good and the good of his family’’
14, to “not act on impulse”
15, and to consider
the importance of economic stability
16, are made together with a call for him to face up to

13 ENR to Belli, SD (end VII-1937), BBPR, (emphasis by LM).
14 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 28th June 1919, BBPR, Old correspondence.
15 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 1932, BBPR, Old correspondence.
16 “Your greatest
victory because you wanted to win it on your own insidious land rather than on that which your
enemies would have happily offered you. You will be much more satisfied with it, but that’s life and I advise you
to be as flexible as possible when you are faced not with a moral victory but that “vile gold”, which as dispicable
as it may be, is always “the basis of everything”. Romeo Rogers to ENR, 12th December 1934, BBPR, Old
difficulties with a “desire to live, with resolution, with boldness” in order to “win” and reach his chosen objectives.

The figure of Romeo Rogers is much more complex than descriptions given of him to date would have us believe.

He has been painted as “an unusual father; a man of a notable culture but with little practical sense and a natural inclination to grant his children a great deal of freedom”.

The image I would like to portray is that of a cultured, secular middle-class man of great sensibility, a man with strong family ties, tightly bound to his wife Ida and his two children, who became progressively burdened by frustrated ambitions, the failure of his professional career and his consequent incapacity to provide materially for his family.

His ambition was to set up business as an independent insurer during the 1920s after employment with Assicurazioni Generali had taken him and his family to Zurich at the outbreak of the First World War and then to Rome in 1919, when the company transferred their head office from Trieste to the new capital after the annexation of Trieste to the Kingdom of Italy.

However, his career was short-lived, scarred by the financial crisis of 1929 and a lack of entrepreneurship. It quickly precipitated a long trail of debt that Romeo Rogers was unable to repay until he obtained much-needed financial aid from his brother-in-law Sergio Manni. This help constituted the opportunity to return to Assicurazioni Generali and thus repay the debts he had accrued in a series of instalments.

Their poverty was barely concealed by the middle-class lifestyle the family continued to

17 "because this rejection can be nothing but a proof of weakness and is comparable to fleeing in the face of any moral or material danger. Even the best captains have lost battles, but they fought them and fighting meant that they "wanted to win", not that they fought and expected to lose. You convince yourself too easily and are wrong to share this idea, even with trusted friends, as it could be wrongly interpreted and enormously damaging if (and this is not impossible) it is used against you. Though I know nothing about it, I know that Danusso’s exam is a dangerous reef upon which many have been thrown. Face it with a will to live, firmly and boldly. You will pass, but if for some unknown reason you were to not pass, be patient. You will have done everything you possibly could have done. Winning it does not matter how, will open a path for you to your chosen studies, the practical application of your dream of art, liberated from the weight of theories as if from a ball and chain. There is one thing I have done that you have not yet had the chance, my sons, and it is to have fought life’s adversity with tenacity, against every one and every thing. I am still fighting today and only just starting to win. Victory will be mine! Be strong, be a man and be calm. Be harsh in your judgements, but do not confuse severity with discouraging the weak.”

Romeo Rogers to ENR, 10th October 1931, BBPR, Old correspondence.

18 Bonfanti et al., Museo e architettura. Il gruppo BBPR, A140.

19 “Dear friend, my sister and I are very sad to hear of the illness of your son Ernesto. We can only imagine the pain this must cause a family as caring and loving as yours.” Anselmo Bucci to Rogers’ Family, 9th January 1928, BBPR, Old correspondence. This short letter from Anselmo Bucci, Ernesto Rogers’ art teacher, shows an intimate side which is intense, warm and characterized by a strong personal sensibility found also in the further correspondence.
maintain.
Their lives were marked by failure, the anxiety of imminent poverty and frustration at not being able to help their sons who had, in the meantime, started university.

The disparity between this continuity of middle-class customs, family values and work ethics, and an imminent crisis with no apparent way out is brought into stark relief through the correspondence between Ernesto and his father from 1929 right through the 1930s. Despite the situation improving over time, allowing Romeo Rogers to regain his dignity, his perpetual sense of guilt for his failure and his inability to have been a "winner" in life is palpable.

A torment which not only saturated the correspondence with his two sons, but that strongly marked their material life, obliging the family to make sacrifices and leaving them with a sense of uncertainty that would accompany them well into the post-war period.

The father saw his two sons as the "heirs of [his] philosophy, which is good and was good, even if the work was neither good nor useless. In you I relive my pride and idealism which nothing has or ever will be able to extinguish. For this I am immensely grateful." In a letter to his wife written on the same day Ernesto's twenty-fifth birthday, he comments: "As I wrote to Ernesto, I saw how even though they are different from one another, they represent the same joy, the same pride for me. This is because in them I see the legacy of my philosophy, my ideals, which I was regrettably unable to put into practice. Only through them will my dreams continue to be realised. Beyond my painful misery and the misery of others, I live my life through them. May they be blessed and saved from all the pain that has embittered me."

The family correspondence built up over this period and young Ernesto's life give us a sense of family continuity, of its values and prospects which are constantly tinged by the sense that a faint yet relentless crisis is waiting for them in the wings.

During these years Ernesto Rogers' family was unable to offer him much comfort, but as illustrated by the letters he exchanged with them, he still wished to remain close to them.

The first decades of Rogers' life were marked by a strong sense of instability conditioned on the one hand by the heavy economic difficulties which cast a long shadow over Ernesto and Paolo's lives, and on the other hand by the family's almost nomadic existence until the end of the 1920s.

These difficulties, together with their continued physical separation, became the glue that held the family unit together. Again, the sheer volume of correspondence between Milan, Trieste and

20 "This obsession with money is a personal one", Romeo Rogers to Ernesto N. Rogers, 25th February 1932, BBPR, Old Correspondence.
21 Rogers buys his own home only in 1953.
22 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 14th March 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.
23 Romeo Rogers to Ida Manni, 15th March 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.
Venice is testament to this. These letters invariably tell of economic difficulties, but they also discuss the family’s rituals and habits, their values, aspirations and worries, offering us fragments of young Ernesto’s personality and his first scholastic and professional experiences.

The letters between mother and son are marked not by the actual date but by day of the week, as if to indicate an intimate and private dialogue between mother and son that is immune to the passing of time. It is here that one gets a sense of the strong bond between the two.

The tone of these letters is entirely different to that used in those to Ernesto’s father, where worry and anxiety over work dominate and Ernesto tries to maintain the tone of a responsible “adult”; attentive and sympathetic to his desperate father’s problems, always ready to give advice and encouragement. In his replies to his mother we can discern an intimate, very affectionate relationship in which the young Ernesto seems to lay bare his fears and worries over his studies and pace of life.

“...My darling little Ernest, I hope you arrived safely and had a good journey even though I saw you didn’t have a very comfortable seat with so many people and that window open behind you. Thank God that behind the appearance of a skinny delicate boy you truly are strong; it is enough to see how you wear yourself out with all that travelling, always on the go in a job that never lets up on your brain or your legs. But you are overdoing it, and must look after yourself. Look at Nino and how much of a fuss he makes over a little cold! So don’t worry and listen to me carefully: buy a quart of oil straight away and take it because your body is like a car; it gets better when you give it oil. Eat well, because at your age meals are essential, and take care of yourself. Never travel too much in one day; it’s not worth doing 1000 things at once! Get all the rest you need and with a bit of calm, you’ll get more done. Eat well at meal times as I taught you. Finish the dates within ten days because they won’t last any longer; and the same goes for that bishop’s bread in the box. Stand up straight(...) Understand? Do I hear you snorting? No-one, my little Ernest, will talk to you like your mum, so listen to her.”

In a letter sent during the same period, his first days of military service, Ernesto jokingly writes to his mother:

“...Mummy dearest if you only knew how little your hygiene rules are respected by our superiors! We don’t wash our hands before lunch; the place is incredibly draughty; (think of my shock), walking bare foot is not considered a crime; swapping a wool suit for a cloth one at every...

24 Ida Manni to ENR, sd, BBPR, Old correspondence.
opportunity is not considered unhealthy and no one asks you to stay seated after eating. We substitute your standards a little, in the eyes of the good Lord, with a great deal of physical exercise. In the afternoon we did exercises in the courtyard in our vests (just think!), I liked it very much and I believe it did me good (God willing!).

These letters exchanged with an apprehensive yet resilient mother allow us to catch a glimpse of young Rogers' character; from the enthusiasm and the ambition that he seemed to pour into each of his endeavours and with which he described every choice, his poor health which afflicted him his entire life, and a natural anxiety that he seemed to carry with him.

Rogers' childhood and early adolescence were marked by the constant instability caused by the family's predicament and his father's continual work transfers. This insecurity was also fed by Rogers's social incongruence caused by race, nationality and education. His reaction to this was to gradually negate each of the elements that set him apart from the socio-cultural reality of that time.

Around the time of the First World War, his father's employment with Assicurazioni Generali required multiple relocations which proved crucial to Rogers' development. After spending just a few years in Trieste, the family moved to Zurich in 1914 where they stayed until the end of the conflict. During these four years Rogers attended primary school and studied German, a language that proved to be of great help to him in his first years of university, and as an architect when reading certain "classics" of European Functionalism and when he came into direct contact with the Swiss component of CIAM at the start of the Second World War.

We are not given the impression that English was spoken in the Rogers household, as at the end of the 1920's the painter Anselmo Bucci urged Ernesto, his workshop student between 1926 and 1930, to finally learn the language of his forefathers.

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25 ENR to Romeo Rogers and Ida Manni, 11th November 1933, BBPR, Old correspondence.
26 All the correspondence between Rogers and his mother is marked by continuous pleas for him to take care of health and diet, always linked to fragility of Rogers' physical condition.
27 "For your health please get the Seldobra which will help calm your nerves", Ida Manni to ENR, 1932, BBPR, Old correspondence.
28 See chapter 2.2.
29 Anselmo Bucci could be considered an artist who worked on a line of continuity between modernity and classicism in adherence to the Novecento movement in Milan. As of 1927, Bucci began to write a column for the magazine *Arte Plastiche*, edited by Vincenzo Costantini with whom the young Rogers also worked. It is likely that the two actually met at that time. For more on Bucci's work see: *Bucci e il Novecento*, (ed) Pontiggia, Elena (Milan: Skira ed., 1999).
30 "Dear disciple, my brief stay in your country has left me, as you can see, an almost civilised person. As you can see I am responding to letters. Immediately I beg you not to get lost in the alti adagi but go to England. In the meantime, you must learn English. There are many Italians (like you) who do not know English; just as there are many Italians (like me) who do not know Italian. Learn it (English) immediately! I already have the address of a teacher; a rather mature Irish lady whom I shall seduce sedurró (I'll introduce
In 1919 the Rogers family followed the transfer of the Assicurazioni Generali headquarters to Rome where, between 1919 and 1921, Ernesto attended the grammar school, Istituto “Torquato Tasso”. Only in 1919 did he move, alone, to Milan, where he took up permanent residence. Here he studied at the high school, Liceo Classico “Parini” until Autumn 1927 when he enrolled in the Architecture Department of the Politecnico di Milano.

From this moment up until the early 1950’s (when he finally bought a home), Rogers lived in various boarding houses, echoing his family’s economic decline which became particularly serious during his university years.

It is at this time that Ernesto established himself in two cities, Trieste and Milan, and two “families” – his natural one and the BBPR, fast becoming his “second” family.

For Rogers, Trieste and Milan became two equally important cities, though with different values and meanings. The first is the place of his origins, his family and individuality; the second is the centre of modernity, professional opportunities and the achievement of social and cultural ambitions.

But one difference survived the slow process of assimilation undergone by Ernesto and his family - his British nationality. This was the only true obstacle to his feeling completely Italian and part of the society in which he was living.

The question of nationality concerned much of the family correspondence dating from 1930 and was primarily posed by Ernesto, though Paolo chose to follow the same path as his older brother.

31 The School system in Italy before the Gentile Reform in 1922 was organised in the following way: from 6 to 10 years old - Primary School, from 10 to 13 - lower Ginnasio, from 13 to 18 - upper Ginnasio and Liceo Classico, from 19 onwards - University. This is the system that Rogers experienced. For more on the school system, programmes and reforms carried out during the Fascist period, see: Fascismo e scuola. Politica scolastica del regime 1922-1943. Charnitzky, Jurgen (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1996).


33 “As far as the issue of nationality is concerned, I would prefer and indeed be happy if you were to keep your original one. However, it goes without saying that I would never say no if this would, in any way, jeopardise the career you have chosen for yourself. And anyhow, impartial advice could only be given by someone who is truly competent and experienced in such matters. Do not discuss this with lots of different people but choose those professors or eminent architects who may be able to give you an objective and well-considered opinion. I would suggest Professor Portaluppi or even Morettone”. Romeo Rogers to ENR, 26th September 1932, BBPR, Old correspondence.

34 “I read Papa’s letter on citizenship very carefully. I do not share his reasoning. It is not my intention to protest, but I believe that to be true to myself I must put myself in a position to take part in this delicate moment of collective responsibility for Italians. I have therefore already started to collect the necessary documents and I hope to send my application as soon as possible. (...) I will not hide my impatience to commence my military service, I cannot wait to finally be posted.” Paolo Rogers to ENR, 4th August 1935. BBPR, Old correspondence.
Rogers' "Italianness", understood as a psychological need to belong to a community, uncouples into two identities: that of a Trieste Jew and that of a British citizen. This personal urgency affected his university years, his degree and led to a strong desire to do national service. In short, it influenced every social rite of passage that defined Rogers' as a young man.

It is necessary here to point out how nationalism was a strong common sentiment amongst the Italian urban middle-classes in the early 20th century. It characterized the Italian Jewish middle-class which, "drunk on its success in politics, science, industry, the arts and journalism, started towards a more complete assimilation" and an active participation in national politics. This process of social integration led to him pledging allegiance to the National Fascist Party (PNF), from which we can read a youthful conformity with the innovative and strongly modernist ideological and cultural reality of 1920s Italy, as well as an open support for the Regime.

Rogers, who belonged to the generation defined by Montale as "naturally fascist", lived through the success and social expansion of Fascism, admired for its innovation, its futurist and modernist character and its potential to make Italy a key player on the world's stage.

There is no evidence of active political participation in the early Fascist era in Roger's case, but rather a "natural" gravitation towards the politics culturally closest to him. It would seem that

36 De Felice, Ebrei fascismo, 20.
37 On the complex relationship between Fascism and the Jews: historians traditionally consider this as an individual approach to politics from Italian Jews. During the first phase of the Regime, the Fascist Party showed no anti-Semitic sentiments and we can prove that many Italian Jews took part in the March on Rome and served as ministers in the Mussolini Government. The strong urban and middle class identity of Italian Jews meant they held an interesting and relevant presence in the political realm both for and against Fascism. See:ibid.,64-76; Sarfatti, Ebrei identità, 5-75; Uno su mille.Cinque famiglie ebraiche durante il fascismo. Mondadori, Stille, Alexander (Milan, Mondadori ed., 1991); I giovani di Mussolini. Fascisti pentiti-fascisti pentiti-antifascisti. Grandi,Aldo (Milan: Baldini e Castoldi, 2001).
38 Between 1929 and the end of 1934 no consensus peaked the levels of enthusiasm and exaltation reached in 1936. It was, however, more extended and more totalitarian, or rather, less tinged with reserve, criticism or concern for the future. The state authority had not been brought into question by the majority of Italians. Fascism's "moral model" had been widely accepted and did not cause provocation in its many contrasts between public and private. The regime's policy did not appear either dangerous or irrational, and as such the bureaucrats and the technical elite had still not carried out that great reduction in efficiency that came about later, at the same time as a new climate appeared and took shape, characterised by scepticism and a lack of faith in the technical choices made by the politicians. The average citizen, the "good citizen" still had very little direct contact with the party as it did not (yet) meddle with his private affairs, or at least if it did, it was rare and in a rather superfluous manner. Therefore, for the average citizen the regime's benefits, real or otherwise, far outweighed its negatives; in, De Felice, Mussolini il duce. Gli anni del consenso 1929-1936 (Turin: Einaudi editore, 1974),54-55.
39 Montale, "Una tragedia italiana", in, Auto da Fè (Milan:ll Saggiatore, 1966) 45; Bonfanti, Porta, Museo architettura BBPR, 1.
40 Rogers' group of friends joined the PNF in the same period: Peressutti in 1925 (he was still at Liceo), Belgioioso in 1928 and Banfi, last, in 1934. We can suppose that Rogers enrolled during the same period
his main motivation for enrolling in the PNF (National Fascist Party) was to further his social integration and ensure the approval of his request for Italian nationality. The period between 1932 and 1933 marked a definitive settling down in Rogers' choices and relationships.

Gaining a degree, the decision to open the BBPR studio with Gianluigi Banfi, Lodovico Belgioso and Enrico Peressutti, his close friends from university, his first professional and public successes such as winning the first 'Littoriali' architecture competition and the Saturday house for the bride and groom designed with Portaluppi for the 5th Triennale, together with the start of his relationship with Bardi, his entry into the editorial team of the magazine Quadrante, and his first public conference at the Rotary club of Trieste all played a central role in the establishment of Rogers' social position and the creation of a network of personal contacts.

We could interpret these choices as an attempt to bring clarity and stability into his own social, cultural and personal lives, to date mired in uncertainty and hardship. The BBPR became Rogers' new family, both culturally and emotionally, and with them, came the choice to plunge himself into the Modern Movement as the sphere in which Rogers could create a new personal and ideological identity for himself. By nullifying his name within the acronym BBPR, Rogers cancelled himself out along with his name and his own complex history in order to identify with a new condition, which would give him a new identity he would fiercely cling to for the rest of his life. The acronym BBPR was a significant element of personal and cultural continuity in Rogers' life that he would never give up as it represented an abandonment of his own personal history that was filled with difficulty and anomaly.

Similarly, his decision to respond to a military draft was of great personal importance; to such an extent that he opted for officer training with a further extension of his military service.

"In Rome I received an excellent reception from my friends Bardi, Ciocca, Pavolini, etc and obtained some influential references (yes, I know my way around). I received a certificate from the ministry confirming that my request for citizenship is being processed. I took it to the Command here and provided there are no complications, by 6th November I'll be in the army. This prospect, whilst making others melancholic, actually gives me a strange sense of pleasure. And I'm as happy as a lark".41

On 6th November 1933 Rogers did indeed begin his military service at the Scuola Allievi Ufficiali del Genio militare in Pavia which continued until July 1934 when he became an officer and was transferred to Rome. It was here that he finished his service on 25th January 1935.

and not in 1934, the date the BBPR took part in the competition for the Littorio Palace in Rome as, in order to enter, it was compulsory to be part of PNF.

41 ENR to Romeo Rogers, October 1933, BBPR, Old correspondence.
During these years Rogers stubbornly proceeded with his bid for Italian nationality, but the family correspondence during this period reveals a gradual personal development and a growing awareness of his own abilities and needs. When writing to his father, Rogers took every opportunity to prove the success of his career and the important contacts he had built up: "I obtained some influential references (yes, I know my way around)." He does so as if to provide reassurance of his ability to secure his own future during such a difficult period for his father. As we can see, a fiercely individual personality slowly flourished, characterised by great independence in comparison to his fellow servicemen:

"My life continues according to a predetermined system, just like every physical thing which endures a reaction to every action and so on. There are moments of fun and many hours of boredom, especially since the snow has kept us confined to the lecture halls like schoolboys. Luckily, I can sneak off to go and draw in my office whenever I want, leaving my companions to yawn."

"Naturally I have already found my own work, which is original and separate from everyone else's."

In November 1934 Rogers took the state exam in Rome, with only a few months left until the end of his military service. He spent these final weeks in the capital reinforcing the relationships and networks he had built up during his work at Quadrante. The responses received by Rogers are filled with his father's pride in his son's success ("In Rome, too, you were able to distinguish yourself and take on positions of trust with moral and material advantages") and his preparations for the final obstacle to his civil profession ("And I would be very happy if your stay in Rome should coincide with the State exam, which is proving increasingly important for you, especially as it is this way that your name will be ascribed to..."

42 "I was about to approach these illustrious fellows, when one of them came towards me with great enthusiasm. He took my arm, led me to a general (director of the Genio) and introduced me to him as "one of the school's best students, a British subject who wants Italian citizenship. Do allow me to recommend him to you, etc." "right, I shall make a note of this. The colonel who took me was a kindly officer of the Stato Maggiore of Milan who had taken great interest in my case. What luck!" ENR to Romeo Rogers and Ida Manni, 7th April 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.

43 ENR to Romeo Rogers, October 1933, BBPR, Old correspondence.

44 "My dears, I am like Robinson Crusoe and at some point in my life I learnt how to deal with it. These pages once filled three envelopes and now they fit just three pages. Cheap, fast and practical." ENR to Romeo Rogers and Ida Manni, 7th April 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.

45 ENR to Romeo Rogers, 17th December 1933, BBPR, Old correspondence.

46 ENR to Romeo Rogers, 6th May 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.

47 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 2nd October 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.
your works and those in which you will surely play an important part." His father's advice was affectionate ("I can't imagine that an ex-Englishman, an Italian army officer can be afraid of anything, not even an exam before a bourgeois assembly") and offered him momentary respite from the anxiety of his own financial hardship. Only once this difficult exam was behind him would the family regain the upper hand; the weighty legacy of so many years of hardship.

1.2 - Conclusions

In this first chapter I have tried to give a full picture of the relationships between Rogers and his family dating from the turn of the century to the early 1930s.

The correspondence we have analysed has allowed us to prove a number of significant elements regarding the aspirations, ambitions and choices that marked Rogers' life, particularly during this first phase.

His struggle with his own religion, his decision to renounce his British passport for an Italian one, the family's forced nomadic existence between 1914 and the early 1920s, their economic difficulties and his parents' frustrations are all elements of instability that burden young Rogers and ultimately led him to take decisions that would ensure he belonged to both a national community (being Italian, carrying out his military service as an officer, adhesion to the PNF) and a cultural one, with his choice to follow the Modern Movement and the foundation of the BBPR studio, in the name of a hard-fought continuity.

Rogers reacted against this instability by creating a number of autonomous characteristics that manifest themselves in the BBPR's activity.

48 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 2nd October 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.
49 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 25th November 1934, BBPR, Old correspondence.
50 "Mamma wrote to tell me that as of the 25th, you will be a civilian again so I've sent you your winter cape, which I hope you will receive in time. However it is not without renewed disheartenment that I think, on this occasion, of the miserable punury that stops me from offering you the help that would be so important to you now that you are about to embark upon your own struggle for life. I have immense faith in you and your willpower, your activity. I am certain that you will manage it, but it would bring me great joy if I were able to somehow make your success a little easier by at least removing those material obstacles that today (more than ever) are to be found along every path. You know, my dearest Ernesto, that it is due to a lack of desire to help you, and you will find it far more easy to forgive my inability to help you at such an important moment than I do. My absence is purely material. My heart, my soul, my mind, my solidarity and my support for all of your efforts are and always will be with you. If in this game of life, everyone who leaves us is met by someone who lives, I hope with all my heart to lose every time so that my defeats may contribute to the victories won by you and Paolo." Romeo Rogers to ENR, 17th January 1935, BBPR, Old correspondence.
By nullifying his name within the acronym BBPR, Rogers cancelled himself out along with his name and his own complex history in order to identify with a new condition, which would give him a new identity he would fiercely cling to for the rest of his life. The acronym BBPR was a significant element of personal and cultural continuity in Rogers' life that represented an acceptance of his own personal history filled with difficulty and anomaly; he would never abandon it.

Anonymity became a condition that would accompany Rogers throughout his life, allowing the creation of a symbolic alter-ego with whom a bond would be established during his own cultural development and that of his projects.

This chapter's main objective, however, has been to prove how those elements of continuity and crisis form part of Rogers' life from the outset. With time they became permanent fixtures upon which the young architect from Trieste would build the foundations for his own personal and cultural choices.

Now we must verify if and how this significant part of Rogers' personal life extends into his professional and cultural domain.

What kind of cultural and personal tools did Rogers develop during the 1930s to deal with his private condition?
2.0 - Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the rise to fame experienced by Rogers and the BBPR between 1932, the year in which Rogers graduated, and 1938, when the Racial Purity Laws were passed.

It was at this time that a young Rogers took the first public steps that would have a profound effect upon his future.

During this “heroic” phase, Rogers’ private difficulties seem to be absorbed by the public choices that began with the decision to found the BBPR studio without first working in the “workshop” of one of the Italian masters. This, combined with his atypical university education shared between the Modern Movement and a stylistic and traditional use of history, his editorial experience at the magazine Quadrante (1933-1936), his first public projects with the Milanese modernist network that announced a clear formal and cultural standpoint, the complex cultural relationship he was building with Pagano and Persico through the magazine Casabella and the 1936 Triennale, the BBPR’s first publication entitled Stile (1936) and his acceptance into the CIAM in the same year all served to carve out a place for the BBPR within the Italian and European modernist domain and together constitute the first experiences of Rogers’ theoretical activity.

I also wish to highlight some of the cultural experiences and projects that would affect Rogers’ life and career in the post-war years.

It is my belief that a significant number of key words and content used by Rogers to describe the relationship between Modernist culture and categories such as continuity, history, tradition, human scale and pre-existing conditions are a product of this complex historic phase.

Following a period of incubation during the Second World War, they truly came into their own with Rogers’ two spells as magazine editor for Domus. La casa dell’uomo (1946-1948) and Casabella-continuità (1953-1964).

Formed in 1933 after the submission of their brilliant thesis supervised by Piero Portaluppi, the BBPR studio was the product of two co—existing and surprisingly close cultural realities in 1930s Milan.

If able to maintain a distance from previous transparent and culturally biased readings of modern Italian architecture made in the early post-war period, it is immediately clear how the city managed to harness the diverse modernist experiences happening throughout the 1920s and 1930s, using them to produce important works. This began with the Novecento group, a movement that brought together a number of very different characters, moving onto Portaluppi’s modernist and historicist eclecticism, shore up by the bourgeois neo-classicist modernism championed by Gio Ponti and finally reaching the urgency expressed by the functionalist avant-garde groups who saw the Gruppo 7 as having opened the door onto this new era.

At that time, the word “modernity” embodied a wide range of projects and cultural experiences; various “hypotheses” for the creation and shaping of the demand for innovation and modernity made by a city as dynamic as turn of the century Milan. There was no dominant trend but different attitudes and areas of activity that co-existed and, together, created important fragments of the Milan that was being expanded with the new Albertini plan.

These different trends and areas of research were brought together at the city’s new architecture department; a product of the new university system created by the Regime in which different theories of modernity overlapped with the programme of studies.

The BBPR chose an anonymous logo that would replace their own names. This symbolized a clear political choice that was perfectly in keeping with those made by the Gruppo 7, in which “the unity of the group is expressed in the desire to renounce one’s own individuality rather than...

2 Molinari et al., PR
3 Irace, Giò Ponti. La casa all’italiana (Milan: Electa, 1988).
5 Nicoloso, Le parole dell’architettura, 131-138
6 Bianchetti, Cristina “Portaluppi e Milano”, in, Molinari et al. ed.,251-270
than reach an effective agreement on which position to take: if each person maintains their own unique personality, no-one comes to nullify themselves within the group”. Rogers embraced this decision, renouncing the possibility of working with Portaluppi’s studio, not least because of his precarious economic state.

His was a cultural and personal choice – to escape, nullifying himself in an acronym that had become his second family and denying his own history and identity. There are few examples of independent work by Rogers during this time, especially regarding his work as a critic for various Milanese and Trieste magazines, whilst his most significant articles always identified Rogers as part of the BBPR group. Rogers tended to identify himself with the destiny of his own group and generation rather than really facing up to his troubled personal story.

The BBPR belonged to a third generation of Italian modernists. By 1933, the days of the public battles fought by the MIAR’s (Italian Movement for Rational Architecture) were over. The Regime had made its intent to support modern architecture clear with the decision to award the new station in Florence to the Michelucci group.

The architectural departments in universities had already produced two generations of modernist architects and the direction given by the new “Masters” was accepted without being fully endorsed.

8 Ciucci, architetti fascismo, 73
There were three architectural magazines at that time: Casabella and Domus, the Milanese publications, and Architecture from Rome, all of which supported and actively promoted the Modern Movement’s theories, albeit in different ways. Furthermore, the Milan Triennale had already reached its 15th edition and Muzio’s new creation at the heart of the city was on the verge of being revealed.

We can therefore state that BBPR’s choice was taken within a clearly defined context, with clear-cut protagonists and driving forces. However, the same cannot be said for the cultural and conceptual clarity of the key words and content adopted by the BBPR and their generation.

Despite attempts made by Edoardo Persico to create a definitive conceptual lexicon of Italian Modernist culture, the Italian scene was filled with highly diverse personalities capable of attributing wildly different meanings to the same terms. As a result, words such as “modern”, “functional” and “rational” always took on slightly different and ambiguous meanings without Italian architectural culture ever managing to define the boundaries of an experience whose protagonists and works changed so much within ten years.

Another key element is the relationship between history and the modern culture that characterised Italian architecture.

This was a far cry from the anti-historicism of the Northern European Bauhaus and functionalist movements. They built a thematic nucleus, first around history and then around local traditions, which proved central to understanding the autonomy achieved by modern Italian architecture (especially after WWII) within the international debate, and the complexity inherent in Rogers’ choice to add the term “continuità” to the title of Casabella.

In Architecture, one of Italian rationalism’s founding documents, written in 1926 by the Gruppo 7, it states: “Given its nature, tradition and, in particular, the victorious improvement in its experience, Italy is most worthy of this mission of renewal. There is no incompatibility between our past and present. We do not wish to break with tradition; tradition is changing, it is assuming new characteristics that make it almost unrecognizable (...) It is here in particular that there exists a certain classical substratum; in Italy the spirit of tradition, and not its forms which are a very different matter, is so deeply rooted that new architecture evidently and almost mechanically cannot but preserve an identity that is typically ours. And this in itself is a great strength because tradition, as we have said, does not disappear but simply changes aspect.”

11 Nicoloso, architetti Mussolinii, 131-138
12 Gruppo 7, “Architettura”, in, La Rassegna Italiana IX-103 (December 1926), 849-855; also in, Quadrante 23 (February 1935), 22-24.
The Italian avant-garde, embodied by the Gruppo 7 and made up of a large number of Quadrante's editorial staff, made itself manifest through a series of programmatic documents that fluctuate between singing the praises of cubist modernity and the "new spirit" of the European vanguard, and voicing a need to consolidate the strength required to create an Italian and Fascist tradition.

This bond with history was never denied even by Italy's strongest modernist elements. Instead, it progressively became one of the areas in which modern Italian architecture built one of its most mature and significant identities.

The experiences of Rogers and the BBPR at this time are central to gaining an understanding of their development in the post-war era.

The stylistic way in which history was taught at the Architecture department in Milan and, in particular, the presence of their supervisor Piero Portaluppi who also worked with them on the Padiglione di una giovane coppia at the Triennale di Milano in 1933, seems to have been decisive, yet very little study has been carried out in this area.

Portaluppi was considered the most influential exponent of a highly sophisticated stylistic and historical modernism following his work with Marcello Piacentini to introduce the concept of modern style with a great deal of academic influence.

Both these architects, and those teaching the history of architecture to the young members of the BBPR, saw history as an element of continuity, with modern style as nothing more than the last in a long line of styles dating from Greco-Roman architecture through the Renaissance to modern times.

The formal education of Rogers and his future colleagues moved along a frontier that (only appeared) to separate academic studies and private study of the Masters and international modernist architecture.

A more in-depth analysis of Rogers' sources and his first forays into publishing reveals a far more ambiguous condition borne of the co-existence of various interpretations of rationality that abounded in the early 1930s. At that time, Bardi's polemics, the writings by Gruppo 7 and Portaluppi and Piacentini's speeches were all considered by the young Rogers to be of equal importance.

This period witnessed the coming together of certain elements to form the tentative outline of the nebulous concept known as Italian modernism.

This would, however, become more clearly defined throughout the 1930s, leading many to take a stand and move in a different direction; in short the definition of Italian architecture as the product of a long history and tradition that caused it to stand out from the "Northern..."
Piero Portaluppi, BBPR: La casa al sabato degli sposi; Triennale Milano, 1933
countries’. This idea conveyed a strong mistrust of the “machinist” and “international” side of rationalist architecture and the consideration that the representation of modernity as a “style” was the fruit of a dialectic between ethics and aesthetics.

In the months between 1931 and March 1932, Rogers worked on a manuscript entitled “Considerazioni sull’architettura moderna” (Reflections on Modern Architecture)¹⁴, an abridged version of which was swiftly utilised in the young architect’s first public address given to the Trieste Rotary Club on 23rd March 1932 entitled “Intorno all’architettura “razionale”” (lit. around rational architecture).

The beginning of the speech revived the Gruppo 7’s idea that architecture is a “collective manifestation. One mind conceives an idea, a crowd brings it to life, and thousands of generations watch and learn”.

The heart of the speech, however, lies in rational architecture’s social “difficulties” and the ambiguity that Rogers immediately identified in the word itself: “Rational? Dear me! I’ve pressed the most dangerous button, the one that sets some bells wildly ringing whilst others repeat the somnolent tones of reproach. Rational architecture (such an inappropriate term that we use with heavy hearts) has a purely dialectical value bestowed upon it by its controversial essence, which cannot be understood in an absolute or dogmatic way.”

The text seems to reiterate the very issues raised at the same time by Marcello Piacentini and Piero Portaluppi on the improper use of the term⁰¹⁵.

According to Rogers, the term “rational” should be replaced by the word “functional”: “The façade must correspond to the building, thus rendering it much more striking and allowing the fiction that lies behind it to be mirrored in its own rhythm. This is functional architecture. Beauty lies in function, or rather an idealisation of what is useful. We must reassure ourselves that utility is, for most prophets and us young catechumen, an indispensable condition, but it is not enough

¹⁴ This manuscript was found by Michelangelo Sabotino, a young undergraduate from Venice who had the opportunity to analyse the Bonfanti archive and kindly supplied me with a copy. It is certainly possible that during the preparation of his book on the BBPR Bonfanti took a great deal of original material from the BBPR studio that was never returned, most likely due to the author’s untimely death. The materials regarding this manuscript and the conference held by Rogers on 23rd March 1932 are well documented in Sabotino’s undergraduate thesis. See: Sabotino, Ernesto N. Rogers. La formazione.

¹⁵ “It is true that even if a house is reduced in the most wonderful manner to a box, it is still a house, but at the moment and especially for us Latin souls, this concept has not yet moved us. But only for now, because though rationalism has found a formula, it does not yet have a style”, in, Portaluppi, Piero, Architettura moderna 4 (January 1932), 23; article taken from a speech given by Portaluppi to Milan Rotary Club in late 1931. However, in 1930 Piacentini had spoken of the limited civilisation of Scandinavian countries as demonstrated through modern architecture. In his own speech to Trieste Rotary Club, Rogers stated: “In both Scandinavia, which lacks an artistic form, and Italy, which has too many, the tradition of forms influence the genesis of modern-day architecture”. 
for architecture”.
The idea of modern and functional architecture as an intercession between the Albertian theory of Utilitas and Venustas was one of the elements that Rogers would slowly become increasingly interested in over the course of the 1930s and 1940s. And the concept capable of clarifying and consolidating later deliberations was found in Pagano’s ethical ideal.16

Continuing in this consideration of the risks posed by rational architecture, Rogers picked up another element that characterised Marcello Piacentini’s book “Architettura d’oggi” (Architecture today)17, published in 1930 and carefully studied in this same year by Rogers, who covered the edition’s first page with the motto “Utilitas, Firmitas, Venustas”18.

These risks were the same as those taken by an “international” architecture, of which Le Corbusier was considered the greatest exponent, discarding the concepts of surroundings and human psychology. “From a strictly rational point of view, the internationality of architecture is absurd. Scientific methods are, of course, universal, but the way in which they are applied should be studied according to particular criteria”.

The tone of the speech is purposefully reassuring. The generic, bourgeois audience soon understood Rogers’ ability to find a common ground, to communicate in order to convince without being abstract or dogmatic, choosing instead a common sense approach.

So what better element could be used to ward off internationalism than “tradition”? In his speech Rogers declared: “The word tradition has assumed a profound meaning, it no longer refers to the forms that one nation’s idea of architecture has taken on over the centuries, those belonging to its culture. It now indicates the idea itself, the vital essence and its spiritual basis. Tradition is a “constant” in the life of a nation, guiding its development through different phases. What is Italian tradition? (...) The constants within Italian tradition are a serene balance between form and spirit, between structural limits and artistic expression. It is as if this essence of Italian art is undergoing a process of metempsychosis from one body to another, from one style to another; but despite saying different things, it always speaks Italian.”

Rogers’ acerbic words give us a sense of a linear, cyclical side to history that begins with Vico and a profoundly spiritual dimension, to those areas that would be progressively purified by Pagano’s teaching on “rural” architecture and, after the War, his contact with Enzo Paci’s phenomenology.

16 A journey that was summed up in 1951 by philosopher Enzo Paci in the following way: “It is the architect’s vital experience that proves to Rogers how the concept of function must be understood in an ever broader and more comprehensive sense. For Rogers, what is most important is not only that function does not sacrifice beauty for utility, but function itself must be understood as a synthesis between utility and beauty”, in, Paci, Enzo. “Continuità e coerenza dei BBPR”, in, Zodiaco 4 (1959),6.


18 A copy of Piacentini’s books belonging to ENR has been found in the Bonfanti archive.
This cultural vision would go on to become a major theme within the concept of continuity in the 1950s.

The speech seems to have been cleansed of most of the theories on contemporary rational architecture put forward by Rogers in his 1930 manuscript; a text that also makes reference to a significant part of his studies and interests regarding modernism's "catechumen", which are contrasted with the architectural styles often cited by Piacentini as positive.

He shows a clear preference for German culture and the opportunities offered by original texts such as: Taut (Das Neue baukunst in Europa und America), a book bought and reviewed by Rogers in the same year, Platz (Die baukunst der neuten Zeit), Gropius (Bauhaus Bauten), Fahrenkamp, Mendelsohn (Europa-Amerika-Russland. Das gesamtschaffen des Architekten), Neutra (America), Bennet (Bauformen in Eisbeton), Schulze (Glas in der Architektur des gegenwart), Koch (Glas und Einzelmoebel und Raumkunst), El Lissitzky (Russland) e Guizburger (Frankreich). In his bibliography Rogers also cites the French architects Le Corbusier (Precisions, Urbanisme, Vers une architecture and L'architecture vivante) e Badovici (L'architecture Russe en URSS), the Italians Piacentini (Architettura d'oggi), Papini (L'arte d'oggi) and Sartoris (Sant'Elia), and the monographs on Hoffmann, Kreis, F.L. Wright, Gocai, Kaufmann and Hopp, - authors who all heavily referenced by Piacentini in his own book (see appendix n.2).

2.2 - Europe in the 1930s. Architecture between modernity and tradition

Continuing in our consideration of the publications that Rogers and the BBPR studio had at their disposal during this time, we can clearly see how their attention shifted between the "masters" of Rationalism and the works created by those who, like the city of Milan and Italy as a whole, were in search of a different road to modernity. The text written by Piacentini, carefully studied by Rogers, continued to have an impact, clearly reflecting these very emotions: "by basing his work on the theories of rationalism and scientificism, Le Corbusier severs every tie with constructive methods and those used in everyday life; he eliminates from his composition every detail that is not technically necessary and creates (or rather, he assumes he creates) the house-utensil, the house-machine, built in series at a very good price. (...) As if in politics, they (Le Corbusier and the young Russian architects) have made it their duty to destroy the past.

19 ENR "L'architettura moderna secondo Bruno Taut", in Le arti plastiche 16 (1931, August), I.
20 ENR "Elementi moderni di costruzione. Il vetro", in Le arti plastiche (1931, 1 April), I.
21 Sabatino, Formazione Rogers, apparati n.2.
During this period, the desks of Italian architects were covered in images of projects by Le Corbusier, Taut, Mendelshon, Mies van der Rohe, and Gropius, as well as those of Paul Bonatz (defined by Piacentini as "the most balanced and harmonious), Berlage, Dudok, Hoger and Fahrenkamp.

In Italy in particular, Le Corbusier's "Machinism" was met with both strong diffidence, and a growing fascination with his ability to tread the line between Mediterranean classicism and modernity.

At this time, modern architectural culture had still not accepted the subtle complementarity between continuity and crisis that was so typical of the Second post-war period. Instead, the concept of a modernity opposed to history, local traditions and a universal and urban language capable of building spaces adequate for the new man, tended to dominate.

This was a modernism borne of Futurism, which by the end of the First World War had already seen an increased complexity and ambiguity in its analysis of the delicate relationship between modernity and history.

One needs only to think of the sheer volume of work written and planned by Le Corbusier, which if it is presented on the one hand as a paladin of an extreme modernity borne of the machine, on the other it slowly revisits the relationship between archaic Mediterranean culture and the concept of the Golden section.

Though it is important to note the case of Le Corbusier, and the Spanish and Italian architects' fascination with his white and Mediterranean architecture, rather more relevant is the way in which the French master looked at the history of the Modern master, suggesting a different way of seeing the past and the manner in which modernists "use" it.

In contrast, the German and Dutch schools and the Bauhaus experience held a much more radical position on these issues.

During this historic period, modernity, no matter how it was interpreted, was seen as being opposed to reality, something it was bound to radically transform.

However, certain architects held very different views, which are often referred to as the children of "another" modernity – one which tried to build linguistic continuity from the fragments of the past and local history in order to compensate for the violent growth of urban, modernist culture.

22 Piacentini, Architettura oggi, 30-32.

In almost all of those European nations with an interest in affirming the modernist vanguard, we find architects and groups who were culturally opposed and found a voice in anti-urban and traditionalist ideology.

This occurred in Italy with the 1900 movement led by Muzio, Ponti and Lancia, together with Cancellotti and Brasini in Rome. In Germany, we saw Paul Bonatz and Tessenow try to build linguistic and ideological paths that offered an alternative to Rationalism. Henri Sauvage in France, and G.G Scott and E.L. Lutyens in the UK produced works that had a clear intent for “resistance”, whilst in Northern Europe, architects (except Aalto, Asplund, Lewerentz and a few others) formed a movement that was able to build a non-aggressive domestic modernity with traditional constructive methods, that had some level of continuity.

However, the degrees of continuity in each of these experiences are linguistic, and so this term was not applied because each initiative allowed for some kind of modernity to be applied to a changing world. The term ‘continuity’ came about after the Second World War with the desire

to a create a different, humane way for culture and modernity to interact in everyday life.

A decisive ideological change took place in the late 1930s in Germany and Italy, where both dictatorships saw traditional and popular architecture as a resource to be used in the construction of grand, new urban settlements.

Here, Fascist populism was mixed with a profoundly anti-urban concept to create the new cities in Polesine, Sardegna and Lazio. The results of this trend were two-fold, as we will see in the next few paragraphs with the research carried out by Mario Pagano and the relapsing effect this had upon post-war Neo-Realism.

However, this perplexingly anti-modernist trend was part of a regional European movement that was already trying to create a different bond; an alternative to local traditions and modernity. This period is documented in "La Nouvelle Architecture", the book by Alfred Roth published in 1938 that became fundamental to defining a new path of continuity between modern architecture and local customs.
2.3 - Rogers, Portaluppi and the School of Architecture. 1933

"I met Auguste Perret for the first time in 1935 at an international convention for Architects held during the Triennale. (...) He came to get me from the hall, took me outside and this was all he saw of the Triennale."

This is the only memory to be found throughout all of Rogers' writings on the Réunion of September 1933, at which the studio gave a brief yet significant speech on the "Architect's education".

It seemed to have an important effect upon the role played by Rogers and the BBPR's first actions within the Italian and international modernist networks.

The text is presented as an interesting turning point in, as well as a summary of, the first phase of intellectual and educational formation experienced by Ernesto Rogers and his future colleagues Gianluigi Banfi, Lodovico Belgioioso and Enrico Peressutti, that culminated in their undergraduate thesis discussed at the student's section of the Reale Scuola d'Ingegneria in summer 1932.

But before diving into an analysis of the text, I feel it is important to evaluate the motives that

25 Chapter 2.2 is taken from a public speech entitled "I giovani alla Réunion: Ernesto Nathan Rogers", given by myself at the international convention "La formazione dell'architetto nella Seconda Réunion Internazionale d'Architectes, Milan 1933", held at the Politecnico di Milano, 27th-29th May 1998.

26 ENR "August Perret, il costruttore", in, CBC 201 (1954).
led Rogers to take part in the 1933 Réunion and the cultural and political significance of this year for the BBPR.

The BBPR's thesis appears to mark the end of the two generations of rationalist architects who were educated at and graduated from the architecture section at Milan's department of engineering. In 1926 Rava, Bottoni, Figini and Terragni graduated. They were followed in 1927 by Gino Pollini, in 1928 by Cereghini and Gardella, and in 1929 by Albini, Camus, Dell'Acqua and Palanti.

As we already know, a number of these people had gone on to form the Gruppo 7 between 1926 and 1927. They were followed in rather chaotic succession by the 1st Miar Exposition in April 1928, the advent of Pagano's time at Casabella in 1930, the 2nd MIAR exposition in 1931 and PM.Bardi's Rapporto sull'architettura (per Mussolini)(Report on Architecture (for Mussolini))27, the MIAR's disbandment and the conception of Quadrante, first published in May 1933.

The BBPR's thesis was of great cultural interest to the debate going on within the school of architecture. Equally important was a project consolidated within a cultural and linguistic framework linked to an Italian rationalist culture that had already taken its first tentative steps in politics and institutions, as well as having an influence upon the development of theories and the planning process.

Though behind in other experiences that were already underway, the BBPR immediately proved themselves to be one of its strongest advocates in Milan. In May 1932 they took part in and won the first architectural Littoriale announced by Bologna's Assalto magazine, with a project for a Fascist house. Mario Pagano and PM.Bardi were both on the jury28.

In July of that same year, they graduated with four individual projects that were united under one theoretical 'umbrella' that presented all the works carried out as one. The thesis was published alongside other works in issue n.10 of L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui upon the recommendation of Pier Maria Bardi.

Piero Portaluppi supervised their thesis and immediately after its completion, he invited them to participate in the 1933 Triennale with him.

At the end of that year, Bardi invited them to join Quadrante's editorial committee.

In December 1932, the group's first project, bar Grillo29, was completed and immediately featured in Casabella by Persico in January 1933, and later republished by Domus and Rassegna di architettura in that same year.

In late August 1933, Portaluppi invited Rogers to take part in the Réunion that was to be

28 Maffioletti, BBPR.18-19; Bonfanti, Porta, Museo architettura BBPR.A6-A7.
29 Ibid.,A7
held at the Triennale between 15th and 24th September that year, representing students of architecture. It is worth remembering that the Réunion was organised by the magazine L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui whose director, Pierre Vago, maintained a close friendship and collaborative relationship with RM. Bardi dating from May 1932 (visit to USSR VIII-X. 1932, "Un fascista al paese dei Soviet" – a fascist in the land of the Soviets), that was later extended to Rogers and the BBPR.

Portaluppi-Annoni, Bardi-Quadrante and, indirectly, Pagano-Persico-Casabella marked out the boundaries within which the BBPR took their first steps, whilst representing the rationalist groups of Como and Milan to whom they refer and the natural milieu to which they belong, within a wider Milanese architectural context that was “open to all experiences that broached the most diverse and contradictory of views”.

It was a form of cultural “agnosticism” that, as well as characterising Milanese professionalism, had a profound effect upon the “architecture section” at the Department of engineering in Milan’s politecnico, led at that time by Gaetano Moretti (president and professor in architecture and architectural composition), Ambrogio Annoni (head of Projects and history of architecture), and Piero Portaluppi, head of practical architecture.

Annoni and Portaluppi in particular tried at the beginning of the 1930s to bring about a significant change in the faculty’s (by then tense) relationship with the newer generations of students who were pushing for an acceptance of new architecture and an abolition of architectural composition as an exercise in style.

From this point of view, the difference in the attitudes taken by Annoni in Milan and Giovannoni at Rome’s department of Architecture with regards to the teaching of history was significant. The former took the decision to only teach history in the last two years as a compliment to construction techniques that had already been acquired, whilst the latter promoted the teaching of history in the first two years of study concentrating on ancient buildings in order to form an “awareness of tradition”. In the best traditions of the Politecnico and Boito, Milan’s architectural department focussed upon creating professionals who were aware of the demands of modern life. It was no coincidence that a course in Town Planning taught by Cesare Chiodi was introduced in 1929. Similarly, Annoni’s history course aimed towards an investigation into “aesthetic and constructive reasons” rather than a stylistic reading of the buildings of the past, thus laying the foundations for “learning to be critical about style”.

The BBPR formed within this context during a time in the school’s life when far more attention was paid to the teaching of history, which was a key component of the curriculum. It was a time when the school was open to new ideas and perspectives, and the BBPR were able to bring these ideas to life through their work.

30 As evidenced by a series of correspondence dating between 1932 and 1935; cfr BBPR, old correspondence.
31 Ciucci, architetti fascismo, 69.
32 Nicoloso, architetti Mussolini, 105-114.
was being paid to requests made by the new generations, especially if compared to just a few years earlier when both the Gruppo 7 and Terragni had expressed a decidedly negative opinion of the education provided by schools of architecture.

Annoni's public declaration at the beginning of the 1931-32 school year that he was "with the youth", together with Portaluppi's public support that guaranteed crucial academic support for the BBPR's "modern style" thesis, leading them to be invited to join him in creating one of the pavilions at the Triennale, is testament to an important turnaround that moved towards normalising internal debate within institutions with Milan being held up as a "modern school" in contrast to Rome's academicism.

It is no coincidence that between 1931 and 1933, Bardi and Pagano made a bold move in this direction, continually coming up against the academicism of Giovannoni, Piacentini and Rome's architecture department, which had been imposed as a model for all new departments to follow.

The battle for the Regime's approval of new architecture did not manifest itself solely in the noisy exchanges made at the exhibitions, but in a more subtle way concerning the roles played by the new architecture departments and, in particular, that of the education and formation of the new professional architects. This situation was clarified between 1932 and 1933 with the definitive installation of Piacentini and Giovannoni's Roman model for the new departments, and Calza-Bini's direction of the Fascist Union of Architects, organised according to the strictest corporative directives given by the Regime.

The speech given by Ernesto Nathan Rogers in September 1933 must therefore be understood within a complex, yet clearly defined institutional, political and cultural framework.

In the same month, Milan's school of architecture became the Politecnico's department of Architecture with a programme of studies identical to that taught in Rome.

Likewise, in this context, the BBPR's thesis can be seen as the product of an educational phase that seems to have been a national anomaly. Nonetheless, it formed an important part of the Italian rationalist block.

On 30th August 1933, Calza-Bini, president of Napoli's department of Architecture and, more importantly, president of the Fascist Union of Architects, wrote to Portaluppi:

"I have written to Mainetti about the Congress. They want two short speeches on the education and preparation of architects, one by a professor; the other from a student. I thought of writing the first and want you, together with one of your students who would speak at the congress and write the text, to prepare a short piece giving the student's point of view”.

33 Ibid., 75-114.
34 Calza Bini to ENR, 30.VIII.1933. BBPR, Old correspondence.
Portaluppi called on Rogers (it is no coincidence his letter was found in the BBPR archive), his newly graduated ex-student and co-creator of the home for married couples that had recently been featured at the Triennale; in short, someone he undoubtedly considered a trusted colleague. In contrast to his colleagues, Rogers displayed an ease with writing as well as superior and already well-honed critical skills. It is enough to consider how the famous “Programma di architettura” published in the first edition of Quadrante in 1933 had been a first for Belgioioso, Banfi and Peressutti, whilst Rogers had, by that time, already published numerous articles for Arti Plasticine and Rassegna di architettura, not to mention his first outing as a critic and polemicist with Intorno all’architettura razionale at the Trieste Rotary Club in March 1932.

But what role did Portaluppi really play in the preparation of the text? Is he, as Calza-Bini suggests, the real author of the text that is then “signed” by Rogers, or is he the instigator of a speech that can be read on rather more complex and ambiguous levels?

On 8th September Rogers told his family of the task given to him by Portaluppi and the contact he had with his professor and Lingeri whilst writing the text. There are two very different yet possible explanations for Lingeri’s rather strange presence at Rogers’ meetings with Portaluppi. The first is that Lingeri was present as a member of Quadrante and Rogers’ co-writer for the Programma. The second is that he was there as a member of the Fascist Union of Architects and, in some way, Calza-Bini’s man in Milan.

It is, however, evident that the text Rogers presented at the Réunion had a rather different quality to those he had written up until that point, if for no other reason than the wide range of topics it discussed.

Rather than naturally linking back to the speech he gave in Trieste, this text has a new political quality and makes a number of controversial references that are very much in line with the institutional and ideological debate of that time.

We must not forget that Rogers was speaking in an official capacity as a representative of Italian students of architecture. This was not merely a controversial speech given by a young exponent of rationalism, but a public discourse and as such, subject to ideological scrutiny from the institutions involved; namely, the school of Architecture and the Union.

This fact makes the analysis of a review written by Rogers for the Italia Letteraria as requested by Pavolini and printed in 1933, particularly interesting when read alongside the speech that was later published in L’Architecture d’aujourd’hui and Quadrante, the speech he gave in Trieste and his undergraduate thesis.

We hear of a respectful and friendly relationship between Rogers and the professor dating from at least 1931 through family correspondence; cfr: BBPR, Old correspondence.

ENR “La formazione dell’architetto”, in, Quadrante 6 (October 1933), 1.
The text of the speech has a circular structure. Its principle themes, the role of the school of architecture and the function of the professional architect, seem to revolve around a central nucleus made up of a brief discourse on the need for rational/functional architecture in modern society.

The central kernel takes on and gradually develops the thesis presented in Trieste a year earlier; referencing certain themes that proved progressively fundamental to Rogers’ theoretical evolution; from the problematic relationship between modern architecture and tradition, to the need for an ethical evaluation of the modernist project.

The structure is basically the same. It follows the difficulty modern architecture was having in gaining the recognition of contemporary society; the rejection of bourgeois tendencies by a new theoretical and linguistic demand; modern, or rather rational architecture finally tying the art of building to the new spiritual demands of modern life; modern architecture as able to transform the useful/cheap into the ethical, and the ethical into the aesthetic, highlighting the strongly idealistic elements within the Italian debate, which in turn prove the prevalence of the spiritual over the material, and finally it repeats Rogers’ belief that using the term “rational” was a mistake. As we have already heard, he considered its use to be unsuitable and to expose modern architecture to erroneous interpretations. Instead Rogers believed it should be replaced by the term “functional” so as to prioritise those highly significant opposites that see functional as being opposed to sentimental, classical as opposed to romantic, 1900 as opposed to 1800.

Functional-classical-1900: this is the trio that wholeheartedly continued in the footsteps of Gruppo 7 (“there is a classical substratum, the spirit of tradition is so strong in Italy”) and the declaration made by Quadrante. This symbolises the anomaly of Italian rationalist architecture through the Italian Modern Movement’s identification of ‘national’ characteristics, which are in turn realised through the demonisation of internationalist machinism and an idealised view of tradition as its undisputed origin.

There are two themes that are developed around this nucleus that continually refer back to it and are probably a consequence of Rogers’ meeting with Portaluppi and Lingeri. The first relates to the school of architecture.

Two long paragraphs (one at the beginning, one at the end) paint a vaguely contradictory picture. Rogers begins with a veiled critique of the school that, he says, should be “dynamic and open to reform” rather than “academic and staid”. The school should not teach art (…) it should teach the craft of art. The school should be built upon a Socratic dialogue between professor

37 The controversy and annoyance provoked by the “superficial and reactionary” middle class is part of the ideology belonging to Italian futurism and early revolutionary fascism. Particular reference to this can be found both in Bardi’s work, and in some of the private correspondence exchanged by the BBPR at the same time.
and student through an active maieutic relationship that guarantees a natural progression in the debate within the school and greater attention to the continual flow of life”. Here he condemns stylistic studies and their axiomatic use in classical architecture.

In the second paragraph featured at the end of the speech, Rogers highlights the change taking place in Italian schools of architecture, especially in Milan where “the dingy stench of academia has been blown away, now a new wind blows in its classrooms”.

The references to the school of architecture attended by Rogers and the policy of dialogue championed by Annoni and Portaluppi are clear. However, there is a real uncertainty surrounding the institutional changes taking place and the substantial modifications being made to the programme of studies.

It is necessary to point out that in contrast to the ‘Milanese’ views voiced by Rogers, another speech was given by a different young architect, Gino Cancellotti, who had graduated from Rome in 1924. A protégé of Giovannoni who would later intervene in the place of Calza-Bini, Cancellotti presented Rome’s new school of architecture in a positive light.

The other theme touched on by Rogers regards the issue of the architect’s profession. It is significant that in his article on functional architecture for Italia Letteraria, which maintained a descriptive and only mildly polemical tone, there are two occasions in which Rogers refers to the positive role played by Calza-Bini, who would later give a speech at a national congress held alongside the assembly for the Triennale, on the new professional role of the architect and the architects’ Union that guaranteed greater autonomy for the work of modern architects.

Rogers used the same tone in his speech for the Réunion.

Here, the rejection of individualism, considered to be romantic and self-centred, that invokes both the document written by Gruppo 7 and the BBPR’s thesis, is tinged with a political quality. The artist-citizen is cited as “an active part of society” that must “focus” on “specific tasks” within society; a “profession” therefore.

“We are professionals specialised in architecture”.

And to restate his point, Rogers cites Mussolini himself: “We are in favour of a collective view of life and we wish to reinforce this at the cost of individual life. By doing so we do not go so far as to reduce men to numbers, but consider them according to their function within the state”.

Cooperative politics, professional organisation through a union and the role of the architect and architecture as “State art”, all feature in this brief text, boldly indicating the national objectives of a unitary policy and Rogers’ final axiom: “functional citizens-functional architecture”.

It is significant that Rogers’ text was then published in Quadrante, not solely because he belonged to the magazine’s editorial committee, but due to the direct support the publication
offered to the corporative policy with Bottai acting as head. Indeed, the BBPR went on to make a number of significant projectual and theoretical contributions to the same cause.

2.4 - BBPR: A generation entre deux guerres between Quadrante and Casabella. 1933-1936

"Our original affirmation as a group came with the first Littoriali for architecture held in Bologna in 1932. It was here that we met Pagano, one of the judges, who came to find us and wrote about us in Casabella. (...) Our friendship with Pagano grew stronger and more affectionate over the years and his esteem was for us a source of kindly encouragement even though (in contrast to other colleagues) we were never directly associated with him through a project of any kind. One difficulty when faced with public life at such a young age, is that you unwittingly inherit situations with temptations, rejections and reservations that have already been decided by others. We were launched into the orbit of the magazine Quadrante without reaching the personal positions held by the eldest among us." 39

A careful consideration of the introductory biographical piece with which Rogers begins his Esperienza dell'architettura, reviewing his own history and that of the BBPR, reveals the remarkable reading the author makes of his own experience in the 1930s and the subtle interpretations that give insight into his own youthful journey.

He makes reference to the Littoriali of 1932, the first architectural competition won by the four architecture students from the Politecnico di Milano (albeit in two separate groups) and Pagano, who would be made editor of Casabella shortly after".

Someone who is never mentioned is Pietro Maria Bardi, also a member of the Littoriali jury and, more importantly, director of the militant architectural review Quadrante. Rogers declared that

39 ENR, Esperienza, 29.

40 For a brief history of Casabella dating to the early 1940s, see: Ed. Universo, Casabella. Per l'evoluzione dell'architettura, dell'arte alla scienza 1928-1943. (Treviso: Canova ed., 1978).

41 For further information on RM. Bardi, see the only monograph written on his life and works. It is constructed as a long historic and critical essay rather than a scientific text but some of its ideas and insights prove interesting; Tentori, PM.Bardi (Milano: Mazzotta ed., 1990); Orsi, A. "Bardi, Pier Maria", in: "ed. de Grazia, Luzzato, Dizionario fascismo, I.146-147.

42 Still today there is no systematic study of Quadrante's history, probably due to the lack of a central archive, Bardi's emigration to South America after the Second World War and the fact that materials regarding the many figures involved with its creation are spread throughout a large number of archives. However, I believe that another deciding factor was the influence of many (including Rogers) who preferred to "save" Casabella's story during the 1930s, at the expense of Quadrante, which was too militant and ideologically attached to Fascism. For a brief introduction, see: De Benedetti, Pracchi, Antologia,772-786; Tentori, Bardi, 68-1 35; Patetta, Luciano. "Libri e riviste di architettura tra le due guerre", in, ed. Danesi,
the BPPR had been “launched” into the magazine, hinting at a detachment, a passivity towards external events and a fine distinction even regarding “certain personal positions held by the eldest among us” such as Terragni or Figini and Pollini that continued to mark out the distance between the ideological positions held by the militant magazine on modern architecture and the Regime it supported by politically and financially.

Rogers’ introduction to Esperienza dell’architettura marks the final stage in a protracted reconsideration of his own public life and a process of selecting politically correct elements regarding the path followed by him personally and his generation that was unavoidably linked to and conditioned by the troublesome reality of their personal and professional connections with the Fascist Regime.

After 1945, there was a reconsideration of Pagano and his works as a theorist and publisher that came to consider him as a “good-hearted” father of Italian rationalist architecture despite his ties with Fascism.

A guilt that, as Rogers clearly explains in a Casabella-costruzioni editorial of 1946, was “punished” with the blood of those rationalist Italian architects who died in battle or during the resistance and that permitted modern Italian architecture to serve the new Italian Republic, free from the sins of its youth.

After the war, modern Italian architecture needed certain figures to act as points of reference and so purified them of their connections to Fascism, transforming them into the symbolic and cultural foundations of modern Italian architecture’s post-war identity. This operation was carried out by Rogers for Mario Pagano and Bruno Zevi for Terragni a few years later.

It is therefore understandable that Rogers wished to establish a clear distance between himself and Quadrante, the militant publication with a highly vocal intent to create a connection between the Regime’s works and the promotion of a new rationalist culture in Italy. Rogers instead favoured Pagano and Casabella, which he would eventually direct in 1953 in harmonious and clearly stated continuity with the Casabella of the 1930s, believed by Rogers to be the only truly positive facet of modern Italian architecture.

And yet if we consider the documents at our disposal, the young BBPR’s success at Quadrante and, in particular, their intense relationship with its directors PM Bardi and Massimo Bontempelli between 1933 and 1936 seem to be decisive to the network of experiences and contacts brought about by this affiliation. Thanks to this, in just a few years the young BBPR became one of the most famous groups of Italian architects both nationally and on a European scale.

For the young graduates of the BBPR, Quadrante meant becoming part of one of the most

43 ENR “Catarsi”, in CBC 195-198 (December 1946), now in, Rogers, Esperenza, 62-70.
important networks in modern Italian and international architecture, which also counted amongst its members such figures as Gruppo 7 members such as Terragni, Figini and Pollini, Alberto Sartoris, who authored the book Gli elementi dell’architettura funzionale (The Elements of Functional Architecture), Pietro Lingeri (Terragni’s Milanese colleague) and Piero Bottoni. At that time Bardi enjoyed great popularity thanks to his organisation of the two MIAR exhibitions and the support Mussolini publicly offered modern Italian architecture. He also maintained a strong direct link to the CIAM, of which he had been a member since its foundation. He would publish reports about this connection, paying particular attention to Quadrante, as he did for the GATEPAC projects and the Mars group.

Bardi maintained a very good rapport with Le Corbusier, whom he invited to Rome to meet with the Italian head of state. It was based upon a shared vision of Mediterraneanism that was robustly supported by the Fascist regime. Walter Gropius’ Rome conference on Teatro Totale (literally, Total Theatre) also occurred within Quadrante’s ‘orbit’ during a national convention on theatre for the masses. The BBPR’s organisation of Gropius’ visit whilst working on Quadrante’s editorial team, was the first opportunity for direct contact between the young Milanese architects and Giedion, CIAM secretary and Gropius’ mediator. Thanks to their closeness to Bardi, the BBPR were able to join the CIAM in 1935. It was also at this time that they came into contact with the industrialist Camillo Olivetti who invited them to.

46 See: Patetta, Razionalismo, 119-255; Ciucci, architettura fascismo, 77-108.
47 Giedion invited Bardi to take part in the IV CIRPAC-CIAM Congress in June 1933. In the previous months he had tried to contact Bardi through Pollini, who he had met at the 1933 Triennale, with the clear objective of organising a meeting between Le Corbusier and Mussolini. This took place in the following months when Le Corbusier visited Rome for a conference dedicated to “L’Urbanism”. The Swiss French architect’s visit was also encouraged by the link between Quadrante and the French neo-Fascist magazine Preludes directed by Gael Lagardelle. These two publications maintained similar ideas on the idea of a Mediterranean axis to counterbalance the Northern one. See Mariani, razionalismo architettura moderna, cap. VIII.
48 See issue no. 5 of Quadrante, dedicated entirely to the IVth Ciam Congress and the Mediterranean voyage of the Patris II, attended by Bardi along with Terragni, Bottoni, Figini and Pollini; Quadrante 5 (September 1934).
49 “Il Lido di Barcellona nel progetto Gatepac”, in, Quadrante 13 (May 1934), 29, 32-33.
50 Funaro, B. “Il gruppo MARS”, in, Quadrante 19 (November 1935), 41-43.
51 Bardi saw the Mediterranean as a political axis to be utilised against the burgeoning German and Russian presence; Mariani, razionalismo architettura moderna, 235.
53 In the BBPR archive two letters from Giedion to Bardi have been found, dated 21st September and 4th October 1934. They contain the details of Gropius’ visit via Zurich, together with an extract of his speech in French and an acceptance to write an article on Le Corbusier for Quadrante that would be published in the November issue of the same year.
BBPR, A. Danusso, L. Figini and G. Pollini. Palazzo del Littorio, Competition, 1934
BBPR, G. Ciocca, V. Bompiani, M. Bontempelli. Palace for the Exhibition of the Italian Civilization,
EUR, Roma, competition, 1937
join the large group involved with drawing up the 1936 Plan for the Val d'Aosta\textsuperscript{54}, and the editor Valentino Bompiani with whom they took part in the Competition for the building in which the 1937 exhibition of Italian Civilisation would be held in Rome's EUR district\textsuperscript{55}. This led to their being awarded the contract for the new Post Office - the only project given by Piacentini to Milanese architects\textsuperscript{56}.

Quadrante's modernist network appears therefore to have played a crucial part in the BBPR's affirmation in Italian architecture. It also offered the four young architects the opportunity to gain priceless editorial and cultural experience where, especially during their first two years at Quadrante, they were heavily involved in the editorial and operational processes\textsuperscript{57}.

The work carried out at Quadrante's Milanese editorial headquarters was highly influential, due both to the militancy of its writing and the way in which the magazine was produced. Also, a guaranteed presence in a magazine so openly biased and with great cultural and political visibility gave the young studio a public importance within the Milanese and national networks, leading the BBPR and Rogers himself to occupy a central position within the international and civilian spheres of the post-war era.

The BBPR found support from a section of the magazine's editorial team during the competitions for the Littorio palazzo and the Exhibition of the Revolution (with Danusso, Figin and Pollini). Bardi also referred to them as the magazine's "mouthpiece" in one of his presentations on the project. Their direct association with Olivetti and Bompiani made them central to the two Roman projects and that for the Valle d'Aosta, whilst facilitating political contact with Oppo (vice-president of the E42), Bottai, who was at that time Minister for National Education \textsuperscript{58} and other key members of the Fascist government.

However, amongst all the reasons given, the concept of bias within Quadrante is cited as being particularly central to their theoretical contribution to the magazine and, in particular, to the direction the BBPR took in 1936. Bardi and Bontempelli's magazine began life as a review of literature and art that paid increasing attention to architecture as it grew in relevance to Fascist cultural policy and propaganda. As well as insisting on a strong bond between the most

\textsuperscript{54} AA.VV. Il piano regolatore della Valle d'Aosta (Ivrea: Nuove Edizioni, 1943, now in, Turin: Edizioni di Comunità, 2001).

\textsuperscript{55} BBPR with G.Ciocca, V.Bompiani and M. Bontempelli, Palazzo per la Mostra della Civilta Italiana all'Esposizione Universale di Roma, project, 1937, in, Maffioletti, BBPR, 52-55.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 78-81.

\textsuperscript{57} Dozens of letters and postcards exchanged on a daily basis between Bardi in Rome, the place he conducted his political and publishing activities, and the BBPR at the editorial headquarters in Milan can be found in the BBPR archive. The correspondence is very intense until 1935; a year of crisis for the magazine that also saw Bardi decide to open an editorial branch of Quadrante-Tecnico in Rome in order to revive the publication.

\textsuperscript{58} See: Di Nucci, L."Bottai, Giuseppe", in, de Grazia, Luzzato, Dizionario fascismo, 194-198.
revolutionary and vital forces in the European modernist vanguard, Bardi concentrated his efforts on the application of Fascist "corporative" theories in urban and territorial spaces. These were obsessively repeated in almost all issues of Quadrante, with various contributions being made by the BBPR and the engineer Ciocca. Even the "Project for architecture" presented by the group of architects involved with Quadrante seemed more the product of compromise rather than a starting point. It was, in fact, closer to the texts written by the Gruppo 7 a few years ago than proof of a real advance in the debate taking place in Italy. Beginning from a call for Quadrante to represent the "tendency of tendencies", the nine points presented pointed towards a need for "clarity" within the Italian scene that would be based on the terms "modern, rational, architecture" for a rationalism against formalist pseudo-rationalism. Its political-cultural position focussed on the nationalistic affirmation of an "Italian line" in which characteristics of "classicism" and "Mediterraneanism" were upheld as a spiritual and non-formal product in contrast to "the fordism, the baroque and the romantic within a section of new European architecture".

The prolific nature of the BBPR and Rogers' writing for Quadrante during this phase proves the continued existence of the rich network of Italian and international personal ties that gave the young Milanese architects many cultural and professional opportunities over the next decade; more so than those offered by corporative town planning that was slowly disappearing with the end of Fascism.

2.5 - Stile. 1936

"Dear Bardi, (...) We have in the meantime gathered our material for the "Coerenza" (Coherence) exhibition at the Triennale in order to get them published. The book should be out shortly. In it we look at the coherence that distinguishes and gives a unique style to every expression of every era; from Micene to now. You must understand that we have tried to express the meaning of each historic period so as to bring the public into contact with culture, using surprise and expressive figures to get their attention. This eliminates the possibility of erroneous
interpretations that usually arise in schools. What do you think?"  

The "Sala della Coerenza" designed by the BBPR for the 1936 6th Triennale (May to October) came to make up one of the expositions organised by the Palazzo dell'Arte that proved highly decisive for its future.

The 6th Triennale was organised by Pagano, who controversially resigned from the Directorate immediately after, and featured the strong cultural presence of Persico who died a few days after its inauguration. This edition is considered the first attempt to create an evidently "functionalist" and international exhibition.

This was the first Triennale to bring Alvar Aalto and Max Bill to Italy; a visit that had a significant effect upon the connections that were later cultivated between the two Masters, and Rogers and the BBPR. As well as the BBPR's "Sala della Coerenza", the exposition also hosted an exhibition on rural architecture in the Mediterranean Basin organised by Pagano and Daniel, and the new "Sala della Vittoria" (Hall of Victory), Persico's last work completed together with Palanti and Nizzoli.

The exhibition had a decisive effect upon future generations of Italian architects because it clearly defined the cultural divide between Pagano's ideal of an architecture that was anonymous, popular and national and Piacentini's "Roman" imperial proposal.

In a bare hall, Pagano displayed panels featuring dozens of photographs he himself had taken during numerous journeys to discover "minor" Italian architecture.

This was an impressive collection of highly expressive images, influenced by Bauhaus and Soviet methods; the product of a whole host of anthropological and cultural studies into rural architecture that was strongly advocated by the Regime at that time.

Pagano viewed the concept of the rural home as the product void of "style" par excellence because it was anonymous, poor and elementary. This moral idea of architecture served only to further advance the definition of a vital tradition that must be considered in order to be truly modern, functional and, therefore, close to the people.

The long line of those "pure, functional forms of non-stylistic architecture" became a radical symbol in Italian architectural culture at a very delicate political moment. At that time, the

61 G.L. Banfi to Bardi, 17.X.1936, BBPR.
63 Ciucci, architettura fascismo, 152-164.
64 "Architecture's real native tradition: clear, logical, linear, incredibly close both morally and formally to contemporary taste", in, Ciucci, Op.Cit., 1898, p.162; "The closer Italian architecture is to the people, the more national it will be. Getting closer to the people means brutal clarity, a jealous administration of public money, exemplary simplicity. Those architects who have the courage to be modest will be the real Italians of our time", in, Pagano, Mario. "Architettura nazionale", in, Casabella 85 (January 1935), 2-7, now in ed. De Seta, Architettura e città durante il fascismo (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1976), 42-51.
Regime's "imperial" policy was moving progressively towards totalitarianism and the policy on autarky that accompanied it forced modernist Italian architecture to experiment and work only with traditional materials. This was also due to a lack of steel in Italy. Pagano clearly indicated the moral path to modernity by telling the story of this traditional, anonymous Italian architecture.

This path to reality is in contrast to the abstract, lyrical ideal expressed by the BBPR in their "Sala della Coerenza" which "poetically expresses and exalts the fundamental link fatally determined by man in each epoch between his own spiritual environment and its works, in order to incite their peers to realise their own coherence by creating an architecture worthy of the history we are living."^65

The room was divided into two distinct areas separated by a curtain. On one side there was a long line of panels that traced the sequence of the various eras and their styles. On the other, there were two lines of Melotti's "savi" (wise men) framed by horizontal texts mounted onto a transparent support. History was portrayed as a scholastic tale, a sequence of styles and coherent responses to the era they represent; man, distant and pious like Melotti's statues. Its

^65 Pansera, Triennale, 283.
atmosphere was a far cry from that of the one Rogers would design fifteen years later for the Triennale, dedicated to the Human Scale. Here, images of ancient and modern history would be exploded in order to construct a new space, made to measure for modern man who would have a different, more mature relationship with History.

If compared to the exhibitions created by Pagano and Persico, the Sala della Coerenza has a direct correlation to the Sala della Vittoria in which, as Giorgio Ciucci points out: "architecture becomes a mystic space, not mythical, closed or unreal. It is a world of balanced spirit which we must confront and favour". Ciucci understandably avoided comparing the two exhibitions, both borne of Casabella and its two conceptual souls, but viewed them instead as two complimentary conditions that create the moral and functional style for a "new European renaissance".

It is, therefore, interesting to note how after working on the Sala della Vittoria, Persico set about creating a supplement for Domus on "Roman art" that was produced at the same time as "Stile", the BBPR's book published in December 1936.

We believe that this Sala and the two very different publications it generated, Stile and Il volto delle epoche, represent a fascinating turning point in the story of the BBPR. After this experience, the group moved in a progressively "spiritual" direction, removed from history and modern architecture towards research marked more heavily by the relationship between reality and the historical-environmental precedents that created it. At the same time, the architectural works in the studio's activity were gradually losing their abstract, "Mediterranean" character in favour of a more solid and brutal quality.

However, the BBPR's choice of the term "style" seems to indicate the debt they owe to the work of Edoardo Persico in Casabella, which once it was fully embedded in the magazine, gave rise to two new columns: "la città che si rinnova" (the city that renews itself) and "Stile".

As Paolo Nicoloso astutely explains: "the name of the column entitled "Style" embodies a concept that is central to Persico's philosophy. Therefore art in general, and also architecture, becomes a question of "style". The concept of "style" becomes a critical tool, capable of opening up a dialectic between art and reality. When understood as a question of "style", art becomes an expression of the way of life of a particular era, establishing a rapport with its own time, which is in turn given a sense of its own condition. Persico is visually explicit about the significance of the relationship between art and contemporary reality, publishing photomontages in the magazine.

66 Ciucci, architettura fascismo, 161.
67 Ibid., 162.
68 Persico, Edoardo. Arte Romana. supplement to, Domus 96 (December 1935).
69 BBPR. Stile. supplement to, Domus 108 (December 1936).
70 BBPR "Il volto delle epoche", in, "Enciclopedia pratica Bompiani" (Milan: Bompiani, 1936).
M. Pagano, G. Daniel. "Architettura rurale in Italia", exhibition, VI Triennale, Milan
M. Pagano, G. Daniel. "Architettura rurale in Italia", exhibition, VI Triennale, Milan
that recreate a piece by Rouault or Chessa next to a shop window and inside a studio”. The tables in “Stile” were elegantly composed by the BBPR. They showed ordered sequences of images mounted onto transparent and opaque cards that played on the discovery and understanding of the stylistic and spiritual meanings of each era, just as had been done in the Sala della Coerenza.

The modernist techniques of collage and photomontage shed their slight futurist hostility in favour of montages that evoked the abstract Lombard art of Nizzoli, Munari and Veronesi. This offered the reader a path to follow, in which the images and few lines of text create a coherent and harmonious picture of the various epochs.

This ordered sequence of different times is described as going beyond the “purely aesthetic”, leading the audience towards art’s secret. It wants to be understood by the lay people through channels that are stronger and more common than pure artistic sensibility; the reasons that determined their forms, or rather, the values that the forms conserve within their apparent

71 Nicoloso, parole architettura, 154-155.
72 “The contrast between a portrait of forefathers and a photograph of modern times (...) confirms the existence of a modern style, a means of expression that corresponds to the ideal spirit and practical needs of a new world”, in, Nicoloso, parole architettura, 155.
BBPR, the "Sala della Coerenza", VI Triennale, Milan, 1936
liermetism. The public must grow acquainted with both the aesthetic and the moral until they understand the profound bond moral acts share with aesthetic manifestations.”

In their attempts to “rebuild the link between art and the substance of culture, the civilisations every era knew how to create, and to give art the responsibility it deserves as a creator of moral stances within civilisations”\(^\text{74}\), the BBPR turned to Persico and his “prophetic” writings, in which he entrusts the attempt to bring harmony and coherence back to modern life to Modernism’s catechumens.

History’s value is closely interwoven with that of a moral vision of modern culture perfectly expressed by “style”. It was a hope for “style” not to be merely formal, but a vital expression of the time and society it represents, anticipating the disquiet regarding the threat of “formalism” that would be present throughout Rogers’ post-war writing.

“Il volto delle epoche” (“the face of the epochs”), the leaflet created for Bompiani during the same period seems, instead, to be a scholastic and reductive regurgitation of “Stile”. Devised for the Enciclopedia pratica Bompiani, it is devoted exclusively to a reading of elementary images from various eras that date from Prehistoric times to the 1800s. However, the brief introduction does refer to History as the linear evolution of eras that follow one another, bringing improvements and more importantly, spiritual growth in the eras that followed.

With “Stile”, we witness a stage of important metamorphosis in the lives of the young BBPR, who try to abandon the corporative, militant ambience of their experiences at Quadrante in favour of a more personal and problematic dimension that would see them aligning themselves with the intransigent positions of Pagano and Persico rather than Bardi’s mundane world.

The BBPR’s professional and cultural lives would move alternatively between these two dimensions, which at least until the end of 1938 when the Racial Purity Laws were passed, had tended towards moderate Fascist allegiance, giving them the opportunity to work with Piacentini on the E42 and on the rural research into the minimal home in the projects carried out for the Ente Nazionale Riso.

2.6 - “Un architetto di quasi trent’anni”. 1938

In July 1938, during a time of ostensible peace in Rogers’ life that was but a moment away from the storm that would be unleashed upon him in the autumn of that year with the passing of the

73 BBPR, Stile, I.
74 Ibid, I.
Racial Purity Laws, he published two brief texts ("Un architetto di quasi trent'anni" (An architect nearly thirty years of age) and "Conto corrente dell'architettura funzionale" (the current account of functional architecture)^75 that symbolise a fascinating turn in Rogers' involvement in the ongoing debate^76 and the lives of Rogers and the BBPR.

The first of the two texts, in particular, seems to summarise and put an end to the journey they had taken both collectively and individually over the 1930s.

This is the first time he writes in the first person, distancing himself from the group (his sore foot) and linking his own destiny to that of his entire generation^77. This is a real narrative leitmotif first seen with the Gruppo 7 that is used by a generation that sees their destiny as already set in stone. This is a personal obsession that can be identified from this point on in numerous private and public moments in Rogers' life.

However, Rogers adds another element to this reflection upon the generation of "catechumen", saying: "We have had no need to define ourselves as 'against', just like the generation that preceded us. We are what we are, no more, no less, precisely because we arise like synthesis from a paradox that placed the past on one side of the world of culture and the future on the other". This is the first definition of what would become, in the 1950s, another of Rogers' texts: "if the flag flown by our predecessors was called "Vanguard", ours is called "Continuity". It concentrates on the question of defining modernity as something to be considered not as a stylistic issue ("styles are dead"), but through a recovery of tradition, seen as the "living and eternal substance of the spirit". This is because tradition is seen as the "perfect coherence of their forms with the necessity that such forms have generated. This coherence is a moral act". Here we find the same reflections made in 1936 with "Stile" and the Sala della Coerenza, but with a greater awareness and a closer link to Pagano's later theories.

The functionalist premise of necessity/utility is linked to a different interpretation of tradition brought about by appealing to moral coherence, involving each problem's definitive and necessary passage "from aesthetics to ethics"^78.

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75 ENR. "Un architetto di quasi trent'anni", in, L'Ambrosiano 172 (22 July 1938); ENR, "Conto corrente dell'architettura funzionale", in, L'Ambrosiano 179 (29 July 1938), now in, ENR, Esperienza,38-43.

76 "my foot is better (...) I have written an article for the Ambrosiana as requested by Gorgenno (?), "Un architetto di quasi trent'anni" that you will be able to read tomorrow and that I hope you like given the moral intransigence and faith that permeate it." ENR to E. Peressutti, 19.VII. 1938, BBPR.

77 "An architect's destiny, that of an artist, is that of his generation. (...) The common denominator is age. Those of us who are twenty, thirty years old find etched on our palms, on the deep line that cuts through it, some sign of recognition. (...) Those of us who are twenty, thirty years old, we are a generation of catechumen", in, Rogers, Esperienza,38.

78 "For us, it is natural to be modern. The problem does not come, therefore, in defining ourselves as modern, but in defining our modernity". (...) Styles are dead. (...) The kind is dead, Long live the king. Once the body stops functioning, its spirit remains
2.7 - Conclusion

In this second chapter we have looked at the public side of Ernesto Rogers' cultural and projectual activity and tried to draw particular links between this and the issues discussed in the first chapter.

Between 1932, the year of graduation and the foundation of the BBPR studio, to 1938 and the conclusion of this first phase of activity and public presence on Rogers' life, we witness the first fundamental steps taken by the young Rogers; steps that would have a profound effect upon his future.

During this "heroic" phase, Rogers' private difficulties seem to be absorbed by the public choices that began with the decision to found the BBPR studio without first working in the "workshop" of one of the Italian masters.

This, combined with his atypical university education shared between the Modern Movement and a stylistic and traditional use of history, his editorial experience at the magazine Quadrante (1933-1936), his first public projects with the Milanese modernist network that announced a clear formal and cultural standpoint, the complex cultural relationship he was building with Pagano and Persico through the magazine Casabella and the 1936 Triennale, the BBPR's first publication entitled Stile (1936) and his acceptance into the CIAM in the same year all served to carve out a place for the BBPR within the Italian and European modernist domain and together constitute the first experiences of Rogers' theoretical activity. This gradual theoretical and educational journey made by Rogers between his first conference in 1933 and the publication of Stile in 1936 also demonstrate the growth and progressive increase in critical content, such as the complex relationship between Italian Modernity and history, that proved to strongly influence his post-war development of the concept of continuity, contributing to an awareness of the unique nature of Italian architectural culture's identity within the European panorama.
Rogers ended this phase seemingly stronger and more secure of his cultural and projectual potential, particularly as it was now anchored in the Italian Modernist architectural network and enjoyed the support of strong political connections built up by the BBPR between 1933 and 1938. However, it was on the eve of this new phase that the certainties of this "architect nearly thirty years of age" were shaken to the core. This journey was completed over the course of the years between 1938 and 1945, but by the late 1930s it had already been imperceptibly yet irrevocably brought into question.
Rogers enlisted the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and the British army to find a way to protect the potential dam site. In 1939, he turned to the US Army Corps of Engineers to find a way to protect the dam site. Rogers believed that the support of strong, powerful nations like the British and American would be key to securing the dam. Between 1939 and 1945, however, it was on the edge of the next phase of the war. The engineers and architects faced a difficult challenge. Young men of all ages were drafted to the war. This meant that the dam's construction was delayed. The years between 1939 and 1945, but by the late 1940s, it was once again possible to seriously bring the dam construction.
3.0 - Introduction

The Racial Purity Laws passed in November 1938 represented an existential turning point for Rogers that led him away from the BBPR and towards his role as a key public figure in post-war Italy and beyond.

The following chapter will look at the period between 1938 and 1945 concentrating on two distinct phases.

The first sees the issuing of the Racial Purity laws in 1938, suddenly depriving Rogers and the rest of the BBPR of the public benefits they had accumulated throughout the 1930s and hurling him into a state of anonymity in a society that denies his very existence. This violent shock provoked a feeling of separation within the architect between himself as an individual and the rest of society.

It also led him to write "Lettere di Ernesto ad Ernesto e vice versa" (Letters from Ernesto to Ernesto and vice versa): a text full of extraordinary psychological and symbolic elements that up until a few years ago, had not been edited.

The war for Rogers was first and foremost an opportunity for private reflection and study, giving him time to complete the personal metamorphosis that proved so fundamental to his career.

This second phase begins with the armistice declared on 8th September 1943 and follows Rogers' complex and painful journey through Italy to his escape to Switzerland (1943-1945) where he received the invaluable support of Madame Mandrot and the Swiss CIAM (Giedion, Bill, Roth and Tschumi). Here, Rogers built up a network of highly important personal relationships that accompanied him into the post-war period and led to his acceptance into the
CIAM’s Council for Reconstruction. These events also helped Rogers to establish himself as a new international reference point for Italy’s Modernist Movement following Pagano’s death and Bardi’s emigration to Brazil.

The chapter will also take a detailed look at the two dimensions present in these works. On the one hand, the “private”: anonymity, Rogers’ negation of his public life, his self-awareness during the war and his need for a continuity maintained through links with his family and the BBPR—a condition that reflects upon the value of the crowd and the nameless man as a real being, an expression of desire and an identity undergoing a profound metamorphosis.

On the other, we have the “public”: his ‘redemption’ from the clutches of fascism eventually leading him to the resistance, and most importantly, to his creation of a strong network of international links centred around the Swiss CIAM group.

In this work I will also embark upon an analysis of the manuscript, “Lettere di Ernesto ad Ernesto e vice versa” (1938/39), archive files from the BBPR and the Monumenti dei Caduti (1945) in Milan, dedicated to all those who died in the concentration camps.


“I am writing to you using this headed paper, a sign of our fascist allegiance (Author’s note: BBPR’s first set of headed paper), to bring you good news. Despite the many difficulties we have had to face and the sacrifices we have had to make, comforted only by our ever-constant faith, the project has been launched exactly as our hands and hard work have fashioned it. The call for tenders has been made. It has graduated, or rather (transposing the scholastic hierarchy to a level of monumental importance) they have considered it ‘worthy’.

I do not know if with my heart rather more saddened than angry by their questions and comments, I created our work as they would have wanted. At that time I had a crazy, instinctive desire to scream “no! It is not like that because that is how you want it, it is like that because it is bound by its own absolute laws; because it must be like that, because it must not become clouded like your heads but be pure, clear, exactly as you see it”. I held back out of cowardice. I thought that our world had a definite meaning above and beyond our existence. And if my cowardice could allow our work to be brought to life in the exact way we wished, I was utterly content to be such a coward. At that moment I carried out the act of a mother who suffers and sacrifices herself in order to save her unborn child in all of its pure beauty”. Following sharing

*This chapter is a reworking of a speech given by me at a public conference: “Un anonimo nell’Italia delle Leggi Razziali: E.N.Rogers 1938-1943”, at the International Congress “Architetture in memoria dell’Olocausto”, held in Bologna, 16-17 May 1998.*
Vedute della colonia.
this highly intimate and insightful reflection with his colleagues/brothers at the BBPR studio, Rogers adds: “Today between 11 and 12.30, both the models and designs of our projects were scrutinised. At 12.30 Piac. [Piacentini] concluded, ‘Right, let’s move on to the bid, Minnucci, just as it is’. The designs are all here and in order’. At 12.45, I returned to Rome by car with Piacentini who drove. As far as he was concerned, the victory was all his. It was too much for us to have him as our driver. But go on, let’s be generous.2

During late spring 1938, the BBPR studio went through a particularly intense period due to the number of projects they were working on and the very public profile these were bringing the studio both at home and abroad.

The studio’s Centre for Light Therapy in Legnano (ILL colonia elioterapica LEGNANO) met with great critical acclaim3 and they won second place in the national competition for the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana.

However, their most important accomplishment was their bid for the new Post Office in Rome’s E42 district being chosen by Marcello Piacentini (ILL plastico poste E42). The BBPR were the only group of “young” Milanese modernists to be so heavily involved in the Regime’s most important operation concerning urban planning and architecture.

In late spring, first Rogers and later Peressutti moved to Rome on an almost permanent basis in order to supervise the planning stages of the project, through to its final approval and the tender for bids, whilst at the same time increasing their political and institutional links in the hope of more work being commissioned both by the regime in Italy and overseas colonies. The correspondence reveals a confidence inspired by good contacts with Valentino Bompiani, Oppo and Marcello Piacentini4, and a certainty that their time in Rome had just begun5

Rogers gives no indication of the immense political and human drama that in just a few months would unleash the Racial Purity laws and rip his life and those of tens of thousands of Italian Jews apart.

His faith in the Italian identity he had struggled so hard to obtain, as well as his prestigious social

2 Enrico Peressutti to the studio, Rome VIII. 1938, BBPR, old correspondence.
3 The reviews published of the building in Italy: Pica, Agnoldomenico “Una colonia elioterapica”, in, Casa­bello 129 (September 1938),4-11; A.C.R., “La colonia elioterapica di Legnano”, in, Rassegna di Architettura (September 1938),394-397; “Colonia elioterapica di Legnano”, in, L’architettura (September 1938),571-573; “La colonia elioterapica di Legnano”, in, Edilizia Moderna 33 (January-March 1940),40; Limberg, K. “Waarom Kinder-Kolonies”, in, De 8 en opbouw 8 (March-April 1939),75-85; Roth, Alfred. La nouvelle architecture (Zurich: 1940),131-138.
5 “We have recently had great success with our ideas and have worked more than any other young person”, Ernesto Nathan Rogers to the studio, Rome, 23.V.1938, BBPR, old correspondence.
standing, a product of his brilliant work and the project bids he had won, gave Rogers a sense of security.

Rather than being a purely personal phenomenon, Roger's attitude was common throughout Italy's Jewish community. "Politically, the Jews did not act as a community but as individual citizens, and as such, like all other Italians (...) Even when faced with Fascism, the Jews behaved like all other Italians". A great number of Jews had supported the fascists from the outset, with many offering the Regime financial support. The overwhelmingly middle-class and nationalist nature of the views held by a large number of Italian Jews gives a clear explanation for this choice.

The ambiguous and complex nature of the fascist, and indeed Mussolini’s relationship with the Jewish communities and the Zionist movement up until 1936, together with their initial distaste for the racist policies of the Nazi regime, led the majority of the Jewish community to have complete trust in and loyalty to the fascist cause.

Over the same period, the Rogers family was going through a very happy calm period with the announcement of Paolo Rogers's engagement to Noretta, a girl from Trieste, and the preparations for the imminent marriage.

Throughout the summer months, the Regime prepared its Autumn campaign and began orchestrating attacks against the Jews via the media. Up until then, there had been very few warning signals, but by the end of 1937 and the start of the following year, the regime used all means of communication including the press to "prepare" public opinion, launching a campaign that became progressively defamatory and prejudiced towards Italy's Jewish population. This campaign culminated in the "Manifesto of Racist Scientists" published in July 1938 and the

7 "Jews in Italy became Italians at the same time as the rest of the population but, generally speaking, much faster"; in, Sarfatti, Ebrei identità. 7. This process of Italianisation witnessed in the various Jewish communities in post-unification Italy between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th appealed to the urbanised, modernist and nationalist reality of the majority of Italian Jews, especially those involved in the liberal arts. A common trend can be recognised "This development in participation in the country's political and social life corresponded to a transformation of and decline in participation in Jewish religious life". Ibid. 8. For more information on the assimilation processes of Italian Jews and their strong presence in Italian social and political life, see: "The Jews at the advent of Fascism" and "The City, material and the book", the first two chapters in Sarfatti, Ebrei identità.
8 "In the five year period between 1933 and 1938, the number of "real" Jews joining the National Fascist Party grew exponentially, accounting for almost 27% of Italian Jews over the age of twenty". Sarfatti, Ebrei identità, 133.
9 The Jewish communities had, in fact, perceived a progressive deterioration of their own standing in Italian society, but found it very difficult to believe that they were on the road to persecution. The reasons for this incomprehension were the original dulling of 15 years of dictatorship, an unquestioning faith in the humanity's progressive civilization, and their deep-rooted feelings of being Italian, together with the belief in fascism held by some, the others' faith in the Fatherland and the dictator's ambiguous public behaviour". Sarfatti, Ebrei identità, 130.
UNA NOTA DELLA "INFORMAZIONE DIPLOMATICA"

Il razzismo italiano data dall’anno 1919 ed è base fondamentale dello Stato fascista

Azione coordinata e risoluta di tutti gli organi del Regime

Assoluta continuità della concezione mussoliniana

La battaglia dell’Ebro

I marxisti si preparano a una resistenza disperata sulla riva destra del fiume

Documento definitivo

Il Comitato del grano

Gli Ebrei stranieri

Sette aerei rossi
Per grazia di Dio e per volonta della nazione
Re d'Italia
Imperatore d'Etiopia

Il presente decreto regola ed amministra la presente materia.

Visto l'art. 6 e 7 della legge 28 giugno 1927, n. 198, nella facoltà del
presidente del Consiglio di amministrazione, congiuntamente

Sotto protesta del RE, Primo Ministro Segretario di Stato, Ministro del
Commercio, e ministro dei Ministeri degli Affari Esteri, di Giustizia e Giustizia, della Politica e della Cooperazione.

ARMAIIO DECRETATO E DECRETIAMO:

Capo 1.

Provvedimenti relativi ai matrimoni.

Art. 1.

Il matrimonio del cittadino italiano di menore età con persona appartenente ad altra nazione è proibito.

Il matrimonio con persone minori di menore età è proibito.

Art. 2.

Pensando al decreto del 28 giugno 1927, il matrimonio del cittadino italiano con persone di minoranza straniera è subordinato al permesso conciso del Ministro del Commercio.

I soggetti minori non potranno per l'incontro di 3 mesi e con l'assenza fino a per dominar.

Art. 3.

Pensando sempre il decreto del 28 giugno 1927, 1. i dipendenti delle Amministrazioni civili e militari delle Stato, delle Organizzazioni del Partito Nazionale Fascista e di uno qualsiasi delle Amministrazioni delle Province, dei Comuni, degli enti pubblici e delle associazioni esercenti al sindaco collaborare matrimonio con persone di minoranza straniera.
first in a series of laws that, as of November the same year, would hail the advent of blanket discrimination against the Jews.

The trauma was overwhelming for the majority of Italy’s Jewish population. As Michele Sarfatti writes: "...as is the case with all minorities who have not long had their freedom, a break with fascism meant (...) a break with Italy. And if such a rupture was difficult for most Italians, for the Jews it was psychologically far worse as they owed Italy their freedom and their status as equals. It was not due solely to their social status, culture or education (...) [that] the Fascists’ anti-Semitic policies, and the way in which they were wounded by them (perhaps more morally than materially) took most Jews by surprise, but their profound feelings of being Italian. These made it impossible for them to simply turn their backs on a country that denied and persecuted them. The realisation that Fascism was not Italy was indeed a painful one".

Between July and August 1938, Demorazza carried out an extraordinary census of Italian Jews. On 13th July the text “Fascism and the Problems of Race” was published and over the following weeks, the NFP’s commitment to ‘fascist racism’ was publicly declared. The atmosphere was growing increasingly tense and Rogers’ family tried to ascertain their legal and racial status.

On the 7th July, Paolo wrote to Ernesto to inform him of their research: “These are awfully dark times but we must not allow them to cloud our souls or rob us of our personal strength. I don’t know how you see it, but I still believe that those who have a clear conscience, like us, will be able to "keep going". This is why I am pleading with you more than ever; to stay calm. I have finally had a response from the solicitor Gris. Until there is an abjuration, we are considered members. In order to cancel our membership, they need a declaration from a notary public on the order of a legal official. But I think that the worth of this is all rather dubious. Once more I insist that you think long and hard before making the decision to carry out what will be a highly significant act for us, morally if not socially”.

His father was so unable to grasp the gravity of the situation that, in September of the same year, he wrote to Ernesto saying: “All three of us can proudly say that there is nothing in the importance, seriousness and loyalty with which we view our being Italian for which we should feel guilty.”

The situation quickly became increasingly difficult and this dark atmosphere seeped slowly into Rogers' correspondence.

10 Sarfatti, Ebrei identità, chapter 4 “The period of the Jewish persecution (1936-43)”
11 Ibid., 146-147
12 Ibid., 149
13 Paolo Rogers to ENR, 7.VII.1938, BBPR, old correspondence.
14 Romeo Rogers to ENR, 3.IX.1938, BBPR, old correspondence.
In his letters, he speaks of a “heavy and hateful” climate whilst those he received from home detail Noretta’s nervous exhaustion caused by the tension of public events.

At the end of August 1938, Noretta broke off her engagement for racial reasons, sending shockwaves through the family and forcing Rogers to make a hasty return to Trieste.

In November 1938 the law by decree n.1728, entitled “Measures for the defence of the Italian race” was published in the Gazzetta Ufficiale. Within just a few days the name of Ernesto Nathan Rogers was struck from the BBPR’s letterhead, the list of participants in the E42 project and the official documents pertaining to all projects. His was a fate shared by “around 200 teachers of all disciplines and levels, 400 civil servants and state employees, 500 private employees, 150 permanent servicemen and some 2500 independent businessmen”.

This was an unspeakable trauma for Rogers. Everything that he was and that he had worked for vanished in an instant.

Rogers was one of those Italian Jews who only truly discovered he was a Jew when the Racial Purity laws were passed in 1938.

At the beginning of November, Rogers wrote to his beloved friends and colleagues at the studio from Trieste: “I am with you in spirit during this unconscionably sad time. I do not know how to make sense of what is happening, of this reality that inflicts such cruel wounds upon me, from which I may never recover. If I say “mamma” or “Italia”, “Italiani”; if I look at this sky, this sea; if I think of my friends, of women, of art, of my soldiers lying in wait, of smuggling, borders and barriers, am I using a language that is foreign to me? No, you know this is not true as I have loved and still love these things desperately. I know how to speak to them of love, and not just in Italian.

Even if I searched the very depths of my being, I would not find such impure matter as would justify such merciless condemnation. You know my feelings and desires, and you know that I chose to wear a soldier’s uniform and did so with pride. You know the pride with which I wore the artists’ name we forged for ourselves through countless sacrifices.

15 BBPR, old correspondence.

16 “I had wanted to come to you tomorrow to avoid prolonging my inactivity at the studio. I beg you to forgive me if I don’t come and instead I stay here in my dear Trieste, where I cling to the rocks, to the seashore and the clouds in the sky without a shadow of rhetoric or sentimentalism for fear that they will escape me, for fear that I will have to leave them for who knows how long”. ENR to the studio, 31.VIII.1938, BBPR old correspondence.


TRANSLATORS NOTE: The Gazzetta Ufficiale is the official publication released by the Italian Government in which all new legislation is publicly announced.

18 “In 1939 the majority were struck from their professional registers”, Sarfatti, Ebrei identità, I 88.

19 De Felice, Ebrei fascismo, 356; and Sarfatti, Ebrei identità, 187-200.
Are we brothers, Giangio, Lodo, Aurel and me?"
The tone is sad, despairing. Rogers goes on: "A dark fate awaits me but it could never destroy what I have built up inside myself during my youth. I had hoped to always take it further but instead I must suddenly abandon the building sites and, like with some unfinished church, allow the sky with its ever-changing clouds to be the roof and weeds, the floor. You will get used to me not being there, but I cannot be without Aurel, Giangio or Lodo. The acronym BBP will always be heard but the R will be lost to this solitary world.

It was so beautiful!

My emotions are taking over: I cannot bear the thought that the bright walls of our studio, that we truly made our own, will no longer welcome me."20

"So if I say "mamma" or "Italia", "italiani", am I using a language that is foreign to me?"21 This loss of his own Italian identity amongst Italians weighs heavily upon Rogers as he believed this identity cancelled out all of his differences. During these months Rogers wrote: "Dear Ernesto, your words are so fluid, so fresh, precise, clear; so immediate, and show such unity of thought and expression that I cannot tell one from the other: This always happens when you speak Italian. Dearest, darling language; what other could you possibly use to say "mamma"?, to say "everything, me", "Ernesto"?"22 This is one of the "Lettere" that Ernesto Rogers would write himself in the form of a dialogue, signalling a significant change in the development of his personality on the eve of the Second World War.

3.1 - "Letters from Ernesto to Ernesto and vice versa"23

In the period following the publication of the Racial Purity laws, Ernesto Nathan Rogers began to write his "Lettere di Ernesto ad Ernesto e vice versa"24 about their ensuing consequences on his private and professional lives, completing in April 1939. The letters serve as a precursor, both in terms of content and register, to his nine "Confessioni di un anonimo nel XX Secolo"

20 ENR to the studio, Trieste 2.IX.1938, BBPR, old correspondence.
21 ENR to the studio, Trieste 2.IX.1938, BBPR, old correspondence.
23 This chapter is a reworking of "Alcune note a margine", in, Ed. Luca Molinari, Lettere di Ernesto a Ernesto e viceversa (Milan: Archinto, 2000).
24 Ibid., 1-73.
25 There are no actual dates written on the manuscript but the reference to a birthday in letter no. 31 and that made to the beginning of the spring in the penultimate letter (41) allow us to make an educated guess that he wrote his last letters between April and May 1939.
(Confessions of a Nameless man in the 20th Century) published anonymously in Domus between 1941 and 1942. It is a collection of 41 letters which do not follow the events of those months chronologically or express direct opinions about the Regime or its choices. Instead, they bear witness to a deep personal unrest and a rupture with a part of his own world and the certainties that governed it.

The young Rogers, "an architect of nearly thirty years of age" and one of the protagonists emerging from the debate on modernist Italian architecture, found himself propelled into a dimension of unexpected and ever-increasing pain. Here, his condition as an anonymous being, forcibly separated from society, seemed at least superficially to prevail over all other emotions and lead to an inescapable journey through his own heart and mind.

When this is taken into consideration, "Letters to Ernesto" becomes historical document of great interest, not least because it adds to the sizeable number of biographical accounts given

26 Le Confessioni di un anonimo del XX secolo (or The Confessions of a Nameless man in the 20th Century) were published in issues 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 164, 167, 170, 176 of Domus and can be found in ENR, Esperienza, 297-304.

27 ENR. "Un architetto di quasi trent'anni", in L'Ambrosiano (July 1938), and now in Ernesto Natha. Rogers, Esperienzo,38-39. But the issue of his thirty years reappears almost obsessively in a great deal of his written work and correspondence, as if Rogers saw them as an important existential threshold, a definitive point of entry into the world he was denied: "Dear Ernesto, thirty years! I feel them with my whole body and they make me want to run around barefoot", in letter 31, ENR, Lettere,56; "When one is thirty, he has the duty, or rather the right to think about the future.", ENR to the studio, 17.VII.1940,88PR.
by victims of racial persecution.

These written works act as a fragile bond between two very different stages in Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ life. They are not just the author’s desperate and highly private screams, but the only evidence of a metamorphosis that, hidden by the war and its dramas, finally delivers us Rogers as an undisputed and unique figure in international post-war architecture.

“The acronym BBP will always be heard but the R will be lost to this solitary world.” This brief reference to the letter ‘R’ in a painful and intimate dialogue between Ernesto and his brothers/collleagues unwittingly marks the beginning of a fundamental psychological journey for the author.

Having once made a deliberate cultural and militant choice to forsake his individuality in order to found the BBPR, and relinquished his own family roots in order to become for all intents and purposes “Italian”, Rogers found himself in a new position. He now saw himself as an individual, separate from the social and sentimental spheres to which he had once belonged.

But at the same time, Rogers slowly began to re-appropriate those elements that had marked him out as different; elements he had painstakingly repressed in order to be accepted and that soon proved useful when he was called to defend himself against a suddenly hostile world. Rather than identifying these traits as directly related to his Jewish heritage or the English roots on his father’s side, Rogers saw them solely as a reinforcement of his own individuality and the path that lay before him, which had to be faced with greater personal autonomy.

The cultural and personal experiences brought on by war, persecution and a separation from society caused the thirty-year old Rogers to undergo a transformation, turning him from a simple member of the BBPR studio into an individual; a protagonist conscious of his new international role in the post-war era.

Furthermore, the “Lettere” are one of very few private documents produced by those involved in the Modern Movement that describe the rise and fall experienced by many young architects who were forced by the war into a long period of reflection about the nature of modernity and their contribution to the construction of society after a decade of avant-garde omnipotence.

These texts that began life as a natural reaction to the trauma experienced by Rogers, soon developed into a lucid reflection upon the condition of the individual in modern society, becoming central to a debate that in the late 1930’s had started to consider the problematic relationship between individual-context-tradition and Modern culture.


29 ENR to the studio, Trieste, 2.IX.1938, BBPR, old correspondence.
These texts are thematically very close to the anonymous letters published in Domus between 1941 and 1942, and embody a significant yet sensitive evolution of the subject. Rogers wrote the text as a single work rather than a collection of unrelated letters. His literary model is very close to that of Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations", an author admired and studied by Rogers. It is a dialogue "ad se ipsum" in which there is a strong element of psychoanalytic reading and culture and though this understanding cannot be directly verified, it is highly plausible given the Trieste panorama and its complex cultural development.

The most surprising element in "Lettere", in terms of the traditional interior dialogue, is the use of a multiple Ernesto. A sum of multiple personalities that follow one another, filling the pages, disturbing and provoking the narrative 'I' and causing it to constantly open windows and doors to the soul, revealing forgotten secrets and unhealed wounds. Ernesto speaks and responds to the other 'Ernestos' who provoke and interrogate the narrator, the principle 'I', with a litany of questions. Rather than being employed for literary expediency, this technique expresses the impulsive necessity felt by the author to vocalise everything troubling his soul.

The psychological pressure exorcised by Rogers through some of the affectionate letters exchanged with fellow studio members are expressed through this double; this reflection of Ernesto. This is confirmed in the anonymous letters published in Domus with Pagano's help a few years later.

However, it is these "Lettere" that arouse most interest, probably because the urgency and radical nature of the situation avoided any real limits being placed on the narrative, therefore allowing themes that are central to understanding Rogers' cultural and psychological journey to come to the surface.

A brief preface to the text states: "If you want to be yourself amongst men, search for your companion within".

30 Whilst there are no texts by Marcus Aurelius in his personal library, Rogers did use phrases from the Roman Emperor-philosopher's tome "Meditations" to open "Continuita", the first editorial in Casabella published in 1953.

31 "How many of me and you are there, Ernesto? One or two? Three-hundred or five-thousand? We are reflected in a labyrinth of mirrors and it is difficult to make out the real object in the midst of so many images. (...) I look, I look at myself, I look at you and the rest of this crowd of Ernestos that is moving around, within and all around me; how many of us are there? You, me and you and you and me again, infinite images and each one sees itself seeing itself until gets lost in tedium.", Rogers, Letters, 28.

32 "I have just arrived and I wanted to write to Ernesto, but instead I am writing to you as, for me, you are almost the same. I want to thank you for the affectionate, strong and profound friendship you have shown my pain over this period. I fully appreciate how I have found it much more difficult to express. But beyond appearances, you know what I am like and I know about you. (and the more we would like to communicate, the more our hypersensitivity makes us more petulant) but together we know how to read each other's souls and express all of our emotions with a handshake. Thank you also Aurel for the walk through our studio's exhibition, and for all of your honesty.", ENR to ER 21.XI.1938, BBPR, Old Correspondance.
An intense dialogue with this “companion within” immediately follows: a dialogue with his double, his shadow and the various other multiple personalities. They speak to one another and give their own reasons for trying to bring order and find an equilibrium that has been lost. It is a dialogue that, moving from one person riddled with memories, fears, regrets and grudges, progressively becomes a “universal” Ernesto; the unknown man, the face in the crowd who finally finds his own identity.

This rejection seems to be one of the most important elements. It represents the need to shift the centre of attention away from the I’s own intimate and dramatic problems to a dimension of universality that becomes a project; a new way of seeing the world.

It is as if the generic individual, the central character in Functionalist scientific research, had suddenly taken on a more defined personality; a face, a warmth, a real humanity. This is probably one of the first steps that led Rogers to write in Domus in 1946 “I want a house that is like me: a house that is like my humanity. (...) That is the house of a human being”.

These letters have a dreamy, allusive tone and make no direct references, but yet it is possible to pinpoint certain characteristics within this suspended narrative that can be found both in certain texts written in 1938 and in an overwhelming number of the reflections made in the years following the war.

Most important is the discovery of his roots, his Jewish heritage, displaced by a secular family education and a source of great conflict for the architect. The text never makes direct reference to this issue, maintaining a wilfully allusive and dreamy tone. However, it would seem that above it all hangs the shadow of a faraway, non-interventionist God, who is not actually there — an alternative to a final, contradictory vision in which God exists and can be found within each one of us.

The “Lettere” are full of these contradictory states of mind which alternate between recollection and childhood memory; the ever-present crowd that now hangs over him threateningly, the spectre of a condition in which the author feels unavoidably immersed.

Here we see the Baudelairian crowd in which thousands of faces and stories merge to represent the humanity that Rogers will later speak of in his last reference to modern architecture, leading him to formulate the concept of the “human house” and then on to his work with Domus between 1946 and 1947.

33 ENR “Domus. La casa dell’uomo”, in Domus 205 (January 1946), 1-3, now in, Rogers, Esperenza, 80-83.
34 ENR to Belli, 22. VII. 1937, BBPR, and: “Because I am loathe to do so for convenience and I don’t have enough complete faith in religion to undertake an act of total sincerity. This is one of my life’s tragedies. Now you know something about me that I have perhaps never said so openly to anyone.” ENR to Belli, SD (end VII-1937), BBPR.
35 See letter 13, E.N. Rogers, Lettere, 33.
As he writes in letter 29: "[town square (…) full to bursting: I found myself in the middle of a dense crowd, a particle in the whole, a pore in a continuous fold of skin, and deep inside me I felt the sky breathing. I became part of a wave: up, up I rose, onto my tiptoes, and then it fell and I was undergrowth on a forest floor. The bodies penetrated one another, as did their spirits. (...) If I had been wounded, the entire crowd would have bled because our veins were linked and our heartbeats passed from pulse to pulse in a flash, and every individual would have lost their own hidden qualities in this fraternity. You told me “watch them”. But I saw you. And I understood that we were different to the others”.

The square and the crowd play a particular role in Rogers' memories as well as those of an entire generation who grew up under the Fascist regime. The square and the universal crowd, mechanical, modern and void of identity or diversity, that finds its individual humanity in anonymity; its difference that slowly leads the modernist culture of man-machine to a different, humanistic vision of the individual and towards the project of Modernity in which Rogers became a central figure.

It is a crowd in which the anonymous Rogers loses himself. The crowd that made him and that helped him perceive his vital, necessary uniqueness that, together with his letters to Domus, earned him his capital ‘R’ as if it were a name in its own right.

This is very much in keeping with what he wrote in the letters of 1941. In the second chapter of "Confessioni di un anonimo del XX secolo" (Confessions of a Nameless man in the 20th Century), Rogers writes "I must be so profoundly anonymous that I can conquer a name, and if I had a name I would want it to be so vast so as to blur the boundaries with anonymity".

Similarly, in the third chapter named "L’anonimo e la folia" (The nameless man and the crowd) he adds: "the crowd pushes from all sides, pulling our clothes to shreds and risking tearing away chunks of flesh. The chasm between two opposing states of loneliness opens up: the one when I try to escape the multitude by withdrawing into myself, and the other if I throw myself into the community and lose myself in it. (...) Millions of men are in me and I am in millions of men: each one resolving his own problems for himself, helps the others (if they help themselves)."

There is another biographical element, together with his most intimate and private family memories, that appears recurrently — the condition of his generation and its fate. And his attitude to it changes radically following the recent political events.

In "Un architetto di quasi trent’anni" Rogers writes: "An architect’s destiny, like that of an artist, is that of his generation. We are twenty, thirty years old, we could consider ourselves a
generation of catechumens; we still carry the wet earth of the trenches which brought us to
life upon our shoulders. (...) For us, being Modern is natural. The problem does not come,
therefore, in defining ourselves as Modern, but in defining our Modernity."
This gives a strong sense of destiny about to be realised; a generation with the ambition to
take direct responsibility for modern Italian architecture and its development.
A year later, Roberts wrote in letter no.27: "What will become of us? (...) We were born before
the war. Our childhood was a shadow; our adolescence, an echo of revolutions. This was our
time. In silence we have developed one clear, constructive thought: one faith, art, architecture.
(...) We believed we were the primitive beings of a new age, catechumens newly emerged
from the Earth. (...) The years pass over us like a steamroller; we have all been flattened by
their events. Will our generation be used as nothing more than a foundation for future wealth
and success? As if it were no more than another in the long line that has gone before it? This
task may serve the masses but it still bears heavily upon the consciences of those spirits who
believed that they were ready for harvest."
Over all of this hangs the weight of recent events and the heavy mood of an impending storm.
And at the same time, we are struck by the patent use of two terms that harked back to the
Italian cultural debate of the 1930s and would be evoked by Rogers in the post-war period, as
with the term "catechumen" which he transformed to "cleric".
In the first case, the use of the term "primitives" recalls the works of Lionello Venturi and his
study on the "Taste of the Primitives" that appeared in the 1930s and can be found in the
BBPR Library, whilst also reminding us of the idea that Modern architecture had "all the
elements of a new archaic period in the history of architecture" as declared in one of the
pamphlets produced by the Gruppo 7 and published in Quadrante in 1935.
However, it is the use of the term "catechumen" on two separate occasions that gives us a
clear idea of the role to be played by the Modernist generations that followed that of the
Masters. It showed a kind of fideistic approach, a moral re-establishment of Modernity's values
and mission in everyday life. Persico used this term very clearly during the controversy that
arose over his supposed anti-fascism; he defined himself "clerical", that is, a catholic, a clerical
of sorts who reacted ethically according to a mission to defend religious values. The term's

40 ENR, Lettere, 49-50; after a decade, in another letter, Rogers, commenting on Cesare Pavese's suicide
wrote: "We are the generation entre deux guerres, forever caught between two wars that are never resolved.
And once we think we have chased away the evil, we see it reappear" in, ENR, Esperienza, 308.
41 Venturi, Il gusto dei Primitivi (Milan: 1926), a copy in BBPR office Library.
42 Gruppo 7, "Una nuova epoca arcaica", in, La rassegna Italiana X-108 (maggio 1927), 467-472, poi, Quad-
43 See: "Chienco/Poeta", in, Nicoloso, Paolo. Le parole e l'architettura: mito e ideologia fra la fine degli ann
significance underwent a progressive transformation, referring first to religion and later to architecture but always with the concept of Modern architecture as a faith that must be defended, promoted and shared by all new affiliates, much like Pagano had tried to do from the pages of Casabella, creating the much-needed relationship between Modernity and ethics with great force.\(^4\)

Principles the young Rogers would invoke more than once in his reflections and concepts, especially from the end of the 1930s onwards.

The "Lettere di Ernesto ad Ernesto" are a lingering premonition of journeys, experiences and life choices that would prove to be central to the life of Ernesto Rogers. They also reveal an extraordinary facet of the Second World War as a vast, hidden and dramatic laboratory in which many ideas and projects for the reconstruction would gradually be formed.

3.2 - After "Le Lettere": 1939-1943

"I have wanted to write to you for two days, but have held back from pouring my bitterness into your lives. Even today I will try to restrain my sadness, as far as is possible.

Yesterday I was walking along the seafront, looking for advice. This sea, my sea\(^{45}\), knows all about me. It was grey and it caught the raindrops that incessantly fall around and inside me.

It knows my past, that is in great part also yours; it knows our past. I remember having passed it off as Italian a thousand times. I do not despair as I know will act eventually. But as well as this may go, I will be here and you there, and when I think that that our union will no longer be, I am plunged into the deepest misery.

This is how one of my reasons for living, one that I was so happy and proud of, is destroyed.

Our union was a real expression of our ideals and we were amongst those few who live and work to make their dreams a reality.

At least you can still remain united and continue the works we began together as they represent not only the hard work of four artists united in the search for a common truth, but also the

Ventri e l'inizio degli anni Trenta. (Venice:IUV, 1982), 266.


45 There are numerous references to Trieste as a place of personal and family refuge during this time. Between 1938 and 1943, Rogers increasingly spent more time in the city; "the children and young people who were persecuted found themselves in situations for which "even the adults could not give rational explanations" (...) The only possibility was to defensively close oneself inside the family nucleus, (...) which offered a rather precarious state of belonging as the only bonds were blood ties", in, Sarfatti, Ebrei identità, 221.
harmony between four men that transcends ethics. This spiritual model must survive these poisoned wounds. Though I must be physically distant, I can at least direct my soul towards that beacon of purity.  

Rogers had only recently finished his “Lettere”. When he emerged from what was essentially a painful process of revising his separation from the world, he decided to forge his own autonomous path in order to escape the highly frustrating situation in Italy and release the studio from circumstances that he believed to be unsustainable, despite the affectionate solidarity shown to him by his friends.

This choice signified a shift towards the international “family” personified by the CIAM, marking out a path that would take him to La Sarraz and then on to London in search of support and new work; the same journey made by many of Rogers’ German and Jewish colleagues.

46 ENR to the studio, Trieste 23.V.1939, BBPR, old correspondence.
47 “I feel that I have reached an important crossroads in my life and though it is difficult to see any solution for myself, it is even harder to imagine one for my family. In light of this, any situation I find myself in is veiled with sadness”. ENR to the studio, La Sarraz, 25.VII.1939, BBPR, old correspondence.
48 From the first warning signs of the Racial Purity laws and throughout 1939, the correspondence between Rogers and his associates is punctuated by affectionate affirmations and a strong show of solidarity within the group, who rally around Rogers during this difficult time.
In July 1939, Rogers stayed briefly in La Sarraz, first with his associates and then alone. It is here that he met and regularly visited Madame de Mandrot, both a strategic and personal reference point, as well as Max Bill and Alfred Roth who had recently referred to the Light Therapy Centre at Legnano in his new book “La nouvelle architecture”.

At the end of July, Rogers moved from Switzerland to London, to visit Maxwell Fry and Riba in order to evaluate the possibilities of a permanent relocation. However, the results of his meetings were disappointing and the scarcity of prospects led him to return, passing through Bern to visit Madame Mandrot.

From this point on, Rogers dedicated himself to BBPR and his friends who had begged him numerous times to return, giving him their whole-hearted support despite the political and cultural climate. He also returned to his family, constantly moving between Trieste and Milan.

49 There are three letters addressed to the studio during the fifteen day period Rogers spent in La Sarraz: ENR to studio. La Sarraz, 15.VII.1939, BBPR, old correspondence; ENR to studio, La Sarraz, 25.VII.1939; ENR to studio, La Sarraz, 30.VII.1939, BBPR.

50 “Bill showed me great friendship; his friendship and advice has been invaluable for me”; ENR to the studio, La Sarraz, 30.VII.1938, BBPR.

51 “My stay here has been wonderful and undoubtedly useful. There are already a good number of us, all of a particular standing, some of whom are very capable (not to mention the incredibly kind Roth and Bill).”, ENR to the studio, La Sarraz 21.VII.1939, BBPR.

52 “I am both happy and sad at the same time; a strangely clear sentiment. I am happy about the certainty of your future which is regularly confirmed. I also find it comforting that so much of my intellectual and social activity does not harm or distance me, but instead grows. But by now, it can be nothing more than a platonic love for which I must force myself every day to cut real bonds off at the roots. Giangio and Lodo, despite their great friendship, still do not show themselves to have been persuaded by these letters and still speak of “our studio”, “our work”, “our” exhibition at the Triennale. Whilst all of this is “mine” in a purely sentimental sense, it is wholly “yours”. We must do our best to see reality for what it is, no matter how painful it may be. And I find it so painful that it seems to me to be a pure invention with no grounding in real life. If I must, as I want to, find my equilibrium once again, I am forced to make the terms of my life very clear and to concentrate all of my efforts on forging it ex-novo. This is very difficult for both personal and political reasons, but I have chosen this path and must follow it. We shall see”; ENR to the studio, London, 6.VIII.1939, BBPR, old correspondence.

53 Riba to ENR, London 4.VIII.1939, BBPR Archive; letter in which Riba’s Refugee Committee asks for ENR’s details in order to help him.

54 “I was thinking about you; (your letter) brought me great comfort. If you had been able to choose, and had not already chosen the path of sacrifice, I would not have written to you to try and influence your decision in any way and I would have supported you under any circumstances. But destiny wishes to at least bring us the consolations of suffering together; in the words of St Augustine, “in necessariis unitas”. In one sense we had all resolved this frightening case of conscience. We architects are well aware of where our duty comes from. Is it the duty of men to suffer and perhaps die for those they are close to? And are they forced to suffer and die in order to triumph over evil? We chose this path because by now only total personal sacrifice can stop the universal spread of evil. And if our lives have to end like that, I pray to heaven that the goodwill our generation has perhaps acquired is passed onto the next, and that at least Julia will be able to follow closely, from the moment of her first words and steps.”
During the war there was a significant lack of work and Rogers, the only one not to be called up, became a crucial point of contact and management for the studio in Milan. For him, the war was an extraordinary time for reflection and study of which we, unfortunately, have very little documentation.

His relationship with Pagano continued to be highly significant as did his series of nine "Confessioni di un Anonimo del XX secolo", published in Domus between February and August 1941 in the chapter entitled “La casa del anonimo” (the house of the nameless man), which complete the four projects commissioned by Pagano from Peressutti, Banfi, Belgioioso and the young Marco Zanuso for his theme “La casa e l’ideale”, (The house and the ideal).

In the first eight confessions, Rogers symbolically reuses the introverted, private tone of “Lettere”, concentrating, on the one hand, on the individual's “pain” in loneliness, and on the other, their “universal” condition. The literary tone is very similar to that employed in “Lettere”; suspended, purposefully evasive, subtly ironic and dream-like. But in the last confession, the one dedicated to the house, Rogers is drawn to face up to the projects he would have certainly seen being designed by colleagues in the studio, which for the first time make a nominal, unique proposal.

The three architectural projects are interesting because they are marked by a stylistic code that is very different to the works that had been built up to the end of the 1930s. The rationalist Mediterranean density present in the E42 Post Office or the Centre for Light Therapy had been entirely abandoned. Architecture had become fickle, transparent and could be dismantled. It was a machine used to indicate the transitory climate caused by war and a desire for a change of scenery to go far away. The city has disappeared and all three works are set in the middle of the countryside or on the seafront.

Young Zanuso's house, for example, is less mature and experimental.

Zanuso had recently graduated and was a frequent visitor to the studio. After the war, Rogers would involve him with the Domus editorial.

In “Confessioni”, Rogers began to introduce themes that would be developed after 1943 in the Lausanne refugee camp and later in his work for Domus between 1946 and 1948.

The anonymous man, who had become at one with the crowd and definitively rediscovered his own humanity, also became a protagonist who embodied the house of the future, the one...

It's seems almost selfish to look for consolation within this fact, but this sense of physical continuity gives a greater certainty to the continuity of time for the work of good and evil and a desire for greater clarity. GB to ENR, Marciana, 26.VIII.1939, BBPR Archive, Old correspondence.

55 “One day in 1941 I met Giuseppe Pagano in the Galleria in Milan. At that time he edited “Casabella” and co-edited “Domus”. I absent-mindedly asked myself “Why don't you write anymore?” I showed him my surprise that he did not remember about the prohibition. I asked him to write about my painful experience with “Confessioni”. Pagano, as generous and brave as ever, accepted immediately. Once I reached the ninth chapter I had to stop because my name was revealed.”, in, ENR, Esperienza, 43.
La casa per la famiglia dell'arch. Lodovico Belgioioso

G. Banfi, E. Peressutti, L. B. Belgioioso. Casa Ideale, Domus, 1941
that would be built after the war.

“There are a few words I would like to whisper into the ear of every architect once the war is over. It goes more or less like this: ‘leave the debris, build your house, it is time. You have done enough playing around with pyramids, coliseums and domes. Show who you really are and what you are worth. I want to be real, living; I want a house where this is possible.’

A few weeks after the armistice of 8th September 1943, Giuseppe Pagano wrote to Rogers:

“My dear Rogers, thank you for your letter full of tacit understanding, promise and hope for the future. I was in Milan for a few hours and looked for you, but to no avail. It is natural and necessary that one could have colleagues who are united, understanding, intelligently responsible and actively ready for any eventuality. My youthful euphoria is in full flight, like in the good old days when I was twenty or even younger.”

Pagano’s tone is, as ever, enthusiastic and full of vision for the future. However, the letter seems to change emphasis, predicting an imminent tragic fate and provoking the need to maintain a strong continuity with the future: “One needs to be aware, to have a will starved of reality; a desire for sacrifice and selfless offers. One shouldn’t stare out the window; come down and take on new responsibilities. Be ready to take it on your own two shoulders. Those of you who are in the right must look out for the timid, be vigilant of those who are compromised, stop the Muzios, Pontis, Dal Porros and even the Portaluppis together with those other colleagues who up until yesterday bemoaned patriotic and Fascist celebrations, from becoming last minute converts. The solid moral and artistic bond that has always united us is of great importance. From the outset, any eventual political divergence will, for us, be an academic discussion of method and procedure. It will never be an absolute principle or moral obligation. I am aware of your ideas and I respect them. We are fighting on the same front and must give our country the key that will finally open the door to civilisation and freedom. But that old vein of fond Trieste irredentism that, in its nationalist way, dreamed of a dignified place for Italy within the free European republic. Kind regards”

This is a powerful exhortation that sounds almost prophetic; a kind of dramatic passing of the baton from Pagano to Rogers, who upon Pagano’s death at the beginning of 1945, would inherit his central position.

56 ENR, Esperienzo, 45-46.

57 Giuseppe Pagano to ENR, Carrara 9.VIII.1943, BBPR, old correspondence.
“On 17th September 1943 I met 2nd lieutenant Rogers on the Ponte-Tresa pass (Ticino). I knew him a long time ago from Pavia. He showed me a piece of paper that showed how, straight after armistice, he had voluntarily enrolled in the National Guard and been awarded the rank of Officer in charge of recruitment for the zone Sempione-Milan. He told me how the task of those national guards was to drive the Germans away from the sacred soil of our Fatherland. Our first three or four days of exile were the same because we found ourselves in the same camps, though later we were transferred to different ones.” The officer compiling this official report for the Italian Legation in Switzerland writes: “I found Rogers once again at the Italian Liaison Office at Dagmersellen where, on 27th October I was given the role of liaison officer. Well aware of his keen sense of Italianness, his attachment to the Homeland and his very special heart and intellectual qualities, I made him officer in charge of duties and interpreting, tasks that he always carried out in a highly satisfactory manner until in January 1944, he was transferred to the university campus in Vevey as an assistant in the architecture department. I must also mention the exams that had to be passed by the students at Dagmersellen who wished to be assigned to universities. A great number of these students took a preparatory course, which I had entrusted to Rogers who, with great passion, dedicated much of his time to giving lessons in architecture to those young men and helping them through their exams”.

Nothing can better explain Rogers’ psychological condition in the months straight after the armistice of 8th September 1943, than his relationship with the military.

His decision to immediately sign up was a clear signal of his return to being an individual with an identity and a name, after four years of painful, forced anonymity.

He chose to join the army; the institution that in 1934 had given him his first taste of joy at being “Italian”.

Rogers signed up and, sensing the impossibility of freeing Milan from the Nazi-Fascists, escaped to Switzerland alongside many others through the mountain passes of Ticino.

A few days after his arrival in Switzerland two letters arrived at the Dagmersellen camp for Rogers from his Swiss “friends” Max Bill59 and Alfred Roth60.

Both expressed their surprise and delight at finding a friend who had survived the war. However, Roth also had another very important piece of news: “Mme de Mandrot sends her most heartfelt regards from Zurich, as do all of your friends, such as Bill. Mme de Mandrot will do her best [to help you]. We must see if the authorities will allow us to set you free. I would be very

58 Major Salvatore Arzano to T.Bianchi, Italiana Legation in Berne, 30.V.1944, BBPR, old correspondence.
59 Max Bill to ENR, 28.IX.1943, BBPR, old correspondence.
60 A.Roth to ENR, 30.IX.1943, BBPR, old correspondence.
Giuseppe Pagano, Mathausen, 1944
grateful for your help as I currently have such a large amount of work that I am overwhelmed by it all. Mme Mandrot would like to build a small house in Zurich; she is very difficult I assure you. (...) I would advise you to familiarise yourself with the exceptional conditions in which you currently find yourself. It is obviously a very difficult time, but never lose hope that we may be able come to your aide"[61].

The CIAM safety net was able to help Rogers, considered to be an important member, as well as being a friend of M.me de Mandrot[62], with whom he had recently stayed at La Sarraz during his round trip to England in 1939. After a few months, Rogers was given the right to move freely throughout Switzerland and so was able to pay regular visits to M.me de Mandrot, Bill, Roth and Tschumi senior. This also gave him the opportunity to transfer to the Vivey University campus near Lausanne.

Roth[63] repeatedly consulted with Rogers about the house for M.me Mandrot, which was finished in 1944, whilst with Bill Rogers discussed the exhibition on Concrete Art for a gallery in Zurich. This was the same exhibition that Rogers would oversee in Milan a few years later.

Those two years were intense, in contrast to his intimate and dramatic personal state, evidence of which can be found in his correspondence with the studio, which was maintained in secret through the Catholic episcopacy of Lugano. Between the end of 1943 and May 1945, when Rogers definitively returned to Milan, affectionate letters were exchanged with his three associates until Banfi and Belgioioso were denounced by an informer and arrested in March 1944. They were sent first to Bolzano and later to Mathausen.

At that point, the correspondence with Giulia Banfi, who had recently given birth, and Peressutti, who had managed to hide himself with friends, took on a dramatic tone, filled with uncertainty for the fate of their friends; an uncertainty that would hang over them until the received news of Giangio’s death in June 1945[64].

The same can be said for the correspondence between Rogers and his brother Paolo, who managed to save himself by hiding in the Vatican[65]. Rogers was able to share his agony at his

61 Ibid, I.
64 “I want to hope that this news (GB’s death) is not conclusive, but all I can think of is poor Giulia, their child who I remember being so affectionate and sensitive, of you, Aurel. I am suffering because of your pain rather than my own, though that too is great as I had such great affection and esteem for him. I shall wait for news from you before writing to Giulia (...). My anguish for Papa grows with every day that passes. I am not harbouring any illusions, but the absolute lack of news and our impotence in the face of it all exasperates me. Have you been to Varese? Were you able to find any information? Have you questioned any veterans?” Paolo Rogers to ENR, Rome, 8.VI.1945, BBPR, envelope n. 154.
65 All of Rogers’ correspondence with Paolo Rogers, Giulia Banfi and the studio studio can be found in envelope n.154, BBPR Archive.
father's deportation with his brother, which took place at the same time as that of his other friends. It was at this time that the “public” Rogers became active, gaining his first experience of teaching at a university by organising a specialist course on prefabricated buildings, and contributing to the construction of the “Centro Studi in Svizzera per la ricostruzione Italiana” (Swiss Centre of Studies for the Italian Reconstruction), which was presided over by Gustavo Colonetti and involved many Swiss CIAM members including Luigi Einaudi and Adriano Olivetti. The public speeches, lectures and brief texts written for the school's bulletin, “Bollettino del Centro Studi dell’Edilizia” focused on the material needs for reconstruction and the widespread use of prefabricated buildings as a necessary step for the country to take.

In February 1945 some of his “young students” including Lodovico Magistretti, Carlo Rusconi, Luigi Caccia, Luigi Fratino and Paolo Chessa, were transferred to the Centre of Studies, which had since been taken over by Rogers.

This is how Rogers described the Centre to his brother Paolo: “I have a dozen people working with me and am expecting another six by the end of the month. Some are my former students who kindly repay me the little I was able to give them. We will try to study some issues regarding reconstruction and make contact with some of the Swiss elements (Roth, Bill, etc). I have moved from Vivey to be with my little troupe in Winterthur so I can be closer to Zurich, the technical heart of the Federation.”

3.4 - Milan. 1945. The BBPR’s Monumento ai Caduti nei Campi di Concentramento.

On 8th April 1945, a few weeks after the fall of Milan, Rogers and Peressutti exchanged a great many letters which denote an awareness of the situation and a sense of centrality attained by Rogers during his solitary time in Switzerland. There is one letter in particular that discusses the group’s current work in Milan that would eventually lead to the “A/R Plan” and future

66 “I spent a great deal of time asking after Papa, but it seems impossible to find out anything of any substance. (...) I have been unable to hold any illusions, apart from the hope that he has been spared too much suffering”, ENR to Paolo Rogers, 10.III.1945, BBPR envelope n.154.

67 Olivetti made contact with Rogers through Vito Latis in February 1944. From that point on the pair tried to maintain permanent contact, discussing the issues of town planning and the impending reconstruction. Vito Latis to ENR, 24.II.1944 BBPR, envelope n.154.

68 26.II.1945, BBPR, envelope n.154.

69 ENR to Paolo, 10.III.1945, BBPR, envelope n.154.

70 Grandi, Pracchi, Milano Guida, 229-250.
developments.

"Dear Aurel, your letter is most interesting and I must congratulate you all on managing to work so quickly despite such great obstacles. It is enormously significant that you have been able to convince certain individuals to consider the plan as they are crucial to its eventual fulfilment. I am in permanent contact with such people as can help us with this and other goals. I assume that Ignazio (Gardella), Piero B. (Bottoni), Franco (Albini), Marco (Zanuso), Gabriele (Mucchi) etc will be working with you. I would also recommend that you include some of the younger ones (I have two or three who are incredibly bright working with me). Let me know if you can alter the group at all. You will have, no doubt, wholly discounted the idea of working with the swine and cretins like Gio (Ponti), Piero (Portaluppi) et al, along with any loudmouths, sell-outs or reactionaries. We need good people for this work: we have already suffered enough.

(…) I will try to set up a meeting with the CIAM, at which I would like to make our proposals. Unfortunately, as I have told you, they are resting on rather shrivelled laurels. However, I do think that, if serious changes are made to its make-up (much like those which took place in our section) the CIAM could play a useful role and I hope to at least be able to whip up a short programme"[71].

71 ENR to ER 8.IV.1945, BBPR, envelope n.154.
The knowing tone with which Rogers speaks of his own role and the objectives that had to be met both in Milan with the studio, and on an international scale with the CIAM (an institution in which Rogers already feels at ease) is striking.

The Rogers who returned to Milan in May 1945 to rejoin his second “family”, the BBPR, was a greatly changed individual; autonomous and ready to take Milanese Modernist culture in hand. There was an intellectual maturity to this political dimension that saw the tools of the project enriched by improved industrial prospects, but above all, the solitude and silence of war seemed to have heightened Rogers’ belief in the need for a real, moral and above all, human dimension to the Modern project.

Here we reach the beginning of a new season that is immediately marked by two significant events: the project for the monument to those who died in the Concentration Camps at Milan’s Cimitero Monumentale, a true expression of cultural and ideal “continuity” with Milanese abstract and rationalist cultures of the 1930s, and Rogers’ involvement in the monographic edition dedicated to the memory of Mario Pagano.

In the Monumento ai Caduti (late spring, 1945), we see a clear declaration of poetics and continuity with the history of the militant Milanese Rationalism of the 1930s.

The monument is built upon a grid expertly composed of a cube, and ordered according to the Golden Section. Within the cube made of simple white metal tubes, is a cross with a glass case at its centre that holds earth and barbed wire from the Nazi-Fascist concentration camps. A simple system of marble slabs upon a number of external panels creates a counterpoint to the emptiness of the structure’s interior. The monument’s base is in stone and takes the shape of a cross. Its references to other works that use abstract matrix, such as those by Nizzoli, Persico, Veronesi, Melotti e Munari, its perfect links with the grills that fill Terragni’s architecture and even its references to European Abstractism adopted by his friend Max Bill, are all elements that can be easily found in this small Milanese monument.

As Tafuri wrote: “that monument, that “overly rational” grid opposing the immensity of genocide, is also a reflection that gives reason to the concept of continuity in Rogers’ later theories.”

The era of Rogers’ continuity had started to take its first, decisive steps towards the 1950s.
3.5 - Conclusion

The trauma caused by the Racial Laws provoked a further metamorphosis in Ernesto Nathan Rogers, undermining his perception of the social and cultural stability he had gained with the BBPR during the 1930s. Yet it is the response to this crisis that proves particularly interesting as it gives rise to a series of writings, first private then public, which witness the conscious transition into a new condition and the definition of the cultural tools needed to make this change.

At this point, Rogers' "case" seems significant because through a painful exploration of himself and his own multiple personalities in the unedited text "Lettere di Ernesto ad Ernesto e viceversa" and later in "Lettere di un Anonimo del XX secolo" published in Domus in 1941-42, Rogers was able to give his condition a universality, shifting it from "Ernesto" to that of "a nameless man in the 20th Century".

And so, the journey with the BBPR that had begun with the publication of their book, Stile, in contrast to the ethics of reality championed by Mario Pagano during the same period, was brought to an end.

I have tried to demonstrate how the effect of the isolation forced upon Rogers by the Racial Laws was twofold. On the one hand, it gave him the ability to transform a personal drama into a basis for a new way of viewing both the world and the man capable of gradually becoming an instrument of culture and planning.

On the other, it marked the beginning of a new, personal phase for the architect who, once forcibly separated from his points of reference, began to forge his own individual path that would transform him into the Ernesto Rogers of the post-war era. This metamorphosis was discussed in the second half of the chapter, taking into consideration the years he spent between Milan and Trieste until 1943 and focussing in particular on the two years spent as a refugee in Switzerland, where the strong bonds he built with Mme de Mandrot and other Swiss CIAM members would give him a uniquely central position within the Italian CIAM of the post-war era. The Rogers who returned to Milan in May 1945 was a very different man to the young member of the BBPR in the 1930s. He had grown aware of his own cultural role and the continuity he represented given the passing of Pagano.

But what development can be seen in the role of the nameless man and human scale in the post-war cultural and projectual choices made by Rogers and the BBPR? And what significance does continuity take on in terms of the Italian Modern Movement?
A la Sorra"

(pas de matin du monde)
dans six ans d'orage,
vous qui sont restés,
devant d'un éclat des mineurs,
qu'on oubli plus.

(4. Baud - G. Legrand
URB. F. Balthaz.)
architectes
vont pour la
libération.
juillet 44

F. Mies

Lodovero Belgioj
22. 7. 46

BBPR and others, AIR plan, 1944
BBPR, Monumento ai caduti dei Campi di concentramento, Milan, 1945

Giuseppe Terragni, casa del Fascio, Como, 1935

Edoardo Persico, Marcello Nizzoli, Steel structure, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, Milan, 1934

Edoardo Persico, Parker shop, Milan, 1934

Edoardo Persico, Marcello Nizzoli, Sala delle Medaglie d'Oro, 1934

Luciano Del Debbio, Casa del fascio, Rome, 1936
4.-“Modernism needs a magazine”: from Domus. La casa dell’Uomo (1946-1948) to the CIAM Congress in Bergamo (1949)

4.0 - Introduction

This chapter marks the end of Rogers’ quest for international and personal affirmation, analysing his and the BBPR’s growing awareness of the need to find an appropriate way of communicating the CIAM’s cultural and ideological values.

The chapter begins with Rogers’ editorial post at Domus magazine between 1946 and 1948, which led to a resurrection of Casabella-continuità in 1953. Rogers’ time as editor at Domus coincided with an analysis of his own ideological and cultural position within the MSA (the Movement for Architectural Studies) and the CIAM, both of which placed considerable emphasis on such fundamental elements as conservation and a continuation of the lessons taught by the masters of the Modern movement.

However, his experience at Domus was his first serious attempt to build a strong cultural continuity with Pagano and “his” Casabella. During this time of fierce political transition in Italy, Domus (as directed by Rogers) can be viewed as a potential laboratory for a “third way” between populist neo-realism and a modernism considered to be overly abstract and detached from reality. It was here that Rogers’ thoughts on the various criteria for the Italian reconstruction were considered in terms of their ability to establish a cultural policy in continuity with Giedion’s activity and his book “Spazio-Tempo-Architettura. La costruzione di una nuova tradizione”.

Rogers’ reflections on the Modern movement’s traditions, as championed during the war by Giedion and Sert, were strengthened not only by his editorial work, but also by the series of monographs on the masters of the Modern movement and the projects carried out by the BBPR, such as the Monumento ai caduti in Milan (1945).

Together, Rogers and Giedion developed a historical and critical expression that found great inspiration in a reflection upon the Modern Movement’s history through the creation of a coherent timeline of its evolutionary journey and a consideration of its relationship with the
histories of art and architecture.
Rogers staunchly defended a continuation of pre-war ideals within the CIAM, and maintained an ambiguous stance that proved rather problematic at the CIAM congresses of the 1950s. Evidence of this can be found in the final part of this chapter, which looks at Rogers' correspondence with the BBPR studio, Giedion and Sert, and the hurdles encountered during his organisation of the 1949 CIAM congress in Bergamo. Here we see those cultural and political choices superimposed against the backdrop of the Cold War that was beginning to carve up Europe.
Rogers soon realised the need for an architecture magazine to boldly promote a different cultural and ideological line, as his experience at Domus, which came to end at the beginning of 1948, had been nothing more than a step towards what would in few years become his direction of casabella-continuità.

4.1 - Milan/Italy 1944-1947

By the time Northern Italy's main cities had been saved from Nazi and Fascist domination in April 1945, the entire country was in political and economic dire straits. Southern Italy had been liberated by the Allies in 1943, and was being governed by a temporary conservative cabinet known as the Kingdom of the South in an attempt to maintain the economic status quo and protect local administrative bodies from radical de-fascistisation. Meanwhile, Northern Italy still had two more years of war ahead. Here, the political parties organized the CLNAI (National Committees for the Liberation of Upper Italy), which acted as a clandestine government for the Resistance. The Resistance was fundamental to political awareness amongst the urban lower and middle classes. However, it was exclusive to the Northern Regions and served to exacerbate the radical differences between the two halves of Italy.
Despite this, the urban middle class elite came to view the Resistance as a national phenomenon, failing to recognise the persistence of the conservatives' economic and political majorities. The events that took place between 1944 and 1947 were crucial to Italy's economic and political development through the 1950s and the 1960s. It is a story of both great political failure, and cultural and generational disenchantment.

1 "The two years of the Kingdom of the South cut the south of Italy off from the progress being made in the north, isolating the protests made by southern peasants, assuring a continuity of the Fascist bureaucracy and suffocating the fragile democratic forces in the south" in, Ginsborg, Storia d'Italia, 65.
In 1944, political parties organized a Government of National Solidarity to confront both the weak, conservative monarchical government and the political presence of the Allies. The political importance of the two, main ideological groups became immediately apparent. On the right were the Christian Democrats and their leader Alcide De Gasperi, and on the Left, the Leftist Coalition composed of the Communist and Socialist Parties, led by Palmiro Togliatti and Nenni.

The stark political contrast between the two coalitions could have opened up a space for the moderate parties; especially as the moderate, urban middle-classes were such an important group in Italian society.

The northern middle classes' desire for modernization and a secularisation of the state had traditionally been expressed by the Liberal Party. During the war, the new Action Party (Pd'A) espoused these values.

The short life of the Pd'A, founded in 1943 and dissolved in 1947, symbolized the moderate intelligentsia's inability to organize a political "third way" between the two main ideological blocks. Its limitation also led to the political breakdown of an economic and cultural model for modernization in Italy.

This diverse party was created during the war with the aim of unifying all political and ideological components which were not affiliated with either the Catholics or Communists. Thus a group was organized by some of the country's most influential young intellectuals, politicians and professionals. It rapidly grew in political relevance, but proved to be ultimately unable to attract the moderate middle classes to its political programme. The intellectual and theoretical nature of the proposal was beyond the grasp of most of Italian society.

The Pd'A's political heterogeneity allowed for the creation of enlightened political programmes that offered a solution to the economic problems in the south of Italy, the nationalisation of private power stations and the secularisation of public education. But despite this, its political weakness was painfully apparent.

The Pd'A became the perfect embodiment of the Resistance's ethical and cultural ideals, when its leader Ferruccio Parri, became Prime Minister of the first Italian Cabinet.

The political inconsistency of his actions soon became evident to the larger political parties, and the Pd'A itself.

By 1947 the Pd'A had disappeared. Its last Congress, held in Milan, announced its political death.
leaving its most important members to defect to the Socialist, Republican and Liberal Parties. Even though the Rd'A was no longer functional, its “azionismo”, or willingness to act, survived as a cultural and political paradigm through the actions of some of Italy’s most provocative intellectuals and politicians. As Silvio Lanaro wrote: “its veterans always brought a secular, enlightened way of viewing society’s problems to the parties that received them, along with a strong inclination towards “planning” and sketching out a possible future. Theirs was an almost priestly concept of intelligence, scientific conscience and a great ethical and idealistic resolution as the cornerstones for a political vision.”

As had happened before, this ethical, idealistic project for reconstruction was soon frustrated by the persistent and strongly conservative resistance of the majority of Italian society. The desire for a “progressive democracy”, and a radical “de-Fascistisation” of the State met with apprehension and silent hypocrisy from the lower middle classes, who had grown up under twenty years of Fascist domination. The Government of National Solidarity, led by De Gasperi until 1947 with representation from all political parties, was unable to instigate any social, economic and cultural reforms. The problems raised by the reconstruction were overwhelming, and were accompanied by a burgeoning resistance to any real reform.

At the same time ideological clashes within the government lessened the chance of any real political action. The international situation was rapidly changing. Truman’s election as US President in 1945 meant a limitation to Soviet political influence in Western Europe. In 1947, the Marshall Plan was implemented as a bold attempt to intervene in Italian politics, where Western Europe’s largest Communist Party held 30% of vote.

A truce was called on the silent battle between modernization and “State continuity” by the contradictory set of compromises put forward by the Christian Democrats and their

10. “our objective is to strengthen Italy both politically and economically, so that the truly democratic elements of the country may resist the forces driving it towards a new totalitarianism” in, Lanaro, Italia repubblicana, 143; Ginsborg, Storia Italia, 101-103.
11. “The period between 1945 and 1948 saw the triumph of what some scholars have dubbed ‘state continuity’ and in virtue of this, a sizeable number of state institutions created by the Fascists formed the basis of the new republic. (…) from the judiciary to the armed forces, from the police to the financial institutions, from teachers to those working for state-controlled agencies. At this time there was also a sort of tacit continuation of power, or rather, a perpetuation of privileges.” Lanaro, Italia repubblicana, 39-40, and note n.3.
This meant no real change was made to the country's bureaucratic structure or its judiciary. It also meant the police and the government escaped a radical purge of their Fascist elements. The economic oligopoly did not see a loss or revision of its privileges, and the ecclesiastic hierarchies continued to wield sizeable influence over the development of Italy's society. The stark contrast between the Constitutional Charter of the young Republic, and the country's economic and cultural structure was increasingly evident.

In May 1947, De Gasperi formed his first government with the support of the right wing, conservative groups and excluded all leftist parties. This marked the end of the Government of National Solidarity and a progressive and ideologically stronger opposition.

4.2 - Domus La casa dell'uomo, 1944-1948

The period between 1945 and 1948 was central to the relationship between the plan for modernization supported by the progressive, urban middle classes, and growing resistance from the more conservative, backward sections of Italian society.

The end of the Second World War brought hope for radical social and economic reform for Italy. At this time, dozens of architectural, philosophical and literary magazines were launched in major cities; evidence of the intellectuals' desire to influence the debate on reconstruction. The intellectuals and young professionals had experienced the Resistance and saw it as a way to regain a new political proposition that was directly linked to Italy's social reality.

After the dark years of the Fascist era, Italy's secular and progressive cultures tried to create a "new national ethos" based on rebuilding a real link between culture and society. The apparent political balance between the major Italian parties in the Government of National Solidarity, provided a space for open and lively debate, and even the most advanced cultural elite believed themselves to be part of a silent revolution that would change the course of the

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12 Ibid., 5-44, and, "During both the Parmi and De Gasperi governments the traditional state structure and administration inherited from fascism was being quietly consolidated", Ginsborg, Storia Italia, 119.
16 Galli della Loggia, Ideologie, classi e costume, 392.
17 Ginsborg, Storia Italia, 65-68.
This illusion was quickly shattered by rapid changes in international politics and the realisation that the tension between the Western and Communist blocs, as of 1948, could eliminate all hope for a world without conflict. The repercussions of this conflict would go on to have radical and immediate consequences for Italy, both politically and culturally.

Rogers' personal experience followed a similar path. His editorials in the architectural review Domus, between 1946 and the end of 1947, are some of the most interesting examples of the avant-garde published in any magazine during this brief period. They also embodied the failure of any possible secular intervention between the two dominant ideological blocks, and therefore the development of any "third way".

This magazine symbolized the political and cultural expectations of Rogers' generation. Domus, the centre of an open, cultural debate, also functioned as an important school for
a young generation of professionals, intellectuals and artists, showing a continuation of the Rationalist culture.

The magazine was a key experience in Rogers’ life, fulfilling his destiny after his experiences editing for Quadrante and his growing activity as an outspoken critic. As Rogers wrote to Belgioioso in 1948: “These two years at Domus have been such a success that I now feel I must defend myself. I am no longer Rogers the architect, but former editor of Domus”.

Rogers’ time at Domus enforced his belief that the architectural journal was an indispensable ideological and cultural tool for the introduction of modern architectural culture in Italy. The Domus experience also helped to establish Rogers as a key figure within the Italian and international debate.

When Rogers returned from Switzerland in 1945, the political and cultural situation in Milan had changed. Pagano’s dramatic death in April 1945 had deprived Modern Italian architecture of one of its most interesting and mature exponents. Pagano’s activity as an architect and editor of Casabella-costruzioni until 1943 was one of the most coherent attempts to link Italian Rationalism to the international debate, and in particular, the CIAM.

Pagano had edited Casabella-costruzioni between 1932 and 1943, and Domus in 1941, transforming each of these publications into an open manifesto of Italy’s progressive and modern architectural culture by trying to open architecture up to the complexity of modern times, whilst struggling against the classical and conservative academism of the “Partenoidi”.

In the last years of his life he had moved progressively from Fascism, considered by the architect as a form of modernisation inherent to society, to a radical criticism of the political and cultural status-quo. In 1942 Pagano, together with Giolli and Bontempelli, was asked to edit Domus substituting Gio Ponti, the previous director and founder of the magazine.

They radically changed the theoretical structure of the magazine but kept any changes to its graphics to a minimum so as to cushion the blow. The house remained a central theme for Domus, but it was no longer seen as the place for Italianess par excellence, as it had been in Ponti’s final year, but a place for assorted disciplines and cultures to meet and create a new concept of modern living.

Any attempts to adapt the aesthetic of modernism to the tastes of the urban middle classes were abandoned. New examples of rationalist architectures were published and a greater...

18 ENR to Belgioioso, 12th October 1948, BBPR, Folder n.154.
19 Pagano was captured in Milan in September 1944, and imprisoned in Gusen-Mathausen where he died in April 1945.
20 Pagano edited Domus together with Massimo Bontempelli and Melchiorre Bega from January 1941 (n.157) until June 1943 (n.173).
21 Pagano, Giuseppe “Partenone ed i Partenoidi”, in, Domus 168 (December 1941), 26-31.
importance given to interior design, now considered to be a coherent part of the overall project.

Pagano announced this transformation by changing the magazine's subtitle from "The arts of
the home" to "the arts in the home".

Architecture was now considered part of a complex and vast landscape, where art, music,
poetry and literature could easily interact. Domus went on to feature art-essays by Giulio Carlo Argan,
poetry by Montale and Saba, writings by Alberto Savinio and the musical compositions of Enzo Malipiero.
Pagano considered Domus to be the ideal space for open dialogue between different disciplines.

In the same year, Pagano helped Rogers, who had been censored by the Racial Laws, by giving
him the opportunity to publish nine, short articles entitled "Confessioni di un anonimo" (Confessions of a nameless man) and it was at this time that the friendship between the two men blossomed.

In 1945, Milanese rationalist culture, left fatherless by Pagano's death, identified Rogers as a key
figure. At that time, he was working on a series of public projects that would be a declaration
of this connection and continuity.

Following his exile in Switzerland, Rogers was Italy's most important link with the CIAM and
the international architectural community. During that time the BBPR had become one of the
political and cultural centres for Modern architecture in Milan. The office had worked incognito
between 1942 and 1945, with Rogers escaping to Switzerland in 1943 and Belgioioso and Banfi
being deported to Germany in 1944. Peressuti went on with his political and design activities,
preparing the "AR Plan" with the CIAM; the initial proposal for a new Master Plan of Milan. By 1945 Peressuti and Rogers were members of the Pd'A's leading cultural group, and
organized a section dedicated to reconstruction at the party's National Congress held in Milan

22 "But we wish to add to these themes regarding the house by extending our programme to other social, moral
and philosophical issues that are closely linked to the home and determine not only its style but the style and
tastes of its inhabitants.” in, Domus 174 (January 1941), 1.

23 As Rogers wrote: "One day in 1941 I met Giuseppe Pagano in the Galleries in Milan. At that time, he
edited Casabella but also co-edited Domus. He asked me "why don't you write anymore?". I showed him
my surprise at the fact he did not remember my prohibition. I proposed writing about my painful experi-
ences with Anonimo. Pagani, generous and daring as ever, accepted immediately. Once I reached the ninth
chapter I had to finish because my name had been revealed.”, in, ENR Esperienze, 70.

24 Tafuri, Storia arch.ita. 9-11, and, Grandi et Pracchi, Milano. Guida all'architettura moderna (Bologna: Zani-

Peressuti informed Rogers about the A.R Plan in a letter in the early months of 1945. As he wrote: "How-
ever, the most important work is that being carried out by our oldest friends on the reg. plan. As well
as having effectively created the group, we have also reached a conclusion on almost all problems facing
us." BBPR, Correspondence Archive, folder n. 154.

25 BBPR, Correspondence Archive, folder n. 154.
in 1945. Individual CIAM members directly participated in Milan’s political life, supporting the Pd’A, as well as the Socialist and Communist parties. At the same time Peressutti, Bottoni and Figini came into contact with the APAO (Association for Organic Architecture) and Bruno Zevi in Rome. They immediately joined the editorial committee of the Association’s official magazine Metron; the first architectural review aligned with the Modern Movement to be published in Italy after the end of the war.

In December 1946 Rogers contributed to the theoretical content of the magazine and helped create a special edition of Costruzioni-Casabella dedicated to Pagano. Casabella-costruzioni had been reinstated in March 1946 under Franco Albini and Giancarlo Palanti (former editor-in-chief of Pagano’s Domus in 1941). The issue dedicated to Pagano was the third to be published after the end of the war.

In its first edition, the editorial piece (“Casabella Costruzioni starts publishing once again”) refers heavily to the ideal of continuity present in Pagano’s Casabella. The brief text is followed by a piece on the BBPR’s project of a monument to the victims of the concentration camps, which had just been completed in Milan’s Cimitero Monumentale.

The monument is accompanied by a short passage written by Enrico Peressutti named “Dedica”. It is a touching goodbye to his friend and companion Giangio who died alongside Giuseppe Pagano, Filippo Beltrami, Raffaello Giolli and Giorgio Labò in the German prison camps.

The second issue, no. 194 published in September 1946, was dedicated entirely to the AR Plan for Milan. The introduction was written by Pietro Gazzola and accompanied the text and tables from the project as developed by its working group made up of Franco Albini, Lodovico Belgioioso, Piero Bottoni, Ezio Cerutti, Ignazio Gardella, Gabriele Mucchi, Giancarlo Palanti, Enrico Peressutti, Mario Pucci, Aldo Putelli and Ernesto Rogers.

A few months later, in December 1946, issue number 195-198 was published – “Special pamphlet dedicated to the architect, Giuseppe Pagano”.

Rogers’ article, entitled “Catarsi” (Catharsis), focused on two of the main causes for debate in early post-war Italy: the coherence between Pagano’s architectural experiences and Italian Nationalism, and Italian Modernist architecture’s detachment from the Fascist Regime.

26 “When Metron was founded, northern Italy was still divided from the rest of the nation. Our best northern colleagues were fighting alongside the partisans for those ideals of a new beginning for which the very best, including Pagano, gave their lives. Those of us in the centre and south of the country live each day in the immense material and moral uncertainty that followed liberation. Metron was the first magazine dealing with architecture and town planning to be published in Italy. (...) As soon as the north freed itself, the Milanese architects joined our editorial team as equals”, in, Editorial, Our culture and Metron, in, Metron 13 (1947).

Metron’s first “board of directors” was composed by: PBottoni, C. Calaprina, LFigini, E. Gentili, E. Peressutti, L. Piccinato, S. Radiconcini, M. Ridolfi, E. Tedeschi and B. Zevi.

27 ENR Catarsi, in , Costruzioni-Casabella 195-198 (1946).
Rogers goes into great depth about his link with Pagano in the final stage of his personal journey; a bond founded on their shared anti-Fascism. "The modern Italian architects, although they had known each other for years and years, never truly became friends until one was able to reveal to the other his newly-found awareness of his anti-Fascism. This is how it was between Pagano and me".

He tried in particular to highlight the importance of continuity throughout this theoretical and methodological experience, separated by the political compromises of individual experiences. The ambiguous connection between Italian Rationalism and the Regime was "purified by the sacrifice of the Modern Movement's martyrs, such as Pagano, Banfi, Giollo and Beltrami". As Rogers wrote, "almost all Italian Modernist architects had some contact with Fascism. Even those who did not agree with it were involved with at least one of its works: the exhibitions, the buildings, the magazines. The past cannot be changed, but we must have the courage to speak about it. (...) We did not realize immediately that, out of our love of love, we risked desiring a son from a prostitute".

Roger's "moral" defence of Pagano is passionate. His entire article is structured around the ambiguity of modern architecture describing how they followed Fascism out of a desire for change and revolution. But he defends this moral "action" as sincere, chosen expressly for the sake of modern architecture and for which they were ready "to pay the price", as Pagano ultimately did.

Rogers ends his essay with a strong call for moral and cultural continuity, with Pagano as the spiritual father of a new era: "Here ends the homage to Pagano that I have held in my heart. But it would not be complete if this text were open to false interpretations by the readers so eager to benefit from this that they try to tarnish his position or take advantage of his sacrifice. I refer to those architects who, having the good fortune to never having been a member [of the Fascist party], believe they can justify their own reactionary artistic inability by accusing modern architecture of being Fascist. I am also talking about those who are even more blameworthy; those who, despite being truly gifted architects, have remained insensitive to civil reconstruction. Pagano had his own story; each person has his own that may be similar, different or even opposite to this. I have spoken of the man and artist who dedicated his life to creating his own coherence. This example is useful only to those who already have both structures to lean upon (..)." This is not just the defence of a man, but also of Rogers and his entire generation. It is a defence centred around such key words as "moral" and "modernity", and in the name of a

28 "The contribution made to the nation by so many is so immense that we can name only the martyrs. Beltrami died a partisan, Banfi died at Mathausen, (...) the dear, sweet Labò was shot by the Germans in Rome.". Ibid.,34.
29 Ibid.,35.
strong political and cultural continuity, he clearly asserts the will of the young modernist group to take the destiny of post-war Italian architecture into their own hands.

Seemingly cleansed of its political sins after purification by the Resistance, Modernist culture remained a progressive contemporary ideal. Domus in Milan, together with Metron in Rome, became the ideological mouthpiece for Modern architecture in Italy.

The different cultural and architectural experiences of Rome and Milan summed up the evolution of Modern architecture between Neo-Realism and a kind of Neo-Rationalism.

The value of its cultural continuity was, however, stronger in Milan, symbolized by the “Monumento ai caduti nei campi nazisti” designed by the BBPR in 1945, and Domus as edited by Rogers. The monument, built in July 1945, and the theoretical structure of the new Domus, represented an incontrovertible bond between tradition and history.

4.2.1 - Milan

After the end of the Second World War, Milan began to radically assert its social and cultural diversity from the rest of the country.

The city was Italy’s main economic and financial centre. The progressive, Socialist traditions of the working and middle classes before Fascism, and the presence of a strong Liberal Party linked to capitalist groups, gave rise to an urban culture with an enlightened and secular vision of modernization. During the war, Milan had been one of the focal points for both the Resistance and the Rd’A.

Intellectuals, young professionals and a section of the middle class supported its constitution, and collaborated with the CLNAI during the war.

When the war ended, a wave of euphoria swept over the city. As Carlo Levi wrote in his story “L’orologio”, “when we reached Milan, we found the city in ruins. The streets were filled with a lively crowd; they were happy and curious. We went all over the place to rallies, meetings and marches. Everyone seemed pleased to see each other; to bump into one another in the street, to breathe, to find themselves again; to feel alive. The city seemed fuller than normal”. The city with its dynamic and vast cultural life supported this idea of National Solidarity until


1948. The intellectuals tried to maintain a close relationship with reality and society, taking a pragmatic approach to the issue of an ethical reconstruction of society.

New political Forums such as the “Fronte della Cultura” and the “Casa della Cultura” were organized by the philosopher Antonio Banfi and a cultural committee made up of intellectuals from diverse cultural and ideological backgrounds.

In 1947 Elio Vittorini, one of Italy’s most interesting post-war authors, edited the weekly magazine Il Politecnico with the economic support of Einaudi and the political patronage of left-wing parties. This important publication aimed to create a dialectical relationship between culture and society.\(^{32}\)

Vittorini introduced a new form of journalism which combined cultural content with a greater awareness of its visual and social message. Great attention was paid to the magazine’s graphic setting and the use of illustrations to draw the reader’s attention to the different articles.

The graphic structure pioneered by Abe Steiner in Il Politecnico strongly influenced other Italian magazines. In the same period, Domus introduced a new and more expressive use of its illustrations and graphic art.

The Politecnico’s editorial team included artists and writers from differing backgrounds. The magazine published works by Carlo Bo, Piovene, Rogers, Eliot, Pasternak, Eluard, Auden and Saba, alongside unexpected reports on the conditions in Southern Italy, the FIAT, the economic crisis and the international situation.

The Politecnico expressed its resolve to open a dialogue between a section of left-wing culture and the more progressive, secular components of Italian society.

At this same time, the pressing need for a physical reconstruction of Milan launched a fierce debate over the new Master Plan for the city.

From the “Casa della Cultura” where Rogers was part of the Committee, to the National Congress for Reconstruction, the CIAM group did not hesitate to show its support to the theoretical Modernist project, whilst taking into account the design tradition of rationalist architecture.

“Since 1945, architects and graphic designers have played an absolutely vital role in Milanese cultural life. One could not think of Milanese culture without considering a certain group of architects, Ernesto Rogers for example, or graphic designers such as Abe Steiner or Max Huber (...) It goes without saying that it was the architects who best expressed the advancements in Milan’s cultural life, as well as those that were taking place in Europe at the same time.”\(^{33}\)

Rogers took on a more prominent role in Milanese society and cultural life, and was soon...


\(^{33}\) Dalla Palma, Cultura della rinascita, 88-90.
considered one of the most important exponents of Modern architecture in Milan. Whilst Rogers was editor of Domus, the magazine (much like Vittorini’s Politecnico) made a significant attempt to bring culture to a wider section of society by utilizing the open and progressive ideas of Modern culture as its basis. The magazines shared the same destiny, bound on the one hand by the political situation and the difficult relationship between strong idealism, and growing complexity of reality on the other.

4.2.2 - Domus La casa dell’uomo, 1946

When Rogers took over Domus in January 1946, he had two major issues to contend with: the urgently needed reconstruction of the country, and a cultural and ethical redefinition of Italian society. The publishing tradition at Domus implemented by Ponti as a modernizing leveller of the tastes of the urban, upper-middle classes, was still strong enough to influence Rogers and his choices. And so, the new editor found himself faced with two different models for the same magazine. On the one hand, there was Ponti’s Domus and, on the other, the magazine as led by Pagano, which focussed on a more interdisciplinary approach to the modern home. The urgency for post-war reconstruction made Rogers’ decision even more significant. His choice is clear from his symbolic use of continuity and content despite the previous style of the magazine. Domus reflected the moderate and ambiguous transition to Modernism made by the middle classes. It was a fashionable magazine which tried to cultivate the radicalism of the architectural Avant-garde, by embracing the conformist tendencies of international style in the 1950s. The undefined nature of Ponti’s relationship with Fascism, especially during its final years, together with Rogers’ role as an active player in the Liberation Committees and international Modernism’s most important circles, are the most likely reasons for Domus editor Mazzocchi’s choice to follow this clear transformation in the country’s political and cultural climate in the years immediately following the war. Rogers understood the ideological strength of a magazine like Domus, and considered it an important connection between post-war Modern culture, and the most prevalent, not to mention influential, social class in Italy. All cultural and political actions carried out by the Modernist culture in Italy had to win the approval of the middle classes.
By adding the sub-title “La casa dell’uomo” (The house of man), Rogers managed to express his terms and the strong ideological value of the operation in a poetic yet immediate manner. The subtitle, used heavily by Pagano, was employed to mark out the nature of the magazine and its philosophy of action. It was used first for Casabella-Costruzioni in the late 1930s, then in Domus where Pagano changed the subtitle from “The arts of the home” to “the arts in the home”.

Seen in this context, Rogers’ choice was clearly the product of a particular historical moment. However, it was reinforced in the opening pages of issue n.205 after Rogers’ editorial giving his reasoning for changing the Domus by-line, by a text entitled “Lost Friends” by Alfonso Gatti, which is dedicated to the deaths of Pagano, Giolli, Banfi and Beltrami.

Gatto also authored the essay that introduces the special edition of Casabella-Costruzioni dedicated to Pagano. A clear link can be found in this text to all that had been written and said by Rogers during those months.

“The house of man” became a new metaphor for the creation of a different, modern way of living and thinking in Italian society.

As Rogers wrote in his first essay: “A magazine can act as a tool, a filter for establishing the reasons for a particular choice. (...) It is a matter of forming a style, a technique and morality around a single function. It is a matter of building a society. There is no time to waste.”

The magazine became a tool for a radical revision of the dominant values and tastes in Italian society. Its ideological strength had moved beyond the traditions of the Modern Movement. Rogers’ belief that the revolutionary spirit of the Resistance had seeped into Italian society, gradually changing it, had a great influence upon theories expounded in the magazine. He was convinced that a revision of aesthetics and techniques could occur only through an ethical reform “with a broad social base”. His appeals for widespread reform were immediately deemed too idealistic and vague to provide the basis for any real plan of intervention, or to influence the cultural debate.

Rogers and his editorial staff published 12 issues of the magazine during 1946. The multidisciplinary contributions continued as they had under Pagano, and were complimented by essays and

35 “He added the subtitle "la casa dell’uomo", echoing the title of the book published by Le Corbusier and Francoise de Pierrefeu in 1942.” Ibid., 77.
articles by members of the CIAM such as Alfred Roth, Max Bill and Siegfried Gideon, who had built up relationships with Rogers during his exile in Switzerland.

Max Bill published his essays on the "Art Concrète", considered by Rogers to be a natural step in the art of modern architecture. At the same time, Lionello Venturi and Gillo Dorfles wrote articles on the state of art in Italy, and on the debate between Realism and Abstractism.

Malipiero, one of Italy's youngest and most interesting composers reviewed the music events, whilst Dino Risi and Guido Ballo dealt with cinematography and the theatre.

During this period, a group of young architects including Giorgio Crespi, Giancarlo De Carlo and Ettore Sottsass jr published an interesting series of architectural essays analyzing the evolution of works by Modern masters such as Le Corbusier, F.L.Wright, R.Neutra and W.Morris.

Particular attention was paid to the inclusion of interior design, using rudimentary materials and prefabricated elements. The architects of the MSA were asked to design a new kind of furniture in response to Italy's dramatic housing conditions.

The projects became a kind of political manifesto for the methodology used by Modern architecture, where Alberti's theory on Utilitas and Venustas was linked to the progressive and ethical ideals of "Justice and Freedom", the motto used by Action Party (Pd'A).

Gropius' motto "from the spoon to the city" was interpreted as a practical revolution in modern design. This appeal for rigour and sobriety was reflected in the beautiful and idealistic projects of the MSA.

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37 Alfred, Roth. "La casa di Mme Mandrot", in. Domus 206 (1946); "Tendenza dell'architettura scolastica svizzera." in, Domus 220 (1947).
38 Bill, Max. "Pittura Concreta", in, Domus 206 (1946); "La costruzione concreta ed il dominio dello spazio"., in, Domus 210 (1946).
39 Gideon, Sigfried. "L'età della meccanizzazione totale.",in, Domus 216 (1946); "Il progresso della comodità", in, Domus 217 (1947).
40 Bill, Pittura concreta, 15-22.
41 Venturi, Lionello. "Considerazioni sull'arte astratta", in, Domus 205 (1946).
42 Crespi, Giorgio. "La casa geometrica e la casa umana", in, Domus 205 (1946); "Le Corbusier vecchio e nuovo", in, Domus 206 (1946); "Destino degli oggetti", in, Domus 207, (1946).
43 De Carlo, Giancarlo. "L'insegnamento di F.L.Wright", in, Domus 207 (1946); "William Morris, pioniere dell'arte sociale", in, Domus 211 (1946).
45 ENR. "Divagazioni intorno ad una mostra di arredamento", in, Domus 211 (1946).
46 ENR. "Ricostruzione.Dall'oggetto d'uso alla città", in, Domus 215 (1946).
47 "from the spoon to the city, one must create objects for their own existence.", in, Ibid., 2.
carried out by the BBPR\textsuperscript{48}, Ignazio Gardella\textsuperscript{49}, Franco Albini\textsuperscript{50}, Marco Zanuso\textsuperscript{51}, Guido Latis\textsuperscript{52}, Asnago and Vender\textsuperscript{53}, Piero Bottoni\textsuperscript{54} and Giovanni Mucchi\textsuperscript{55}, in which they tried to provide different design solutions to social and economic themes. At this time, the editorial staff also published several articles dedicated to traditional English and Japanese houses\textsuperscript{56}, as well as articles about the new housing projects by Frey and Clark\textsuperscript{57}, Neutra\textsuperscript{58}, and Alfred Roth\textsuperscript{59}, which view the normalization and prefabrication of buildings with great importance.

The use of prefabricated parts was thoroughly researched by Rogers in Switzerland during his time as director of the Centre for Reconstruction Studies, and came to be a considered a key element in the modernization of modern architecture. Two young Milanese architects, Marco Zanuso and Chessa, edited a series of three articles dedicated to the principles of prefabrication\textsuperscript{60} which were published in the first three issues of Domus.

But, as had been the case with other situations, the ideas behind their argument was too idealistic and theoretical, lacking the necessary technical study.

The apparent heterogeneity and complexity of the contents published in Domus during 1946 were part of a broad, ideological programme exemplified by Rogers' leading articles. The sequence of these articles simultaneously showed the coherence of their agenda, the severity of cultural polemics and the evolution of the political situation in Italy. It was evident

48 BBPR "Una veranda in una loggia antica", in, Domus 208 (1946); "La libreria Cantoni", in, Domus 210 (1946).

49 Gardella, Ignazio "Alloggio per tre persone", in, Domus 211 (1946); "Elementi di mobilio", in, Domus 214 (1946); "Uno studio professionale", in, Domus 222 (1947).

50 Albini, Franco "Una libreria", in, Domus 207 (1946); "Elementi di cucine componibili", in, Domus 213 (1946); "La pellicceria Zanini a Milano", in, Domus 214 (1946).

51 Zanuso, Marco. "Un negozio per macchine calcolatrici", in, Domus 207 (1946); "Casa e natura", in, Domus 211 (1946); "Elementi e cucine componibili", in, Domus 213 (1946); "Mobili per piccole serie", in, Domus 217 (1947); "Una libreria a Como", in, Domus 223-24-25 (1947).

52 Latis, Vito "Abitazione di un borghese", in, Domus 205 (1946); "Alloggio per quattro persone", in, Domus 211 (1946); "Un soggiorno", in, Domus 214 (1946).

53 Asnago, Vender: "Tre case", in, Domus 211 (1946); "Negozi di abbigliamento maschile", in, Domus 216 (1946).

54 Bottoni, Piero "Una casa rurale", in, Domus 209 (1946); and Domus 221 (1947) dedicated to the VIII Triennale.

55 Mucchi, Giovanni "Una casa rurale", in, Domus 220 (1946).

56 Gentili, Eugenio "La casa inglese", in, Domus 208 (1946); Gandolfi, G "Esperienze giapponesi", in, Domus 209 (1946).

57 Clark and Frey "Casa in California", in, Domus 213 (1946).


59 Roth, Alfred "La casa di Mme Mandrot", in, Domus 206 (1946).

60 Chessa, P.A., Zanuso, Marco. "La casa prefabbricata: il modulo", in, Domus 206 (1946); La casa prefabbricata: i materiali., in, Domus 207 (1946); La casa prefabbricata: il cantiere., in, Domus 208 (1946).
from the outset the themes that Rogers would focus on; his essays followed a virtual path leading to his main areas for theoretical development.

"The house of man" immediately appeared on the main cultural horizon as a metaphor for the humanistic utopia of modern culture.

As Rogers wrote in his first leading article, "a house is not a house if it is not warm in winter; cool in summer. It must be serene in every season, welcoming the family into each of its harmonious spaces. A house is not a house if it does not contain a corner for reading poetry, an alcove, a bathtub, a kitchen. This is the house of man. (...) I want a house that is like me (but better): a house that looks like my humanity. If taken to extremes, our argument can lead either to utopia or become a cliché, because if we ask too much, we are asking for the unattainable, but if we only look at what is immediately around us, we risk being content with too little. The house is an issue of limits, but the definition of these limits is an issue of culture; and this is precisely what the house ultimately is."^61

At this time Rogers was facing a cultural battle to enforce the role of Modern Architecture and its traditions in the debate for reconstruction in Italy.

Rogers fought this battle using two weapons: the CIAM's cultural and international relevance and the growing significance of modern Italian culture. Rogers was perfectly aware of his cultural position and ideological association with the CIAM. He had created a "periodical of tendencies", which this attempt to promote modern architecture met with strong provincialism and accusations of being overly abstract.

In March 1946 Rogers published an article about the New York Museum of Modern Art's idea to publish a competition for the new United Nations buildings. He wrote: "In support of the initiative, the magazine "Progressive Architecture" has sent us many messages that tell us they see it like this: We believe that your magazine represents the most progressive group of architects in your country, and as such we would like to invite you to collaborate in and support the Museum's proposal. (...) It is highly significant that such eminent colleagues have offered their hand to Italian architects even before Italy has taken its rightful place amongst other countries. The misadventures that leave us forgotten amongst the ruins of our home are not such that in the world of culture our money no longer holds value. (...) Perhaps this is due to the incomparable name given to us by the Fathers; is ours not the land of Bramante, Brunelleschi, Sangallo and Borromini? But we owe this much more to the fervent obstinacy of the artists in the vanguard who fought like the partisans for years in order to defend and further the ideal of a humane architecture. I want to remember everyone, not just the names of the three we have.

^61 ENR. La casa dell'uomo, 2.

^62 ENR. "Farewell", in, Domus 223-224-225 (1947).
au manifeste, s'il ne se réfère pas explicitement aux CIAM, il pourrait avoir été conçu, mutatis mutandis, comme une seconde Déclaration de La Sarraz. L'on ignore d'ailleurs les circonstances exactes de sa rédaction, tant comme l'identité de ses auteurs et de ses premiers signataires: autour du 19 août, date indiquée sur une version anonyme du même texte, séjournaient à coup sûr au château Rogers, Eugène Claudius-Petit (futur ministre français de la Reconstruction), l'architecte d'Hilversum, Pieter Elling, probablement Alfred Roth, convoqué par la châtelaine dès le 14 août. Mais l'argument renvoie à l'ensemble des discussions qui ont eu lieu depuis le mois de juillet, avec aussi Giedion, Belgiojoso et Peressutti du BBPR, Kalivoda, Charles Karsten d'Amsterdam, Russel Barker de la Légation américaine à Berne, sans doute encore d'autres architectes non identifiés ou de passage. La liste des personnalités sollicitées est longue, de Paris, Amsterdam, Zurich,

314 Typoscript sans titre, A 10.
lost Terragni, Pagano, Banfi. Do you think such sacrifices do not count? We feel their spiritual presence. The avant-garde groups throughout the world have an intimate understanding of each other and this time you can see how that works. (...) In civil countries, the CIAM architects worked for years with many others in the spirit of our great association: they have known for a long time exactly what they want."

In August 1946 he returned to this subject in an article written from La Sarraz where the CIAM had been called together. "There is a great peace here that binds the past with the present, allowing us to think of the future in peace. We are protected from behind, like when we walked before our parents as children. (...) Le Corbusier, Max Ernst, Lipchitz, Eisenstein, Alvar Aalto, Gropius, Sirkus, Breuer, Bill, Roth, Follain, Bourgeois, Moholy-Nagy, Schawinsky, Marino Marini; American, Polish, Russian, German, English, Italian, those with no nationality, French, Swiss, Spanish, Finnish; famous artists and those who have never been heard of, great talents and those that time will judge harshly, different personalities, but all people burn their own existence in one single flame: Modern art."

Through Rogers, Domus became the natural link between Italy and the rest of the world. By the end of the war, Italy was politically exhausted. Until the end of 1946, the country's defeat had increased its sense of isolation from the international political debate. Rogers presented the CIAM as an open, multicultural arena where Italians had the same rights as those from countries on the winning side. The CIAM represented a cultural and ideological continuity of the experiences of the architectural Avant-garde, and were also viewed as the best exponents of Modernism.

Functionalist architecture was shown as a culture with "tradition", rather than being seen as radically Avant-garde. The sacrifice made by its "martyrs" led it to be considered the most important and progressive experience after the end of the war. Rogers played an important role during this time, giving the radical Avant-garde a new image. The 'cultural continuity' of this experience facilitated the moderate social classes and the government's understanding of the CIAM and Modern architecture itself.

Rogers played on a direct political level trying to justify the Fascist pasts of a number of rationalist architects, and proposing Modern architecture as open and progressive.

As he wrote in an open letter to the new President of the Italian Republic, published in Domus in June 1946: "We belong to a generation that has paid its dues to ingenuity and foolishness. In order to satisfy our passion, Modern architecture has lost its innocence: like Mary of Egypt who gave herself to the ferrymen. Yes, almost every one of us has sinned if we believed that a love of

63 ENR. "La casa dei popoli", in, Domus 207 (1946).
64 ENR. "La casa degli artisti", in, Domus 212 (1946).
art could allow such serious compromises. But many years have passed since our spirits were confused, and the blush of embarrassment only fades away if we compare it to the wounds that now shade our sentiments. There are martyrs among us and, even if we cannot have their halos, who could deny us learning from the pain experienced by our dead brothers and fathers? I feel, I feel that those martyrs have the virtue of poets who, as Baudelaire said, have the privilege of being themselves and others at the same time.”

Meanwhile, the battle to connect the theories of the Modern Movement to reality met with accusations that Modern architecture was too abstract.

In May and June 1946 Rogers returned to this subject disputing two articles that appeared in two well known Italian newspapers: “Corriere di Informazione”, and “Il Tempo”. Rogers insisted on the contemporary nature of modern architecture, as well as its ethical and technical value. The apparent contradiction between the “casa reale” and the “casa ideale” had to be solved through a strong, common belief. As Rogers wrote: “it is our duty to identify the ideal house and the real one. The errors that keep us from reaching this goal can, to a certain degree, be ascribed to the artists, but for the most part it is the fault of society.”

And he continued: “In each case, the thing we must ascertain is the current climate, as there is a great difference between actions and thoughts.”

The large gap between the complexity of the country's economic and physical reconstruction and the idealistic call for a “Plan of National Reconstruction” became evident. Accusations of abstraction and intellectualism concealed Modern culture’s inability to give adequate solutions to such serious problems.

The political situation was rapidly changing. The Government of National Solidarity was now led by De Gasperi, after the failure of Parri and the Rd'A. The idealistic programme for national reconstruction was slowly succumbing to the economic crisis and growing resistance from the moderate, conservative middle classes.

The call made by Rogers and Vittorini for the creation of a new culture based on ethics and a wider-reaching social programme finally moved away from the drama of Italian reality. Rogers was starting to understand how the crisis unravelling in Italian society was causing its cultural programme to fail. In his first essay of 1947 Rogers wrote:

“This magazine that many find too bourgeois and others, too progressive, requires an effort that is far greater than its results. Over the last year we published twelve issues. The editor shows us diagrams of our lives (..); those of us on the editorial team show him the letters that

66 ENR. “Due Leonardie l’architettura”, in, Domus 208 (1946).
67 ENR. “Casa reale e casa ideale”, in, Domus 209 (1946).
68 Ibid., 2.
arrive from all over the world, flattering and encouraging us to continue along the road we have started. If we are a long way from our goal, it is not only because our strength cannot meet the task, but because by concerning ourselves with the house of man, we are making a fatal reflection on the crisis taking hold of the society in which our themes are developed. If we consider many of the works we have illustrated from an economic standpoint, regarding the ability of most Italians being able to buy them, we must conclude that they are inaccessible because they are deemed too bourgeois. If we consider them from a taste point of view, they are deemed too progressive because of the new forms and purposes. The problem is that these objects cannot be enjoyed by the less affluent, and those who could buy them do not like them because they prefer sham decorations. These are the reasons behind this crisis.

The magazine's financial difficulties epitomized the sorry state of the “third way”, which was ultimately unable to create a cultural and political space between the conservative middle classes and the left-wing. The fragility of Rogers’ idealistic proposal was overpowered by the strong ideological opposition of the two main blocs. 1947 was the last chance for open dialogue between the opposing fronts. Truman’s policy against Communism in Western Europe was progressively widespread. Political opposition was becoming an increasingly social divide, and the likelihood of any possible cultural action taking place within this space of ideological mediation was looking ever bleaker.

It is significant that in July 1947 Rogers was asked to take part in the debate on the VIII Triennale, and on the creation of the experimental quarter’s QT8. Defending the works of the rationalist architects, and Bottoni’s direction, he wrote:

“It is a social programme in the broadest sense, but knowing Bottoni is a Communist, someone, without looking at all the facts, has immediately stood up and said: this is a Communist programme, as if all other non-Communists taking part (the majority) should have been more faithful to the leader’s beliefs than our own.”

By July 1948 the political equilibrium had collapsed. De Gasperi had formed a new government that excluded all left-wing parties, with direct support from the most conservative groups. The political battle became violent. The Vatican supported the Christian Democrats and their strongly anti-communist campaign. In turn, the Italian Communist party joined the COMINTERN, and organized a Pact of Unity in Action with the Socialist party (94).

At this time Milan, like the other major northern cities, was characterized by a conservative reorganization of its public institutions. Between 1946 and 1947 the Director of the “Corriere della Sera” Luciano Caramel, and the Prefect Troilo, both from the Pd’A were fired at the behest

69 ENR, “Note to readers”, in, Domus 217 (1947).
70 ENR, “Esperienza dell’VIII Triennale”, in, Domus 221 (1947).
71 Ginsberg, Storia Italia, 154-155.
of Prime Minister De Gasperi.

Vittorini was violently and directly attacked by Togliatti in II Politecnico.

In 1947, Domus published only eight issues. Rogers tried to organize special monograph editions dedicated to the state of Art, Interior Design and Architecture. The April issue, dedicated to the debate on art, was an almost lyrical composition dealing with the work of some of the most interesting modern artists.

Carlo Ragghianti, Elio Vittorini, Jean Starobinsky, Dino Risi, Gillo Dorfles, Mario De Michelis, and other intellectuals were asked to write about the sculptures of Moore, Manzù and Marino Marini, the paintings of Klee and Chagall and the literary works of Kafka, Majakovski and Cocteau.

The idyllic union of these varied artistic forms dealing with the concept of modern utopia continued into Rogers’ last issue of Domus.

This was an absurd yet generous defence of modern culture in the face of a new, faster growing conservativism. In December 1946, Rogers proudly made extreme declaration of his cultural “faith” when he wrote: “They say we are unilateral, that we are blinkered and that we forget to pick the beautiful flowers along the road for our crowns, choosing instead to fashion our garlands from meagre branches. They say we are presumptuous, that we believe ourselves to be coherent, that we are following a trend in order to find a style. (...) In doing this we often allow projects to be managed by young people we know to be immature and even mediocre, just so that they will join us at the barricades where it is decided that the critics are right, insisting on ignoring the more mature and indeed more perfect creations of those who we believe work for a moribund world that perhaps no longer even exists.”

As we can see, the last two leading articles published between September and December 1947 communicated a strong ideological desire, skilfully summarizing the themes of two hard years of debates whilst highlighting the evolution of Rogers’ theories. The tone of his writing had also changed. His idealistic call for a better future evolved into a calmer, more realistic understanding of the country’s problems.

In “Apologue”, a brilliant account of the CIAM Congress in Hoddesdon, Rogers moved away...
from a bitter comparison of post-war conditions in Italy and England\textsuperscript{79}, to make some interesting reflections on prefabrication and the laws pertaining to it.

Whilst describing the amusing experience of certain CIAM members during a visit to a factory making prefabricated houses, Rogers raised the problem of the relationship between a particular context and the lack of a normative framework governing the use of modern, prefabricated housing. As he wrote: "The aeroplanes and houses are made from aluminium. The houses are small, reduced to the bare essentials.(..) What I have just written involves a critical observation which I would use to draw conclusions.(..) (this is followed by the description of a house assembly line) The house is finished. Hoisted up onto four wheels and off it goes, pulled along by tractors. It will stop near similar houses amongst the green meadows of Somerset, or further afield, near the smoky houses of some Welsh mining village. They will become part of the landscape, of the planning of life. And herein lies the problem: they are all alike."\textsuperscript{80}

Later on in the article, Rogers' describes the elegant dress of an Indian architect, and keenly proposes a relationship between the functional and traditional elegance of his dress, and the limit of the same concepts being applied, in a mechanical fashion, to life.

This essay was one of the first clear examples of Rogers' theories on the idea of Context and Regionalism in relation to the dogmatism of Modernist culture. History and landscape were becoming important references in Rogers' work\textsuperscript{81}.

The last leading article, however, was a series of bitter considerations of Domus as a magazine that was in the vanguard of the Italian social and cultural situation as it was at that time.

At the end of that year, Rogers was fired by his editor Mazzocchi. The editor's decision was apparently unexpected, but it was undoubtedly a consequence of both the difficult financial situation the magazine found itself in and the changing political climate\textsuperscript{82}.

"Farewell" was a harsh defence of Rogers' ideological position and his editorial choices. It was a violent attack on the conservative, traditional culture\textsuperscript{83} and his editor Mazzocchi\textsuperscript{84}.

\textsuperscript{79} "In that country where the black market is practically non-existent, not even the very rich can afford more than one suit a year; yet every soldier is given a complete civilian outfit. Luxuries are banished and great sacrifices are made to distribute what is necessary; housing is viewed in the same way. (and I say this with a heavy heart).", in, ENR, Apologue., in, Domus 221 (1947),2.

\textsuperscript{80} ibid.,3.

\textsuperscript{81} See also : ENR."Arte materia prima", in, Domus 214 (1946),2.

\textsuperscript{82} Mazzocchi had always been very sensitive to changes in the political climate. He fired Ponti in 1942, then in 1945 he employed Rogers who was close to the CLNAM, and then, in 1947, he reverted to the more conservative Ponti.

\textsuperscript{83} "You might see an ambitious, concerted, obstinate programme which could not be satisfied with an opinion from the same milieu where dandys breed and flourish." In, ENR, "Farewell", in, Domus 223-224-225 (1947),2.

\textsuperscript{84} "Two years have passed. It is too short a time if our soil was meant to grow vines and trees rather than
He began by invoking the period directly after the Liberation and his decision to edit the magazine as a “periodical of tendencies” with a strong cultural agenda.

“A symbol against the sceptical, an act of faith against the cynical, a link between the public and the most conscious vanguard. A banner, a pledge, a promise.” After the Liberation there was such eagerness for progress that everyone supported us in our battle, because rare are the moments in history when ideals seem so close to being realized that they awaken the very interest of those who see them merely as tools, a means to their practical ends. Intolerant of pettiness and provincialism, having overcome all boundaries, we believed it our task to announce the works of Italy’s most conscious artists. A periodical of tendencies, we agree we tried to insert the specific issues raised by architecture into the common framework of modern cultural problems in order to meet this need for coherence.”

But he goes on to point out the evident contradictions in his programme, and the ultimate failure of his attempts. “What kind of readers were we expecting? A carefully-printed magazine like ours published by Editoriale Domus is expensive and cannot develop unless it is met with understanding by those who buy it. This is an obstacle to overcome. We know how easy it would be to enter only into the homes of the privileged. The ambiguous economic structure of society has undoubtedly had a dramatic influence upon the cultural sphere where it is not always possible to find a common interest among individuals. The inventions of techniques and aesthetics, the theoretical results of architecture are, for instance, very much advanced, whilst the social instruments to profit from them are still primitive. Material and spiritual interests often diverge in such a way that people living in the same age are not truly contemporaries: there is no coherence to support them. The aim of a useful magazine is to attach itself to a particular policy and abide by this as strictly as possible.”

This awareness of the “ambiguous economic structure of society”, and the dramatic contrast evident between an advanced culture and a “primitive” social structure, showed Rogers’ realistic but ultimately partial understanding of the situation. It would most likely have been impossible for him to limit himself to an elitist and idealistic cultural proposal.

Rogers eventually returns to the “family” of international modernist culture to emphasize the coherence and the breadth of this experience. “Sometimes, however, people who are very well-known, men like Le Corbusier or Gropius, Aalto or Neutra, have said to us “Go on, you’re on the right track” and some, those whom we believe to be among the best, we have found sunflowers”, in ENR, Ibid., 2.

85 Ibid., 2.

86 “Domus is the only coherent magazine, and though it is greatly improved under its new editorial team, it is perhaps limited by its specialisation in habitat culture.”, in Metron, n.13, 1947; “Domus (...) presents itself with an aristocratic air and has little influence over militant architecture”, in Tafuri, Storia archit., 13.
along the way, standing above us: Bill, Roth, Sert, Syrkus, Gideon, Maxwell-Fry, Van Easteren, the people at the MOMA, the most authoritative magazines, the friends of the CIAM, the MSA and the APAQ. It was no accident that Rogers published an important essay by Alvar Aalto and some of his recent projects in his final issue.

87 ENR, Farewell, 3.
Die gute Form
Sonderschau des Schweizerischen Werkbundes SWB

Max Bill, Die Gute form exhibition, 1949
The theoretical link between these two designers, like their friendship, was strong, and a shining example of evolution having taken place in at least one facet of Modern architecture. In the same issue Rogers published an article on Max Bill’s foremost sculpture entitled ‘‘Continuity’’99. It seemed he was tempting fate as six years later, Rogers, as the publication’s new editor, embarked on his second foray into magazine editing by adding ‘‘Continuità’’ to the original title of Casabella and publishing Muratsalo’s house and the Saynatsalo town hall by Alvar Aalto80.

In a long letter to his BBPR companions written from the Island of Elba on 30th December 1947, Rogers noted: “I still find myself oscillating between different emotions; ambition, pride, altruism, dedication, selfishness. These are accompanied by my recent failures and human disappointments. I do not know how to get used to the petty interests that have distanced me from people with whom I believed to profoundly share the same ideals. I know that life is often like this, but I do not know how to give up my hope for better relationships. I know I have given a lot; I expected no more than to have built upon solid foundations. But it seems I did not even have this and my construction has fallen in around me, causing me great pain. This is a lesson. I believe that this brings a second era to a close. The first was that of my article ‘‘conto corrente dell’architettura’’, an omen of racism that nonetheless allowed hope to flourish. This second era ends with my ‘‘Farewell’’ and goodbye. Perhaps I will waste less energy and finally be able to concentrate on writing a book. We’ll see.”91

A new phase in Rogers’ life was beginning, and the general elections of April 1948 abruptly closed a vivid, illusory yet short phase of Italian history.

At the Italian Republic’s first political elections held on 18th April 1948, the Christian Democrats and their Prime Minister, De Gasperi, won a landslide victory with 48.5% of the votes, accompanied by an absolute majority in Parliament. With the Popular Front (made up of the Italian Communist and Socialist parties) winning 31%, little was left to centrist parties92. On 30th April 1948, Ernesto Nathan Rogers embarked on a slow journey through Africa, Brazil

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91 Correspondence Archive, folder no.154.
and Uruguay, finally reaching Buenos Aires, Argentina and Tucuman’s architecture department. What link can be made between these two apparently unrelated facts: the gravity of an historical event of this magnitude and Rogers’ own personal story?

It is, in my opinion, important to analyse the psychological and social pressure these people were exposed to, which had a profound effect upon the decision a significant number of those involved in the Italian architectural culture of the post-war period had to make regarding where they should live.

All of this was set to a backdrop of violent ideological and social conflict. It is unthinkable that the choices taken by those involved, or indeed their intellectual and mental development, would remain immune to such widespread disruption.

This was also the time of an international consolidation of human and cultural relations brought about on the one hand by the calamitous economic crisis experienced in Italy and Europe, and on the other by Giedion’s proposal of a new policy geared towards improved international relations at the CIAM 1947 congress in Bridgewater.

The Action Party’s fragile dream of a secular and moderate reconstruction was quickly crushed beneath the weight of a political clash of titans that left no space for the progressive centre. Likewise, resistance from the relentless machinery inherited from the Fascist state crushed all hopes for the implementation of radical reforms that had been developed at the heart of the CLN.

The elections of 1948 dealt the final blow to the collective experiences of national solidarity. Experiences that, from Vittorini’s Politecnico to Ernesto Rogers’ Domus, had been borne of a stubborn hope to build a relationship with the most advanced sectors of the middle classes, whilst facilitating the cultural development of the proletariat. However, these aspirations arose more from blind hope and post-war euphoria than a real understanding of the Italian social structure.

As active members of the party, Rogers, Peressutti and Belgioioso played a significant role in Milan between 1943 and 1947. After the liberation of northern Italy, the surviving members

93 E. N. Rogers to E. Peressutti and L. Belgioioso, 30 April 1948, BBPR.
96 Ciucci, Planning, Architecture and Art After the 2nd World War (Zürich, 1994).
98 Belgioioso was in the Lombardy Regional Committee, Peressutti designed the logo, membership cards and letterhead for the Action Party, whilst Rogers (in Switzerland since 1943) was in regular contact with party members in exile.
of the BBPR together with other secular members of the Milanese Modernist groups were called upon to take up key posts within the public commissions, as well as being responsible for holding debates and conferences on reconstruction. These people were also central to the creation of the Casa della Cultura and the Movement for Architectural Studies. Most of these figures found themselves increasingly isolated by the political events of 1948; events that marked the beginning of a new, private phase, far from the political stage, which saw them choosing instead to concentrate on the opportunities provided by Milan’s urban middle classes and the desperately needed reconstruction.

This marks the beginning of a widespread condition that affected modernist architecture and its key protagonists, the cultural scene’s central figures and the passive supporters of its policies. Rogers’ decision to accept the invitation to promote the plan in Buenos Aires and teach one semester at the new architecture department in Tucumán ostensibly offered him the chance of obtaining international prestige. It gave Rogers the chance to distance himself from a political situation deemed to have reached its end, and to open a new and potent frontier for the BBPR studio, which had fallen victim to the effects of a long and drawn-out economic crisis.

The role played by the BBPR during this time, and by Rogers in particular, was becoming central to events in Milan. Its close links to the international scene (reinforced by Rogers during his stay in Switzerland between 1943 and 1945), the loss of Pagano, Giolli and Banfi as intellectual reference points and the fact that their political beliefs were rooted firmly in the centre would be decisive factors in the Milanese group’s critical success in post-war Italy.

A success fuelled by Rogers’ strong belief in the importance of international relations and their “instrumental” role in Milan’s cultural milieu.

With this decision, Rogers, confident of his new position within the CIAM, aimed to reinforce his own role as a cultural and ideological arbiter in Italy and open up new horizons that would consolidate the studio’s international credentials.

Immediately after casting his vote, Ernesto Rogers left for Argentina, asking the studio and his colleagues to keep him informed on all matters through regular and detailed correspondence.
This led to the accumulation of a large quantity of letters dating from 30th April 1948 to May 1949, covering every aspect of project activity, internal and external relations, meetings and programmes. This is a source of great historical interest thanks to the accuracy of its contents and, in particular, the fact it provides the unique possibility of recreating the relationships and psychological dynamics within the BBPR whilst allowing the reader to envisage the attitudes and viewpoints its members held towards the various people and situations with which they came into contact.

Once the conflict had ended, autarky and isolationist ideas had been done away with and many of the Maestri had emigrated to America; the centre of relations and exchanges shifted from the old continent onto an international scale. At the same time, the CIAM’s new policies for reform and regeneration tended towards a strengthening of individual national groups in order to improve their political standing with the local population.

Rogers’ journey to Argentina had a very real political and cultural significance. As a member of the CIAM council, he was expected to promote the creation of CIAM groups in Argentina and other countries in South America with the help of local modernist architects from Amacio Williams and Vivanco to Tomas Maldonado and Ferrari.

Rogers’ didactic and cultural activity continued in the same vein as it had during his time at Domus and his internment in Switzerland.

It was also informed by an issue that had been the subject of heated post-war debate within the CIAM: a synthesis of the arts. This subject had already been discussed by Giedion and Hans Arp during the Bridgewater Congress in 1947 and applied by Rogers in his editorial work at Domus. It would eventually provide the basis for one of the three debate sessions at the 1949 CIAM congress in Bergamo.

It is significant, therefore, that Rogers worked to promote Max Bill’s arrival in Argentina, and that he used the conference held in Buenos Aires (December 1948) to mark the opening of the exhibition Nuevas Realidades, to raise this issue.

This provided another opportunity for Rogers to reinforce his connection with the Swiss CIAM, as well as his cultural orientation, in which Giedion and Bill were used as two fundamental points of reference.
reference points. Proof of this can be found in the intense correspondence Rogers exchanged at this time with the CIAM secretary and Bill during his travels and conferences both in Buenos Aires and previously in Milan.

A firm believer in Concrete Art as the only art form compatible with modern architecture, Rogers discussed its general characteristics at the Argentinean conference, together with some elements of his own cultural reflections.

The difficulty of discussing a topic outside of his specialist areas was evident, but despite this Rogers touched upon a number of fundamental themes, echoing his Domus editorials. These included decoration as a necessary expression of individuality in architecture, Concrete art as a fundamental component of a vision of architecture as an integration of modern art forms, and Concrete art as a cultural element in synthesis with art history.

These subjects formed the introduction to the conference: "In contrast to the idea held by the majority of those involved in these issues, it is my opinion that our judgment of concrete art would be far more sturdy if we were able to demonstrate how the buds of this new art form belong to a plant that is well-rooted in the soil of history. I want to make it clear that it is not the result of an unexpected explosion (and therefore ephemeral), but the development of a basic idea that, in a latent or confused way, has always been a part of the art world."

Much like Giedion with his "Space, Time and Architecture", Rogers insisted upon architecture and modern art as the product of a "new tradition" found in certain vital elements throughout history, rather than a modernist vision advocating a break with the past. These ideas slowly became central to the theories and concepts of both architects and the choices that would be made throughout the 1950s.

After a brief period of acclimatization in Buenos Aires, Rogers moved to the Tucuman campus where he gave a course on the Theory of Architecture named "Función del arquitecto en nuestra sociedad" (The function of architect in society).

In his first lesson at Tucuman, Rogers concisely re-examined the characteristics inherent in this progressive way of revising modernist culture and its inadequacies, in order to fully understand real processes and respond accordingly.

The problem of "giving a dimension of reality to one's own science and ideals" passes through

111 Max Bill was in Milan in October 1948 for both the Congress for Reconstruction and a conference at the Casa della Cultura given by Peressutti.
112 E.N.Rogers to the Studio, March 1949, BBPR.
113 ENR, Esperienza, 146.
114 "Función del arquitecto en nuestra sociedad", in, BBPR, old correspondence, 20 sheets on paper headed "Universidad Nacional de Tucuman", s.d.
115 ibid., 3-4.
the development of a "method that reconciles the individual's concept of beauty with utility". This Albertian lesson is inextricably linked to the "architect's drama", passed over during his time at Domus and picked up during a conference held in Buenos Aires in October of the same year.

There is yet another basic element that keeps returning and is read through the social and historic role played by the architect: "The artist is the dialectic expression of society, he is the son of tradition whilst overcoming it and at times even destroying it. The artist is neither a passive product nor an entirely free creator of his own time. The artist is a link between the past and the future, he endorses the present, with his roots in the past and his branches in the future."

Rogers emphasized the architect's role of historic and cultural continuity within society whilst recognising the struggle between aesthetics and ethics in the reconstruction of a modern and just world present in his own projects. His course was dedicated to the house and basic structures for all; a house created for "the widest possible number of people". During the period between 1943 and 1948, we can still see the central themes in Rogers' theories and his strongly polemical nature. However, this is the last time Rogers discussed these issues so clearly; by the end of the course at Tucuman, he seemed to have finally abandoned this particular area, concentrating instead on less "political" issues and a more in-depth understanding of modern architecture and its relationship with society and history.

After a number of "happy" months at the Tucuman campus, by the beginning of the year Rogers felt ostracised and found relationships with those involved with the Buenos Aires plan rather strained as he was unable to hide his own bewilderment at the complicity between "modern" Argentinean architects and a "neo-Fascist" government like that of Peron.

Two months of slow travel within Latin America followed, where he travelled through Chile and then Peru, holding public lectures and meetings. He was also asked by Giedion if he would bring one or two Latin American representatives to the Bergamo Congress.

The meetings in New York that took place in late May 1949, first with Kaufman Jr to establish cooperation between the BBPR studio and the MOMA, and later with Gropius and Sert.

116 ibid., 5.
117 ENR, "Il dramma del'architetto", in, ENR, Esperienzo, 165-170.
118 ENR, Farewell, 2-3.
119 ENR, Farewell, 10.
121 Between February and March 1949, Rogers was sent first to Santiago de Chile and then to Lima to lecture at their respective Architecture departments.
122 S.Giedion to Rogers, 4.IV.1949, BBPR.
to discuss the next CIAM conference at Bergamo, brought his travels to an end and Rogers returned to Europe that very summer.

During this brief but decisive time, his role as intellectual and political mediator between Italian architecture and the international scene that had weighed so heavily on Rogers' affirmation of centrality during the post-war years, was fully consolidated.

In the meantime, the Milanese studio was fast becoming the Italian base for all foreign architects linked to the international CIAM circuit. Between just 1947 and 1948, Neutra, Maldonado (sent to Europe by Rogers), Kaufmann jr, director of the MOMA, Aalto, Giedion, Bill, Steinberg and Roth were received by Peressuti and Belgioioso who, in some cases, organised meetings with other members of the MSA at the Casa della Cultura.

In addition to this system of contacts and links, there was an interesting development in the use of communication and knowledge regarding how it could be utilised.

Once his experience at Domus (considered to be the official mouthpiece of the MSA and the Italian CIAM) was over, numerous attempts were made to found a new magazine. After the failure to create an MSA journal, a contact with Wogensky, a student of Le Corbusier and member of the Ascoral group, proved highly useful as it led the CIAM to propose that the BBPR create a new international magazine.

Having heard about the meeting from Belgioioso, Rogers (in Argentina) clarifies: "At best this seems interesting, because it is always good to have an open channel at our disposal. My two years at Domus were so successful that I am now bound to defend myself; in fact I am no longer Rogers the architect, but Rogers former editor of Domus (..) This success ties us to the following consideration, I, WE cannot lower our standards".

This awareness of the ideological and political value fast being acquired by certain means of communication accompanied Rogers throughout the development of the centrality of his own cultural and political role.

The international relations activity that year was completed by a series of visits to Europe and the United States made, in particular, by Belgioioso in reference to the reorganisation of the studio. All this is documented in letters and reflections written by Belgioioso and Christof Bon, the young Swiss architect working in the studio to whom new "international" projects

124 This was a proposal made by the BBPR and Zanuso that floundered after a meeting with Garzanti in which he expressed serious doubts about the project. E. Peressuti to ENR, 27 May 1948, BBPR.

125 Studio to ENR, 26 October 1948, BBPR.

126 ENR to studio, 12 October 1948, BBPR.

127 In 1948 Belgioioso travelled to Switzerland and England. In his second trip, not only did he make the usual contact with the Mars Group, Belgioioso also analysed the organisation of English architectural studios.
were entrusted. These documents were sent to Rogers during his stay in Argentina. A rationalisation of processes, experimentation with plastic materials and a progressive detachment from active politics all happened at this time as a reaction to a new climate, in order to define a new form of agnostic professionalism that would mark 1950s Italy.

By this time, the atmosphere in Milan and in the rest of Italy was rapidly changing. These letters contain a real underlying concern for international events, the start of the arms race and the divide between the two blocs. Similarly, news arriving from Italy reported stagnation, crisis and a scarcity of jobs.

"In these three years since the war - Belgioioso wrote to Rogers at Christmas 1948 - (which are fast becoming a pre-war era with no hope for continuity) (...) the solidarity that united all men in the face of a common enemy is disintegrating." New developments in political processes merged with a new phase of reform within the CIAM and the organisation of its congresses. This situation epitomised the close link between the current climate, the mental states of those involved, the politics involved in cultural choices and strategic direction. The cultural opposition between the various factions became unmistakably political. Every decision taken seemed to cause further instability between the different groups.

During this time of confrontation and the progressive predominance of the pro-Eastern bloc faction within the CIAM, as was the case in many such cultural groups in post-war Europe, the choice to discuss weighty "international" issues such as the reform of modern architectural culture, seemed to be an easy form of political agnosticism capable of smoothing out differences and finding a broader consensus.

The call for a generic, harmonious link between ethics and aesthetics and the general desire for "a house for everyone" seemed to smooth over all political glitches and calls for a direct relationship between social and national politics.

The case of the Bergamo congress is symptomatic of this, as we can see from the correspondence exchanged between Rogers and the BBPR studio, and the Sert Archive.

In June 1948 Peressutti notified Rogers that he had informally been in contact with Giedion, who wanted to hold the next CIAM congress to Bergamo as an alternative to the proposal made by Helena Syrkus, Sert, Havliceck and Samuel, who wanted to hold the congress in

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128 C. Bon to ENR, 4 VIII. 1948, BBPR.
129 L. Belgioioso to ENR, 31 XII. 1948, BBPR.
130 The case of the MSA and the change in atmosphere within the group that occurred between its foundation and the early 1950s was symptomatic: Baffa, Morandi, Protasoni, Rossari. Il Movimento Studi per l'Architettura (Bari: Laterza, 1995), 201-225.
131 Protasoni, Sara. "Il gruppo Ciam Italiano e la tradizione del Moderno", in, Rassegna 52 (1992), 28-39; ENR "Programma Domus: la casa dell'uomo", in, Domus 205 (1946), now in Rogers, Esperienza, 80-84.
Prague.

Giedion was a key player and brokered a solution to this very delicate situation. On 27th June, Sert wrote: "I have just written a long letter to Gropius about this, and asked him to discuss the issue of the next CIAM congress with you, especially regarding where it should be held, because you two represent the two extremes of the CIAM. If you two are able to find a common course of action, we will be able to solve these potentially dangerous problems facing us. If not, I am very much afraid that the CIAM will split between East and West, and its ideas will be destroyed. (...) Helena Syrkus was here recently, and will stay a few more days with us upon her return from Lausanne. We will discuss the matter again, and I hope she will understand that it is better not only for the CIAM but also for contact between East and West, that we not go to Prague before the situation is clear and the war tensions in Europe have calmed. There are serious problems which have to be solved if the CIAM and the movement we stand for are to survive."

The choice of the Czechoslovakian capital by a number of the CIAM's Communist members was symbolic of the political situation at that time. Between February and March of that year, the Czechoslovakian Government of National Unity had fallen through the suppression of opposition parties followed by an immense workers' revolt mobilized by the Czech Communist Party. A new government with a Communist majority was quickly formed.

These political events monopolized the attention of the Western press during the first months of 1948; the same time the American Congress definitively approved the Marshall Plan.

The proposal of Prague as venue for the next CIAM congress seemed like a political provocation and a request for its leaders to take a firm position.

On 15th July 1948, Sert responded to Giedion after a long discussion with Gropius: "We cannot control what will happen with the CIAM. If the world is split in two, the congress will also be inevitably separated by physical barriers beyond our control. If things improve, the congress will not have the difficulties that you expect. Though things are bad, and as an incorrigible optimist I believe they cannot continue in this way for very long and that changes must take place before the end of the year, following the American elections. Gropius is of the same opinion on this matter though he has a gloomier outlook of the situation than I. We both agree that it is useless worrying about making a decision between Prague and Bergamo right now. By the end of the year, three months before the Congress, we will be called to make a final decision. At that time it may be totally impossible for an American to obtain a visa for Czechoslovakia. If that is the case,
we will have to decide on Bergamo, supposing members of Eastern countries can come there. I have received no communication lately from Melena on the subject but I am all for Italy as far as my plans go and I intend to spend two months there before or after the congress. \(^{36}\)

In the meantime, Giedion was working on the Italian bid with the BBPR and the Italian CIAM group. Rogers received regular updates on the situation and was also writing to Giedion in Zurich at the same time.

In August 1948, in response to another letter from Zurich, Sert wrote: "In my previous letter I answered your question about holding the Congress in Bergamo instead of Prague. I agree with you but insist that you should get Havlicek's approval, together with that of the other CIAM delegates in the country." \(^{37}\)

At the same time, Belgioioso addressed the issue with Rogers making it clear that Bergamo was now the chosen venue: "Giedion came here with his wife.(..) This morning we went to Bergamo in my car and it was very encouraging. (..) Giedion says that the space will have a good influence over the decisions to be made about the friction between rationality and aesthetics that is currently afflicting the CIAM. He has therefore decided that the congress will take place there and not in Prague, and that it will be held at Easter 1949, muy bien. We have received a letter from Sert and he is also in agreement over this decision. The only hostility comes from Helene. The Swiss are equally happy because, as G. told me, if they held the congress in Prague, none of them would have attended. G. believes that even the Poles will eventually come and show great enthusiasm." \(^{38}\)

During this phase, the choice of venue took on a new, purely political dimension which tended towards preventing requests from the group's pro-Eastern elements and to find an acceptable choice of mediation in Bergamo (and Italy).

Meanwhile, the discussion within the Italian CIAM \(^{39}\) grew in intensity due to the "communist" faction's desire to use the Bergamo congress to discuss national issues. Peressuti wrote in January 1949: "Tomorrow morning we will have a CIAM congress here. I think that Bottino and Pucci in particular wish to bring up national issues before the CIAM (the Fanfani plan etc.). We will naturally always address these issues on a CIAM, that is international, level but not pro domo as I believe they would like." \(^{40}\)

This call for internationalism seems to hide an uncompromising political will and a desire to avoid becoming institutionally isolated after certain modernist Italian architects refused to make

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\(^{38}\) L. Belgioioso to Rogers, VIII.1948, BBPR.

\(^{39}\) Protasoni, Ciam Italia, 36.

\(^{40}\) E. Peressuti to Rogers, I.II.1949, BBPR.
a decision regarding the criteria that would govern the country's reconstruction and the way in which this would be carried out.  

During this time, Peressutti acted as a link between the CIAM Directive and the Italian organization. On 6th March 1949 he was in Paris together with the CIAM leaders to organise the congress and define its various subjects and working groups. Peressutti is referred to in documents as the delegate in charge and the BBPR studio, as the headquarters for the organisation of the congress. The period was set for late July as requested by the American group through Sert, who was working hard towards improving the CIAM's international profile and ultimately shifting its central focal point from Europe to America.

141 Protasoni, Ciam Italia, 32-33.  
143 In a series of letters sent during May 1949, Sert insisted to Giedion upon a change in direction regarding geographical balances within the CIAM given the presence of Gropius at Harvard and the growth in the number of American members. He tactfully suggested the creation of a CIAM secretariat in North America, as well as working towards the creation of a number of CIAM cells in South America under his supervision: J.L. Sert to S. Giedion, letters, 4.V. 1949; 12.V. 1949; 24.V. 1949, Harvard University, Frances Loeb Library.
The first congress document, put together in Paris, detailed the division of the two central themes in keeping with the two dominant schools of thought within the European CIAM. The ‘main subject’ was linked to the use of the CIAM framework and its application through that created by Le Corbusier and the Ascoral group to whom the tasks of the congress organisational group were transferred. The ‘secondary subject’ regarded the issue of synthesis within the arts - a subject close to Giedion’s heart and often discussed by Rogers - as a continuation of the previous congress held at Bridgwater. Another commission was set up for the “reorganisation of the teaching of architecture”. Initially entrusted to the Mars Group, Rogers would eventually preside over the commission during the Bergamo Congress. In May of the same year, the subject was dealt with directly by Rogers, Sert and Gropius in New York, who made their contribution with an unedited document sent to the Bergamo congress and from which Rogers would create the final document laying out the commission’s duties. Once again, Rogers is used as a guarantor for the CIAM’s maestri, as well as an advocate of a policy of mediation and continuity within their work.

4.4 - Conclusion

The period between 1945 and 1948 represented a new beginning for Rogers that reinforced his role in Italian national culture and the position held by the BBPR in Italy.
Though he would only direct Domus for two years (1946-48), he used it to create a cultural role for himself that was in direct continuity with Pagano. Furthermore, his invitation to join the CIAM Board transformed him into the CIAM’s principle reference point in Italy together with the BBPR studio.
However, the element I have aimed to analyse on in this chapter is the definition of Domus as a breeding ground for theories and projects that embody a “third way” for Italian architecture, between a return to populist realism and an abstract, formalistic modernism. Rogers chose to promote dialogue on order to resolve the crisis brought about by the urgently needed


146 In May that year Rogers was invited by Sert to attend the meeting of the American CIAM. Over the following weeks Rogers held further meetings with Sert and Gropius: J.L.Sert to S.Giedion, letters. 4.V.1949; “Rogers left a couple of days ago and I had several talks with him about Ciam matters. He should be in Milan by now. I am also in touch with Peressutti”, 24.V.1949, Harvard University, Frances Loeb Library, Cambridge Mass., Ciam C6.
reconstruction and an awareness of the limits of avant-garde culture.

The choices made by Rogers tended towards architecture on a “human scale”, allowing this to be the key factor in the modern project. It was a new form of humanism in which the culture of the Modern Movement and new traditions come together to follow the path carved out for them by the Swiss CIAM and the two books by Giedion (Spazio, tempo, Architettura) and one by Alfred Roth (La nouvelle architecture).

This was a phase of frenetic research that took place in a climate of extraordinary tension caused by political situation both in Italy and abroad, that would witness over the course of just a few years, the attempts to create a government of National Solidarity in Italy, the spectre of the Cold War and the creation of two opposing blocs (as seen during the BBPR’s organisation of the CIAM Congress in Bergamo and commented upon further in the final chapter). It was in this context that Rogers championed the idea of dialogue between opposing factions, of reconciliation and the creation of tools that would facilitate the creation of a meeting point for context, human scale and the culture of the Modern Movement.

The experience at Domus failed miserably due to strong political pressure but also because it was unable to represent the majority in its debate on Italian transformation versus conservation. The concept of the “third way” was also, therefore, a political and cultural failure.

At this time, Rogers also attempted to build and strengthen his own public position through a re-evaluation of the Italian Modern Movement and Pagano under Fascism as a progressive force that, mistakenly, washed away its sins through the sacrifice of martyrs. This conscious act of reconciliation would eventually lead to a definitive reinforcement of the cultural role played by Rogers.

This was an historic phase of change and fortification for Rogers, who experienced its arrival in the late 1940s with the decisive experience of directing Domus and the affirmation of the central role played by himself and the BBPR studio within the CIAM.

Here we see how reflections upon the role played by human scale and the need for an active dialogue with tradition are slowly forming, predating the decisive era of Casabella-continuità.
The Ciam Congress in Bergamo, 1949

Congressisti in visita alla società Dalmine (Foto Archivio architetto Sandro Colombi).

A sinistra: José Luis Sert (di spalle) e Le Corbusier alla piscina della Dalmine (Foto Wolfe).

The Ciam Congress in Bergamo, 1949
The Ciam Congress in Bergamo, 1949
Chapter 5: “Continuità e crisi”. The experience of Casabella-continuità. 1953-1964

5.0 - Introduction

When Ernesto N. Rogers, the new editor of Casabella, added the subtitle “continuità” to the magazine’s title in autumn 1953, he brought a complex personal and cultural journey he had begun in the 1930s to an end.

In this chapter, I analyse the many cultural and operative variants applied by Rogers to the term ‘continuity’ during his time at Casabella, focussing on the period between 1953 and 1958. I also consider a number of the BBPR projects which could be seen as highly relevant to the Italian and wider international debate. These works include: the Ina-casa neighbourhood in Cesate, the new museum at the Castello Sforzesco, Milan’s Torre Velasca and Rocco Scotellaro’s tomb in the outskirts of Matera.

My aim is to analyse the influence wielded by Rogers’ ideological and publishing activity at Casabella-continuità had upon Italian architecture in the 1950s, paying particular attention to the parallel process of radical modernisation that was transforming the country beyond recognition.

The term continuity is central if we are to understand the significance of Italian architecture during this historic time given to the changes it underwent in the 1950s and its international reputation. (See the ENR/Banham debate that preceded the Otterlo CIAM congress).

Continuity could be defined as one of the most striking characteristics in post-war Italian architecture; an incongruous member of the international scene whose relationship with historical context, traditions and landscape became central themes would define its identity for years to come.

Continuity also represents the completion of Rogers’ cultural and personal journey, proving that “the destiny of an architect is that of his generation”.

1 This chapter is the result of many papers I have given at conferences over the last few years, allowing me to further my research into this fundamental theme: “Continuità e crisi: the theoretical and design approach of E.N. Rogers in the architectural post-war debate”, at the International EAAE Congress, Delft, 8 - 10 February 1996; “A proposito Ernesto Nathan Rogers. Modern architecture: vision and revision”, introduction Professor Kenneth Frampton, Columbia University, New York, 26th November 1996; “Ernesto
1953 was a fundamental year for the identity of Ernesto Nathan Rogers and the role he plays within Modernist circles both in Italy and abroad.

Close ties with Giedion, Gropius and Sert, along with his presence on the Council for the reorganisation of the CIAM from 1947 thanks to his intense involvement with the Congresses held in Bergamo and Bridgewater, all contributed to Rogers' being established as a central figure in 1950s international Modernist culture, and an ideological and cultural linchpin between Italy and the rest of the world. This status was also achieved thanks to the fact he was a key
member of the Italian CIAM together with his BBPR colleagues, Lodovico Belgioioso and Enrico Peressutti; his having organised an international delegation to attend Milan's 1951 Triennale “De Divina Proportione” (In Divine Proportion); his co-direction of the CIAM's summer school in Venice from 1952; his nomination within the “Five International Architects” group to design the new UNESCO headquarters in Paris2 and last but not least, his being named as the new editor of Casabella in 1953, publishing his first issues in late autumn of the same year.

Rogers' presence was doubly important. On the one hand he was a highly influential CIAM member with a political and ideological approach marked by an underlying scepticism and a continuation of modernist ideals; on the other, he was a member of the BBPR and among those central to the definition of Italian architecture's cultural identity.

Italy's national culture was subject to a profound figurative and conceptual metamorphosis that mirrored a similar evolution taking place throughout Europe and the wider world, and the cultural and political role played by Rogers in all of this was decisive. Italian architecture saw a significant rise in international attention fuelled by two events involving Rogers and the BBPR that took place in England within the space of just a few years: the exhibition dedicated to Italian and Swedish architecture at London's RIBA in 1951, and the controversy unleashed by Reyner Banham in 1959 in the pages of the Architectural Review, in which he accused Italian architecture of “betraying” the moral values of modern architecture.

The London exhibition “Italian contemporary architecture” was the first real international exposition of post-war Italian architecture and was overseen by two Italian CIAM delegates, Franco Albini and Enrico Peressutti.

Here, works by many Italian architects from the CIAM and MSA were displayed, such as Sant'Elia, Terragni and Lingeri, Pagano, Persico and Nizzoli, BBPR, Gardella, Albini, Bottoni, Mucchi, De Carlo, Menghi, Zanuso, Gandolfi, Cerutti and Marescotti. The exhibition met with great critical acclaim, leading the Architects' Journal to comment that: “The Italians are not tired of being modern and remain uninhibited (Author's note: The comparison here is with Swedish architecture, which is also on display): on the contrary, they [the Italians] are riding the crest of a wave; very busy and highly contemporary”3.

The architects chosen and the works exhibited are a clear indication of the desire to establish a stylistic and formal continuity between the rationalist experiences of the 1930s and the first works created in the immediate post-war era, in particular through the building traditions

2 Between 1952 and 1958, Rogers, together with Lucio Costa, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Sven Markelius, was a member of the “Five international architects” commission created to design UNESCO's Paris headquarters; Bonfanti et al. *Museo, architettura, BBPR*, A411.

3 Sara Protasoni, “Il gruppo italiano e la tradizione del Moderno”, in, “The last CIAMs”, Rossegra 52 (December 1992), 34-35.
established by the first Ina-casa neighbourhoods that had been recently completed. Particular attention was paid to architecture, defined by Rogers in an article published in the Architect’s yearbook IV (1950):

“The evolution of taste and techniques is not necessarily bound to a particular economic social state, as artists are always clear on the ultimate objectives of their work and are, therefore, able to impose an “aesthetic morality” (...) With the market partly saturated by this spate of luxury building, and the government increasingly burdened by the needs of the country, a fuller deployment of building operations aimed at satisfying popular requirements must be respected. (...) A recent series of competitions entered by hundreds of Italian architects showed that a fire still glows under the ashes, and that the more mature architects have undergone an evolution during these last few years. (...) In these as in other projects, Italian architecture’s unique style is obvious. Even in the midst of other contemporary architectures, it has retained unmistakable characteristics. (...) The development in Italian architectural style over the last thirty years has been tied to the large-scale transformation of architecture in other countries. Moving from the more rigid forms of early rationalism, architecture is creating a more fluid physiognomy for itself that is faithful to technical demands and the realities of everyday life. (...) (Italian Architecture) is a shining example of the humanist approach to architecture; that is to say, of architecture’s unique and universal vision linking the activities of contemporary architects to the roots of our oldest traditions”.

The images that accompanied the essay referred to the works and authors that would be present at the London exhibition a year later. As the delegate organising the CIAM congress in Bergamo, Peressutti allowed Rogers to be seen as a significant presence in the conceptual development of the exhibition’s structure and the choices made regarding it.

The tone of Rogers’ texts, like his choices for the RIBA exhibition, was still strongly conditioned by his ethical desire for reconstruction and his short stint at Domus. What is evident, however, is the conceptual structure Rogers built around the image of Italian architecture projected to the rest of the world as a continuation of its modern history, yet the architect was also aware that language too was following a complex and unique trajectory.

In 1951, Rogers published a brief yet significant essay in the magazine Aut-Aut entitled “the state of Italian architecture”, in which he wrote: “Last born, amongst older sisters from more


5 The majority of those whose work was displayed in London belonged to the MSA, and with regards to this Rossani writes: “It is also interesting to highlight how Domus, under the direction of Ernesto N. Rogers, came to be considered an organic part of the association (Author’s note: MSA), confirming that “the magazine Domus was for two years the training ground where he was able to demonstrate this trend” in, Baffa et al., Msa, 33.
MINISTERO DEL LAVORO E DELLA PREVIDENZA SOCIALE

PIANO INCREMENTO OCCUPAZIONE OPERAIA - CASE PER LAVORATORI

BANDO N. 4287

per la prenotazione di N. 8 alloggi INA-CASA

Costruiti nei Comune di Reana del Roiale

a favore dei lavoratori che prestino abitualmente la loro opera nel comune suddetto e nei comuni di: PASIAN DI PRATO - BASILIANO - CAMPOMIRMADO - LESTITZA - MARTIGNAGGIO

MERETTO DI TOMBA - MORTEGLIANO - PAGNACCO - PAVIA DI UDINE

POZZUOLO DEL FRILLI - PRADAMANO - TATAGNACCIO - UDINE

da assegnarsi «CON PROMESSA DI VENDITA» e «IN LOCAZIONE»

Tutti i lavoratori che proseguono abitualmente la loro opera in uno dei Comuni sopra citati e che abbiano versato adesso una somma di contributi dovuti alla CASSA INA-CASA ai sensi della legge 256/1949, m. D. possono presentare domanda di prenotazione per i seguenti alloggi:

1) «con promessa di vendita» per loro stessi o per altri proprietari di alloggi nei Comuni sopra citati e dimostrere che nessuno dei componenti il nostro famiglia ha proprietari di un alloggio in uno di essi Comuni;

2) «in locazione» anche se risultino proprietari di un alloggio, ma non ne possono usufruire per essere una imputazione alla loro volontà.

Per gli alloggi di locazione non possono guadagnarne di nuovo, i lavoratori, che hanno già guadagnato un alloggio in uno dei Comuni sopra citati, per ogni elemosina accettata ai sensi di legge 256/1949. Tutti i lavoratori che hanno già guadagnato un alloggio in uno dei Comuni sopra citati, per ogni elemosina accettata ai sensi di legge 256/1949.

**AVVERTENZE**

Per gli alloggi di locazione non possono guadagnarne di nuovo, i lavoratori, che hanno già guadagnato un alloggio in uno dei Comuni sopra citati, per ogni elemosina accettata ai sensi di legge 256/1949. Tutti i lavoratori che hanno già guadagnato un alloggio in uno dei Comuni sopra citati, per ogni elemosina accettata ai sensi di legge 256/1949.

Per gli alloggi di locazione non possono guadagnarne di nuovo, i lavoratori, che hanno già guadagnato un alloggio in uno dei Comuni sopra citati, per ogni elemosina accettata ai sensi di legge 256/1949. Tutti i lavoratori che hanno già guadagnato un alloggio in uno dei Comuni sopra citati, per ogni elemosina accettata ai sensi di legge 256/1949.

**NOTE**

In nota: la presente manifestazione è stata redatta sulla base delle leggi e disposizioni in vigore al momento della sua pubblicazione. Tuttavia, le disposizioni e normative possono subire vari modifiche nel corso del tempo. Pertanto, è consigliabile consultare le ultime versioni delle leggi e disposizioni in vigore per evitare eventuali errori. Se si desidera avere informazioni più aggiornate o specifiche, si consiglia di consultare le officine legali o consulenti adeguate o le fonti ufficiali."
advanced countries, modern Italian architecture had chosen how to behave with youthful nonchalance without a clear notion of its own nature. But perhaps thanks more to intuition than self-criticism, it has quickly developed and created its own distinct personality where very diverse artistic temperaments are brought together. (...) Since this controversial initial phase has been overcome, deeper cultural motivations and those caused by the influence of given objectives (climate, materials, etc), have taken precedence, leading our architecture to the place it rightfully belongs to: the place of tradition”

Just eight years later; Reyner Banham vehemently accused Italian architecture of “betraying” its futurist and rationalist roots; his reason for this was a series of projects on the Neoliberty works of the young Gabetti and Isola and Vittorio Gregotti that had recently been published in Casabella-continuità.

During this time Italian architecture finally moved beyond the poverty-stricken years of reconstruction and launched into one of its most prolific, albeit contradictory phases of stylistic and project-based activity of the 20th Century. And, at the centre of this renaissance, was Rogers' Casabella-continuità.

5.1.2 - Aix-en-Provence, 1953

In the early post-war period, Italian architecture expressed its linguistic and cultural independence from the experiences of other European countries and North America. This was fiercely defended by Rogers and was also manifest in the increasingly diverse nature of projects undertaken by the Italian CIAM after the 7th CIAM Congress, held in Bergamo (1949) following through the congresses held in Hoddesdon (1951, “The Heart of the City”), Aix-en-Provence

8 In the first part of his book on post-war Italian architecture, Manfredo Tafuri traces the terms of a rather contradictory, ambiguous framework in which the recourse to a relationship with history became central to the Italian experience between 1945 and the end of the 1950s: Tafuri, Storia architettura italiana, 5-123. On the concept of anomaly in post-war Italian architecture, see: Luca Molinari, “Between continuity and crisis. History and project in Italian Architectural culture of the Postwar period”, in, 2G 15 (October 2000), 4-11; Luca Molinari, “Giancarlo De Carlo and the post war modernist Italian architectural culture: role originality and networking”, in, D. van den Heuvel, G. de Waal, ed., “Team X Between Modernity and the Everyday” (Delft: TU Delft, 2003), 83-92; Luca Molinari, “Metamorphosis Italy”, in, A+U 420 (2005), 8-16.
Adalberto Libera, drawings, 1938
These works seemed to consolidate a state of multiplicity and incongruity that had been heavily influenced by Italy's unique, radical and highly contradictory process of economic and social modernisation developed during that particular decade, which was still well behind the rest of Europe.

1953 is still considered the dawn of the so-called "economic boom" experienced by Italy in the late 1950s and 1960s.

Italy was slowly recovering from an arduous post-war reconstruction period, marked politically by the start of the Cold War and the presence of Western Europe's largest Communist party, and economically by a dependence upon a system split between a few urban industrial centres and a land structure ruled by agriculture, providing employment for 45% of the country's working population.

This was an economic situation that, by the end of the 1940s, was experiencing massive unemployment, a traditional, oligarchic and highly conservative approach to production and the wary acceptance of modern life and its economics by the urban middle classes.

This condition was in contrast to the world of architecture, especially with the inauguration of INA-casa; a large-scale multi-year residential reconstruction plan that between 1949 and 1963 involved one-third of Italian architects and more than two-thirds of Italian municipalities in the construction of 355,000 homes throughout the country.

The framework law known as the "Fanfani Law" entailed a rejection of industrialisation in favour of long term employment for the jobless workforce, the use of traditional building techniques and the basic idea that a home could be bought through a state system of micro-credit.

At the same time, the ideology behind the INA-Casa experience allowed for a return to the concept of unity, of micro neighbourhoods built on a human scale and the expression of a new...
community through the creation of modern homes that stayed faithful to traditional residential architecture.

The INA-casa was the most significant project for modern Italian culture in the early post-war years, especially for the new generation of architects who had been entirely excluded from the cultural and design processes of Italy's reconstruction. De Carlo, Gino Valle, Vittorio Gregotti, Carlo Aymonino all created their first works with INA-casa. From this perspective, INA-casa provided a fascinating battleground for modernist tendencies, the concept of tradition and pre-existing conditions.

However, INA-casa was a solution embraced by the historic generation of Italian rationalists that placed modernist cultural tendencies in direct conflict with elements of the Italian housing and building traditions.

From this viewpoint, the INA-casa experience was another significant example of continuity, directly linking post-war Italian architectural culture to the late 1930s and Pagano's exhibition during the first round of competitions held between 1949 and 1955.

12 BBPR, Figini and Pollini, Bottoni, Diotallevi and Marescotti, Quaroni, Ridolfi, Libera, Samonà, Cosenza were all asked to design INA-Casa neighbourhoods between Milan, Rome, Matera and Naples during the first round of competitions held between 1949 and 1955.
of architecture in rural Italy\textsuperscript{13}, the autarchic and rural projects of the BBPR, Gaetano Ciocca, Bottoni and Asnago and Vender\textsuperscript{14}, and Libera’s research on the relationship between human scale, building systems and building traditions. There was a fine line that, during the war, saw the same studies experiment with minimalist and pre-fabricated houses that were published in the Manuale dell’architetto immediately after the war.

The manual’s graphics and concept were created by Libera with Ridolfi’s help\textsuperscript{15} and provided the basis for the INA-Casa guidelines and the projects for INA-casa neighbourhoods designed by the same architects.

This experience had a direct effect on the majority of residential projects presented by the Italian group to the CIAM\textsuperscript{9} in Aix-en-Provence\textsuperscript{16} proving how different they were to similar proposals made by the Smithson’s\textsuperscript{17} or the Dutch group.

The Ina-casa neighbourhood in Cesate created by the BBPR, Albini, Gardella and Castiglioni\textsuperscript{18}, and Figini and Pollini’s project for Borgo Porto Conte\textsuperscript{19} are clear examples of the kind of design and research operating in Italy at that time. During this period the CIAM seemed to function as a rhetorical superstructure rather than an active force. The dimensions of the suburbs and villages as a made-to-measure community, the use of rural architectural traditions as a modern framework and their ties with traditional building methods also had a sizeable influence upon these projects.

Rogers and the other architects involved in these projects described the main features of the Cesate INA-casa project in the following way:

\textsuperscript{13} G. Pagano and G. Daniel, Galleria della Mostra di architettura rurale alla VI Triennale di Milano, 1936; Pagano, Daniel, Architettura rurale italiana, Quaderni della Triennale, (Milan: Hoepli, 1936).
\textsuperscript{14} Here I refer to the semi-rural suburb for workers by Bottoni and Pucci in the Milan area (1938-39) and Valera Fratta (1943-45), the houses built for the Ente Nazionale Risi by the BBPR (1938-1940), Gateano Ciocca’s rural prototypes in Garlasco (1935) and Asnago and Vender’s colonial houses in Tenuta Castello (1937); Luca Molinari, “Tra continuità e crisi. L’architettura moderna lombarda dagli anni Trenta alla metropoli contemporanea”, in, Valerio Terraroli ed., Lombardia Moderna. Arte e architettura del Novecento (Milan: Skira ed., 2007), 257-262.
\textsuperscript{17} Clearly explained in: Dirk van Den Heuvel, “Le present de l’utopique: la grilla de röidentification urbane d’Alison et Peter Smithson”, in, AA.VV., CIAM9, 147-156.
\textsuperscript{18} Bonfanti, Porta Museo architettura BBPR, A60.
“The basic idea is to develop opportunities for life that develop from the family nucleus into many more, thus expanding the community. The houses are, in fact, predominantly for the use of any family and they have been freely focused together around the “heart” (..). This “heart” is ostensibly a typical square that allows inhabitants to meet one another as they carry out the fundamental collective acts of a community. These various “hearts” are linked by a centre adjacent to the railway station.”

The project’s ideological core revolved around the idea of a “heart” as developed at the CIAM congress in Hoddesdon held in the same year, and at which Rogers played a significant role having particular input into the final version of the congress’ catalogue. This concept seems to have more in common with the projects for South America presented by Sert at that time,

20 Bonfanti, Porta Museo architettura BBPR, A60.
BBPR, F.Albini, I.Gardella, G.Albricci. Ina-casa Cesate, 1951
than Le Corbusier’s “machinist” perspective of the modern city.

“Heart”, “Community”, “human scale” – these concepts brought together one of the CIAM’s most highly debated post-war developments in an attempt to revise the concept of the functionalist city with the Italian INA-casa project and reconstruction through Rogers’ role as political and cultural mediator. Rogers saw the construction of a Modern Movement tradition and its link to the concept of a “human scale” as the key to moving past the heroic era of the avant-garde once and for all.

Here we see cultural schemes and projects that looked for a reduction in the mechanical and deterministic factors represented by the CIAM framework, in order to allow for a greater consideration of moral content and human scale in architecture.

Rogers’ doubts concerned the difficulty of applying overly rigid methodologies to real processes, not to mention the challenge of linking real life and all of its complexities to Modernist orthodoxy. However, Rogers kept these doubts confined to the CIAM without ever really discussing them in any detail.

During the congress in Aix-en-Provence, Rogers chaired the session dedicated to the Training of Architects as he has done in Bergamo. During the session he maintained a didactic position very close to that of Gropius, though Rogers insisted upon the centrality of history and its active relevance to modern projects.

However, the role played by Rogers and the Italian group became increasingly critical of the CIAM mission and its cultural policy. In a letter written to CIAM delegates in La Sarraz in September 1955, Rogers wrote: “the bulk of the CIAM’s ideas have now been taken on by most architects. And most of these architects hold positions of power. The CIAM is no longer in opposition; but our power is superficial. The great danger to architecture is Modernist conformity. (...) We must give the public real examples according to a pragmatic methodology (...) that shows what we have in common and the continuity in our way of thinking”.

These views would go on to inform the political role played by Rogers in the CIAM during the 1950s. They would also be used by him (through Casabella-continuità) to define the characteristics of Italian architecture that continued to develop, culminating in his presentation on the BBPR’s Torre Velasca, Gardella’s Olivetti cafeteria and Giancarlo De Carlo’s houses in Matera given to the 1958 CIAM congress in Otterlo. Not only did these projects represent a conceptual and formal distance, they demonstrated an identity that was now fully formed.
In the winter of 1953 Giò Ponti convinced Mazzocchi, the owner of Editoriale Domus, to resuscitate Casabella, which had been out of circulation since 1947, placing Ernesto Rogers at the helm.

I believe that despite the conflict between these two characters in their approach to Italian architectural culture, Ponti believed the role played by Casabella during that time of great change was crucial. And, he knew that Rogers was the only person who could reasonably replace Pagano, given his relevance within the Italian modernist community and his international reputation.

In December of the same year issue number 199 was published. The first real change was the magazine’s title after Rogers decided to add the term continuità.

The only image on the front page of this first edition was the title. Gone were the images and the authors who had created the austere and avant-garde aura of Pagano’s Casabella, in the style of German and Soviet magazines. Instead, there was just a blank page dominated by the

22 “I cannot forget that it was you who proposed Mazzocchi entrust Casabella to me and for this I sincerely thank you”, this sentence ends a brief message from Rogers thanking Ponti at the end of his time as editor in April 1965; ENR to Giò Ponti, 2.IV.1965, BBPR, Casabella envelope.
24 Claviola, Il destino dell’architettura. La rivista Casabella 1930-1936. L’invenzione di un linguaggio per im-
magazine’s new name in an elegant yet domestic font. The only addition to this was the highly significant by-line “rivista internazionale di architettura”, International Architecture Magazine. By adding the word Continuità Rogers made a bold ideological statement; a clear indication of what would become one of the key elements in the identity of post-war Italian architecture.

As the magazine continued to be published, the term continuità took on a number of complex meanings, making it an essential for understanding Rogers’ theories and this particular period for Italian and European architecture.

These meanings developed progressively during the first six years of Rogers’ time at the magazine, with editorial staff actively making contributions. This team included Marco Zanuso (who had already worked with Rogers on Domus), Giancarlo De Carlo, the young Vittorio Gregotti, and the highly influential philosopher Enzo Pace, who provided conceptual inspiration throughout this period.

The term continuity came to represent an essential feature of the CIAM’s unwritten post-war ideology and the desire for a new form of Modern tradition as expressed many times by Giedion, Sert and Rogers. Furthermore, despite the fact that Rogers had always shunned a global understanding of reality, continuity became central to understanding this period in Italian architecture. Not only did it epitomise that time, it became a term shared by an entire community of professionals and university teaching staff.

Despite the brevity of this cultural period, the term was able to assume all the characteristics of an ideological concept developed by a particular device (Casabella-continuità), a network of institutions such as the CIAM, MSA, Politecnico di Milano, IUAV Venice, and a series of works.


25 In the last two decades, the Milanese and Venetian schools made a number of critical contributions to the standing of Ernesto Rogers and the concept of continuity. These contributions, made by colleagues or students, reinforce the initial viewpoint through a personal assessment. However, they rarely attempted to read Rogers’ concept of continuity as a conscious ideological elaboration, viewing it instead as strengthening an action that was above all linked to the planning of the BBPR's work. For further information, see: Luciano Semerani, “Ernesto Nathan Rogers Un modo di intendere l'architettura”; Gianni Contessi, “Appunti provvisori per un lessico rogersiano privato”, in, Phalaris 10 (Oct-Nov 1990), 1-5; i contributi di F. Tenton, P.L. Nicolin, V. Gregotti, J. Banfi in, “Ernesto Nathan Rogers, testimonianze e studi”, Quaderni del Dipartimento di Progettazione dell’Architettura del Politecnico di Milano, 15 (1993).

26 On the concept of ideology, see: Duby, “Storia sociale e ideologia della società”, in, J. Le Goff, P. Nora, ed. Fare storia (Turin: Einaudi ed., 1981), 117-138; to focus on the role played by Rogers: “history will seen have to recognise those people who, thanks to their professional situation, find themselves in the front line and are revealed as agents of the forces of conservation, resistance or conquest; creators of the necessary conditions. These people are all the specialists to whom society delegates teaching and educational duties. They are also those who act as a mouthpiece for a particular social group.”. Ibid., 123; Vouvelle, Ideologie e mentalità (Naples: Guida ed., 1989); Also see, Somol, ed., Autonomy and Ideology, Positioning an Avant-Garde in America (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997).

27 For proof of this, see the internal debates at the MSA between 1946 and the end of the 1950s, and the frequency and use of words such as “continuity” and “pre-existing conditions”: Baffa et al., Msa, 195-549.
that share its ideals.

My intention is not to tell the magazine's story, but to try and pinpoint the moments and phases in which the term continuity was described by Rogers; to see how it took on ulterior meanings and was brought to life through a series of works and projects that seemed to embody its ideals. During the first few years of Rogers' Casabella, the word continuity seems to be a multifaceted term that absorbs and acquires associated content and meaning, which in turn open up complimentary ways of understanding the political and cultural arenas in which Rogers was a chief protagonist: the Ciam and the MSA, the university and Italian architecture.

The thematic developments that followed in subsequent issues of Casabella under a strong and mindful direction, transformed the magazine into a key ideological tool in which the featured works of architecture and articles worked together to create a different form of "unfinished treaty" for 1950s modernist architecture.

5.2.1 - "Continuità"

In September 1953 Rogers was working on "Continuità", an editorial piece that would soon feature in the first issue of Casabella under its new direction.28

The text begins with a quote from Marcus Aurelius' "Meditations", a book that Rogers frequently read during the war and that affirms the vital, universal features of continuity: "whoever sees what is before them sees everything that has been since the beginning of time and everything that will happen for the rest of eternity, because they are one and the same nature and species".29

From the text's opening lines, it seems clear that there were two elements around which

28 There are three versions of this editorial: the first two are hand-written and incomplete, the third is a typescript with each of the corrections dated 27th September 1953; BBPR, pack n.28. The final text was published in issue no. 199 of Casabella-continuità and reprinted in Rogers' 1958 volume Esperienza dell'architettura.

29 I believe it is interesting to note the contiguity of a vision of the Universe as a dimension that constantly mutates due to an instability that interminably searches to strike a balance between Historicism and Phenomenology:"All matter; including universal matter, is permeated by an ever-present tension, inexhaustible contrasts between activity and passiveness; they are linked and developed like a chain of causes and effects. (...) The world is, therefore, an ordered living body, not a casual mishmash of bodies; as eternal as matter, as contingent as arrangement. This is currently unique, but it has been infinitely rebuilt in the past as it will be in the future, according to an eternal law." in, Carlo Carena, "Introduction", in, Marco Aurelio, I Ricordi (Turin: Einaudi, 2003,first edition, 1943),X-XI; the phrase is from n.37 of the Sixth Volume.

30 ENR, "Continuità", in, CBC 199 (November 1953),1; today in ENR, Esperienza, 92-94.
Rogers wished to centre his first introduction to a subject that he would explain over the years. One was the legacy of a publication that held great symbolic value for Italian modernist culture thanks to the experience of its first editors Pagano and Persico. That legacy also functioned as an "historic conscience", or rather; "the true essence of tradition" as the acceptance of a coherent and anti-dogmatic "tendency", adhering to a heterodox methodology against any kind of formalism. Rogers interpreted the significance of tradition using examples given by his teachers, Enzo Paci and Antonio Banfi, who at that time were trying to marry the concepts of phenomenology, humanism and Marxism.

In fact the article displays a strong idealist desire that shifts its focus from the "casa dell'uomo" as cultivated by Rogers in Domus, to the concept of the need for continuity between "man-architecture-man" as a central element in architecture, in order to avoid the threat of formalism.

Rogers tried to express the tragic complexity of researching a problematic continuity that aims to give shape to a Modernist tradition and its Masters, without tying it to certain linguistic expressions.

Instead, it was to be seen as a cultural bridge linking Italian phenomenology, as an expression of a new restless humanism open to reality, and the research carried out for almost thirty years by Giedion, culminating in his book "Spazio, tempo e architettura. Lo sviluppo di una nuova tradizione" (Space, time and architecture. The development of a new tradition) published in 1954 under Rogers' direction.

This conceptual bond with Giedion appears to be much more significant than the idea of history fiercely reclaimed by Rogers. In the first chapter of his book entitled "La Stona quale parte della vita" (History as a part of life) Giedion clearly lays out the concept of History as a

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31 Salvatore Veca, "In memory of philosopher and architect Enzo Paci", in, Quaderni, 48-51. The highly important connection between Rogers and Enzo Paci, and earlier with his former teacher Antonio Banfi, are often referred to by Rogers and mark out post-war Milan’s network of relationships and intellectual overlap between phenomenology and design. One should also consider the role played by the magazine Aut-aut, founded by Paci himself, to which Rogers, Dorfles, Anceschi and Cantoni made significant contributions. There is also Paci’s essay “Continuità di BBPR”, his published speeches in CBC, and from 1957, his participation on the Editorial Committee.

32 The volume translated by Enrica and Mario Labò, Rogers’ friends and fellow Italian CIAM members, was published by the Milanese publishing house, Hoepli. It was here that Rogers would commission the translation of the CIAM volume on the ‘Heart of the City’ in the same year; Giedion, Spazio, Tempo ed Architettura (Milan: Hoepli ed., 1954). Again to be considered is G.C. Argan’s review of the Italian edition of Giedion’s book in: G.C. Argan, “Spazio, Tempo, Architettura”, in, CBC 201 (March-April 1954).

vital and continuous flux closely tied to reality and subject to a conscious selection process by those who read and use it in their projects. Furthermore, there is a crucial paragraph in the first chapter named "L‘istanza della continuità" (the appeal for continuity), in which Giedion writes: "in order to make plans, our knowledge must surpass the current situation; we must know what has happened in the past whilst predicting what will happen in the future. This is not an invitation to prophesize but the call for a universal view of the world. (...) to be in direct contact with history, or rather, to live our lives within broader temporal dimensions. Current events are simply the most obvious parts of a continuum".

Each of Giedion’s reflections on the subject of the space-time continuum is surprisingly consistent with Marcus Aurelius’ opening sentence (used to open the article) and the ideal of a “dialectical continuity of the historic process” taken from the lesson by Bergson and Focillon, two of Rogers’ favourite authors.

In order to strengthen the connection with Giedion’s experience, Rogers stresses that: “cultural unity; continuity in time; continuity in space. Work that does not have authentic roots in tradition is not truly Modern, but authentic works have a meaning today until they are able to resonate. In that way, free from chronology and a no less abstract idealism, breaking with convention, we are able examine the reality of architectural phenomenon in its historic substance”.

The issue of tradition and its indefinite vitality is resolved by Rogers through “the ethical content of our own aesthetics that lead the profession and the art back to its creation: the techné”.

In these few lines Rogers seemingly manages to create a bond between his own present personal journey and that of 1938 when, in the second part of his text “Un’architetto di quasi trent’anni”, he wrote: “culture is dead, tradition is born. Tradition is a living, eternal part of the spirit; it is the work of those who have died and been transformed into energy. (...) Tradition is the perfect coherence of their forms and comes with the necessity that such forms have generated. This coherence is a moral act. And suddenly we have brought the problems of aesthetics into the realm of ethics”.

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34 “history is not only an archive of unchangeable fact, but a development, a system of living and mutating interpretations and attitudes”, in, Giedion Spazio Tempo Architettura,6.
36 ENR;“Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei”,in, ENR, Esperienza,279.
37 Semerani,”Ernesto”,1-3; Contessi,”Letture”,96.
38 ENR, Esperienza,93.
39 Ibid.,94.
40 ENR, Esperienza,38-39.
"Yes, it is true that in 11 years time I will no longer be editing Casabella. It is also true that I have put a great deal of passion into my work for this magazine, trying to continue to fly the flag carried by Pagano and Persico". In this note written by Rogers at the end of his time at Casabella in 1964, the words and terminology with which he had begun his editorial mission in 1953 resound:

"Casabella is the magazine which Pagano and Persico guided through the dark period. (...) The motto we have chosen to express our way of thinking is continuity. We have seen fit to have it printed above the old title as a reminder of the task we have undertaken. It expresses our sense of humility when faced with this legacy and perhaps our presumptuousness in hoping to be worthy of such a responsibility."

This statement is the most direct form of continuity expressed by Rogers to give a sense and meaning to the choices he made as editor:

With this first, essential symbolic passage, Rogers showed his direct continuity with a particular experience in modern Italian architecture, and transformed it into the only way of demonstrating the values and positive content of its history dating from the 1920s.

This concluded the historiographical and critical revision of post-war rationalist architecture begun by Rogers in 1946 with his special edition of Casabella-costruzioni dedicated to Pagano, which he confirmed with the RIBA exhibition and consecrated with the new Casabella, especially its first issues.

This policy of conceptual and self-critical revision led to a normalisation of Rationalism's guilt about its former Fascist allegiance and identified Rogers as the only natural cultural and spiritual heir to Pagano.

Following this declaration of cultural continuity, Rogers began to develop another element that
was central to his own recent intellectual activity, the relationship between modernity, tradition and morality, by expanding upon the train of thought embarked upon by Persico and Pagano in their Casabella editorials and the exhibition dedicated to rural architecture at the 1936 Triennale.

A perfect example of this can be found in the numerous quotations that accompany certain articles and essays found in the early issues, in which Pagano’s photographs of anonymous Italian architecture were either cited as with Peressutti’s text on Puglian trulli45, or published, as in

Rogers's editorial for issue n.202 dedicated to the link between “responsibility and tradition”[^16]. The early issues were heavily informed by this content, reiterating the idea of the legacy left to the new editorial team. This inheritance functioned on two levels: that of the founding fathers and that of Rogers' time as editor of Domus[^17], as he was the only editor after Pagano to have the opportunity to direct both magazines at two different times.

5.2.3 - The Masters

In a work plan detailing Casabella's new structure, Rogers notes: "Plan C.B./ Basis/ Master/ Foreigner/ Italian, acquired, young/ Tam Tam/ Technician/ Politician/ Plastic Arts/ Yellow: magazine of magazines, it. issues, int. issues, student/ I.D."[^48].

The figure of the Masters and the role they played seemed to be central to Casabella-continuità and is proof of their constantly striving towards the construction of a new “Modern tradition” as begun by Giedion[^49] and taken on in the 1940s by Rogers both in Italy and at the various CIAM commissions and congresses.

In the first edition of Casabella-continuità, the editorial is followed by a short text by Walter Gropius. This is in turn followed by a number of expressionist designs by Eric Mendelsohn. Yet the various facets of the relationship with this notion of Maestri are developed in a more complex way and on different levels, thus establishing varied and enduring instances of thematic and conceptual continuity in Rogers' direction of the magazine.

Rogers knowingly fashioned his magazine as a tool that would support and publish the works and writings by the masters of the Modern Movement and the CIAM's most high-profile members.

Casabella-continuità published the works of the greatest "masters" such as F.L. Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Gropius and Aalto, and emerging talents such as Sert, Markelius, Bakema, Jacobsen, Tange, Neutra, Rudolph and Saarinen with stubborn continuity.

The magazine did not just publish, but publicly took sides in defence of the masters' work.


[^17]: “it would be extremely relevant if we were able present in our first issue your work from 1948 onward, thus establishing a kind of continuity with the last issue of Domus, december 1947, in which your work was then published”. J.Banfi to A.Aalto, 21 IV. 1953, AA archive, Helsinki.

[^48]: ENR, sheet SD (1953), BBPR-Casabella envelope.

often assuming the role of cultural agitator as with the case of Wright's abandoned project for Venice or the controversial fate of Le Corbusier's Ronchamp chapel. On these occasions, Rogers showed an almost fanatical devotion to the defence of values and cornerstones of the CIAM and the Modern Movement; he was like an altar boy, keeping his doubts strictly to himself.

In the conference on "L'architettura Moderna dopo la generazione dei Maestri" (Modern Architecture after the Masters) held at Berkeley in 1965, Rogers declared: "If the flag waved by our immediate predecessors was called "Vanguard", ours is called "Continuity". (...) We have had to regain a sense of tradition that, despite living on in the words of modern architecture, had been provisionally placed to one side of the debate's revolutionary action, which should influence every accidental attempt to overcome the uncertainties of academic, nostalgic and reactionary culturalism (...) The gravest danger facing our age (at least in the West) is not a conformance to academic styles that the Masters' generation should instead be fighting against, but Modernist conformism. (...) The difficulty lies in utilising the contributions made by the vanguards in this new expansion of tradition, without renouncing them. This is because there are many who in fighting modernist formalism fail to realise that they themselves have fallen to prey to another type of formalism; folklore or other such traditional styles".50

During this time Casabella-continuità continued the editorial activity begun by Rogers with a series of books, "I Maestri dell'architettura moderna" (Masters of Modern Architecture), overseen by the architect and published by Il Balcone publishing house between 1947 and 1959. This was the first series of pocket-size books on architecture ever to be published in Italy. However, more importantly, it was Rogers' first serious attempt to create a different history of the Modern Movement, breaking with the idea of a solitary Vanguard Movement with no past, and replacing it with that of Modernity as the offspring of particular "vital" past experiences.

This is how the series took shape over the following decade:

1947: Terragni, Mario Labò; Morris, Giancarlo De Carlo
1948: Asplund, Bruno Zevi; Olbrich, Giulia Veronesi; Garnier, Giulia Veronesi
1950: Mackintosh, N. Pevsner
1953: Oud, Giulia Veronesi
1954: Neutra, Bruno Zevi
1955: D'Aronco, Manfredi Nicoletti; Pagano, Carlo Melograni; Nervi, G.C. Argan; Mies van der Rohe, Max Bill; Perret, ENR

50 ENR, "L'architettura moderna dopo la generazione dei Maestri", conference, May 1956, now in, ENR, Esperienze, 148-149.
1956- Hoffmann, Giulia Veronesi; Loos, Muenz
1959- Boito, Liliana Grassi
SD - FL Wright, Bruno Zevi
SD - Figini e Pollini, Eugenio Gentili Tedeschi

Planned titles that were never published:
Berlage, Samonà; Wagner; Labò; Mendelsohn, Zevi; Dudok, Quaroni; Gardella, Zevi; Michelucci, De Mayer; Albini, Samonà; BBPR, GC Argan; Ridolfi, Vittoria; Beherens, Argan

They make for very interesting reading as they alternate the proclaimed “Masters” of the Modern Movement with their forerunners, with particularly important references to the Italian scene made in the first volumes in the series dedicated to Terragni and Pagano, and followed by texts on D’Aronco and Boito, “father” of the Politecnico di Milano, whose teaching duties were slowly taken over by Rogers from 1953.

However, the names of most of the international authors could be guessed from the opening chapters of Giedion’s Spazio, Tempo, Architettura; proof of the vast cultural influence the CIAM’s Swiss secretariat wielded over Rogers’s work.

An equally striking fact is that up until this time, Italian historiography had attached no importance to the link between Rogers and Giedion, and their mutual influence. There had been a bond since 1934; Giedion maintained regular contact first with the BBPR studio and later with Rogers. The constant exchange of letters, their agreement on political and ideological issues (especially with regards to decision-making within the Ciam after 1943) and the play on key words ever-present in their correspondence is testament to a strong friendship that would prove decisive for the fates of both in the post-war era.

In the first edition of “Space, Time and Architecture: The growth of a new tradition”, Giedion talks at length about “anonymous” 19th Century European engineering, touching upon Labrouste and Eiffel, Van De Velde, Horta, Berlage, Wagner and Viennese school, Perret and Garnier. The list of “Masters” soon grew with the inclusion of the central nucleus made up of the Chicago school and F.L. Wright, Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and finally Aalto, who would later be added to the edition published in the 1950s.

Rogers seemed to broaden the horizons of the Modern Movement’s “new tradition”, enriching it with the inclusion of individuals such as Morris, Asplund, Mackintosh, Dudok, Oud, Mendelsohn and Beherens, whilst also incorporating a selective reading of Giedion with militant stories of

52 Interestingly, Giedion’s first book is not held at the BBPR’s studio library. The only editions to be found there are his works post-1946. It is, however, irrefutable that Rogers was familiar with the book given his visits to Giedion in Switzerland between 1943 and 1945. Furthermore, the list of publications held at Roger’s private library has been lost.
the Modern Movement's architecture from Platz to Pevsner and Hitchcock (with whose work Casabella's editor was very familiar).

With its choice of topics and authors, the "Balcone" series seemed to work in parallel with Casabella-continuità, promoting the in-depth analysis and essays that together seemed to create a fragmented, and involuntary new history of 20th Century architecture. Its first edition 'Labò on Mendelsohn', was followed by Rogers on Perret and a table of designs by D'Aronco, Sert on Gaudi, Duncan on "actuality" in Sullivan's work and Liliana Grassi on Camillo Boito's "modern intuition". These texts consistently indicated the need for a "vital" link between history and the past as emphasised by Giedion in the opening chapters of his book. In fact the titles and their discourses focus on the "actuality" and "modernity" of the architects involved, able to strengthen and give meaning to architecture's contemporary activity in the real world.

De Carlo's controversial departure from the editorial team in 1956 gave rise to an even more problematic phase in the re-evaluation of pre-Modernist experiences and the new historical icons in direct reference to the debate on the "giovani delle colonne" (literally the youth of the columns) and the forays into Neoliberty that were published by Casabella. This change heralded the new generation's entrance into the debate on the relationship between history and the modern, which led to Rossi and Gregotti's texts on "The Influence of European romanticism on Antonelli's architecture", Guido Canella's work on "The bourgeois epopea at the Amsterdam school", Tentori's text on the "Sommaruga's Contribution to Historiography" and Michele Calzavara's on "the Architecture of Gaetano Moretti".

These texts marked the beginning of a significant phase of study and discussion on the importance of the Italian 19th Century that signalled changing tastes and interests within the new editorial group and the Centre of Studies. However it is important to understand how these texts, whose ideas were not wholly shared by Rogers, overlapped with the monographs on certain Masters and started to be published in 1959 at the same time as the last CIAM congress and the controversy with Banham. In fact, within just two years numerous monographs were published, such as those on F.L.Wright (n.227), Adolf Loos (edited by Rossi, n.233), Van de Velde (edited by ENR, n.237) and Behrens (edited by Gregotti, n.240).

The magazine's watchwords were slowly changing, following a conceptual path that moved 53 The volumes, Gustav Adolf Platz, Die Baukunst der neuesten Zeit, (1927), H.Russell Hitchcock and Johnson, The International Style. Architecture since 1922, (1932), Nikolaus Pevsner, Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius, (1936), were found in the BBPR's library.

54 In issue n.215 of Casabella-continuità introducing Bottega d'Erasmo project in Turin by Gabetti and Iosla's young studio, Rogers declares his own confusion about the project as well as his desire to keep the magazine as open as possible.
from planning as an open method, to the city and country as new locations for cultural and political debate, which would mark the last five years of Rogers' time as editor that he shared with the Centre of Studies.

5.2.4 - Continuity and crisis

In April 1957 Ernesto Nathan Rogers wrote an editorial for issue no. 215 of Casabella-continuità named “Continuity or crisis?” The text and that particular issue’s composition came at a strange and rather delicate time for Italian architecture and the magazine itself. At the end of 1956, both Giancarlo De Carlo’s departure and the ensuing reorganization of the editorial team had been finalised, with Vittorio Gregotti named as chief. However, most importantly, issue 215 of Casabella-continuità featured not only the article on the Ina-casa neighbourhood in Rome’s Tiburtino-Testaccio post neo-realism, but also two texts by Gregotti and Aldo Rossi on Arte Nouveau and the Amsterdam School and the first Neoliberty projects by the young Gabetti and Isola in Turin. This was an explosive issue and its cultural and linguistic content would have serious repercussions, first in Reyner Banham’s article for the Architectural Review on its supposed “betrayal” of Italian modern architecture and later during the debate at the last CIAM Congress, held in Otterlo in 1959.

The issue’s editorial brought the season dedicated to pre-existing conditions to a perfect end, whilst opening a fiery debate about the legacy, interpretation and position to take on recent works by the masters of the Modern Movement. However, the magazine continued to discuss Italian projects until the end of the 1950s. This led to a very clear ideological position in direct agreement with the political line maintained within the CIAM by Giedion.

The title and context of Rogers’s texts immediately clarified the heart of a subject that was central to the author’s intellectual journey and fast becoming crucial to the development of the Modern Movement in the post-war era.

Rogers’s choice, much like that of Giedion though with different allusions, was to move towards a continuity of historic processes used by the Modern Movement; not for stylistic reasons but as a design-related and cultural approach. In his 1957 text, Rogers suddenly began to elaborate

57 See Protasoni’s review.
concepts that aimed to eliminate the idea of Modernity as a revolutionary process, transforming it instead into an action of continuity full of the “vital” energies of the past.

This is the sequence of fundamental passages in his editorial text: “Can architecture develop the principles of the Modern Movement or is it changing direction? This problem is this: continuity or crisis? (..) If we consider history to be a process, one could say that it is either always crisis or always continuity depending on whether the desire is to emphasize what has not changed, (permanence), or that which has (emergence) (..) Continuity implies a change in the order of tradition. Crisis is the rupture-revolution, the moment of dis-continuity caused by the influence of new factors. (..) To understand where we are in the current situation (with its future possibilities) it is necessary to expand the motives behind the Modern Movement, freeing those that have come about for reasons of contingency, and therefore have a limited lifespan, from those that desire a longer durée because this is what their essential content demands. (..) That controversial reason for using our predecessors to qualify our own actions “against” those of an era which would have forced us to behave as if on a crusade with oversimplifying radicalism, no longer stands: who does not remember how a flat roof was required to earn one’s colours in modernity? Gone too are the reasons for the artificial division caused by the controversy that caused a shift in the terms that distinguished progressives from reactionaries. The struggle
is no longer between traditionalists and those at the vanguard (...) but between the good and the bad on the same side. It is no longer enough to be generically modern; one must explain the meaning of that modernity."

The modernity Rogers spoke of was a product of Enzo Paci’s philosophy of phenomenology, but it also encompassed the problematic and modernist thread of Piacentini, Pagano and Persico whilst acting as interpreter of the defensive policies coming out of Giedion and Sert’s CIAM, sending a clear ideological and cultural message to the Italian and international modernist community.

The term continuity encapsulates the path and choices made by Rogers, but it also expresses the profound urgency present within the Modern Movement at that time and the transformation it was undergoing.

The duality between continuity and crisis cut through Italy and Europe at an extremely delicate political time, which saw opposition between the two blocs soar. This caused questions to be asked by society and the cultural elite about the consequences of the continent’s forced modernisation.

Rogers was the only one to foresee the spectre of crisis, but he immediately suppressed this vision in favour of modernity’s continuity as a non-stylistic process. Rogers was aware of and made reference to some of the diseases that were eating away at the heart of the Modern Movement’s regulatory structures, yet he stopped himself there, wholly convinced of the need for a policy on continuity.

But it seems to be equally apparent that the editorial choices made by Rogers and the Centre for studies in Casabella-continuità’s third phase led to a progressive cultural and political consideration of the effects this duality was having on Italy and other countries throughout the world. The collapse of the CIAM as an institution “freed” Rogers from his duty to hold the party line on crisis within a structure he wished to defend. He was left with only the Masters and their work to protect. And so these last few years of cultural action became more radical and liberated, not least because they opened up new territory to Rogers.

5.3 - The international debate on “continuity”

“The establishment of the present state of the New Architecture could be supplemented in many respects by the consideration of the history of its development. (...) The new architecture in its present form is the immediate and clear expression of the meantime expanded consciousness of the time we live in. The task of living history can only arouse in mankind a sense of the present to be created, and not for the already completed past. The history will thus become an indispensable element of practical life. (...)”

In this book, Alfred Roth opens himself up to a new national and regional concept of modern architecture, whilst citing history and context as elements essential to architectural production within the Modern Movement.

The book opens with an ideological scenario that became central to the debate on the relationship between the modern project, pre-existing conditions, and continuity. However, it is Giedion’s theories that manage, alongside Rogers’ writing on the subject, to take the term “continuity” to the heart of the CIAM and the post-war debate.

As we have already seen, Giedion (in his book “Spazio, tempo e architettura”) defines the cultural and ideological characteristics of a new relationship between the Modern Movement and tradition. It is also in this book that the first interpretation of the concepts behind the term continuity appear. During the 1950s, Giedion investigated the term, taking ancient civilizations and Egyptian prehistory as his starting points. However, he did so without developing it into an element capable of acting as an instrument of active planning. The term “continuity”, even though it was not referred to directly, became central to Western architecture both due to the large-scale post-war reconstruction taking place in Italy, Finland⁶⁰, the UK and Poland⁶¹, and as an element capable of developing and eventually establishing the concept of crisis in the urban system that was undergoing an increasingly complex expansion.

The most immediate characteristic of linguistic relapses was provided by Italian Neo-realism⁶² and the so-called Nordic and British “Neo-Imperialism”, which tried to translate the notion of tradition, quiet living, good materials and a preservation of the human scale by mediating...

⁵⁹ Roth, La Nouvelle architecture (Zurich: Verlag dr. H. Girsberger, 1940), 8.


⁶¹ See “La ricostruzione in Europa nel secondo dopo-guerra”, in, Rassegna 54 (giugno 1993), 4-89.

strongly between the social demands made by the 1930s avant-garde and local customs. Similar responses were given by the CIAM congresses, especially in their production of the book "The heart of the city" edited in 1954 by Rogers, Sert and Tyrwhitt and in which an attempt was made to reconcile the increasingly cumbersome principles of the Athens Charter, and the concept of "a more human life for the community". Significant theoretical contributions made to the book by Giedion, Paulsson, Le Corbusier, Gropius, Bakema and Neutra, together with Sert’s work in South America, are testament to the desire of certain, fundamental CIAM members to find a path to the concept of continuity that crossed between “human” content and modern architecture.

65 Ibid., I.
Within the concept of “humanity” in Modern architecture, many reflections coincide that are in line with those made by Rogers during the same time, and with which the Italian architect tried to build bridges. Beyond his close relationship with Sert and Giedion, Rogers maintains a constant dialogue with Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto; individuals who had coherent, problematic and yet highly diverse approaches to his research.

Aalto showed an interest in Rogers’ ability to link architecture with the concepts of natural context and human scale; elements that made him one of the undisputed protagonists of this time.

Le Corbusier’s case is more complex. His interest lay in the apparent discontinuity shown in pre-war production, seen as little more than a betrayal, and the increasingly sophisticated dimension in the relationship between history and territory, as seen in Chandigardh’s project.

This is entirely different to the path taken by Lewis Mumford and the idea of Regionalism that was reworked during his time in California, which was brought to Italy by Adriano Olivetti. Olivetti not only subsidised the translations of some of Mumford’s most important works at the La Comunità publishing house, but saw in Mumford’s work the perfect conciliation between the ideal community and small-scale management of the planning of urban settlements.

Despite the bond between Rogers and Olivetti, contacts and exchanges with Mumford never led them to work on the same subjects at the same time. This was perhaps due to Mumford’s overly critical attitude towards the Ciam, as well as undoubtedly being a product of cultural distance; for example, Rogers strongly disliked the vernacular embraced by Mumford. Brought together by a humanised concept of modern architecture and their condemnation of modernist formalism, Rogers on one side and Mumford on the other produced the theories and certain projectual tools that led to the era of “Critical Regionalism”.

In Mumford’s case, this production gave confidence to many members of Team X and their reflections on architecture, the community and a delocalisation of urban functions. However, it is important today to highlight how the founding notions of the debate on continuity, such as human scale, attention to locations and their background, and a secular dialogue with history, have become the cornerstones of a new phase of Regionalism defined by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre as “critical” given the sophisticated and problematic elements with which it attempts to marry the contemporary project with concern for a new local landscape.
in the modern world.

5.4 - Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to illustrate how by adding the term, “continuità” to the title of Casabella, Rogers concluded the lengthy cultural journey he began in the 1930s. “Continuity” became a cultural and ideological category that was given multiple complimentary meanings by Rogers in order to define a “tradition” for the Modern Movement capable of action within the urban and environmental reality of the post-war era both in Italy and the wider world. Rogers gave the term a strong cultural value that would lead to the definitive affirmation of his position within the CIAM and Italian Modernist culture. Casabella-continuità became an active and conscious instrument of this cultural and ideological action, and in this chapter I have tried to separate out the various meanings Rogers tried to give the term whilst maintaining a high level of conceptual coherence. However, a pattern seems to form after the first few issues: the need to take the term “continuity” from a purely cultural level and applying it to projects. Rogers transformed this element that was so fundamental to the creation of a brand new identity for Italian architecture through his discussion of pre-existing conditions, and with a series of projects that followed this programme carried out at that time by the BBPR. The task of the next chapter is to verify the coherence within Rogers’ theoretical activity and his projects, whilst trying to gain an understanding of the potential and the limitations of this approach within the context of 1950s Italy.
6.0 - Introduction

In the first few issues of Casabella-continuità, Rogers defined fundamental cultural and ideological criteria by slowly minimising the role of continuity within the context, tradition and history of the Modern Movement. However, he then went on to promote continuity as a tool to be used by this project, establishing something of a fundamental watershed for Italian post-war identity. Rogers also used the new Italian architectural oeuvre and the BBPR studio's professional activity as occasions to promote this. The debate on pre-existing conditions became an extraordinary ideological and cultural platform for Italian architecture and determined the characteristics of this stage so fundamental to their future development.

In this chapter I aim to analyse the complex and rather ambiguous facets of the concept of pre-existing conditions through a reading of the two contemporary projects developed by the BBPR studio between 1948 and 1958: the museum in the Castello Sforzesco and the Torre Velasca, both in Milan.

Here, we will try to understand what defines such a cultural tool and how it can be used in the project stages, considering its merits, dissemination and limitations.

Putting continuity into practice entailed a consideration of context and a mediation between its cultural and environmental history, capable of making the modern project something to every man, to the world of nameless individuals searching for an identity in Italy during the economic boom.
6.1 - Pre-existing conditions

Though Rogers showed an almost passive contiguity with the concept of a "Modern tradition" in comparison to Giedion, explaining a highly-developed concept through series of interesting variants, it was actually in his public discussions on the issue of tradition and pre-existing conditions that Rogers (and Casabella-continuità) proved his momentous originality, capable of influencing the identity and future of contemporary Italian architecture on an international scale.

Using a complex elaboration of the concept of tradition, Rogers hoped to identify the cultural and operative tools that would help him create a "new tradition" through a generation of new Modern works which allowed for a painful separation of Modernity from popular tradition. Seen from this perspective, the responses given up until this time seemed vague, and the concept of continuity did not appear able to secure a victory over the functionalist demands of the "heroic period".

A number of significant elements can be found in one of Rogers' preparatory notes for editorial no.199 in which he states, for example, that the editorial should have initially been entitled "Il Formalismo" or "Formalism". A "self-critical" article by Quaroni had also been planned on the INA-casa installation in La Martella near Matera, together with the publication of Albini's works and an article on the Trulli.

It is likely that this note was written some months before the final article came out, as Albini, La Martella and the Trulli were all moved to issue n.200, whilst issue n.199 printed works by Gardella and Ridolfi with a background by De Carlo and an article on traditional architecture in the Cameroon.

In the same edition Giancarlo De Carlo wrote: "During the times of Pagano and Persico, Casabella was a symbol of the fight against academia. Today's Casabella wants only to fight formalism, another face of the same enemy".

De Carlo resumed his discussion on Formalism in what, to all effects and purposes, was a second editorial, and a symbol of his rather uneasy relationship with Rogers and the rest of the

1 "The conception of space in prehistoric art" is a fundamental chapter in a study on the "Continuity of the human spirit". Today this issue is being discussed everywhere and particular questions are being asked: what has changed and what has remained the same in human nature over the passing of time? What is it that separates us from other historical periods? What has been eliminated and what, repressed in our unconscious, is now resurfacing after having lain dormant for long periods in the minds of artists? For many years I have considered the issue of continuity in the human experience, and I have been particularly interested in the birth of art (prehistory) and architecture (Egypt and Sumer).", Giedion, Siegfried "La concezione dello spazio nell'arte primitiva", in, Casabella-Continuità 206 (1955),75.
2 ENR, note, sd, BBPR Archive, Casabella envelope.
3 De Carlo, Giancarlo "Formalismo continuità dell'accademismo", in, CBC 199(1953),ii.
editorial team. However, the terms he used to broach the subject were conceptually coherent with Rogers' articles from the same period.

The theme of formalism occupied a central position until at least the end of 1956, and was linked to the considerations of method as an open, anti-dogmatic and heterodox form which Rogers often referred to, drawing directly on Gropius' teaching methods and his constant discourse with Paci. In the case of the latter, the terms moved between the idea of method as an open project aware of the flow of reality, and architecture as a form of experience. This subject brought Paci and Banfi's phenomenology into direct contact with the socialism and pragmatism of Dewey and Read that had been brought to Italy by Paci himself through the pages of his magazine, Aut-Aut.

Rogers used his editorials to find a common bond between the method of open planning and a new concept of tradition, using them to establish the criteria of identity and originality for Modernist Italian architecture.

The terminology used by Rogers and Casabella-continuità was subject to a subtle yet significant evolution that embodied the passage from a post-war culture still linked to the debate on tradition as begun by Pagano in 1936, to a more mature and diverse form that saw Italian architecture's identity as linked to its "pre-existing conditions". The first signs of this can be found in the editorials and some articles in the magazine's first issues. In the issues numbering 199 to 205, Casabella published three lengthy articles on the subject of traditional architecture in clear continuity with Pagano's anthropological and photographic studies on rural architecture, including Rogers' editorial "Responsabilità verso la tradizione" (Responsibility for tradition)(complete with a photo of Pagano), which seemed to drag this phrase towards an unfamiliar horizon which placed it in direct and open dialogue with the many works of Italian architects being published at this time.

This was a complex editorial in which Rogers tried to build an operative link between the world of tradition that had nourished Italian culture but could not be passively regained, and the modern culture this world had to take as its new starting point, giving a meaning and foundation to its own actions. "A link between spontaneous (popular) and learned traditions must be established in order to create one unique tradition". By this time Rogers had long been aware of the separation between Modern culture and the actual traditions of a country like Italy, and saw a new tradition as the key to mending that fracture.

4 Read, Herbert "L'arte e l'evoluzione dell'uomo", in, aut-aut 5 (September 1951), 383-402; Paci, Enzo "John Dewey", in, aut-aut 9 (May 1952), 175-192; Paci, Enzo "Sull'estetica di Dewey", in, aut-aut 10 (July 1952), 317-331; See also a quote by Giedion in reference to a book by Dewey, John "Arte come esperienza", in, Giedion, Ibid., i 3.

5 ENR, "Responsabilità verso la tradizione", in, CBC 202 (1954), 2, ora in, ENR, Esperienza, 269.
That the situation in Italy was like this had been confirmed by the neo-realist movement, which, although its limits were fast becoming apparent, had attempted to create a dialogue between communities, their traditions, emotions and languages and Modernist culture. However, Rogers’ greatest fear was a return to a neo-folkloric condition, represented in his opinion by the projects for Ina-Casa neighbourhoods in Rome’s ilTiburtino and the village of La Martella near Matera. It was for this reason that he began to search for an alternative, indicating the terminology and features of this path in this very editorial.

For Rogers the word tradition meant a “continuity of dialectic relationships, an open account, with no hope of conclusion”.

After just two issues, in another of his editorials named “Le preesistenze ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei” (Pre-existing conditions and contemporary practical issues) Rogers did not limit himself to introducing and explaining this new phrase, but tried to provide the cultural tools required to put it into practice, in keeping with the concept of the “pre-existing conditions”.

He said that the contemporary project would have to be “increasingly comprehensive of the cultural values historically inherent in the new forms”, allowing it to identify with the “environmental and historic conditions in which it is manifest”.

These “pre-existing conditions” consisted of a complex and ambiguous background which modern architecture had to consider in order to create its own works in continuity with its surroundings. It was necessary to start from that which was already in existence; a space rich in history, nature, landscape, traditions and language that the modern architect would at least be able to attempt to breathe life into a “new tradition”, universal and circular in its flow.

But how could this new action be guaranteed without risking a descent into “formalism”? This appears to be a central query and possibly the most delicate and ambiguous point in all of Rogers’ theoretical and operative considerations. The planning/design process must undergo a heterodox, problematic and inexhaustible consideration of reality as regularly pointed out by Rogers (under Paci’s influence). The designer’s choices must heed a strong moral intransigence capable of mediating between “beauty” and “utility” in order to generate a truly “functional” philosophy.

These are the criteria pertaining to “coherence and continuity” that Paci would identify in a text on the BBPR at the end of the 1950s, citing their work as the perfect embodiment of this
action. But more importantly, these words served as a conclusion to the cultural journey that placed Rogers' editorial and theoretical work in perfect continuity with that carried out by Pagano and Persico.

Rogers constructed a second, important conceptual point of difference regarding the subject of "pre-existing conditions", stating that "even F.L. Wright and Le Corbusier, though sensitive to suggestions of a "natural environment" had neither the occasion, the desire, nor the conscience of possible links with a cultural environment. The same town planning designs (...) emerge as visions native to an earlier time, indifferent to now. (...) The problem with historic continuity (and therefore the conscious historicisation of modern phenomena with regards to those of the past, still so relevant to our lives) is a rather recent addition to architectural thought. (...) If we (modestly) admit that we operate within the remit of a methodology promoted by Gropius, it is easy to recognise that a major evolution is possible as we continue along the path we have chosen." Rogers goes on, trying to puntualize: "Whereas before the working relationship between efficacy and beauty was limited to expressing the world as confined within an architectural body, today it is expanding and influencing those areas where cultural exchange is becoming more intense, and more human. The notion of the "maisonne de l'homme" goes beyond the abstract and indiscriminate framework of the ideal being and takes on a notion of the human scale with its dramatic past vicissitudes, expanding to recognise the distinct and unique facets of modern society".

The respect and observation of "pre-existing conditions" set this apart from the activity of the Vanguard and its Masters.

The originality and evolution of this activity played ambiguously on a defence of the Masters' work and a creation of tools for a new season of "continuity", which in fact represented its downfall. Rogers' subtle criticism echoed his first controversial editorials in Domus on the abstract nature of Avant-garde culture, in the name of a real "humanity" capable of transforming "human scale" into an integral part of the planning process.

The concept of continuity, when applied directly to the project, became a way of listening to and mediating between crisis and profound transformation. Rogers considered the practice of paying attention to pre-existing conditions to be the solution to this crisis of reality, using the Modern project and definitively linking Modern culture to contemporary times and souls.

But Rogers was becoming increasingly aware that the issue of "pre-existing conditions" was

9 "In general, Rogers' attitude atteggiamento di si presenta come la continua verifica di una sintesi dialettica per cui il rapporto tra tradizione e modernità o tra ambiente stonico e razionalismo moderno acquista il suo vero signifcato nell'attuazione dei BBPR. E a sua volta nei BBPR si incarnà l'esperienza di una generazione."; in, Paci, Enzo "Coerenza e continuità dei BBPR", in, Zodiac 4 (1959).

10 Ibid., 280-283.
Ernesto Nathan Rogers with V.Gregotti and G.Stoppino.
The house of the man, Triennale Milan, 1951
Italian architecture's defining feature within the international debate.

"Tradition is an enormous accumulation of potential energy that can and must be transformed into action by the many Italians who are still capable of continuing the cycle". This is how Rogers explained this phenomena in an appendix to his editorial "La tradizione dell'architettura moderna italiana" (the tradition of modern Italian architecture), which is actually the opening essay in Kidder Smith's book "Italy builds: its Modern Architecture and Native Inheritance"; the book that launched this new phase in Italian architecture onto the international stage at the beginning of the 1950s.

In the first of the opening texts for the nine "Italian styles of Architecture" featured in issue no. 199 and presenting the works of Gardella (casa Borsalino, Alessandria) and Ridolfi (apartment blocks in viale Etiopia, Roma), Giancarlo De Carlo wrote: "even these two highly distinct works find common ground in their representation of the most original and productive features of contemporary Italian architecture. They are the first results we have seen of the urgency that, over the last few years, has freed architectural thought from an abstract dogmatic mechanism, committing itself to carrying out a profound study of reality (...) starting from a functionalist base, which cannot be discounted given the fundamental structure of modern civilisation. Though they come from different directions, these works both arrive at a common anti-formalist goal that transcends the comfort of taste, refuses any narrow-mindedness and modestly faces up to the many problems of reality." From issue no. 199 Casabella-continuità continually published the works of the most important Italian architects, focussing on the Italian CIAM and the MSA, and reassessing them in accordance with pre-existing conditions and the construction of a new tradition capable of reconciling individuality of style and its inclusion on the landscape and in research. The works of Albini, Gardella, the BBPR, Ridolfi, Bottone, Dai neri, Michelucci, Cosenza, Libera, Figini and Pollini, Labò, Scarpa, Latis, Minoletti, Caccia Dominioni, Valle, Lugli, Aymonino, Magistretti, Gregotti and Gabetti and Isola were a resounding affirmation of the Italian way of "doing" architecture, and their international recognition was gained predominantly through the pages of Casabella-continuità.

Terms such as "pre-existing conditions", "tradition", "continuity" become staples of the Italian (and the Milanese) Modernist community's public debates and discussions, as we can see from a MSA debate held in Milan in May 1955 on architectural traditions. Albini's declaration that "I believe tradition represents a continuity of civilisation, history, the constant motion of life", Aymonino's quotation of Boito sustaining that "tradition typifies our architecture", or Franco Berlanda's comments that "the idea of architectural tradition as the
sum total of the experiences of all valid works from all times and places, has been critically
developed by every artist as an aid to solving the problems of a particular build in a determined
environment" all demonstrate just how much Casabella-continuità had influenced the language
and views of architecture.

These key words formed the critical and projectual vocabulary of almost two generations of
Italian, and in particular, Lombard Modernist architects thanks to cultural groups, magazines and
the Architecture department at the Politecnico di Milano, sanctioning the ideological influence
wielded by Rogers during this decade through Casabella-continuità.

6.2 - New Museums in post-war Italian architecture; the BBPR Castello Sforzesco in
Milan, 1948-1956

6.2.1 - Italian reconstruction and the debate on historical centres.

The dramatic issue of Italy's reconstruction meant the country's architects had to deal with
both an overwhelming demand for housing and the restoration of the historical centres of Italy's
towns and cities.

The weak modernist position, as defined before the war, was confronted with the necessity to
restore not only a material heritage, but to preserve a very complex "memory".

The relationship between modern and historical architecture became one of the main subjects
in the European architectural debate. However, in Italy the role of history and tradition was
introduced as one of the principal characteristics to focus on when forging a new relationship
between contemporary design and individual creativity.

The Italian reconstruction was soon flooded with civic and symbolic meaning after the long
Fascist period, and the debate on restoration turned into a symptomatic battle between the
two sides of the same group: the desire to retain historical memory versus the desire for a
Modern renovation of Italian cities. This "naive" quarrel was partly overcome by the lengthy debate published in Casabella-Continuità
about tradition, and the relationship between pre-existing conditions and contemporary building


15 This chapter is a reworking of a conference paper written for: "New Museums in post-war Italian
architecture: the use of precedents for contemporary design" given at the 2nd Alberti EuroConference.

16 Bonfanti et al., Città, museo BBPR, 150, note n.151.
practices. The debate provided a much-needed cultural response to a massive and uncontrolled reconstruction of Italian cities, which received political support from the close relationship local councils maintained with urban developers.

The political weakness of the Modernist position on reconstruction and the victory of the Christian Democrats in 1948 isolated the Italy's progressive intellectuals and a number of the Masters of post-war Italian architecture.

The civil and ethical ideals supporting the debate on reconstruction were dramatically overturned, and the role of the architect moved towards personal research and professional style as a new form of artisan creation.

The refinement of this architectural research, as shown by the small-scale projects created by Albini, Gardella, Figini and Pollini, and Caccia Dominioni in the late 1940s, was in stark contrast with the rate of development taking place in Italian society and cities, and led to the creation of an elitist form of modern design for an ideal modern life.

6.2.2 - New museums for Italian cities: the debate on pre-existing conditions and contemporary building practices.

The importance of how Italy's artistic and cultural heritage was organised became apparent at the beginning of the 1950s. The urgent restoration of some of the most interesting historical buildings, together with the violent impact urban speculation had upon Italy's landscape and architectural heritage, and the first public denouncement of the "new vandals", revealed the fragile relationship between the importance of memory, and the rapid development of Italian society.

The significance of design in civic life and its relationship with the historical heritage and traditions became clear during the debate on the new museums.

The museum became a kind of metaphor for urban conditions where the architect had a new client and proposed his idea of architecture as a bridge between a living tradition and the

17 "As has already been pointed out; Gardella, Albini, BBPR, all attempted to recreate the urgent need for morals and reform, ideals from which rationalism had become detached, and the application of these elements to something that was truly within their reach: Style". Grandi et al., Milano guida, 286.

18 Ibid., 280-309.

19 During this period Antonio Cederna, one of the fathers of the ecological debate in Italy, published several articles in the weekly publication, Il Mondo, denouncing the violence of Italian property development. His condemnation started a violent debate on the role of modern architecture in relation to the historical centres of Italy's towns and cities.

20 AA.WW., "La diffusione museale", in, Hinterland 21-22 (March-June 1982); Canella Guido, "Figura e funzione nella architettura italiana dal dopoguerra agli anni Sessanta", in, Hinterland 13-14 (January-June 1980).
complexity of urban life
Thanks to the theoretical works of Rogers, Argan and Bianchi-Bandinelli, Italian culture regained an operative use of tradition and history, overcoming the idealistic vision of Art. Its relationship with the past moved from being linguistic and analogical to a more analytic and therefore, problematic direction.

The relationship between contemporary design and objets d’art passed from the historicism and eclecticism of XIX century museums towards a direct comparison between form and content. The museum was no longer viewed as a container, where the relationship between the public and artistic works was forced and passive, but as a space to be actively experienced.

Modern culture recognized the educational and civic value of the past as part of a memory that cannot be suppressed, whilst at the same time, considering the link with a certain historical phase as a civic and political precedent in which society could recognize itself.

The strong influence of Dewey’s “Art as experience” upon the Italian debate was proven by the direct use and elaboration of his theories by Argan, Banfi and, later, E.N. Rogers.

The idea of a museum for the people increased general awareness of the pedagogical and educational value of art whilst promoting a relaxed everyday relationship with the museum as an open space. The importance of how the artefacts were understood immediately took on a deeper meaning within the museum environment as this was a space whose use was directly related to a possibility for everyone to create a personal cultural experience through continuous interaction.

“The direct relationship between object and observer” was founded upon the idea of continuous discovery, encouraging a sense of surprise and curiosity when faced with the artefact. However, this often led to the object’s isolation within its own space. The aim was to ensure a direct impact that would be as powerful as possible.

“It [the artefact] is articulated as much as possible from its support, its mount, its protective cover, so that it may become a free and dominant entity”.

Contemporary design recognized this need and used its relationship with the object as a precedent which could then be used to make a comparison. The interaction between the artefacts and the public was a key aspect of the museum experience.

23 Bonfanti-Porta, Milano guida arch., 153, and Banfi, Filosofia, 146.
25 Ibid., 144.
object on display and its environment gave rise to uninterrupted experimentation in the Italian museum of the early fifties, where contemporary form found a new autonomy and each artefact was understood as part of its own tradition.

The precedent, as the exposition of an object or the restoration of an historical space, guaranteed modern continuity.

The importance of design in civic life and its relationship with historical heritage and traditions became clear during the debate on these new museums.

At the same time, the issue of the designer working with too much autonomy was reduced somewhat by their collaboration with museum-trustees; the real decision makers. The relationship between these two groups became fundamental to the final result and testified to a parallel evolution in historiography and museography, where the influence of sociology and material culture was beginning to have an effect (Baroni / BBPR, Mercenaro / Albini or Scarpa / Magognato).

At the beginning of the 1950s some of the most exciting Italian designers were involved in the restoration of historical buildings in order for them to be used as museums. Franco Albini began in 1950 with Palazzo Bianco. Later, between 1952 and 1954, he worked on the projects for Palazzo Rosso and the treasure of S. Lorenzo in Genoa.

Carlo Scarpa’s work for the Museo Correr at Ca’ Rezzonico in Venice in 1953 was particularly impressive. At the same time, the BBPR had been working on the restoration of Milan’s Castello Sforzesco and would continue to do so until its partial opening in 1956. Scarpa, Michelucci and Gardella also worked on the reorganization of the three main rooms of Florence’s Uffizi galleries, which featured works by the early Italian painters of the XII and XIV centuries.

6.2.3 - The BBPR’s design for the Museum of Castello Sforzesco, Milan

The opening of the new museum in the Castello Sforzesco (Milan) was a high point in the debate over new museums in Italy. It marked the beginning of a long discussion on the relationship between pre-existing conditions and contemporary building practice.

The Italian President opened the museum on 23rd April 1956, and in its first weekend it was...
visited by more than 10,000 people.
The following day, an Italian newspaper printed an article entitled "Il museo non è noioso" (the museum is not boring). Museums, particularly those of this kind, were soon considered to be another medium for the visual communication of mass culture in the modern city, much like cinema or theatre.

As the BBPR wrote in their introduction to the project, published in Casabella-Continuità: "children playing, soldiers strolling with their fiancées, pensioners, students, couples: once we have decided upon the style of our setting, we have to make it a popular location".

They also wrote that "the Castello Sforzesco is directly opposed to the noble, severe and classical Brera Art Gallery. It is an entity that has a didactical and popular function, easily understood by the masses, and that appeals to their natural emotions and their desire for spectacular, fanciful and grand expression".

Rogers began to consider the city museum as a popular response to classical, academic culture, which provided a digested account of a population's civic history.

The great importance placed upon the mediaeval and renaissance period reflected upon precise civic and cultural ideals related to an idealistic concept of the community's participation in public life and culture.

Despite the BBPR's writings conveying an almost neo-realist concept of community space, it is interesting to note how the idea of pre-existing conditions was immediately combined with that of architecture on the "scale" of all human beings, for the masses behind Milan's economic boom who were desperately in search of places that had an identity fit for those new times and their deepest desires. By considering pre-existing conditions, new architecture was able to create a bold identity for that anonymous mass of citizens.

The relationship between design and precedent was overburdened with civic and cultural indecision, whilst at the same time increasing the artefact's visibility and usage.

The most vitriolic criticism of these projects was saved for the supposed excess of visibility in the BBPR's design. Italian critics considered the project too "intellectual...noisy ...indiscreet". It was the need to create an "emotive environment" and reinforce the understanding of these

30 "Il museo non è noioso", in, Il Giorno (30th April 1956).
31 In the same period, Rogers was working with Giorgio Strelher and Aldo Grasso on Milan's Piccolo Teatro.
32 BBPR, "Il carattere stilistico del Museo del Castello", in CBC 211 (June-July 1956), 63.
33 ibid., 65.
34 Tafuri, Storia arch. ita., 68.
35 Pane, Roberto "Riserve sul Museo", in, Architettura 33 (1958); Cederna, Antonio "Il regista invadente", in, Il Mondo (9th October 1956).
36 Samonà, Musei, 51.
works of art that caused the BBPR to produce scenic sequences for the main objects, whilst focusing on the growing importance of the architect's creativity and sensibility towards the existing space and the artefacts displayed within it.

The problems involved with establishing a coherent relationship between pre-existing conditions and contemporary design soon became clear, such as the rather delicate nature of subjective interpretation and the use of contemporary language without falling into empty historicism.

It was now the artefact that was open to interpretation, with the modern "shell" as designed by the architect acting as a symbol of its new communicative vigour. This project was also evidence of an understanding of its relationship to the rapid changes affecting society in the north of Italy.

The new central reference point was the lower-middle classes, the largest social group in Milan, and the museum was used to express a precise cultural and political characteristic.

The story of the castle's restoration is an interesting example of the different attitudes to the use of precedents in Italian architecture.

The Castello Sforzesco was founded in the 14th century under the Visconti dynasty. In the 14th century it was enlarged by Ludovico il Moro, finally taking the form we know today under Spanish and Austrian domination. From 1893 to 1906, Luca Beltrami, one of the pioneers of stylistic restoration in Italy, rebuilt part of the structure that had become unsafe, perfectly recreating Visconti's style and organizing the museum's interior into a sequence of neo-medieval and neo-renaissance rooms where the artworks were displayed in their "natural" environment.

Bombing during the Second World War had caused such damage to the castle that it was possible to remove earlier restorations in order to make new archaeological excavations overseen by the museum's curator and connoisseur of Modern Italian Architecture, Professor Baroni.

The restoration was highly dependent upon the museographical organization, and so, this relationship between such a varied heritage and the large spaces of the Castle had to be combined with a strong, unitary expansion.

The displays were organized as flexibly as possible around the most important and monumental pieces, which provided the structure.

The museum was home to varied and important collections, ranging from the architectural and sculptural remains of ancient and lost Milanese buildings and an immense picture gallery, to a series of tapestries by Bramantino and a vast collection of furniture, musical instruments and costumes. The displays were inevitably wide-ranging and focused upon the need for a direct view of several artefacts at once, thus creating different sections organised in a way which linked

37 Samonà, Musei, 51; "An attempt has been made to restore an authenticity to each work of art by slowly creating a fitting resonance around each one". Salvini, Uffizi ordinamento, 24.

38 Samonà, Musei, 52.
BBPR, Museum Castello Sforzesco, Milan, 1949-1956, axonometry
BBPR, Museum Castello Sforzesco, Milan, 1949-1956, sketches of the entrance and the main hall
each part of the restored Castle as a new entity. The “Pusterla dei Fabbri”, one of the mediaeval city gates, was placed at the entrance to the museum and its first three main rooms.

The skilful organisation of the museum, which allowed free dialogue between the principal works of art and minor pieces, was immediately noticeable. For example, in the second room the beautiful funereal ark with the equestrian statue of Bernabò Visconti (1363) was surrounded symmetrically by four stands displaying Romantic bas-reliefs.

Great care was taken with the use of materials and levels of natural and artificial light, with attention paid to every detail of how each piece of art was displayed.

The different settings and materials used for the restoration were of the utmost importance as they increased the visual impact. Wood (walnut and olive), wrought iron, gilded bronze, grey stone, green granite, white plaster and concrete were used for stands, panels and brackets. This combination of precious and simple materials guaranteed an expressive yet equal relationship between the artefact and contemporary design.

All of the materials used and the sequence in which the artefacts were placed were aimed at giving a sense of chronological sequence to the display, which provided both a physical and personal experience of urban history and its fragments.

Two of the main rooms, in particular, seemed to symbolize the project’s philosophy: these were the “Sala dell’Asse”, and the “Sala degli Scarlioni”.

Located at the heart of the museum, The “Sala dell’Asse, a beautiful room whose vaults were painted by Leonardo da Vinci, was discovered during the last restoration and seen by the BBPR as “an outdoor space to highlight the vine-trellis painted by Leonardo as a fresco on the ceiling, and at the top of the walls, solid walnut tooth-edged panels had been created in order to avoid a subdivision of wall space”.

“In the centre of the room, a labyrinth consisting of panels of solid walnut were used for contemporary displays. Iron lamp posts with burnished brass spotlights arranged in a regular pattern divided up space and light evenly throughout the room. Green granite flooring could be found around the perimeter of the maze”.

The final room of the museum was the Sala degli Scarlioni that “centred around the Rondanini Pietà. Upon entering, the visitor sees the back of the large niche carved in severe stone. The false ceiling in walnut beams is separated from the existing structure. The simple burnished brass lamp cylinders hang from this structure. The sculpture stands are made from live wood, as is the wing concealing the Pietà Rondanini”.

39 BBPR, Castello Sforzesco, 62.
40 BBPR, Castello Sforzesco, 66.
The staircase that leads to the Michelangelo-esque Pietà echoed a journey made by Rogers in August 1954\footnote{Evidence of this journey can be found in the Rogers-Aalto folder; ENR to A.Aalto, 24th August 1954, letter; A.Aalto Archive, Helsinki.} and Saynatsalo’s recent visit to the area. The stairs leading into the room, designed by the Finnish master, inspired the form of the new descent, the only “organic” element in the entire exhibition.

The room epitomised the relationship theorised by Rogers between modern architecture, the interpreted space and the sculpture, and created a new and original dimension where the Pietà Rondanini was slowly discovered, to then be contemplated in complete isolation.

The restoration of the Castello Sforzesco became a key manifesto of Italian design, expressing the relationship between pre-existing conditions and contemporary building practices.

However, it is important to remember that over the course of nine years the BBPR studio developed two projects with a perfect coherence: the museum at Castello Sforzesco and the Torre Velasca both in Milan; two new monuments for a city undergoing a transformation.
6.3 - The Torre Velasca

"The Italians (Giancarlo de Carlo, Ignazio Gardella, Vico Magistretti, and the undersigned) have been the most obvious bone of contention (..) It is significant that we have held shared views during this international debate, because this shows a mutual commitment today in Italy (shared also by many of our absent colleagues): the attempt to create an architecture that is more closely linked to our lives and therefore, in its very essence, more modern".\(^{42}\)

Issue number 232 of Casabella-continuità, published in October 1959 had a double ideological and symbolic value. On the one hand there was Rogers' editorial (rather more detached than melancholic) on the definitive end of the CIAM, whilst on the other were the articles on three of the BBPR's recently finished projects; without doubt the more popular of the two.

The editorial gives a subtle sense of pride and satisfaction for the coherence and accomplishments of the Italian architecture, which knew how to fashion its own unique vision of modernity through the diversity of its numerous experiences.

Rogers's public battle with Banham, the "custodian of frigidaires" who according to Rogers was incapable of accepting Italian architecture's rich and problematic evolution beyond the avant-garde, had recently ended. The repercussions of this controversy did not only dominate at Otterlo, but they made Rogers the undisputed focal point of Italian Modernist architecture at that time.

The Torre Velasca was presented as one of the most significant symbols at that time; a demonstration of modern architecture created in accordance with pre-existing conditions and the BBPR group's ability to coherently apply those considerations made by Rogers in Casabella-continuità.

Tafuri aptly pointed out the strong conceptual link between the Velasca project and the new museum at Milan's Castello Sforzesco planned by the BBPR during the same time. He referred to it as "an homage to Milan completed with the as yet unsilenced tools of historicism. The Velasca is being built in the city, lyrically telling the story of an urban body on its way to extinction. Once again we await the catharsis from the intentions buried in the folds of a single object (..) the Velasca, wrapped in its ambiguous aura built on analogy and innuendo; it is there to act as a symbol of Italian architecture's aspirations in the 1950s. In the great museum that is this historic city, the tower is almost certain to find a home that might alleviate their solitude protecting them from the future and reassuring them of their moral duty".\(^{43}\)


43 Tafuri, Storia archit. 68-69.
It is important to note how two vertical monuments were under construction in Milan at the same time; both equally capable of boldly expressing the city's future, as well as its modernity and its ambitions. These were the Torre Velasca by the BBPR studio and the Pirelli skyscraper by Giò Ponti and Pierluigi Nervi. Each building seemed to give a different interpretation of Italian modernity, but both manage to perfectly embody the culture of their creators Rogers and Ponti; both directors of eminent international magazines. However, it is no coincidence that one project was defined as a "tower" and the other, a "skyscraper".

The tower, not the skyscraper, was commissioned by the Rice society in 1950, to fill a plot 450 metres from Milan's Duomo left empty by wartime bombing. The multifunctional complex had space for shops, offices and apartments and it was initially thought it would be home to the headquarters of certain American agencies. The studio's initial rendering and first version of the tower showed a steel and glass structure; a monolith split horizontally into three sections, each with a different function.

After this first version was written off due to budgetary problems, the BBPR decided on a more traditional design in reinforced concrete that, nonetheless, utilised American ideas on height. The structure and its pillars, developed by the BBPR together with Professor Danusso, were to be external; the levels were to remain freestanding, separate from the central section, which would be perfectly symmetrical and composed of elevators and emergency stairwells. The designers focused predominantly on the building's external surface and its shape, aiming to establish a direct and visual dialogue with the imposing structure of the gothic Duomo.

The external ribs, made from the same material as the pre-fabricated walls, vertically taper off through the body of the edifice, folding over the embossed ribs. At this point the tower, whose top six levels were designed for residential use, expanded into a mushroom shape that completed the crown of the urban tower. Its shape transformed the Torre Velasca into a new urban monument, symbolic of the fragmented reconstruction of a city that cannot find its own, new soul.

The pre-fabricated panels had been designed to be removable, so each tenant could decide to have the walls pushed towards the exterior, should they so wish. The idea of an architecture that would reflect the person living in it, and a façade that could be modified according to the choices its tenants made regarding the house's interior, had already been explored by Giò Ponti.

This section of the building reworked the concept of a gothic urban construction. On the first floor, Ron, Prizzon, 86PR, La Torre Velasca (Milano: Ed. Abitare Segesta, 1982).

44 See ed. Fioni, Prizzon, BBPR, La Torre Velasca (Milano: Ed. Abitare Segesta, 1982).
45 As well as being one of Italy's greatest structurists, Danusso was on of the BBPR'S professors, creating the bid for the Palazzo della Civiltà italiana with them in 1936.
46 Ponti, Amore l'architettura (Genoa: Società editrice Vitali e Ghianda, 1957).
BBPR, the Velasca Tower, Milan, 1959-1958
two floors there were shops giving onto the street and offices above these. The apartments were situated in the building's uppermost section with balconies that not only offered a view over the city, but that used strong chiaroscuro to alter the way in which the tower's apex was perceived from within Milan's urban landscape.

This was a building capable of tapping into a dense and complex context, giving life to a creation with a strong physical and symbolic identity. It would seem to be both the strength and the paradox of the very principle of pre-existing conditions, as interpreted by Rogers and the BBPR, a distinctive symbol for a new mass society in search of a stable identity. Rogers applied the logic of continuity to this issue, or rather, that of a dialogue between history, the traditions that determine our deepest roots and the Modern project as its new incarnation.

The Torre Velasca undeniably symbolised a highpoint in the BBPR and Rogers' activity, and was a lofty expression of that particular period in Italian creativity. But it was also a conclusion that confirmed the difficult contiguity between a line of continuity and the tensions caused by a state of mounting crisis.
Once again it is Paci who manages to express the level of coherence and continuity in the BBPR's work. "the Torre Velasca must not be considered in relation to what has been said, as a definitive solution. This is proof of a continuity of intent that can be traced back to the Light Therapy Resort at Legnano. The form of the Tower originates in a functionalist interpretation of the surrounding urban space and its requirements. Yet the shape is, at the same time, "allusive" and tries to express functionalism in its broadest sense, blending with the historic atmosphere of Milan. And so we have a modern technique wishing to fully exploit the heritage left to it by rationalism; a technique that sought not to repeat but to recall a tradition in modern form, without discarding the rigorosity of its methods. This is certainly not a "revival", but rather the will to create a technical artistic-cultural synthesis." Yet Paci felt a need to provide new tools in order to strengthen understanding of Milan's new Tower. "Fundamentally, the problem of the Torre Velasca is that of synthesizing rationality and environment, technique and history, scientific universality and regional urban reality. The Torre should be considered as the architectural expression of a problem that has reached maturity; a thought that should be taken into account when judging its importance and value. (..) The worst way in which it could be interpreted would be to consider it as the end of the "Modern Movement", as a return, or a 'continuity' which could develop into a reaction."47

These final fears expressed by Paci were significant and resonate in the BBPR's text published in Casabella-continuità.

As the BBPR wrote in their "Clarification" of the three published projects, "the agreement with pre-existing conditions, be they natural or artistic, is never understood in a natural, or at least imitative or analogous way, but is built out of sympathy for the things around it. We then try to embody the meaning of these elements in our composition through an understanding of its essential character rather than a deductive analysis. (..) Given the great level of commitment demanded by the significance of the area, the Torre Velasca represents the overwhelming complexity of an issue and the most dense concentration of our ambitions."48

This comment seems to have a subtle double meaning. It refers to this great monument's ability to represent the path of "Italian production, without being tainted by those useless attitudes displayed by a significant part of European (and American) architects."49 Yet at the same time there was a fear that form and personal taste might, in some cases, have taken precedent thus making the project little more than a formalistic exercise. This project seems to have led its creators to understand the limits of an ambiguous method that relied excessively upon the

47 Paci, BBPR, 39.
48 BBPR, "Chiarimenti", in, CBC 232, 6.
49 Ibid., 63.
ethics and awareness of the designer who is called to interpret the pre-existing conditions in
order to sense and appreciate the context and intervene in the right measure.
As Tafuri wrote, this minor risk cleared the path "to a new chapter in the autobiography of
Italian architecture"; as he would admit to Robert Venturi some years later, the Torre Velasca
had unwittingly cleared the way for post-modernity.

6.4 - Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to prove the operative and projectual effects of the concept of
continuity, as developed by Rogers through the activity of the BBPR studio.
Casabella-continuità became the ideological mouthpiece used to communicate and substantiate
the examples and projectual applications of continuity as an architectural tool.
Upon a close examination of Rogers' editorials and the works and projects of many important
Italian authors created during this time and published in the magazine, the editor's aim to
transform the cultural action of pre-existing conditions into an ideological one capable of
creating a new identity for post-war modern Italian architecture can be clearly identified.
I have also given two examples of the application of the relationship between the modernist
project and pre-existing conditions through an analysis of the project for the museum in Milan's
Castello Sforzesco and that for the Torre Velasca, carried out between 1949 and 1958.
In both cases, the projects became exercises in reading and interpreting historical and
environmental pre-existing conditions that would allow the creation of a bold identity for the
new urban masses of Milan during the economic boom. The reflection upon the anonymous
individual who brings the concept of a human scale to life, finally takes shape within these
projects. Furthermore, the decision to turn to history and an interpretation of history opened
up a new, ambiguous chapter: the criteria governing the choices made by the architect and the
direction they finally decide to take.
Rogers hoped to resolve this by making an idealised appeal to the ethics of the project, but
instead this opened a Pandora's box that led straight to Post-Modernity.

50 Tafuri, Storia arch., 69.
"Dear Einaudi. Our friend Berlanda, who has kindly acted as messenger between you and I for some time now, told me she had spoken to you of my book, and that you had showed an interest in my proposal; a response to your warm invitation for collaboration of some months ago.

There are now three possibilities to speak of, all of which are still in developmental stages: a theoretical book (treatise); a handbook for the public; a collection of essays.

It is not by accident that I have started to define the third of these, as before I can move onto the others, I must clarify my human-artistic position by showing these documents to the public.

Its title could be La conquista della misura umana (The Victory of human scale).

I hope I do not come across as overly presumptuous if I say that this book could be a heartfelt biography, a confession of the architects of our generation, born and developed in a time of great political and cultural excitement.

From a political point of view, there is the clear evolution from Fascism to anti-Fascism and reconstruction. Looking specifically at architecture, I focus on the issues we have had to resolve over the years, from rationalism to now.

The project as a whole is a collection of articles, lessons and conferences that I have given all over the world. Some are unedited, some have appeared in foreign publications which are no longer in circulation and others are the product of my two years as editor of Domus.

I will write a broad introduction and am also thinking of adding a number of cursive passages to the volume as a personal assessment of our journey so far.

These texts, which number around twenty, are in chronological order and deal with four recurrent themes: politics, ethics, aesthetics and the teaching of architecture.

The title reflects the content, that is, the desire to establish a personal dimension and the parallel research into a corresponding architectural dimension."
Milan, 11th June 1950"

"Dear Giulio (...) I am preparing the second volume of Esperienza dell’architettura (the Experience of Architecture) for the “Saggi” series, which Roberto [Cerati] happily suggested I call Editoriali di architettura (Editorials on Architecture).

For this reason, part of the material will be taken from Casabella. However, there is also a long essay on Daedalus as well as others that are shorter and have been published in various places. I hope to have organised my texts in just a few weeks. In the meantime, I have asked Bishop’s widow to provide me with some beautiful photographs as she did for Esperienza - I cannot wait to see them. It would be helpful if the reprint of Esperienza dell’architettura came out at the same time as the Editoriali, because in the brief introduction I highlight the link between the two volumes."

1 Folder “Esperienza dell’architettura”, BBPR, and now in, Molinari, Luca. “Alcune note sull’esperienza di Ernesto Nathan Rogers”, in, ENR Esperienza, 305.
Einaudi's publication of Ernesto Nathan Rogers' two volumes, Esperienza dell’architettura and Editoriali di architettura, between 1951 and 1968, was a reminder of the need to understand these works as a single entity, and a narrative expedient with which Rogers' conceptual development could be appreciated, with particular regards to its relationship with the debate slowly enveloping Casabella-continuità and Italian architectural culture of the 1950s and 1960s. By discounting Esperienza dell’architettura and Editoriali di architettura as two important collections of writing, as is often done, one runs the risk of underestimating the complexity and vibrancy of the slow, intimate mental process that led to the selection, organisation and revision of the two texts produced at different times and in different ways.

In this way we see that the books are not simply a well-assembled collection of heterogeneous material, but a carefully created montage that moves between a conscious reconstruction of Rogers' own biography and a reading of events that preceded this personal and intellectual journey.

These publications are the final step in Rogers' re-evaluation of his own experience, marked by reconsiderations, uncertainties about the role played by himself and his generation, comparisons with friends and colleagues and a subtle bargaining over content, which led to an imperceptible weariness present in each of his works.

It would, therefore, be extremely reductive to consider these two volumes as nothing more than a mere collection of texts. It is far more exciting for us to analyse the immense number of choices, omissions, changes in opinion and exchanges that underpin one of Italian architecture's most significant texts of the period between the end of the Second World War and the economic boom.

I also believe it is important to consider these two volumes as a single conceptual, autobiographical and editorial creation, developed by the author over the space of fifteen years and that fell within a well-defined historical period; a phase that saw the affirmation of a generation of architects considered by Ernesto Rogers to be one of the most important intellectual reference points.

The first book Esperienza dell'architettura, is the fruit of an ideological and cultural operation keenly pursued by Rogers.

In contrast, Editoriali di architettura is better seen as the refinement and definitive completion of a journey that "rather than giving a chronological, mechanical series of events, aims to bear testament to the changes that have taken place within me (Rogers): to what has happened
within me with the passing of events”³. For Rogers, these two books embodied his experience and his various lines of coherence. Both books were published at the beginning of the decline in Rogers' cultural "success"; slowly unfolding between 1958, the year of the Otterlo Congress and the resounding affirmation of the concepts of continuity and pre-existing conditions within the Modern culture of the CIAM, to 1964 and the closure of Casabella-continuità. During this time, the magazine and its content seemed to be overwhelmed by the events going on around them, not to mention the very different season Italian culture was entering into with the 1963 Triennale organised by Vittorio Gregotti and featuring Aldo Rossi, Umberto Eco and Gae Aulenti. If we compare this Triennale to the previous edition in 1960 dedicated to the school, we find two fronts that are utterly distant. It was precisely at this moment that Rogers began to write his second book, which served to recollect and order his thoughts rather than to continue his cultural agitation. Rogers appears distant and this is due most likely to his progressive illness and, in particular, the fact the battle for continuity during the 1960s seemed to have been overpowered by the violence of events.

7.1 - “Esperienza dell'architettura”

“Dear Rogers (…)

Berlanda will have told you of our wholehearted approval of your proposal. As regards the introduction, I believe it would be best to develop this so that it functions not only as a guide to the readers, but as a text in its own right. However, I would remove some of the more incidental passages as this will add to the work's authenticity. Send me the text as soon as you have everything ready and we can discuss the details.

22. VI. 1950 ⁵

“Dear Einaudi (…)

I am working on my book but fear I will need a little more time as my professional work has rather overtaken it. I hope that you are able to take my word and wait for the book, as it is a great honour for me that you have thought to include it in your collection and I would be sad

3 ENR. Editoriale, XI.

4 This essay is a reworking of the following essay: Molinari, Luca “Alcune note sull’esperienza di Ernesto Nathan Rogers”, in, Rogers, Esperienza, 305-328.

5 G. Einaudi to ENR, 22nd June 1950, BBPR, Folder Esperienza dell’architettura.
for this to be compromised by delays.”

21 XII 1950

In his response Einaudi suggests the end of June 1951 as a deadline, whilst in the meantime Rogers was working diligently on his book; editing, choosing the photos and making his first revision of the text.

Marked by his painful removal from Domus some time ago, the lack of any fixed post at an Italian university and a gradual but problematic resumption of his professional work, Rogers had tried at the beginning of the 1950s to overcome the isolation to which he felt he had been consigned by making a book proposal to Einaudi; eight years later this would become Esperienza dell’architettura.

This proposal had the clear intention of offering the evolution and current state of his theoretical activity as a reflection of an entire generation, and as a plausible hypothesis with which to understand the transformation of Italian architectural culture in the 1930s and the early post-war period.

Rogers’ experience became that of an entire generation of architects that had been knocked by the modernisation of the country after the end of the war.

In this way, the unpleasant isolation from cultural spheres and decision-making processes experienced by Rogers after the elections of 1948 was counterbalanced by this Modernity that had been purified by the war and the sacrifices that were made, allowing for a legitimate change in role from that which, with hindsight, came to be considered as the “retreat of Italian architecture”.

When these factors are considered, the creation of this volume appears to be a consciously significant act, both insofar as it is a reconsideration of his own journey and the continuity, choices and contradictions that marked it, and a confirmation of a purified, coherent image of an operative and ideological landscape that posited Ernesto Rogers as one of the centres in a system of networks around which Italian and international Modern culture revolved.

The structure of the texts and their selection process followed a thematic order, which Rogers introduced to Einaudi at the first reading: “politics, ethics, aesthetics and the teaching of architecture”. This conceptual framework informed the choice of texts in both volumes and the journey that had a profound effect upon their author.

6 ENR to G Einaudi, 21st December 1950. Folder Esperienza dell’architettura, BBPR.
7 Having failed a competition to teach at university level in 1948, despite considerable teaching experience in Tucuman (1948) and at the AA in London, Rogers was finally given a course (“Caratteri stilistici e costruttivi dei monumenti”) to teach at the architecture department at the Politecnico di Milano.
8 ENR, Esperienza, 305.
The first book, which should have been finished by the end of 1952, followed a different path to the one that had been marked out for it.

The editor Mazzocchi, as requested by Ponti, asked Rogers to resuscitate Casabella. Within just a few months of this happening, he was asked to teach the course on the style and construction of monuments at the Politecnico di Milano's architecture department.

His book La conquista della misura umana (The Victory of human scale), despite being ready to go to print, was not published until 1958. Its title had been changed to Esperienza dell’architettura and its structure had been altered by two new fundamental experiences.

However, thematic and conceptual omissions from the two books are a clear indication of the evolution of Rogers' philosophy during this decisive time.

In 1951 the BBPR carried out two projects for the IX Triennale, and were heavily involved in the exhibition "Architettura misura dell'uomo" (Architecture on a human scale), which was personally overseen by Rogers, along with Vittorio Gregotti and Giotto Stoppino.

The similarity of this title with that of the book Rogers was working on at the same time is significant. It indicates a line of research that considered the rationalist experiments of the 1930s and internal debates in the CIAM, arriving finally at his role as editor of Domus and his Conquista della misura umana project.

After the war, Rogers saw the issue of "human scale", a problematic imperative of functionalist culture, as aligned with that of the "casa dell'uomo" and the possibility of "forming a taste, technique and set of ethics as parts of the same function".

At the entrance of the space designated for Rogers at the IX Triennale, there was an introductory board that read: "The physical measure of a man determines the necessary dimensions of architecture; it is the constant measure determined by our anatomical and physiological conditions (..) Man, architecture, man – this is the never-ending circle of origin, means and aims".

This panel referred to a poetic area of research that advocated every possible explanation and echoed the absence of any trace of overbearing paternalism in the declarations and captions present throughout the exhibition. A photomontage offered an admirable visual explanation of this theory: a man in the foreground who is facing the back "measuring" the space inside a house using his arms.

9 For a more in-depth analysis of the eventful editorial process undergone by Esperienza dell’architettura, see: ENR, Esperienza, 305-327.


11 ENR "Programma: domus. La casa dell'uomo", in, Domus 205 (January 1946), 2, now in, ENR, Esperienza, 116.

12 ENR "Architettura, misura dell'uomo", in, Domus (July-August 1951).
The composition is classical yet at the same time, everyday and informal. The man's dress, his posture (pensive and slightly fatigued), and the setting give a sense of classicism domesticated. "The human scale" had been stripped of its objectivity and adapted to the private 'scale' of the "casa dell'uomo"; a space for personal relationships and a modern life in harmony with tradition.

The humanistic approach to architectural space, together with the moral teachings of Persico and Pagano, provided the basis for the research into "an interior" and "architectural dimension" that emphasized the unity towards which Rogers as "man-citizen-architect", was inclined.

The "Victory of human scale" could be seen as the motive for Rogers' and the BBPR's education, journey and maturation during the 1930s and 1940s. It is the "issue" they fought for, as Rogers himself confirmed in his introduction to the book, and as such is a natural title for a text that retraces the stages of that journey.

The first edition, edited by Rogers, remains faithful to this journey, and makes for a complete reading of his own experience. It was completed with two essays (the first, an introduction and the last, a conclusion) respectively entitled "Misura umana" (human scale) and "Verso la casa dell'uomo" (towards the house of man).

Whilst the aim of the second essay was to rise to the challenge left open after Rogers' Domus had been shut down, it was in fact the first text that, according to the author's intentions, should have re-examined the nature and progress of modern Italian architecture through a reading of its own history.

The issues considered are more or less the same as those that make up the first part of the essay written in 1958 entitled "Mestiere dell'architetto", or 'the craft of the architect'. The text is split into two parts that follow each other conceptually but differ grammatically (one uses the simple past, the other, the present tense) and in terms of the relevance of experiences cited.

13 ENR to Giulio Einaudi, 11th June 1950, BBPR, Esperienza dell'architettura folder.

14 Most of the texts referred to in the 1951 index are present in the definitive version. The chosen, and therefore excluded texts are: "Conferenza rappresentanza studenti; Architettura primordiale", which probably corresponds to "Per la valutazione primordiale dell'architettura"; in, Valori primordiali 1 (1938); the seven main texts in the nine "Confessioni di un Anonimo del XX secolo" published in Domus between March 1941 and February 1942; "Ricostruzione funzionale", originally entitled, "Reconstruction fonctionelle", in Bollettino del Centro Studi per l'edilizia (April 1945); "Dal cucchio alla città", originally published under the name "Ricostruzione: dall'oggetto d'uso alla città", in, Domus 215 (November 1946); "Per gli studenti di architettura" published in Domus 213 (September 1946); "Iniziazione all'architettura". Two handwritten texts, E. Nathan Rogers, S.D. BBPR, Folder Esperienza dell'architettura.

15 "Book E/ Preface as self-criticism/ Dedication/ 20 years. Fascism-Post-war/ Trade/ Book to make the point/ Moral coherence = aesthetics-ethics/ Take responsibility first and foremost for/ one's self, then for the others/ Humanist research is one of the architect's/ bases, for this reason his speeches are not/ theoretical but an impulse towards a determined/ architectural fact/ A text written by E. Nathan Rogers, S.D.", BBPR, Folder Esperienza dell'architettura.
It is as if this essay were able to make manifest the seam between the two editorial projects, and two different times, thus restoring them to the continuity of one unique and uninterrupted experience.

The first part looks at the impact of history upon a generation, from Fascism through the Resistance and its martyrs, to the fantasy of reconstruction, as he had planned to do in 1951. It is a tiring and painful "recherche" through a reassessment of personal and generational experiences. Its tone is passionate yet distant, and it sets its objective as telling the stories of the characters, myths and aspirations of this time, as well as the development of an 'instrument' of modern Italian architecture.

It is likely that these pages had partly been written in the winter of 1951, as the notes accompanying the draft sent by Rogers to his friend Lanfranco Boselli\(^{16}\) would suggest. These were later used as a basis for the essay of 1958.

One passage in the text makes a clear reference to this rupture. After his memory of the horrific loss of his friend and colleague who worked and fought alongside him, "Giangio" Banfi, the tone suddenly changes as if the author has returned after a long absence, and Rogers declares: "As of this moment, my memories become confused with conscience, and it falls to me to talk of things that are still ongoing without being able to distinguish between different ways of looking at things"\(^{17}\).

The daily routine of battles and discussions fought by Casabella-continuità took their toll on Rogers' essay and his book, and were largely responsible for Conquista della misura umana not being published in 1952.

However, it would be wrong to believe that Rogers had not established some form of continuity between these two elements, trying even then to maintain ties and encourage a conscious reading of his personal history.

His analysis in the introductory essay seems appropriate also for the structure of the text. Once again there is no rejection of his initial hypotheses. Instead these are coherently integrated in continuation with the experiences that followed.

The book grew and became more complicated but never lost its original structure, maintaining its references to the "four recurrent themes: Politics, ethics, aesthetics and the teaching of architecture"\(^{18}\) as declared by Rogers in his first letter of 1950, and combining these with the most important contributions made to the debate by Casabella-continuità throughout

16 Seven pages of notes commenting on the texts to be included in the book, no date, signed "Franco". The handwriting is the same as that found in a series of letters sent from Lanfranco Boselli to Rogers between 1945 and 1949, BBPR, Folder "Esperienza dell'architettura".

17 Rogers, Esperienza, 5.

18 ENR to Giulio Einaudi, 11th June 1950, BBPR, Folder Esperienza dell'architettura.
the 1950s: the role of tradition and pre-existing conditions in contemporary projects, and a
methodological continuity with the works of the masters of the Modern Movement.
A swift analysis of the opening index shows the selections made as a result of this. The most
important texts of his youth are brought back, though curiously those produced for Quadrante
are excluded, signalling a distance with an experience that was not entirely wholesome. As
Rogers points out in his opening essay “we were launched into the orbit of the magazine
Quadrante”. There is also an increase in links and references to Pagano’s teachings that were
later verified.
Great importance was attached to the individual-collective doctoral thesis, a true manifesto
of the poetics of the BBPR studio’s projects and organisation, and the “scritti dell’anonimo”;
testament to one of the most testing and distressing times in the author’s life.
The historic phases of the Resistance and reconstruction are instead retold through the
texts written during the time Rogers spent at Lausanne’s Champ university teaching about
prefabrication at the school of architecture. Texts from Casabella-costruzioni (“Catarsi”,
catharsis) and II Politecnico (“Provedimenti urgenti”, desperate measures) were also used for
this purpose, along with a significant number of his Domus editorials.
The first part of the definitive index, as read chronologically from the three chapters “Prima-
durante-dopo la guerra” (“Before-during-after the war”), utilises the majority of texts chosen
and revised in 1951.
The Domus “Saluto” (Farewell) is followed by his debut editorial for Casabella-continuità so as
to establish an instantly recognizable continuity between the two experiences.
And so, the programme for the Conquista della misura umana was replaced by Esperienza
dell’architettura; a new beginning, revived by new and decisive arguments.
The book’s title, suggested by Rogers’ young assistant Luciano Semerani19, is a clear expression
of the cultural climate of the time, far from the unsavoury dry spells of the late 1940s and full
of the euphoric faith in projects that characterised one of Italian architecture’s most important
periods, not to mention one of the most culturally exciting times for Milan.
This first draft became, to all effects and purposes, the central kernel of the book, together with
certain editorial texts written for Casabella-continuità. A further two chapters were added to
this first part: the first was “Utilità e bellezza” (utility and beauty), which was related to some of
the reflections made on the role of architecture and how it is taught. The second, “Tradizione
ed architettura moderna” (Tradition and modern architecture) was the true conceptual basis
for Casabella-continuità between 1953 and 1957.
Most importantly, these chapters must be considered as the central conceptual and ideological

19 Semerani, Luciano “Ernesto N. Rogers: un modo di intendere l’architettura”, in, Phalaris 10 (October-
November 1989), 3.
core of Rogers’ projects and his theoretical activity. They are two bodies of work created from Rogers’ didactic and editorial activity that interweave and feed into each other whilst following separate paths. They deal with theoretical issues and their complimentary applications at the same time, strengthening one another through mutual comparison. It is these two components that represent the most significant coupling within the final project of Esperienza dell’architettura.

The chapter dedicated to the didactic “utility and beauty” is presented as his first attempt to deal with the issue of how to teach architecture. This section predated “Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico”²⁰, by a few years, and established a coherence with the leadership of the two Commissions for the teaching of architecture at the Ciam 7 and 9 Congresses, borne of the constant dialogue with Giedion and, in particular, Gropius.

The basic comparison between “constructive energy” and “decorative energy”, the recurrent and “dramatic” confrontation between lifespan, tradition and individual creative activity seemed to find a tentative solution by exercising the “virtue” in the “ethical index of poetics” taken beyond formality.

This continual and unresolved conflict formed the basis of Rogers’ research. It perceives a condition that has reached its limits within the present time, the impossible accordance between a shared tradition, his own productive context and the journey of the “invention”, which took a dramatic turn in the 1960s when faced with the progressive devastation of the country. Rogers’ efforts aimed to reconcile a Modernist teaching method based on the negation of the didactic value of history in favour of the teaching of architectural design, with the problematic and active use of memory, focused on surmounting the “historic limits of the avant garde”²¹ whilst reclaiming a “tradition” of the Modern Movement shared by Giedion in the 1940s and 1950s.

This deferential respect for the work and activity of the Masters, which often became a public defence of their most recent projects (from le Corbusier’s Ronchamp to F.L. Wright’s project for the casa Masieri in Venice), was often confused with an invitation for a personal, free interpretation of history that would unwittingly lead to a post-modern attitude to planning.

²⁰ Elementi del fenomeno architettonico, or Elements of the architectural phenomenon, was first published by Laterza as part of the Biblioteca di cultura moderna series in 1961. The text had initially been written as a dissertation in the competition for professorship, and published at the same time by his friend, Laterza. However, immediately after this, Rogers tried to convince Einaudi to take the text. Despite considerable interest being shown in the essay, the editor eventually decided not to publish and the text was forgotten about until, in 1981, Cesare De Seta submitted it to be reprinted by the Neapolitan publishers, Giunti.

²¹ ENR, “L’architettura moderna dopo la generazione dei Maestri”, in, CBC 211 (June-July 1956), now in Rogers, Esperienza, 192.
The concepts of “Continuity” and “crisis” lived a contradictory parallel existence in Rogers' Casabella. Subtle references to both can be found throughout the book.

The four "medallions" dedicated to the four Masters (Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier) act as a natural counterbalance to the book's final section dedicated to the relationship between tradition and modern architecture; a chapter that is brought to a close with the Torre Velasca, a "bone of contention" at the last CIAM Congress in Otterlo.

But Rogers did not consider a defence of the Masters’ work as contradictory to the research into “tradition”. The recognition of the avant-garde's “historical limits” occurred at the same time as the discovery of a new harmony with reality, preventing a definitive distancing of architecture from the “living world”.

The debate on pre-existing conditions soon became one of the first real occasions in the post-war period for an active reconciliation of context and contemporary architecture, beyond the "international movement of cretins" facile understanding of modernity and folkloric revivals.

7.2 - “Dear Mr Rogers”

“Dear Mr Rogers,

(•••) There are many items which will have to be shortened or eliminated. E.G., there are references to the positions of architects under Fascism, which are too old hat, and would be unlikely to interest English speakers (see cap.IX); there are also references to the post-war political scene that are too parochial to be left in, e.g. in chapters XI, XVI, XX, and XIII. One chapter (VIII) is a sentimental lament over a friend and colleague who died in the War and is certain to be omitted.

22 Smithson, Allison "L'incidente di Otterlo", in, Quaderni DipartimentoENR, 35-37.
23 Nicolin, Pierluigi "Scrivere", in, Ibid.,90.
24 Rogers' editorial “L'architettura moderna dopo la generazione dei Maestri” (Modern architecture after the generation of the Masters) is the final moment in a long and torturous realisation about the limits of the avant garde and the “machinist” element of its culture, which began to unravel/ become apparent in the Domus editorials of 1947 (just consider the splendid description of the Indian architect, his traditional dress and the aeroplane in the editorial, “Apologo”) and continued to the CIAM debate during the first half of the 1950s.
William Warren Smith, Cambridge

The book was finally submitted in early 1958, at the climax of a season of projects and debates that were central to the position held by Rogers within the national and international intellectual communities.

I believe that his desire to finish the book at this time was linked to a growing sense of the end of an era. A sentiment that was intensified by the controversy with Rayner Banham, the construction of the building on the Corso Francia in Turin and the Torre Velasca in Milan, and the Ciam's definitive closure in Otterlo.

During those last two years, Casabella-continuità had been subject to an agonizing internal debate that would lead to a radical reform of its editorial team, monthly programming (as of 1959), and a progressive development of its political editorials.

The book's publication seemed to be the perfect conclusion to Casabella's first phase of life, giving way to a new era that was to be more problematic, varied and complex than the first. 3000 prints were initially made of Rogers' book, published as part of the "Saggi" series (n.240) at a cost of 4500 lire. It sold out within two years, and was shortlisted for the Premio Viareggio for essays.

The book's success was proof of Rogers' connection with Italy's social and cultural spheres, which still lay untouched at the end of the 1950s.

In this particular case, it is very difficult to evaluate the book's critical success due to its inextricable link with Casabella-Continuità, and the international kudos the magazine had acquired.

The book's function was perhaps to highlight and develop the autonomy of an ideological construction over the years beyond the fragile editorial equilibrium and inevitable discussions.

Between 1958 and 1961, Rogers personally tried to get the book published in the United Kingdom and the United States. He had the book translated at his own expense and entrusted the negotiations to the publishing house Lund Humphries.

Despite Rogers' fame, and Gropius' efforts to persuade Harvard to buy the text, his plan never took off. Doubts about the book's excessively progressive nature discouraged the American reader.

26 The first editorial team was made up of E.N. Rogers as director, G. De Carlo V. Gregotti and M. Zanuso as editors, J. Banfi as editorial aide. Clashes over the political editorial led De Carlo to leave the publication at the end of 1956, causing Rogers to have to radically reform his team. V. Gregotti took over as editor-in-chief whilst Argan, Guiducci, Nervi, Paci, Quaroni, Samonà, Sacchi and Zanuso made up the rest of the team. The editorial group was joined by a Centre of Studies in 1959, composed of a number of "young" architects. The only real element of "continuity" at the magazine, apart from the director, was the editorial aide, Julia Banfi.

27 In the first year 1967 copies were sold, and by the end of 1960 there were only 30 copies left. BBPR, Folder "Editoriali di architettura".
publishers, who refused to print, citing poor translation as an excuse. The reservations also led to a remarkable downward turn in the relationship between Europe and the United States in the 1950s and 1960s on political and editorial issues, not to mention the debate on architecture.

7.3 - "Editoriali di architettura"

"Dear Giulio,

I hope you have received a rare copy of my book Elementi del fenomeno architettonico from Cerati. It should be one of the three I am about to tire myself out writing for the publishing house Einaudi, but I do so with great commitment.

This specimen, which should by published in the NUE with the current illustrations and perhaps a few additions, requires your critical eye as, whilst I am not wholly unsatisfied with my work, I feel there are still some holes in it, especially at the end. I would prefer a more powerful finish, like a "fugue". The essay is also a little too short. (..) I am preparing the second volume of Esperienza dell'architettura (the Experience of Architecture) for the "Saggi" series, which Roberto [Cerati] happily suggested I call Editoriali di architettura (Editorials on Architecture).

For this reason, part of the material will be taken from Casabella. However, there is also a long essay on Daedalus alongside others that are shorter and have been published in various places.

I hope to have organised my texts in just a few weeks. In the meantime, I have asked Bishof's widow to provide me with some beautiful photographs as she did with Esperienza - I cannot wait to see them.

It would be helpful if the reprint of Esperienza dell'architettura came out at the same time as the Editoriali, because in the brief introduction I highlight the link between the two volumes. As for the book "Total Le Corbusier", which should be included in the NUE, I am currently collecting material. In the meantime I have been promised a series of designs to illustrate the text by Le Corbusier's heir. It is a challenging topic but I am aiming to submit to you by September 1966 as agreed. The publication of "Discussioni" still has a large question mark hanging over it that is fast consuming my heart, though this would be the crowning glory of my work and that of the publishing house (an assumption that serves only to give an encouraging nudge).

Ernesto N. Rogers"
This lengthy missive sent to Giulio Bollati, editorial director of Einaudi, at the end of 1965 clearly expresses Rogers' objectives after his dismissal from Casabella in February of the same year.

The three different projects act as a counterpoint in origin and content to the 'natural' continuation of Esperienza dell'architettura (written about by Rogers in his brief introduction to its second edition).

These are: the reprint of Elementi del fenomeno architettonico, the essay he prepared for the professorship exams and edited by Laterza in 1961, though the author had wanted it to be published by his friend Einaudi, and the lengthy essay entitled “Le Corbusier totale”, which had already been announced in a 1965 interview and that dealt with the strong bond that developed between Rogers and the Swiss Master after the Second World War. Unfortunately, the only remaining trace of this text is to be found in Rogers' declarations of intent.

Finally, there was the idea for a new magazine, which Rogers pestered Einaudi with until the end of 1966.

According to Rogers’ plans, “Discussioni” would be a new two-monthly publication that would act as a space for debate and engagement for “that great number of people who feel the urgency of the free struggle on certain issues”, especially since “Casabella gone to ruin and there is no longer a responsible voice capable of criticism”.

This project was kindly yet firmly rejected by Einaudi. He wrote to Rogers in October 1966 saying: “As regards the magazine, I do not wish to embark upon a project of this nature. Magazines should be the initiative of single groups and the publishing houses should have nothing to do with this. I think it would be more useful to look at an issue of Menabò (the only unorthodox magazine, a space for debate open to all) dedicated to the arts and techniques being developed today, and start to build it from your Esperienza dell’Architettura”.

However, Rogers concentrated his energies between 1965 and 1966 on his project Editoriali di architettura, acting enthusiastically on a suggestion made to him by Roberto Cerati back in 1962.

As he had done with Esperienza dell’architettura, Rogers used this new time of “silence”


31 “…I was planning a meeting for a book I have been thinking of for some time and that I may perhaps write. It would be a critical book that would encompass the artist in all his glory as a cultural and creative being. There was still a great deal of information missing from the book, in particular Le Corbusier’s views on his own work.

Between 1965 and 1966 a book contract was discussed with Einaudi, but by October 1966 Rogers had still not begun to write, as he confessed in a letter to his friend Wando Aldrovandi. There are no traces of any such work in the BBPR archive, leaving us to conclude that Rogers never wrote the essay.

32 Giulio Bollati to ENR, 19th April 1966, BBPR, folder Esperienza dell’architettura.

33 Giulio Einaudi to ENR, 31st October 1966, BBPR, Folder Esperienza dell’architettura.
imposed on him by his removal from the magazines he once directed (Domus, 1946-1947, and Casabella-Continuità, 1954-1964) to reorganise, select and revise the materials produced during one of his most intense and productive phases of activity as an architect and polemicist.

And as with his first book, the preparation for his new volume was not restricted to a simple thematic assembling of various materials, but saw him structuring the texts according to an attentive and well regulated direction.

By the beginning of 1967, both books were accompanied by an obstinate declaration of uncomfortable coherence as the political and social dimension had radically changed since the end of the fifties.

Rogers' generation seemed to be in trouble, appearing unable to contend with the violent changes that began in the early 1960s.

The ideal of 'continuity' clashed with the progressive shattering of single design experiences. Italy had entered into a phase of the most vulgar and widespread violence witnessed on its own territory, in its own cities and against its own culture.

The reserved and elitist debate in the clubs, associations and drawing rooms was partially brought into discussion after a vertiginous rise in the number of university students and a wave of immigration that was slowly beginning to affect the social fabric. It was also affected by the first demands made by students and workers (from Piazza Statuto to the culmination of the violence in Valle Giulia).

1964 undeniably represented a point of no return and the beginning of a new and very different era, strongly marked by political events and changes in Italian society.

In a year that witnessed the consolidation of a centre-left government and the largest surge in the building boom with the construction of 450,000 residences, there were three significant events that had an impact upon the world of culture and the visual arts: the closing of Casabella-Continuità, the Venice Biennale with its affirmation of American Pop Art and the Milan Triennale dedicated to 'free time' - proof of a real generational shift within Milanese architectural culture.


35 The XIII Triennale dedicated to 'Free Time' was organised according to a theoretical programme developed by Umberto Eco and Furio Colombo, and that involved a number of the "young" architects who had been involved with the editorial team and the Centre of studies at CBC. Rogers himself had been invited to join the scientific committee in 1962, but he soon had to withdraw for health reasons.

An analysis of the impact the culture of free time had on the country and its daily life shows a thematic gap in the logic of "commodity" present at previous Triennales, whilst the various exhibitions, overseen by Gregotti, Meneghetti, Stoppino and Brivio (introductory section), Rossi and Meda (the external exhibitions), and Gae Aulenti, Aymonino and Paciello (the Italian section), signified a visual and conceptual rupture that had an immense impact.

See AAVV, TXIII exhibition programme (Milano: 1964); ed, Pansera, Anty. Storia e cronaca della Triennale...
7.4 - "A turbulent, inner dialogue"

"The collection of texts written over the course of one's life, during travels, illness and love, is an experience that reveals one's own turbulent inner dialogue: Which pages should I send to be published? Which are more relevant, more important? There are moments of exhaustion, bewilderment, discouragement. (...) It is difficult to decide on one's own."^36

An essay should have introduced the new book, an "Elegy to Architecture" that was never written.

In his second volume, Rogers invoked the terminology of an inevitable "temporal" continuity between the two books. He selected texts for it with a more intimate, private tone, whilst maintaining a rather similar structure to that used in the first.

By now the author no longer seemed interested in "public" approval of his story. Instead he wished to "bear testament to the changes that have taken place within (me): to what has happened within me with the passing of events"^37.

The book increasingly seemed to be a reappraisal of a journey now marked by great disappointment and the spectre of a threatening, progressive illness.

The tone of the brief introduction, as with the text written for the reprint of Esperienza dell'architettura, is more sedate. It no longer concentrates on a journey shared by his entire generation, but obsessively returns to Rogers'"turbulent inner dialogue"^38.

A natural counterweight to this "exhaustion" is, as ever, the dimension of ethics; the hope based on a work ethic or on a "utopia for reality" (the title of Rogers' last editorial) that seems to be "the best way of finding sufficient strength to go on".

Though passing ironic comments about his own private life in another letter to Bollati, in which he declared himself, "an orphan (by family) and widower (of Casabella)"^39, Rogers did not renounce his view of architecture as an open method and a place for debate between different cultural generations in a phase in his life that had finally seen him become a professor of architectural composition^40.

37 ENR, Editoriali, I.
38 Ibid., I.
39 ENR to Giulio Einaudi, 18th January 1966, BBPR, folder Esperienza dell'architettura.
40 "When he was teaching composition, Rogers underwent a regeneration, finding renewed creative interest in architecture and the project's effectiveness that would perhaps have distracted him from Casabella's fate". Canella, Guido "Per Ernesto Nathan Rogers", in, Marina Montuori, ed. Lezioni di progettazione (Milan: Electa ed., 1988),280.

For further information on Rogers' experiences teaching architecture at university level and his relationship
Rogers' maieutic dimension, his personality and the cornerstone of his work and teaching borrowed from Gropius and Dewey were all notably strengthened over these years, signalling the impact his presence would have upon Milan's architecture department.

As Guido Canella pointed out "(...) Rogers spent the period between 1963 and 1968 drunk on his dedication to the school. (...) Though he had taught all over the world, and continuous requests were being made for his return, his school has always obstinately been the architecture department in Milan. The very place where, towards the end when he was unable to speak clearly, he had to ask his young assistant to read his lectures for him, stoically refusing to renounce his presence.""41

At the same time, Rogers' role became central to the Italian scene, not solely because he had given many diverse young architects the opportunity to cut their teeth on Casabella-continuità and its Centre for Studies, but because of the dialogue the magazine managed to maintain with a rapidly changing reality until 1964.

During his time at Casabella, Rogers was often accused of falling "victim" to the influence of certain individuals within the editorial team, as if by way of justifying the changes within the magazine's editorial staff.

I believe that such a statement risks over simplifying the development in content and the role that Casabella-continuità played in a long and complex phase of Italian history.

Instead I believe it would be far more interesting to focus on the persistent and almost contradictory dialectic between theoretical "continuity", understood as a coherent and progressive ideological creation championed by Rogers during his eleven years at the helm of the magazine (24), and the signals, the stimuli and various contributions made to the magazine at different times.

We can find evidence of this problem in Editoriali di architettura rather than "Esperienza", which is defined by both a general reading of Rogers' own experience, and his vigour and enthusiasm for the debate on pre-existing conditions.

with the culture of the Modern Movement, see the essay by Baffa, Matilde, "La questione dell'insegnamento dell'architettura negli anni del dopoguerra", in, Baffa et al., MSA,83-115.

41 Canella, Per Ernesto,240.

42 The role played by Casabella-Continuità was fundamental. The young Gregotti was first called to join the first editorial team with De Carlo and Zanuso in 1953, going on to become editor in chief from 1957 to 1962. The first articles by Giorgio Grassi and Aldo Rossi were written in 1955 and in the coming years Guido Canella, Carlo Aymonino, Aurelio Cortesi, Francesco Tentori, Luciano Semerani, Silvano Tintori, Gianugo Polesello and Manfredo Tafuri were asked to make theoretical and polemical contributions. In 1958, Matilde Baffa took over editing the books, whilst in 1957 Gae Aulenti had been asked to take over typography and in 1959, a Centre for Studies was founded, overseen by Rossi, Semerani, Tentori and Tintori. In 1961 there was a partial reorganisation of the editorial group, with Rossi and Tentori being named as editors, whilst Cortesi, Grassi, Semerani and Tintori worked in the "Centro Studi".
“Editoriali” embodied an historic phase for Casabella-Continuità in which Rogers’ philosophy was increasingly shaken by the unavoidable force of events, as well as the physical and mental transformations taking place around him; a condition that would immediately spill over into the choices and organisation of texts for the book.

7.5 - The last book

“From Pevsner to Giedion and the other historiographers of the Modern Movement, they have all had to recognise the various phases in order to explain evolution: from Morris to van de Velde, to Gropius and to us today, the line is clear as long there is no desire to set it into certain forms. Instead one must accept the dialectic energy in the strong conceptual impulse, whose consequences are just as valid as its contradictions”.

Significantly, the book begins with a dedication to the Masters.

The group of the four “Giants” (Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Gropius) is added to a Pantheon of Modern architecture’s “gurus”.

The idea of creating a “tradition” within the Modern Movement’s development is one of Ernesto Rogers' most important post-war themes, and is a clear continuation of the historiographical line held by Pevsner and Giedion.

It is also significant that the essays on Le Corbusier and Wright were actually commemorative texts published after their deaths.

The universe that had been marked by the “reassuring” presence of the Masters seemed to have reached crisis point after a widespread fragmentation that acted as precursor to the events of the following decades.

The dialogue between the “continuity” of a body of shared project experience, and personal creative space became increasingly central to Rogers’ thought, especially when faced with continual criticism of the Masters’ work. This was symbolised by Casabella-continuità’s defence of Le Corbusier’s designs for the Ronchamp chapel.

The inability of the different generations to communicate with one another, first seen in the

43 ENR “Gropius ed il senso della storia”, in CBC 271 (January 1963), 1, now in, ENR, Editoriali, 7.
45 The article “The last meeting with Frank Lloyd Wright” was published in CBC 227 (May 1959), immediately after the death of the American Master in that same year. Similarly, the eulogy to Le Corbusier “Lasting importance of Le Corbusier” was published in Marcatrè in 1965.
1950s with the Italian debate on the “youth of the columns” and team X’s opposition within the CIAM, led Rogers in 1961 to exclaim rather provocatively that “first and foremost it is necessary to recognise that today architecture’s creative forces are still dominated by men over seventy (except Aalto who is 63). This is a relatively unnerving reality (...) There is a need for immediate proof of new talent in order to put an end to these apocalyptic visions”; “the fact we have seen nothing as momentous as the convent at La Tourette designed by Le Corbusier should be food for thought.”

The introductory essays from three monographic editions of Casabella-continuità dedicated to Henri Van de Velde, Peter Behrens and Adolf Loos (32), were added to these articles on the Masters (the first index produced by Rogers refers to the inclusion of a text about Mies van der Rohe, which was later excluded).

These books were of great importance for Italy at that time. This is partly because they brought together and concluded the rewriting of a possible historiography of the Modern Movement as developed by Rogers, Belgioioso and Peressuti during their scientific direction of 14 editions in the “il Balcone” series from 1947. But it is also due to the fact that they symbolise one of the most important areas of study and critique for the “young” architects of the Centre of Studies, charged by Rogers with the creation of a new mythology for middle-class architectural culture.

Rogers was striving to build a continuity of experiences, contacts and works of European Masters in order to build a complete historiographical picture. This connection between the Modern Masters of architecture and the experiences of Van de Velde and Behrens, Viollet le Duc, Ruskin and Morris (never directly commented upon but regularly quoted), became an important reference point for Rogers.

The programmatic character of the chapter on the Masters, accompanied by a splendid yet mournful portrait of Olivetti, was progressively absorbed into the section on “Testimonials and polemic interventions”.

46 ENR “Non si può fare a meno dell’architettura”, in, CBC 247 (January 1961),1, now in Rogers, Edizioni, 90-95.

47 The “Centro studi”, or Centre for Studies, was created as a permanent centre for research and study within the magazine’s editorial body in 1959, when Casabella started to be published monthly. Between 1959 and 1961 it was made up of Aldo Rossi, Luciano Semerani, Silvano Tintori and Francesco Tentori, and later, between 1961 and 1964, the “Centro studi” was composed of Aurelio Cortesi, Giorgio Grassi, Luciano Semerani and Silvano Tintori.

The issue dedicated to Adolf Loos was overseen by Aldo Rossi, who also dealt with the summary of featured works. The issue dedicated to Henri van de Velde was personally overseen by Rogers given the affection and admiration he had always shown to the Belgian Master; yet it is undeniable that everyone in the Centre for Studies was involved with organising materials. The issue dedicated to Peter Behrens contained three long essays written by Vittorio Gregotti, Silvano Tintori and Aldo Rossi.
The first two published essays ("I CIAM al museo", "Testimonianza sugli architetti del ventennio") rebuilt the link with Esperienza dell'architettura by referring to two highly relevant elements. The first was the debate on pre-existing conditions, as one of the basic attributes of post-war Italian architecture and its repercussions on the international debate; the second, the testimony to the evolution of Modern Italian architecture through its own experiences, from Fascism to reconstruction through the resistance.

However, it is the other fourteen editorials that sequentially deal most candidly with the issues that led to a merciless appraisal of the country's increasing cultural and material ugliness, out of an awareness of a latent crisis for architecture and its apparatus.

Many of the texts contain almost obsessive references to the atomic bomb and the danger it posed to humanity, and the leaden climate of the Cold War that reached one of its most intense crisis points between the 1950s and 1960s, informed Rogers' words and thoughts, transforming the phrase "atomisation" into a metaphor for the state of Italian culture.

The violent ideological opposition of the two blocs did not only affect political and economic life in Europe, but managed to seep into daily life, shaping judgments, customs and language. The impact this had upon Italian culture, and the design and visual cultures in the following decades, is yet to be seen; but it is worth noting how phrases and concepts such as "atomization", "Americanisation" and "atomic era" are not just commonly-shared terms but end up being used to create a different existential condition.

In Rogers' post-war texts, his realisation of the deep crisis that was fast engulfing Italy goes hand in hand with an awareness of architecture's growing conceptual and linguistic inability to face up to the new social and political reality fast engulfing the country.

At the end of the 1950s, Rogers predicted a crisis for architecture and its apparatus that would explode in the ensuing decades with a growing mistrust of the professionalism, and a radical discussion of the project of architecture as the only point of reference, as far as the solution and management of its complexity was concerned.

The sense of "limited rationality" as a condition of contemporary architecture can be glimpsed in Rogers' last editorials and accompanies the persistent question of what kind of architecture

48 "I suddenly felt that I had been launched into the orbit of a desperate situation for all human beings, when the hostess passed by the newspaper: De Gaulle had tested his atomic bomb in the Sahara/Where would those killer clouds go? All it needed was a little wind and the desert would expand out through the towns and villages/ But even if we were safe from this bomb (as we are), who will save us from the others that are poised to destroy humanity?" in, ENR, "Non si può fare a meno dell'architettura", in, CBC 247 (January 1961), I, for further information, see "Architettura assurda", in, CBC 257 (November 1961), both published in "Editoriali di architettura".

would be fitting for a society that was becoming increasingly uprooted and distanced from its own traditions, its own culture.

Every protagonist of Italian culture, including Rogers, had their own way of dealing with the spectacle of one of the most profound and rapid upheavals in Italian history. The economic "boom" had an evident impact on the country's mentality and landscape, leaving an altered Italy with different cultural, social and economic realities.

In response to this, Rogers proposed a conceptual and linguistic model of methodological and cultural coherence founded on a global way of working that would not survive the sixties. "We Cannot Do Without Architecture", "Temporary Architecture", "Absurd Architecture", "The Architect of the Atomic Age": the titles and content of these articles convey a deep discomfort that expresses the difficulty (if not the impossibility) of "cultural unity" through architecture when faced with such historical instability.

The growing rift within the cultural project of "continuità" can be found in these editorials. It becomes a dominant leitmotif, even when the criticism is aimed at political or social events, as was the case in articles such as "Mafia Constructions and Construction against the Mafia" or "The Right and Left in Architecture".

The theme of the difficulty of recognising oneself in a rapidly-changing world ran parallel to the desperate calls for dialogue that Rogers continued to make through Casabella-continuità, as if he were trying to find plausible reasons for the failure of the modernisation process in Italian society.

In doing so, Rogers joined a whole host of "tragic" figures in bourgeois, secular and progressive culture; victims of an unfinished modernisation process that had dogged Italian history since Cattaneo, passing through the Rossetti brothers, the brief life of the Action Party and the heaven on earth of Olivetti's "community".

It became inevitable that the last two sections of Editoriali di architettura would be entirely different from those found in Esperienza. His notes on the methodology of architectural composition, marked by "unity and beauty" and the relationship between modern architecture and tradition, act as a counterbalance to the articles on "Countries" and the "Problems of the school".

The international standing gained by Casabella-Continuità justifies the presence of this seemingly unrelated section, whilst expressing one of the author's most critical existential states.

The strongly international nature of the two magazines led by Rogers was motivated by an experience in the author's private life and the insight this brought into the progressive globalisation of information on architecture and its consequent ideological power.

50 "the great challenge of our age lies in establishing cultural unity", in ENR, "L'architetto dell'era atomica", in CBC 267 (September 1962), I, now in ENR, Editoriali, 1969.
One of the differences that set Rogers apart from the rest of the Italian and Milanese scene can be found in a personal history that conditioned his fate and aspirations. Born in Trieste to an English father; subjected to continual movement between Zurich, Florence and Milan since childhood, this "errant Jew", intellectual, child of the cosmopolitan and secular middle classes, made this journey and international contacts one of the cornerstones of his own education and future, to become the natural trait d'union between Italian architecture and the modern international circles in the post-war era.

It is unthinkable that his experience of teaching in Switzerland during the war, Tucuman in Argentina, London, Berkeley and San Francisco, not to mention his unflagging activity as a speaker that took him all over Europe, Asia and America during the 1950s and 1960s, would not influence the organisation and content of the magazines of which he was in charge.

Since his time at Domus" (1946-1947), Rogers insisted on having the main articles translated into English and French, understanding that the battle for modern architecture (and later, that for the affirmation of Italian architecture) would only be won through constant international promotion.

Furthermore, the growing debate in the editorial team by the end of the 1950s on how much importance to attach to issues of town planning, together with a growing awareness within Italy's cultural and political spheres of the importance of protecting and managing the land (which in itself led to a debate on the new laws regarding town planning), undoubtedly had an impact on the magazine's political editorial in terms of the understanding of some of the most interesting foreign cultures.

These issues of Casabella-continuità, dedicated entirely to architecture, history and the various cultural and artistic experiences of those countries, became greatly important to the future of Italian publishing51, and show a comprehensive appraisal of the situations in those countries. Whilst those dedicated to the United Kingdom, France and Germany all use reconstruction as a starting point for assessing the various town-planning and design policies in place, the issues on the Soviet Union and the United States embody an incredibly important evaluation of their respective situations without the slightest hint of ideological prejudice, which was rampant in Italy at that time. The texts on the architecture of the Middle East or Argentina spoke of the growing interest in the cultures of developing countries that were only just starting to appear on the international radar:

The final section on the "Problems of the school" plays a different role, wading into the cultural and political battle Rogers waged within the Italian university.

The "unhelpful" nature of Rogers' involvement within Milan's architecture department could not

51 It is useful here to consider the comparison of the issues from Hinterland magazine led by Guido Canella, with their corresponding issues of Casabella under Vittorio Gregotti.
solely be ascribed to resistance towards the culture of the Modern Movement, but resistance to a maieutic approach to teaching architecture that clearly contradicted the traditional Italian academic course.

Though in 1952 Rogers was given the task of teaching the “complimentary” course on the stylistic and constructive features of monuments, he became central to the careers of many young architects, so much as to transform Rogers’ famous travels on his own journey to “discover” regional Italian architecture into a collective heritage, already idealised in the memories of those who had the good luck to take part in them.

But in this case, the chosen articles were selected as a denouncement of the situation in the Italian university that was close becoming unsustainable due to the exponential rise in the number of students and the cultural limitations of its courses.

They are crucial eyewitness accounts of a universe that is about to explode and a spirited call to resolve some of the strongest contradictions, whilst at the same time, defending the students occupying the universities in Turin, Milan and Rome in a political climate marked by indifference and obtuse apathy.  

And it is in these very pages that the tone of Rogers' declarations becomes increasingly intense and heart-rending. He insists on ethical and civic duty; an element that had always set the Trieste architect’s works and texts apart (“the moral unity of the man-citizen-architect, who is man first and foremost, then a citizen, and then an architect”) - a lesson that remains highly salient even today.

52 “If the students in Milan’s architecture department are involved with agitation (an agitation now so painfully violently that it has moved from being a strike to becoming an occupation of the school with grave consequences for all), then something must have pushed them to it. (…) It is absurd to play down such a serious situation and it is far too easy to keep these lawless students quiet”, in, ENR, “Evoluzione della vita universitaria”, in, CBC 273 (March 1963). 1, now in ENR, Editoriali, 257.

Ernesto N. Rogers, Aldo Rossi, Marco Zanuso and others, Milan, 1959
This thesis has investigated how the key term continuity was developed into a cultural and ideological resource by the Italian architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers (1909-1969) and how it became central to architectural planning in the Italian and European post-war Modernist community, influencing its choices and direction, whilst reinforcing and clarifying communication with and pressure on an outside world.

It was particularly in post-war Europe that the term continuity acquired a whole range of (often ambiguous) meanings that would allow it to be considered as a possible solution to the growing sense of social and cultural crisis, which was exacerbated by the economic boom and the reconstruction process. It was a cultural category that dealt directly with the issue of defining an identity in transformation, straddling the tendency to conserve cultural and environmental treasures, and the tension provoked by the metamorphosis taking place.

Many experiences and protagonists of the post-war period rallied around this concept in defence of the Modern Movement, its active cultural role in the process of transformation and its choice not to break with some of the great experiences of the past, but to go forward in close continuity with them.

However, I believe that no-one in the post-war architectural culture was more central to the conceptual development and cultural affirmation of this term than the Italian architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers; member of the BBPR studio and editor of Domus (1946-48) and later Casabella-continuità (1953-1964).

The affirmation and widespread usage of this concept in the post-war era went hand in hand with its definitive intellectual and international consecration by Ernesto Nathan Rogers who added it to the title of Casabella in 1953.

In this sense, the Rogers/continuity experience can be viewed as a methodological “case study” in which the term adopted by a community of intellectuals and artists at a particular historical juncture became the expression of a cultural philosophy regarding reality and the definition of the project itself.

My findings shows that it is highly significant that Rogers attempted to turn the conceptual reflections on the term continuity into a tool capable of creating new, concrete architectural
experiences.
The main conclusions of my research were the follows:
Continuity is a category that defines an ongoing conflict between conservatives and change. It is usually during the crisis that contradictions come to the surface, expressing a generalised state of conflict and dissatisfaction. The concept of "continuity" is understood as one of the ways in which many contradictory conditions can be resolved through a redefinition of concepts such as identity and context.
The use of Rogers' specific "case study" and his theoretical and design production using the term "continuity" allows us to reflect upon the importance one particular experience places upon the creation of tools used to face a condition of cultural and social crises.
The duality of continuity and crisis was boldly endorsed, especially in the second half of the 1950s when the country was in the throes of an economic boom and modernisation process, and European societies were faced with the extension of their markets for a new mass society and the first traces of globalisation in consumerism and trade.
The relationship between the term continuity and the post-war Italian and international architectural spheres, produced works, objects, environments, writings and theories capable of having an effect upon reality and its transformation as it is shown by the products of the Italian post-war Modernist architectural culture.
Ernesto Nathan Rogers' definition of the concept continuity combines cultural and ideological stimuli with a number of personal and private issues, thus rendering the term a cognitive representation of the author's view of the world. An in-depth analysis of Ernesto N. Rogers' private archive of unedited correspondence that dates from 1919 to the mid-1960s has led to certain facts being uncovered from which we can draw a series of hypotheses showing how continuity was a personal theme for Rogers long before it began to inform his intellectual development.
The assertion of the concept of continuity has also been analysed using Rogers' experience, cross-referencing his public story with his private one.
We tried to demonstrate how Rogers attached a personal value linked to his emotional and family experiences to the term continuity; an act that would have a profound effect upon it, particularly in its formative years. Ernesto Nathan Rogers's definition of the concept combined cultural and ideological motivations with a series of personal and private themes, making this term a significant model of representation.
The analysis of the relationship between a particular 'case study', such as Rogers' personal experiences, and its ability to transform very private content into universal cultural elements: This can be traced through the evolution of Rogers' theories on the concepts of anonymity the masses and context from the 1930s; all of which are inextricably linked to his own personal
The choice to nullify his own name within the acronym BBPR in 1932 must be viewed as a coherent cultural decision in keeping with the debate in Italy at that time. However, it must also be understood that this choice was also linked to the fact Rogers had a very personal desire to belong to a new community that was more unitary and less problematic than his own family life and roots (dual British-Italian nationality, Jewish origins). With the dramatic events of the Racial Purity Laws which forced Rogers into anonymity, his theory on the individual-mass relationship began to consider the concept of reality, opening the way for the cultural reflections that would lead Rogers to add the motto “la casa dell’uomo” to the title of the magazine Domus in 1946. This was a time of decisive conceptual evolution in which Rogers asserted the value of real humanity in architecture in contrast to the abstract nature of avant-garde culture of the Modern Movement. However, this was also a fundamental journey that saw Rogers turn dramatic reflections on his own anonymity into universal fact, which were then able to be used as an instrument for cultural reflection that would prove decisive to the future of post-war European architecture.

The projects and cultural action undertaken by Rogers and the BBPR during the 1950s were a direct result of the lengthy debate and research phase that had begun in Italy at the end of the 1920s, and been developed by Italian Rationalism in the 1930s and the post-war reconstruction.

It was here that the characteristics and identity of Modern Italian architecture were determined, with the complex and undefined relationship with history and environmental traditions as one of their most central issues.

The experiences of the BBPR and Rogers in particular must be viewed within this cultural and projectual context as this was very thing that provided the foundations for the original and decisive contributions they made in the post-war years.

The term Continuità, or continuity, was used by Rogers as a key ideological tool with which he was able to impress the difference of Italian architecture upon the international debate; predominantly through an informed use of Casabella-continuità.

Rogers theoretical writings embodied the identity of a post-war Italian modernist community and wielded a great deal of influence over the texts, choices and projects created both in the professional milieu and in the world of university teaching.

It was a cultural condition that expressed the anomalous nature of Italian Modernist culture from the late 1930s and onwards through the horrors and devastating consequences of the Second World War.

During Rogers’ development of Casabella-continuità, and particularly in its initial phase between 1953 and 1958, the concept of continuity acquired a wealth of meanings that were, nonetheless,
fully coherent and capable of dialogue with different issues and conditions.
It is for this reason that I have referred to continuity as an ideology: because of its ability to
influence an entire community of Italian architects whilst defining the necessary projectual tools
and a common language, and because it became central to the debate and internal conflict
within the CIAM throughout the 1950s.

Continuity took on a strategic and ideological value within the CIAM, especially as regarded the
management of its internal policies and its relationship with the changed political landscape.
This issue was discussed with reference to the organisation of the 1949 CIAM Congress in
Bergamo where Rogers' and Giedion's tactics of political mediation and continuity were firmly
put into practice in order to avoid any tension between the different political characters of the
organisation.

Continuity as an active mediation between human and environmental contexts (pre-existing
conditions) and the Modern project. This is the last passage that transformed a cultural notion
into a resource for projects able to condition and build fundamental characteristics for this
phase in Italian architecture. It is within this context that I have tried to demonstrate how
the BBPR projects for the museum in the Castello Sforzesco and the Torre Velasca (both in
Milan) represented the most evolved and complex attempt to actively use the term continuity
within a project. That is, the construction of spaces in which dialogue between the Modern
project and pre-existing conditions was guaranteed, alongside the consolidation of a new
architecture suitable for a new mass of individuals in search of an identity and a condition of
total transformation, much like the one Italy had been plunged into in the aftermath of the
Second World War.

Rogers' research into possible conceptual and operational tools that could be used to elaborate
the concepts of continuity and pre-existing conditions, set an important precedent for the
various attempts to root modern culture within contemporary society. Many historians consider
the Torre Velasca experience as a conceptual virus that introduced the Modern Movement to
post-Modernity, opening up a new phase in the relationship between project, history and mass
culture.

Casabella-continuità acted as an essential training ground for European and Italian architectural
cultures, especially if you consider the influence it held over the theoretical work of Aldo Rossi,
Vittorio Gregotti, Giorgio Grassi and Guido Canella, beginning in the 1960s and going on into
the Post-Modernism of Robert Venturi and the critical regionalist experiences of the 1980s and
In each of these experiences, the need to root Post-Modernity in reality and its environmental traditions is the common denominator.

It is my belief that without Rogers’ theories none of this would have been able to happen, precisely because they considered the necessity for an instrument of open, transversal and heterodox work that was profoundly linked to the idea of the individual's attention to places and their needs.

My research study has mainly focussed on Rogers’ experiences and on Rogers’ capacity of influencing, through his writings and polemics, the cultural networks he attended.

I think that the discovering of the personal archive of Rogers, I did in the early Nineties, influenced me and strongly addressed my researches, keeping the main interest on Rogers’ production.

This approach limited the research only on Rogers’ point of view and kept the networks’ reactions on a secondary side (BBPR, Ciam, MSA, University).

A research on the strong influences determined by Rogers’ activities on the Italian and International post-war architectural culture should be carried on in the next future and on his cultural influence within the Italian faculty of architecture.

As well the impact of Casabella-continuità’s experiences upon Italian and international architectural culture is yet be seen, as is (in my view) the relationship this publication had with the other “militant” magazines of Modernist culture of the same historic period, should be considered in the future scholar researches.

I think I should have analyzed more in depth the complex releationship within the “second” family of Rogers: the BBPR office. Analyzing the records of the correspondences within the four members of BBPR it is clear the close and rich dialogue on theoretical and design arguments which shows the different “individual” contributions to the BBPR productions.

Another line of research should follow the effects of mounting international political crisis and the ideological globalisation of the CIAM in the second post-war period. I feel that an in-depth research through the different individual archives would provide an insightful point of view on the relationship between cultural elaboration and political situation in the “cold war” era.

The value of Rogers’ experience for today’s work remains to be seen; should it be considered as a historical condition that reached the end of its road, or, should we instead assess it according to its cultural potential?

I believe that today, perhaps even more so than in the 1950s, the dangerous and problematic comparison between continuity and crisis, as mediated by the ambiguous role played by identity, continues to be central to the contemporary debate.

And this affirmation goes both for contemporary global society and the world of architecture, which has been pushed in two different ways towards the globalisation of a new international
style that moves indifferently through the cities of the world, and the picturesque, naïve defence of various local linguistic and building identities.

I believe that a reflection upon continuity as a form of open, flexible dialogue that listens to the world around it is greatly needed, as is a concept of the architectural project as a form of active mediation between the desires and real dimensions of contemporary human beings and an increasingly complex urban reality.

My findings show that Rogers' idea of viewing architecture as a process rather than a formalised style continues to be one of the most culturally vital concepts; one we must understand and act upon.

This is particularly true in an historic phase that is witnessing a profound metamorphosis in the craft of architects, their tools and key words, whose final limits have yet to be established.
Ernesto N. Rogers, in his own home, Milan, 1958
Abbreviations

ENR  
Ernesto Nathan Rogers

EP  
Enrico Peressutti

GB  
Gianluigi Banfi

BBPR  
BBPR archive, Milan

AA archive  
Alvar Aalto archive, Helsinki

CBC  
Casabella-continuità
Sources and archives:

BBPR’s archive, Milan

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- Correspondences between E.N.Rogers and S.Giedion
Politecnico of Milan, Central Archive
- Rogers and the teaching at the Faculty of Architecture

Archivio di Stato, Milan
- Rogers and Racial Laws

Archivio Stato, Rome
- BBPR and EUR

MART, Rovereto, Central Archive, Belli archive
- Correspondences between E.N. Rogers and Belli

Interviews: Giulia Banfi, Giancarlo De Carlo, Lodovico Belgioioso, Gillo Dorfles, Vittorio Gregotti, Guido Canella, Luciano Semerani, former editor of “IL Balcone”
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"Un soggiorno." *Domus* 214 (1946).


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Appendix:

Complete List of the Works, BBPR archive

ARREDAMENTO

1947- Ufficio Anguissola , via Brera
1947- Anuissola, via Brera
1942- Ing. Meo
1938- Banfi, Milano
1944- Albergo Commercio ( sistemazione )
1946- Casa Riva
1942- Appartamento, via Cappuccino, 1
1946- Cavallotti, via Telesio
1947- Cennarini, via Colonnetto 8
1947- Melzi, via cappuccio
1946-
1941- Scuole Artigiane
1946- Ravelli, via D'Annunzio
1946- Russo, Trieste
1946- villa
1942- Galleria " Corrente ", via Spiga 9
1941- Chiovato, via Vigoni 3
1942-
1941, dott.Carpi
1941, Jacini, via del Lauro 3
1943, casa Luce, Milano
1936, dott.W.N.Rogers, Firenze
1945, Puliti, via dei Giardini 27
1937, avv.Romanini, via Caravaggio 3
1942, Morandi, Milano
1941, Casa Tescari,
1944, Appartamento, via dei Mille 5
1941, dott.Bettinelli, via Cosimo del Fante 7
1939, Bruni, via Cicogna
1938, M. Banfi, Milano
1939, Porro
1938, Comm. Prota
1937, dott.G.Manni, Trieste
1938, Germanini Cras
1939, Studio BBPR
1936, Verozzi, Trieste
1939, STIPEL, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele
1946, Vitali
1939, Uffici Banca Lombarda ( sistemazione)
1947, bar-Taverna, Bormio
1941-villa Irfis, Desenzano ( sistemazione)
1936-sala da musica dott. Monath, Trieste
1943- proprietà Melzi ( sist.), C.so Roma 76/80
1944-appartamento, c.so Magenta 46
1945- libreria "La Lampada", C.so Vittorio Emanuele
1944- negozio Luce Belsana, Milano
1944-Marescotti
1945-negozio "la lampada", Milano
1945-negozio "Minerva", via Montenapoleone 12
1944-Riva ( sistemazione ), via Cappuccini
1939-Stipel ( arredamento), Galleria Vittorio Em.
1946- villa (" "), Portofino
1938-negozio Crippa ( pubblicità-arredamento), Montecatini Terme
1941-villa Stoppani Porto-Ceresio ( arred.)
1944-Arredamento di uno studio ed una Biblioteca

INDUSTRIE-UFFICI

1943-Stabilimento conceria pelli, Pinerolo
1944-Edificio per Uffici S.A. Branca
1946-Bar Taveggia, via Manzoni 25
1945-Clinica "Ordine di Malta"
1946- Scuola, convitto, portineria, obitorio, Osp. Princ. Jolanda
1942- Cucirini milanesi, via Oglio 1
1938- Concorso EUR 42, palazzo PPT e Te. Ti., Roma
1941- Ferrari catania palazzina uffici
1939- Feltrinelli masonite, studi per l’applicazione della masonite
1939- Isola d’Elba, piano
1940- Iniziativa Martelli Ospedale (non eseguita)
1944- Ufficio società Luce Belsana, Milano
1943- maglificio, Caravaggio (sistemazione)
1936- Ufficio società Aquila, Trieste
1937- Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, Roma
1938- Mostra Leonardesca, Palazzo dell’Arte Milano
1946- Monumento Mathausen, Milano
1938- Monumento alla Vittoria, piazza Fiume
1946- mostra della Resistenza, Parigi
1937- Comando Legione Alberto da Giussano, Legnano
1939- Oratorio, Morimondo
1938- Restauro chiostri S. Simpliciano
1937- Padiglione Società Italiana navigazione, Expo int. Parigi
1934- Palazzo del Littorio
1937- Parigi 1937
1947- stand e pubblicità ditta Crippa, Milano
1940- Politecnico, aula di Chimica
1938- Piano Regolatore e studio padiglioni nuova Fiera Milano
1943- Padiglioni Mutilati del viso, Policlinico, Milano
1945- Piano AR, Milano
1932- Piano regolatore di Pavia
1946- ricostruzione Immobiliare Monforte
1947- Ripristino Tomba Pasquinelli, Monumentale Mi
1937- Colonia elioterapica, Legnano
1936- Albergo Obelisco, Opicina
1943- Supermercato Brunelli Maciacchi
1945- scuderia Sem
1944- Società Cas, Legnano
1945- Sistemazione luce, S. Siro

CRI
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ML38
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MRP
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sala delle "priorità italiane"

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**RESIDENZA**

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1941- casa Serra, Legnano
1943- padiglione dormitorio e abitazione, via Varesina
1946-
1943-casa per sinistrati
1946- Condominio Scheidler, via Rugabella
1946- casa Werner, via Visconti di Modrone
1947- Edificio con ristorante, piazza S. Carlo
1946- Quartiere case abitazione sist. prefabbricato
1933- Casa del sabato per gli sposi, Va Triennale
1935- casa Feltrinelli, via Manin
1938- case popolari a Vigevano
1934- casa Ferrario, via del crocefisso
1935- casa Turati, Baggio
1941- villa a Desenzano
1943- Elementi per case in serie, alloggio univ. ACIS/AV
1943- villa Pozzolini
1943- Villaggio Belsana, Arenzano: Autorimessa
  " " : Abitazioni
  " " : Albergo
  " " : Cascina
  " " : casa cantoniera
  " " : centro
  " " : cappella
  " " : diporto
  " " : fattoria
  " " : forno
  " " : casa del nino
  " " : ponte
  " " : Pozzo
  " " : Refettorio
  " " : stabilimento
  " " : villa
1944- villa Pozzolini, val Verone
1937- casa per giovani professionisti (progetto)
1944- Abitazioni prefabbricate "Quarum"
1938- Quartiere case popolari, Aosta
1943- villette pre-fabbricate
1943- progetto case legno per sinistrati
1946- sistemazione portineria villa (?)
1944- villa Salmoiraghi
1947- "
1938- villa dott. Agular, Rapallo
1935- villa barbaran-Predeal
1947- villa Mulo, Vigevano
1937- villa comm. Venosta, Cornate Olona
1937- villa dott. G.C., Colle di Scazola
1935- villa Elter, Cogne
1935- villa Lekner
1933- villa Morpurgo, Opicina del Carso
1936- villa Venosta, Cornate
1937- villa Paloschy
1946- villa Oggioni, Moltrasio
ENR, Bibliography list, (1932), BBPR, Vecchia corrispondenza.

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- "Einzelmöbel und Raumkunst"

Gioielli e Riviste
- Italiani - Francesi - Tedeschi - Inglese

ENR Royer
1931
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Palazzi — Piccolo dizionario di mitologia e antichità classiche
Kapka — Il processo
Steiner — I punti essenziali della questione sociale
Luna — Ora ci vedo
Ilfen — Peer Gint
Genovesi — La logica per gli giovinetti
Salvatore — La bufera Infernai
Banfi — Malaguzzi — Al giorno d'oggi
Schoré — L'evoluzione Divina
Jergson — L'evoluzione creatrice
Troisi — Istituzioni metafisiche
De Santillanna — Compendio di storia del pensiero scientifico
Vasari — Opere di Vasari
Steffen — Manes e la morte
Steiner — I misteri dell'orient e del Cristianesimo
Hoffding — La fisiologia del rinascimento (1°)
Hoffding — La fisiologia del rinascimento (2°)
Heine — Lo scetticismo
Bantner — Socrate
Bedanò — Da Tolomeo a Galileo
aparfava — L'attualismo
Rotta — Aristotile
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Livio — Dalla fondazione di Roma
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Cicerone — Catone il vecchio
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The love of the culture for the ten
Arcadian\'s with the

This is the 20th

Ernest
Abstract

The concept of continuity, often coupled with that of crisis, took on an even greater significance over the 20th Century and in particular, during the Second World War.

The growing aggression of European and North American cities; the affirmation of mass culture on a global scale; the ever-greater contrast between local cultures, their traditions and the increasingly pervasive and globalised modernity; the complex relationship between the individual, their scale and their desires, and an alienating condition of standardisation make these terms two of the most important concepts of the last century and this new millennium.

Architecture was faced with this problem at the beginning of the Modern Movement as the various regional contexts found the modernisation process progressively difficult to handle.

One of the people to develop the concept of “continuity” during the 1930s, and even more so after the Second World War, was the Italian architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers, member of the BBPR studio and key exponent of the CIAM. His theories, developed in the two magazines he had edited (Domus and Casabella), together with the projects elaborated with the BBPR, made an essential contribution to the Italian and international debate, as well as acting as a tool with which one can understand the attempt made by modern architectural culture to bring reality, its languages and traditions closer to a project of sustainable and modern transformation.

This thesis investigates:

- How Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ cultural, projectual and personal experiences both in Italy and abroad during the period stretching from the 1920s to the 1960s had a decisive (though not exclusive) impact upon the concept of continuity.
- The way in which continuity, as elaborated by Rogers, became central to the debate surrounding Italian and international architectural and theoretical production after the Second World War.
- The value of “continuity” as a tool for cultural and projectual mediation with respect to the concept of crisis caused by profound change in the 20th century city.
- The nature of the consequences the debate over these two key phrases had upon architecture from the 1960s to today, with particular consideration of its relationship to history, local environmental traditions and the concept of human scale.

Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ experience is seen as an exemplary case-study and a story that is central to understanding the ‘evolution of “continuity” in modern architectural culture of the 20th Century’.
The research methodology is interdisciplinary and considers History as a tool with which processes and forms of dialogue, exchange and development between individual protagonists and different networks can be investigated. Naturally, the History of architecture coincides with the history and theory of art, as well as the histories of politics, economics, sociology, science, anthropology and cognitive learning studies.

I have also chosen to use Rogers' experience to investigate how a process of theoretical development can become an ideological medium capable of influencing a community, and a projectual tool able to give coherent responses.

The historical research was based on in-depth archive research which has at its core the work carried out over a decade at the BBPR Archive and that of Rogers himself, and later in complimentary archive sources linked to modernist networks, as well as a series of interviews and dialogues held directly with the protagonists that confirm the research carried out using paper-based sources.

Active discussion with the DKS group, and reflection upon the research carried out by Alex Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre on the subject of critical regionalism, the idea of history, tradition and the rule, and the relationship between individual creativity and external reality, has been fundamental to the development of a methodology with which to tackle this research. Equally important were the seminars given by Professor Schoen on the concept of the project as a political dialogue, and those given by Professor Rosenberg on the relationship between the rule and reality.

The research carried out on the concept of continuity vs. crisis can also be viewed as the ever-relevant need to see the project of transforming reality as a political and cultural practice of mediation and patient consideration of the physical and social contexts with which architecture comes into contact, as well as the idea of a modernity that, in order to be such, must critically and knowingly re-evaluate the stories that construct the deep-rooted identity of each location. Continuity continues to be a potent antidote of pacifist mediation against extremists and the aggression that pertains to reality.
Luca Molinari
Biographical notes

Born, 1964

Architect and critic based in Milan, graduated in the Faculty of Architecture at Politecnico of
Milan in 1992 after a work and study experience in Delft (Ecole de l'Architecture, TU Delft
1987) and Barcelona (ETSAB 1990-92).

Associate Professor of "History of Contemporary Architecture" at the Faculty of Architecture,
Naples "La Sapienza" since 2011

Curic professor at the Academy of Fine Art of GuangZhou (China).

He currently collaborates with several international architectural and non-specialized magazines
such as, amongst others, "Architecture Today" (McGraw-Hill), CQ and Panorama-First.

He is editor and curates several exhibitions in the architectural and contemporary art field,
co-author and co-organizer of the international "Work in Progress" (Firenze-Milano), "La ferita del collo


He is co-editor of "At the Edge of Something Else. Contemporary Architecture (Palazzo Spada Napoli), Michele
Molinari, Luca Molinari (eds.)" (Firenze, Marsala, 2004)

He has been a member of the "Città di Napoli" Board of Directors from 2003 to 2005 and of the "Progetto
 involontario", the Donazione Foundation Board of Directors from 2005 to 2007 and of the "Progetto
e lentamente" Board of Directors from 2005 to 2008.

He is a member of the "Città di Napoli" Board of Directors since 2008 and of the "Progetto
involutario" Board of Directors since 2008.
Born, 1966.

Architect and critic; based in Milan; graduated in the Faculty of Architecture – Polytechnic of Milan in 1992 after a work and study experience in Delft (Faculty of Architecture, TU Delft, 1989) and Barcelona (ETSAB, 1990-92).

Associate Professor of “History of Contemporary Architecture” at the Faculty of Architecture, Naples “Luigi Vanvitelli” since 2003.

Guest professor at the Academy of Fine Art of GuangZhou (China).

He currently collaborates with several international architectural and non-specialized magazines such as Domus, Lotus, Abitare, Il progetto, L’architecture d’aujourd’hui, GQ and Panorama-First.

He edited and designed several exhibitions in the architectural and contemporary art field, the most relevant are: Santiago Calatrava. Work in Progress (Triennale, Milano), Le forme del cibo (Opos, Milano), Stalker (Opos, Milano), I sentimenti del 2000. Arte e fotografia dal 1960 ad oggi (Triennale, Milano), Side Effects (Triennale, Milano), Gold Medal for Italian architecture. First edition (Triennale Milano, Naples, Rome, Singapore, Guang Zhou/China), Piero Portaluppi (Triennale, Milano), 20.06. An overview on contemporary Italian architecture (Palazzo Reale, Naples), Michele De Lucchi; Milano verticale; Italo Rota; Dens-City; Living History (FMG space for contemporary architecture, Milan).

From 1995 he is the editor for architecture and design of Skira Publisher.

Scientific curator of the Fondazione Portaluppi (Milan) from 2000 to 2003 and of the “Progetto Portaluppi”.

Curator for architecture and urbanism of the Triennale of Milan (2000-2004) and member of the Scientific Comitee of the Triennale; during this period he conceived, produced and organized a series of public events to enlarge popular acknowledgment on architecture such as the the first edition of the Gold Medal for Italian Architecture, the Festa per l’architettura (Festival
of Architecture) and the lectures’ series Cantieri aperti (Open works under construction).

He has recently appointed by the Italian Minister of Culture (PARC) and the Italian Foreign Office as curator of the Italian cultural event at the third London Festival of Architecture (June 2008).

He has been the Director of the School of Design, Naba, Milan (2005/06) and actually held the direction of the Master of Interior Design.


He edited: Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Esperienza dell’architettura (Milano-Ginevra, 1996) and Lettere di Ernesto ad Ernesto e viceversa (Milano, 2000); (with Mirko Zardini)a monographic issue on the Italian contemporary architecture for the Dutch magazine Archis n.7, 1999; (with Paolo Scrivano), Arquitectura Italiana del posguerra/ Post war Italian architecture 2G, n.15, Barcellona 2000), Side effects (Milano, 2002), Gold Medal for Italian architecture (Bologna, 2003), (with Fondazione Portaluppi), Piero Portaluppi. Linea errante nell’architettura moderna (Milano-Ginevra 2003) and A+U n.420 on “Italian metamorph” (guest editor).

He currently work as independent adviser for Public and Private Institutions as well for international investors in the field of architecture.

In November 2007 he has been awarded by the X Venice Biennale of Architecture with “Ernesto N. Rogers prize” as best Italian architectural critic.