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Aldo Rossi: The City as the Locus of Collective Memory and the Making of the Public City in Cold War Italy

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ALDO ROSSI: THE CITY AS THE LOCUS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND THE
MAKING OF THE PUBLIC CITY IN COLD WAR ITALY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Art and Art History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Sonia Melani Miller

August 2017

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

ALDO ROSSI: THE CITY AS THE LOCUS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND THE
MAKING OF THE PUBLIC CITY IN COLD WAR ITALY

by

Sonia Melani Miller

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2017

Anthony Raynsford, Ph.D.	Department of Art and Art History
Dore Bowen, Ph.D.	Department of Art and Art History
Elizabeth Carrol Consavari, Ph.D.	Department of Art and Art History
Soroush Ghaharamani, Ph.D.	Architecture and Landscape Architecture Program Chair at West Valley College

ABSTRACT

ALDO ROSSI: THE CITY AS THE LOCUS OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND THE MAKING OF THE PUBLIC CITY IN COLD WAR ITALY

by Sonia Melani Miller

This paper seeks to redefine the scholarship on Aldo Rossi (1931-1997), an Italian architect known for having reintroduced symbolism to European architecture after the 1960s. My thesis addresses questions surrounding the development of Rossi's theory of city morphology, proposing that it was rooted in antifascist sentiments and influenced by politics of the Cold War. Rossi's professional growth is outlined through a period conditioned by the reactionary ideologies of postwar Europe, which deeply influenced the nation's culture and shaped artistic production. This thesis relies on unpublished archival material from Rossi's early career that documents the leading political and philosophical ideas of his time. It reveals Rossi's growing interest in developing a theory for a type of architecture and urban design rational in form and socialist in content, driven by the ethos of an emerging political Left. In this narrative, Rossi's work is contextualized in the efforts of a generation of Italian architects who conducted collective research on behalf of the Ina-casa program of national reconstruction in conjunction with the era's leading politicians. This collaborative effort ultimately led Rossi to develop theories for a structuralist reading of the city, as well as to the formulation of a type of humanist architecture in support of the collective consciousness of the Italian "public city" in the latter half of the twentieth century.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBPR	Banfi, Gianluigi; Barbiano di Belgioioso, Lodovico; Peressutti, Enrico; Rogers, Ernesto Nathan
CIAM	Congres International d'Architecture Moderne (International Congress of Modern Architecture)
COMINFORM	Communist Information Bureau (also COMECON)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DC	Democrazia Cristiana (Italian Christian Democratic Party)
FIE	Fondo per l'Investimento Edilizio (Funds for Real Estate)
ILSES	Convention on the Regional City at Stresa
INA	Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni (National Institute for Insurance)
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
MSA	Movimento Studi dell'Architettura (Movement for Architectural Studies)
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement)
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party)
RSA	Repressive State Apparatus
UIA	Unione Internazionale Architetti (International Union of Architects)
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
URSS	Unione delle Repubbliche Socialiste Sovietiche

[Trans.] All translations are by author unless otherwise noted

Introduction

Can a narrative change our perception of reality? Often incomplete documentation and the transcultural decoding of texts have led to the misrepresentation of politicized personalities. This misinterpretation is common for the depiction of individuals associated with ambiguous events of the Cold War, and is particularly exemplified by the appropriation of the public image of Italian architect Aldo Rossi by the English-speaking world. Who was Aldo Rossi in reality, and what was his role in the making of the “public city” of the 1960s? What was the public city? This research aims to demonstrate that, despite a multitude of conflicting interpretations, the scope of Rossi’s work was deeply ideological and political, motivated by fundamental prerogatives of his time that precluded the collective engagement in contemporary urban issues and the redefinition of a national rationalist architectural style. It also explores a multitude of ambiguous and often contradictory influences that characterized the artistic expression of the immediate postwar period and attempts to clarify some of the controversy over the definition of rationalist architecture.

The cultural particularity associated with Aldo Rossi’s typology and approach to urban design has been widely overlooked despite the worldwide inclusion of his book *The Architecture of the City* in academic curricula. Often described as one of the most enigmatic personalities of post-World War II Italy, Rossi derived his theory from the social, political, and economic conditions of a period that to this day lacks conclusive scholarship. This time was regarded as the golden age of capitalism characterized by a state of worldwide economic expansion and high unemployment spanning from the end

of the conflict in 1945 to the economic depression of the 1970s. Italy was one of the countries devastated by the war that, along with Japan, West Germany, France, and Greece, unexpectedly took part in this worldwide economic growth and was transformed in merely a decade from a rural economy into an industrial power. The period between 1950 and 1963 recorded the country's major economic escalation and the radical transformation of Italian society and culture, made possible by the implementation of progressive economic policies and by the cooperation among various productive sectors of society. The policies that enabled the mechanism behind this economic and cultural development, allowing architects to take an absolute position as shapers of the built environment, remain to this day the most overlooked facets of the postwar period, along with the influence of international politics on the nation's cultural affairs. Rossi actively took part in this transformation by participating in urban studies that rethought ideas of the early rationalist architects and by greatly influencing the consciousness of his contemporary peers. He, along with other politicized architects, researched a methodology for the rational evolution of Italian society that took the nation's socioeconomic development as the point of departure.

Rossi's most creative work also reflects a deep emotional response to national events in connection with the political tension of the Cold War that had drawn the nation in the midst of the antagonism between the Soviet Union and the United States. Thus, as Italy became the playground for political jockeying, and the national political alliances gradually deteriorated, Rossi externalized his most anguished anxiety with projects that were later considered examples of his methodology. His early writings, conference

speeches, and organizational associations are testimonials of the search for an architectonic language communicative of a distinct political ethos that took advantage of secular notions embedded in the nation's collective consciousness and the extrapolation of these ideas to the physical realm of cities.

This research aims to demonstrate that Rossi's scope was primarily rational, although his objectives are often contradicted by the surrealist quality of some of his work, expressive of the phenomenological manifestation of the deepest human anxiety. Many authors wrote entire chapters about Rossi's theory in support of specific and often unrelated agendas. However, they never properly scrutinized the actual politicization of these ideas but rather explained them with preconceived and academically defined notions of style and ideology. Therefore, the development and the actual meaning of Rossi's ideas are discernible only by contextualizing his work within contemporary socioeconomic conditions and political events, allowing his rational thought to be set apart from the phenomenological manifestation of anxiety in reaction to personal traumas. The communicative properties of Rossi's architectonic language became progressively evident as his typology acquired definition. The dialectic of this language, however, was also inevitably subjected to disparate decoding by receivers from different cultural backgrounds, which overall reflected Rossi's objective to create a style purely national. The surrealist quality of Rossi's work, for example, was interpreted as "existentialist" by Peter Eisenmann in a monograph entitled *Aldo Rossi in America* that introduced Rossi to the American public in 1979. In Rossi's work, Eisenmann found a reflection of the existentialist climate of postwar Italy that, according to him, was

particularly reflected in Rossi's writings and drawings, which he found to be inseparable from one another. According to Eisenmann, the existentialist cultural context motivated the significance or loss of significance of ideas and objects that, he claimed, Rossi expressed with a rejection of the ideology of consumption of modernism.¹ Eisenmann described Rossi's architectural language as something that exists in a prelinguistic universe, unencumbered by history and ruled by an analogical dialectic that forces the viewer to detach from his own cultural disposition and to envision the city as a narrative made up of elements from different places and times.² According to Eisenmann, this analogical process removes Rossi's architecture from any historical logic and provides it with an alternative meaning to rationalism and functionalism by articulating elements such as the unconscious and the shadow.³ Thus, it was from this perspective that Rossi refused the pastiche of styles without historical extrapolation, facing the reality of existentialism without renouncing the choice available in modernism between ethics and ideology and aesthetics and taste.⁴ Eisenmann suggested that Rossi's work proposed a rupture with history and was decontextualized from the social reality of the 1960s and 1970s. This break with historical continuity, according to Eisenmann, was explicitly made in the book *The Architecture of the City* with the departure from past traditions, expressed by the "analog artifact" that brought together different memories. Eisenmann

¹ Peter Eisenmann, "Preface," introduction to *Aldo Rossi in America: 1976-1979: March 25 to April 14, 1979, September 19 to October 30, 1979* (New York: Institute for Architecture and Urban Study, 1979), 6.

² Eisenmann, "Preface," 6-8.

³ Ibid., 8-9.

⁴ Ibid., 15.

also interpreted this analog artifact as Rossi's attempt to deal with the existential reality of man's relationship with objects and of monuments' connection with history.⁵

Therefore, according to Eisenmann, this rupture with history conferred man with the new role of survivor, not because of choice, like the modern movement had proposed, but for the lack of choice. Eisenmann's depiction of the character of Rossi's architecture is reasonably in tune with the architect's response to the cultural activities that took place in Italy in 1979 and 1980. Thus, Rossi's participation in the events of the "Season of the Ephemeral" and in the architecture biennial on postmodernism of Venice (Venice *Biennale*) justifies Eisenmann's description of his as an architecture "caught between the memories of a forgotten past and an unwanted future, with no hopes for the future."⁶ (See Fig. 1).

Figure 1. *Teatro del mondo*. (The World's Theater). 1979-1981. Aldo Rossi. Temporary theater, tubular steel and wood opening piece of the Venice Biennial of 1979-1981. Accessed March 13, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

⁵ Ibid., 1-5.

⁶ Ibid., 15.

It also suggests that the existentialism Eisenmann read into Rossi's work merely derived from Rossi's personal anxiety towards current political events. Thus, Eisenmann noted that "Rossi, unconscious of this final irony, was unwilling to continue the past into the future [as] he acknowledged architecture in the present extension of that humanist condition and confronted its reality."⁷

In 1981, by the time of the closing of the Venice *Biennale* on postmodernism, historian Vincent Scully also wrote a monograph for the introduction of Rossi's book, *A Scientific Autobiography*. In this preface, Scully addressed the gestalt properties of Rossi's architectural typology, as he describes it as "Platonized enduring shapes deriving from the observation of things translated into his memory."⁸ (Fig. 2 depicts the recurrent equilateral triangle floating above a quadrilateral shape).

Figure 2. *Cimitero di San Cataldo, Modena*. (San Cataldo Cemetery, Modena). 1971. Aldo Rossi with Gianni Braghieri. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Vincent Scully, "Postscript: Ideology in Form," in *Aldo Rossi: A Scientific Autobiography*, trans. Lawrence Venuti (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 111.

Scully explained that these forms were few, very carefully selected, coming out of his memory, standing for a multitude of things, and geometrically simplified but not as abstract as they seemed at first glance (see Fig. 3).⁹ He also described Rossi's architecture as a product of his memory rather than his ideology, presumably deriving from personal recollections of the country's architectonic past that included modern and fascist architecture (the De Chirico forms), which inexorably came back to haunt his public image.¹⁰

Figure 3. *Edifici pubblici, teatro e fontana, Zona Fontivegge, Perugia, Umbria.* (Public buildings, theater and fountain in Fontivegge, Perugia). 1982-1989. Aldo Rossi with Gianni Braghieri, Gabriele Geronzi, Massimo Scheurer, and Giovanni da Pozzo. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Moreover, Scully claimed that this architecture recovered the basis of vernacular northern Italian peasant and industrial shapes as well as the nation's classical past, all of which derived from memories of places that Rossi had seen and translated into his architectural

⁹ Scully, "Postscript: Ideology in Form," 114.

¹⁰ Ibid., 111-14.

typology as recordings of visions, spatial volumes, and particular types of urban environments. (See Fig. 4).¹¹

Figure 4. *Municipio di Borgoricco, Padova*. (Town Hall at Borgoricco, Padua). 1983-1988. Aldo Rossi with Massimo Scheurer and Marino Zancarella. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Rossi's opposition to functionalism, according to Scully, was embodied by his definition of the "urban artifact," centering on the idea that certain buildings maintain their form over time even if their function changes, and often become the elements that give the city its identity.¹² Thus, Scully noted Rossi's rejection of the modernist mantra of "form follows function" and a connection with notions of historical materialism,

¹¹ Ibid., 111-12.

¹² Ibid., 113.

advocating for the passage of historic traits among generational cultures. He also maintained that, although Rossi openly rejected modernism, he was foreign to postmodern relativism in the way it was understood by Eisenmann. To the contrary, he claimed that Rossi rather considered the public architecture of the city to be a stage for human action, significant to the discourse of collective memory.¹³ Scully elaborated this idea in the introduction of the 1985 book, *Rossi's Buildings and Projects*. In this monograph, he attributed Rossi's embrace of the collective experience to the inclusion in his architecture of particular industrial forms and materials commonly found in the local landscape. A methodology that, in time, he claimed became exemplary of Rossi's commitment to proletarian values and of his way of creating relationships between the city and specific buildings.¹⁴ On this occasion, Scully also depicted Rossi as a particular type of "modern" architect because of the austerity his architecture expressed with the overall clarity of its plain surfaces, avoidance of decoration, and with the gestalt cognitive process induced by its Platonic forms.¹⁵ On the other hand, he recognized that in contrast to the architecture of the modern movement, Rossi's buildings externalized continuity rather than rupture by respecting and retaining age-old types that were gradually modified with every repetition in a manner reminiscent of the work of the masters.¹⁶ Thus, according to Scully, Rossi combined the "metaphysical and painterly

¹³ Ibid., 112.

¹⁴ Vincent Scully, "The End of the Century Finds a Poet," in *Aldo Rossi: Buildings and Projects*, ed. Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1987), 13.

¹⁵ Scully, "The End of the Century Finds a Poet," 13.

¹⁶ Ibid.

feelings of illusion and the space of imagination with the passion for the structure and spatial types of vernacular and classical traditions that overall make sense of the environment and hold it together.”¹⁷ He also claimed that Rossi did not invent his architectonic forms but rather remembered them, and maintained them unviolated by stylistic elements in an attempt to represent what he considered “communal” and “collective.” (See Fig. 5 for an example of formal and symbolic contextualization).

Figure 5. *Museo do Mar de Galicia*. 1992. Aldo Rossi and Cesar Portela. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Eisenmann, on the other hand, described Rossi’s work as both “existing outside time and conditioning time” because of the way it collapsed the past and the future to make history present.¹⁸ Thus, according to him, Rossi exemplified the idea of the “collective”

¹⁷ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸ Eisenmann, “Preface,” 11.

with the repetition of three essential typologies closely associated with the milestones of Italian ritualistic and cultural life. These typologies, according to Eisenmann, consisted of the structure of the baptistery that symbolized the official acceptance of individuals in the community; the cemetery, which was associated with the passage of individuals to the spiritual community; and the monument, which was the element commonly used by society for its self-representation in the realm of cities.¹⁹ Scully, on the other hand, thought that Rossi expressed the idea of the collective through the universal language of the Platonized shapes of his architectural typology and by the mean of the composition of his architectonic projects (see Figs. 6 and 7).

Figure 6. *Sagraate, Monumento ai Partigiani. Sagraate, Milano.* (Monumental Fountain to the Partisans, Sagraate, Milan). 1965. Aldo Rossi. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

The shape of the equilateral triangle is repeated in many of Rossi's projects to symbolize social equality. The book by Giorgio and Paolo Pisanò *Il triangolo della morte: La politica della strage in Emilia durante e dopo la guerra civile* (the death triangle: The politics of the massacre in Emilia during and after the civil war) attributes the triangle with an emblematic meaning for Italian groups involved in the resistance as well as for the "autonomists" active in the postwar.

¹⁹ Ibid., 11-15.

Figure 7. *Le Cabine dell' Elba*. (The Cabins of Elba). 1975. Watercolor drawing. Aldo Rossi. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>. The archetype of the cabin was used for the project of the students housing in Chieti. Scully described the gabled dwelling units to represent individuals of society and the repetition and grouping their coming together in the simplest kind of community. The cabins surrounding the large communal building represent the masses gathering around a centralized leadership. Scully, "The End of the Century Finds a Poet," 12.

The interpretation of Rossi's work in terms of existentialist relativism on the one hand, and of gestalt modernism on the other, testifies to the versatile and culturally dependent decoding of his architectural language that fueled similar arguments for years to come.

Spanish architect and theoretician Rafael Moneo, for example, in his introduction to the book *Aldo Rossi's Buildings and Projects* of 1985, explicitly discussed Rossi's materialist use of the historical process in the making of his architecture. Moneo's understanding of Rossi's architecture was clearly influenced by his own belief that the environment is made by man as the materialization of memory and reality. Thus, according to Moneo, architectonic elements allow the passage of memories of past events on to future generations and perpetuate historic ties among the inhabitants of the urban

environment. Moneo believed that these environments speak of the past through their forms, and that the observation of the familiar shapes these contain teaches individuals to identify common elements recurring in the structures of cities.²⁰ Moneo also explained that Rossi relied on a mental exercise that could be traced back to an Aristotelian tradition, allowing for the conceptualization of meaning through the mimesis of architectonic shapes that are decoded and translated according to particular cultural understandings.²¹ He therefore believed that Rossi worked according to the “primacy of reason,”²² using the concept of type to explain the growth of the city, and the logic of architectonic forms to formulate his own abstract typology.²³ He also thought that Rossi’s objective was the making of a type of architecture in its primary and original conditions that communicated through the mimesis of architectonic forms according to a process relying on the association of “generic shapes” with “common meanings.”²⁴ Thus, he claimed that Rossi, in order to represent the “common” and the “generic,” had attributed the function of utensils to buildings by shedding any superfluous decoration and by contextualizing them into the surrounding landscape in such a way that their form

²⁰ Rafael Moneo, “Postscript,” in *Aldo Rossi: Buildings and Projects*, ed. Peter Arnell and Ted Brickford (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1987), 313.

²¹ Moneo, “Postscript,” 313.

²² Kant’s critical philosophy centers on two fundamental questions: One central to his theoretical philosophy relates to the pretension of reason of earlier rationalist philosophers such as Leibniz and Descartes. The other is related to his practical philosophy in connection with British empiricists such as Hume.

²³ Moneo, “Postscript,” 313.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

became inseparable from their function.²⁵ In 1976, Moneo further examined Rossi's methodology in an article published by the journal *Opposition Reader* that specifically discussed the book *Architecture of the City* and the project of the San Cataldo Cemetery (see Figs. 8 and 9).²⁶

Figure 8. *Cimitero di San Cataldo, Modena*. (San Cataldo Cemetery, Modena). 1971 Aldo Rossi with Gianni Braghieri. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Figure 9. *Cimitero di San Cataldo, Modena*. (San Cataldo Cemetery, Modena). 1971 Aldo Rossi with Gianni Braghieri. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

²⁵ Ibid., 312-14.

²⁶ Rafael Moneo, "Aldo Rossi: The Idea of Architecture and the Modena Cemetery," in *Opposition Reader: Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture 1973-1984* (New York: Princetown Architectural Press, 1998), 112.

On this occasion, Moneo suggested that Rossi developed his typology from two essential conditions he found historically rooted in European architecture and that in time became a characteristic of all his work. One of these themes was the relationship of public architecture to the city; the other consisted of the typology for an autonomous architecture based on the relationship between architectural styles and the city (see Fig. 10).²⁷

Figure 10. *Quartier Schützenstraße*, Berlin Mitte. 1995-1998. Aldo Rossi. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Moneo wrote that Rossi ultimately considered the city to be a collective entity, a repository of history, and a complex structure locus of collective memory that relies on the role of history for its perpetuation. In this context, he suggested, urban facts are

²⁷ Moneo, “Aldo Rossi,” 112.

produced under the pressure of economic phenomena, of which they become the reflection, and as such they push the city's evolution.²⁸ Moneo also suggested that, according to Rossi, architecture should function as an autonomous discipline discernible through the study of the city, which in itself represents architecture's most complete expression. He proposed that, according to Rossi, the observation of the city's architecture and of the other principles governing its form such as political, social, and economic systems could enable the understanding of urban morphology. Thus, it is only through the understanding of the latter that an autonomous discipline working according to the basic principles governing urban forms could be formulated.²⁹ Ultimately, Moneo proposed that Rossi had successfully identified the elements intelligible through memory that allow the city to be perceived as an "urban fact" reflective of the externalization of human condition and serving as a repository of society's collective memory.³⁰ According to him, Rossi had managed to establish continuity between architectural typology and form, allowing the understanding of the formation of the city from areas or sectors. It was this particular facet of Rossi's work that allowed Moneo to connect his methodology with the neorealist trend popular at the time, overall disregarding the fundamental incompatibility between rationalist principles and the organic neorealism of Saverio Muratori.³¹

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

In 1988, British architect and historian Alan Colquhoun interpreted Rossi's approach to architecture as a manifestation of the methodology of structuralism, which at the time was gaining popularity in reaction to the minimalist style typical of postwar real estate projects.³² Colquhoun believed that the postwar criticism against functionalism extended to all systems of ideas that it associated with as a "behavioral" system, and ultimately favored the onset of structuralism in all its artistic expressions.³³ He suggested that structuralist ideas could be applied to architecture through the notion of the type, which behaves like a language and relies on the persistence of earlier forms, as well as on their sublimation through the mimesis of shapes.³⁴ Colquhoun explained that this process had persisted in architecture because of the continuance over time of the forms and structures of basic buildings, with which standardized shapes are associated with specific uses and, as such, are systematically drawn from memory.³⁵ Thus, its dynamics allow the meaning of a structure to be formulated according to its relationships with other parts of a particular system, and historic forms to act as a continuation of the past to create new meanings in the present.³⁶ Colquhoun, with this analysis, reformulated Moneo's materialist interpretation of Rossi's morphological approach, but detached it from the

³² Alan Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism: A Retrospective Glance," *Assemblage*, no. 5 (February 1988): 8.

³³ The functionalist system of ideas included the philosophy of Bertrand Russell, the anthropology of Bronislaw Malinowski, and the music of Arnold Schönberg." Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 9.

³⁴ Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 10.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

current of neorealism and instead placed it within the rationale of Saussurian linguistics. Finally, in 1989, Italian architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri associated Rossi with the experience of the Italian architects of the 1960s by acknowledging his completion of the research started by Ernesto Nathan Rogers.³⁷ Tafuri credited Rossi with the formulation of an architectural typology free from fixed content, consisting of primary forms derived from a study of the architecture of Adolf Loos.³⁸ He also explained that, in the book *The Architecture and the City*, Rossi attempted to redefine the urban scene according to the same principles of the French school of geography through an epiphany of selected and well-researched signs drawn from memory. Therefore, it was for this reason that, according to Tafuri, Rossi had researched the primordial essence circumscribing the source of forms through experimentations with the primary shapes of the triangle, cube, and cone, as well as the creation of a variety of potential combinations to be used in the design of his analogous city.³⁹ Tafuri, however, found Rossi's typological research too confined and self-centered, and his repetition of the architectural typology to be inappropriate for the depiction of urban environments that presupposes models, archetypes, and figures as points of reference.⁴⁰

In 1994, German author Hans Gerhard Hannesen proposed another view of Rossi's architecture that partly reiterated ideas mentioned in the earlier literature. Hannesen

³⁷ Manfredo Tafuri, "The Case of Aldo Rossi," in *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 135.

³⁸ Tafuri, "The Case of Aldo Rossi," 135-36.

³⁹ Ibid., 136-37.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 137.

described Rossi's approach to the architecture of the city as an observation of the development of the built environment over time.⁴¹ He suggested that in order to find a formula to express collective experiences and to create areas for future uses to deal with urban expansion, Rossi had centered his methodology on the analysis of the space communities design to deal with specific stages of life and death.⁴² Hannesen explained that Rossi found this communal space expressed with the notion of the *luogo architettonico*, as well as being exemplified by three main architectural typologies reminiscent of Eisenmann's interpretation of his association of public structures with the milestones of Italian collective life. Hannesen, however, described these typologies as "houses," comprised of the "house of death" of the cemetery, the "house of life" of the school, and the "house of public representation" and stage of public life of the theater.⁴³ According to Hannesen, Rossi also attributed historical monuments with the role of repositories of collective memory for their ability to invest places with special significance and to make them into valuable points of reference.⁴⁴ In this context, cities become the stages where architecture is a set, the man is the actor, and public architecture is the "site of collective memory reflecting society's ideals, necessary to deal with present

⁴¹ Hans Gerhard Hannesen, "Cara Architettura!," in *Aldo Rossi Architect* (London: Academy Editions, 1994), 30.

⁴² Hannesen, "Cara Architettura!," 40-45.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30-35.

and future in a world flooded with triviality.”⁴⁵ (See Figs. 11 and 12 for the “house of death”).

Figure 5. *Cimitero di San Cataldo, Modena*. (San Cataldo Cemetery, Modena.– Trans). 1971 Aldo Rossi with G. Braghieri. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Figure 6. *Cimitero di San Cataldo, Modena*. (San Cataldo Cemetery, Modena.– Trans). 1971 Aldo Rossi with Gianni Braghieri. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

The way Hannesen emphasized the importance Rossi attributed to the notion of cultural continuance, attributed to the *luogo architettonico*, is consistent with the architect’s

⁴⁵ Ibid., 71.

rejection of the modernist idea that a break with the past could help achieve a better society. Rossi's rejection of the modernist mantra, overall fundamental to his ideology, was also expressed by his reverence for past accomplishments and use of examples from antiquity to illustrate exemplary phenomena of architecture and urban planning.⁴⁶ Hannesen also proposed that this rejection of the modernist mantra of "function defines form" was mainly dictated by Rossi's belief that buildings retain their forms as constituents of the city, even when their functions essentially disappear, and then they become important mainly for their sentimental value.⁴⁷ Ultimately, Hannesen reiterates some ideas previously proposed by Colquhoun, such as the connection of Rossi's typology with the conceptual views of Quatremere de Quincy.⁴⁸ On the other hand, he highlights some aspects of Rossi's architecture that are often overlooked by other architectural critics, including its resemblance to the Terragni Town Planning Movement, with the buildings of the Soviet revolution, and most importantly the overall undeniable mark of Rossi's Catholic roots on his use of symbolism.⁴⁹

Finally, it was up to the American critic Charles Jencks to adequately address the role of culturally dependent codes for the reading of Rossi's architecture. Jencks mainly derived this observation from the way architectural syntaxes are distorted to fit local understandings, and from the overall reliance of this process on culturally dependent and

⁴⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 29-54.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 71.

often conflicting visual codes dictated by the viewer's experience.⁵⁰ Hence, he observed that signs based on the modern code are interpreted differently from signs belonging to the traditional code derived from the experience of normalized architectural elements.⁵¹ Departing from this principle, Jencks differentiated the semantic groups that condition architectural readings from the decoding of architectural forms based on class culture, and clearly separated the Peircean tradition from the Saussurian.⁵²

Jencks' theory on the decoding of architectural language became the precursor of a debate with Italian critic Umberto Eco that accompanied the widespread application of structuralism to Italian urban design in the 1960s, leading to explicitly different positions on the reading of architectonic signs (elitist versus populist; modern versus popular). However, although Jencks made a fundamental distinction between the Peircean reading of Robert Venturi's architecture and that of the Saussurian tradition, he did not associate Rossi's typology with either type, but instead vaguely described it as an ambivalence of the two codes.⁵³ On the other hand, he placed Rossi's architecture within the categories dubbed as the "new Tuscanism" and the "new abstraction," which he had coined to describe a design approach based on the "controlled repetition and restrained mood" of Platonic geometry and the transcultural classicism of abstract architectural themes.⁵⁴ The

⁵⁰ Charles A. Jencks, *The Language of Post-modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 37-40.

⁵¹ Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture*, 42.

⁵² Ibid., 55.

⁵³ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 147-50.

category Jencks described as “new abstraction” generally dealt with the abstract qualities of regular geometric forms, stimulated through intuition but still dependent on rational thinking and ability to control emotions. Jencks attributed these abstract geometric forms with the peculiar characteristic of supervening ideas that do not change but go through continual stages of transformation based on a grammar of universal archetypes conceived throughout the course of history.⁵⁵ According to Jencks, Rossi’s typology relied on this multivalent nature of architecture, especially as expressed by the autonomy of certain themes to dominate history and function, allowing historic structures to be transformed and adapted. Thus, he believed that this determined Rossi’s reliance on the permanence of abstract types such as the house and the neighborhood block for their temporal and cultural permanence and their ability to continue transforming themselves indefinitely.⁵⁶ Jencks explained that in this respect, Rossi’s architecture is supposed to be transcultural, to force the combination of “opposite” archetypes, to think across functions, and to get away from the stereotypes of typical production.⁵⁷ He also wrote that Rossi used the Platonic geometry of parts that fit together with an industrial precision to produce a well-behaved and easily understandable style that, irrespective of specific taste, concentrates on organizational problems and allows architecture to be controlled as an art form.⁵⁸ Jencks also described Rossi’s style as austere and based on repetition of walls and voids,

⁵⁵ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 151.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

inexpensive but celebratory of a sophisticated poverty in a manner that makes it simultaneously aristocratic, proletarian, bourgeois, and anti-bourgeois—a style, he claimed, particularly appreciated by the ex-modernists for its constructional logic and the shedding of decorative details.⁵⁹

Rossi, according to Jencks, contributed to the practice of the “irrational rationalist” use of reduction to form archetypes, a practice that mainly differentiated him from “historicist rationalists” such as the Kier Brothers and that led to the creation of a new methodology enabling the exploration of morphological design enacted through a typological approach to the urban context.⁶⁰ This methodology set the basis for a popular planning method of the 1980s called “critical reconstruction,” centering on the restoration of the traditional nineteenth-century street pattern that followed the guidance of traditional city plans, but that did not constrain the contemporary architectural expression of new building additions. Jencks wrote that Rossi’s book *The Architecture of the City* disguised this methodology as the notion of the collective memory of the city, in the context of which, urban forms act as a repository of culture from generations past for generations to come. Rossi explores the way the architectonic forms of these building types may accommodate changing living uses over time.

The literature on Rossi allows for comparing different evaluations from personalities of various cultural backgrounds that expressed a personalized understanding of his architectural language. Eisenmann’s existential relativist evaluation was obviously made

⁵⁹ Ibid., 152.

⁶⁰ Charles A. Jencks, *The New Moderns: From Late to Neo-modernism* (London: Academy, 1990), 122.

in reaction to the phenomenological externalization of Rossi's personal anxiety during the time that his architectural dialectic fully developed. Scully, on the other hand, obsessed over the gestalt process of Rossi's typology, classifying him as a type of modernist architect who rejected the overall modernist mantra but, on the other hand, shed superfluous details, used simple forms, and relied on the autonomous communication of architectonic shapes.⁶¹ Moneo and Tafuri emphasized Rossi's materialistic views and the way the intrinsic humanism of neoclassical types translated into his rational approach to architecture. Moneo also discussed Rossi's morphological research on the city's structures and vaguely connected it to the contemporary neorealist current, which was self-proclaimed Hegelian and anti-rationalist. Colquhoun, on the other hand, attributed Rossi's concern for the intertextuality of urban structures to the embrace of structuralism by the Italian architects of the 1960s and their reaction to functionalism. Finally, Hannesen connected Rossi with Terragni's Town Planning and emphasized the importance of his roots in the country's Catholic mysticism. Hannesen's former remark clarifies the position of early twentieth-century rationalist architects from the temporal perspective of a pre-Gramscian era when the *Fascio* was considered a progressive regime, in opposition to the same observation made in retrospect. The association of Rossi with Catholic mysticism, on the other hand, allows connecting values embedded in the nation's collective consciousness with notions of precapitalist communism (understood in terms of Durkheim's definition of societal coherence),

⁶¹ The project for students housing in Chieti, for example, is a repetition of the gabled dwelling unit exemplifying individuals taking part to a group and coming together in the community. These cabins are symbolically grouped around a large communal building in the center of the piazza—see fig. 7. Scully, "The End of the Century Finds a Poet," 12.

explained by the articulation of common ethics through the Saussurian syntax of the structuralism of Levi-Strauss. Jencks' overall dislike of structuralism, on the other hand, led him to interpret these ideas differently, neglecting the actual encoding involved with the formulation of architectural typologies that the structuralist theory explains. Jencks also suggested that Rossi had succeeded in his objective of creating a classless typology, but contradicted this observation by proposing a retrospective reading of Rossi's dialectic based on the way in which his architecture resembles the type of modernism relished by the Fascists.

In conclusion, a proper examination of Rossi's idea, ethics, and political associations in connection with his contemporary events was clearly never attempted. Thus the focus of this research is on the events and conditions leading to the formulation of Rossi's theory, his involvement with the research for urban models, his early association with other contemporary architects, and the multitude of philosophical approaches he revisited in the process that led to the formulation of his theory of urban morphology. It focuses on the review and analysis of unpublished archival material and of several untranslated texts to articulate the fundamental meaning of Rossi's thought. It also develops a chronology of the influences and circumstances that led to the formulation of the early version of his theory. These include the postwar social and political climate, Rossi's involvement with leftist militant activities, the influence of the foreign policies of the Soviet Union, the influence of Marxist philosophers, and his sensibility for the cultural traditions of the nation. It then develops an overview of Rossi's political vision and his position on various economic and cultural policies, along with the leading national and

international ideas that influenced its formation. Ultimately, it attempts to make a connection between Rossi's ideas and structuralism's reliance on the role of rituals and myths (whether religious, cultural, or political) to establish urban permanence through the perpetuation of culture.

Chapter One deals with the period from the end of World War II to 1953, consisting of the years that marked a milestone for international and national politics. It covers the national and international events leading to the death of Stalin, ending an era of cultural policies that had drastically affected architectural production. It also discusses the events leading to the nation's economic recovery and societal changes, Italy's involvement in the Cold War, and the national and foreign cultural policies that changed the relationship between national art and politics.

Chapter Two examines the years between 1953 and 1960, explaining the instruments that allowed the economic recovery and cultural transformation of the country and discusses the primary policies, ideologies, and personalities involved. It particularly covers Rossi's participation in the activities of the group *Casabella Continuità* and his position on the debate on modernism undertaken by different European chapters of CIAM. Finally, it examines the studies and writings that established the basis for the early development of Rossi's theory.

Chapter Three explains the events of the first half of the 1960s, concentrating particularly on the studies that led to the codification of Rossi's urban design theory and the publication of the book *The Architecture of the City*. This chapter also provides a glimpse into the social climate leading to the new political and cultural phase the country

entered in the late 1960s. It finally concludes by connecting the notion of “permanence” of Rossi’s theory with the Saussurian textuality of the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss.

Chapter One

The Years of Influence: The Formation of a National Consciousness, 1947 to 1953

This chapter provides an overview of the complexity of the Italian social and cultural landscape in the decades spanning the late 1940s to the early 1950s. It attempts to explain the dramatic changes in the national social, political, and cultural environment caused by the events and ideologies of the immediate postwar period, by the introduction of the politics of the Cold War, and by the onset of the social conditions leading to the “years of lead,” a time of intense social unrest affecting all areas of cultural production at the national and European levels. It also offers an overview of the role of the national party system in the production of cultural policies, as well as the contradictions created by foreign politics. Finally, it outlines the context of the immediate postwar period that contributed to the foundation of the political thought in the nation and suggests the impact this might have had on Aldo Rossi’s intellectual development and the making of his architecture. This contextualization of Rossi within his contemporary society aims to provide an understanding of the political events shaping his ideology, as well as the dynamics affecting the discipline of architecture and urban design in the postwar period.

Aldo Rossi was born in Milan on May 3, 1931 in the interwar period, coinciding with the early years of the Fascist regime. At the onset of the war, his family moved to the Lake Como area, where he spent his childhood and attended the local *Collegio archivescovile dei Padri Somaschi* (Catholic Institute Alessandro Volta). Rossi frequented the institute throughout middle school, receiving a technical education founded on Catholic principles that contributed greatly to the formation of his personal

ethics. In 1949 he enrolled in the architectural program at the Polytechnic University of Milan and embraced the cause of the Italian Communist Party, contributing several articles on architecture and industrial design to the journal *La voce comunista* (The Communist Voice) and the magazine *Casabella Continuità*, eventually joining a study group funded by Ernesto Nathan Rogers, chief editor and director of the latter publication.

Rossi's early career as an architectural student and as an apprentice practitioner coincided with the country's years of postwar reconstruction, spanning from the late 1940s to the late 1950s. This period was characterized by a consistent effort invested in public work projects that amounted to a countrywide program of urban reconstruction and economic development. It was also marked by renewed attempts of the United States and the Soviet Union to influence national affairs, following the shattering of their diplomatic relations. In 1945, the anti-fascist alliance of a new "all-party government" was formed with the union of parties once banned under the Fascist regime, such as the Christian Democracy, the Socialist Party, and the Italian Communist Party. This "all-party government" led by Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi counteracted the newly formed Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), supporter of former fascist ideas in an intense power struggle that degenerated over time in the conflicts of the "years of lead."⁶² The primary concern of the all-party government was to create an opposition to the old system of values now propagated by the MSI, as well as to cope with matters of public

⁶² The "all-party government" also known as governo di *centro-sinistra organico* was formed in June 1945 at the end of the war.

organization and to respond to the pressing need to find an effective economic model to manage the rapid reconstruction and industrialization of the country. The bipartisan alliance of the all-party government finally dissolved in 1947 with the onset of the Cold War as a result of the political jockeying of the United States and the Soviet Union. However, this process laid the groundwork for future political alliances and created the basis for necessary legislative action to enact programs of economic development. A national divide in internal politics took place regardless, and the centrist Christian Democracy (DC) sided with the United States by adhering to the mandates of the US Marshall Plan, while the Italian Communist Party joined the cause of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).⁶³ In 1948, Italian Communist Party (PCI) leader Palmiro Togliatti introduced a strict cultural policy explicitly aligning Italian culture with the cause of the Soviet Union and increasing the strength of the CPSU on the European front with a common ideology and centralized authority. Thus, the binary paranoia of the Cold War took hold in Italy as the DC's arguments and strategies to support the US

⁶³ Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi secured a subsidy of \$100 Million from the United States for his leverage on Catholic voters, with the aid of the Vatican, to support and promote US foreign ideology. In 1947 De Gasperi traveled to America under the invitation of Time magazine. Here, he spoke to Secretary of State James Byrnes who accused the Italian Communist Party of bringing Italy within the orbit of Russian influence. Finally, Ambassador Alberto Tarchiani was granted American aid. He cabled Italy that "the government, the Congress and the economic powers of the country (the United States) are preoccupied with the possible victory of the Socialist – Communists in the upcoming elections. This is the reason why the credits and aid we (Italy) have received have been relatively so slow. Our every act toward Moscow arise suspicion, if not true irritation. You know that today the destiny of the world and our fate – depends on the progressive accord or conflict between the Russians and the Americans." Originally printed in Alberto Tarchiani, *Dieci anni tra Roma e Washington* (Milan: Mondadori, 1955), 134-35; also cited in Adrian R. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy* (Farnham Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 107.

Marshall Plan were counterbalanced by the alignment of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) with the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

The Shaping of the Collective Consciousness through the Means of “Cultural Representation”

The means of public representation were manipulated to shape the consciousness of Europeans throughout the most significant events of the twentieth century. This type of psychological control was fundamental for the Fascists’ exercise of cultural hegemony and was later used to gain support to perpetuate strategies of the Cold War. Thus, Italy, like all other European nations lacking political stability, was significantly influenced in the formation of its national ideologies by foreign politics and by the teachings of Marxist philosophers. In this context, the writings of a pool of prominent political philosophers widely influenced the ideology of the political Left, and by interpreting the dynamic in which this ideology was manipulated, they explained some of the strategies enacted by the nations at play.

Many of these political texts were fundamental to Rossi’s intellectual formation, including the writings of Antonio Gramsci, Gyorgy Lukacs, and later of Louis Althusser, and Raymond Williams. Most importantly, these writings also became the philosophical basis of Eurocommunism that largely influenced the postwar landscape of Europe and that fundamentally diverged from the crude institutional Marxism of the USSR and China by offering a different interpretation of the way control can be exercised through cultural representation. Thus, the traditional form of Marxism embraced by Lenin, Stalin, and

⁶⁴ Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 151.

Mao regarded “all ideas, beliefs, values, and cultural forms to belong to and shape a society’s superstructure; which was believed to be determined mainly by the interests of the economic base.”⁶⁵ It therefore suggested that a system’s ideology could be destroyed by a change in the economic structure, and that the new system’s ideas, beliefs, and values would come to replace the old, along with the introduction of new cultural forms.⁶⁶ Gramsci, Lukacs, Althusser, and Williams modified this “base-superstructure model” with an interpretation that saw economies and ideologies in an interactive relationship. These late Marxist philosophers did not regard cultural values and all associated ideas and beliefs as a function of a superstructure dictated by the interests of the economic base.⁶⁷ They, instead, focused on the actual function cultural representation had in administering and controlling power through ideology.⁶⁸ They therefore argued that

⁶⁵ According to Marxism, all history is ripe with class struggle, in which the interest of the dominant economic group is represented as the benefit of society in general, while the interests of the proletariat, those who sell their labor for wages are not represented, or are represented as those of a particular minority. John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 24.

⁶⁶ In *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* John Brannigan explains the way the control of the means of representation through culture was interpreted differently according to the different versions of the materialist (Marxist) ideology. Brannigan mentions that Marxist thinkers have followed two distinct interpretations of the idea propagated by Marx’s words “the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.” One of these interpretations is that economic is the determining factor of any society or culture and that the ruling mode of economic production (e.g. capitalism, feudalism) determines the ruling mode of economic production. Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 24.

⁶⁷ For Marx the notion of culture as an autonomous entity devoid of politics was an illusion, which concealed the fact that culture functioned in reality as a mean of control. The ruling class employed cultural forms to represent itself as the savior of all humanity. “Only one must not form the biased opinion that the petty bourgeoisie, on principle, wishes to enforce an egoistic class interest. Rather it believes that the special conditions of its emancipation are the general conditions according to which alone modern society can be saved, and class struggle avoided.” Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 24.

⁶⁸ Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 24-25.

power operates in society according to a hegemonic logic that penetrates deeply into social and cultural codes and conventions.

The writings by Gramsci and Lukacs that guided the action of resistance groups during the war were still popular in Italy during the postwar period. Both philosophers supported the idea that the consensus of the people could be won through consciousness-raising and free will, rather than with the substitution of a means of representation with another.⁶⁹ In the second half of the twentieth century, however, Althusser contradicted this position positing that there is no such a thing as free will or choice for any of the classes of society (whether the proletariat, or the bourgeoisie), but that all individuals are subsumed in the state's ideological apparatus (ISAs).⁷⁰ In 1971, Althusser, by re-examining Lenin's philosophy of Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, proposed that the ISAs was the instrument used by most nations to construct the subjectivity of all individuals in

⁶⁹ Gramsci believed that positive social and political changes could derive from the ideological struggle generated by the exposure of the contradictions of the hegemonic systems. Gramsci referred to this coercive ideological process as hegemony, typically viewed by traditional Marxists that regarded economics as the sole determining factor as an illusion concealing the "real." In *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci explained that "men acquire consciousness of structural conflict at the level of ideologies." Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 365; also cited in Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 25.

⁷⁰ "Ideas have disappeared as such (insofar as they are endowed with an ideal or spiritual existence), to the precise extent that it has emerged that their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus. It therefore appears that the subject acts insofar as he is set out in the order of its real determination: ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief." Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), 43-44; also cited in Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 25.

society, which in turn determines that society's actions and ideas.⁷¹ A different interpretation of ideological hegemony was also formulated by postwar philosopher Raymond Williams, who considered it a complex system of internal structures, contradictions, and processes working at a fundamental level in the consciousness of society.⁷² Ideology, therefore, was for Williams a self-perpetuating force with its structures and processes embedded in the material practices pervading a society, rather than a set of ideas and assumptions instrumental to the ends of a particular social class.⁷³

Gramsci and Lukacs were the philosophers who provided an explicit example of the contribution of ideology in shaping the consciousness of the Italian nation, exemplified by their analysis of the rise of the social and psychological conditions that had made the

⁷¹ Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) acts on a total different level of the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), by employing a direct top to bottom application of force and relying on the construction of social norms and parameters through the material institutions of education, religion, politics, and so on. Therefore, RSAs rely on the threat of violence to maintain order through the police or army. ISAs, on the other hand, rely on the construction of social norms and parameters through the material institutions of education, religion, politics, and so on." Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 127-86.

⁷² "We cannot separate literature and art from other kinds of social practice, in such way as to make them subjects to quite special and distinct laws." Raymond Williams, *Marxism, and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), quoted in Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 1.

⁷³ "...invisible force which unconsciously determines the limits and norms of thought and actions through its material institutions, penetrating society and culture to the extent that it operates as undermined common sense, the most rudimentary assumptions of that society and culture." Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 27.

Ideological hegemony, according to Williams, is a complex system with a myriad of internal structures, contradictions and processes of change that works at a fundamental level "deeply saturating the consciousness of a society." Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1982), 37.

"...therefore pinning down the individual or groups 'behind' it is a fruitless exercise precisely because its structures and processes are embedded in the material practices pervading our society, and it is not a set of instruments or tools to be wielded like weapons by the bourgeoisie over the proletariat." Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 28.

rise of fascism possible after World War I. These circumstances, according to them, derived from a problem of “consciousness” on the part of the proletariat that had failed to become aware of its historical destiny.⁷⁴ Gramsci in particular questioned Marx’s view of ideology as a “grand delusion” strictly determined by the economic base of society, and formulated the hypothesis that ideology was furthered by a system of cultural organizations that intended to represent society to itself in the name of the common good, but actually upholding the interests of the ruling class.⁷⁵ It was for this reason, according to Gramsci that in Italy, with the onset of the economic crisis, the emergence of an extreme right-wing system adhering to bourgeois ideology was possible. He explained that this “hegemonic” ideology was the determinant factor that had allowed bourgeois society to remain intact, despite the total collapse of the capitalist economic system. Gramsci believed that the relationship between economics and ideology existing at the time of the collapse of the state in pre-World War II Italy had caused the proletariat to fail to recognize their real interests, allowing fascism to rise.⁷⁶ He explained that this relationship was like that of an economic structure acting in mutual exchange with an ideological structure. Thus, while economics influenced the position of the proletariat,

⁷⁴ Gramsci and Lukacs tried to understand the way this issue related to the failure of the proletarian revolution. Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 25-26.

⁷⁵ This mechanism was part of the whole system of social, political, and cultural organizations (schools, churches, the media, the army, the town civil organizations, political parties and the law courts). These were also the institutions that educated the proletariat, which unconsciously subscribed to them. Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 26.

⁷⁶ Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, 26.

ideology determined their consciousness, and this ambiguous relationship had distorted the proletariat's understanding of current power relations.⁷⁷

The New Cultural Policy of the Italian Communist Party (PCI): Controversies of Palmiro Togliatti's Socialist Realism

The most explicit attempt at manipulating the means of cultural representation in postwar Italy was made in 1948 with the introduction of a new cultural policy by the Italian Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti. This new policy targeted the nation's artistic discourse and was Togliatti's attempt to pave the Italian road to socialism by allowing a westward expansion of the Soviet ideological model.

The Italian Communist Party's approach to culture had become strict since the VI National Congress held in 1948, after the Soviet Union presented the objective of the plan COMINFORM to create a single party's ideology and to centralize all political operations in Moscow. The COMINFORM plan also counteracted the United States' recent promotion of the US Marshall Plan with the intent to marginalize the communists and socialist governments of Western Europe. The strategy that the US Marshall Plan had for the Italian territory envisioned the disintegration of the postwar alliance between the Christian Democrats and the Italian Communist Party, overall targeting the destruction of the popularity the Communists had acquired during the resistance.⁷⁸ It

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ In September 1974, the Soviet Union created COMINFORM: The Communist Information Bureau under the leadership of Andrei Zhdanov, in response to the Paris Conference addressing the Marshall Plan. The mission of COMINFORM was to distribute information to the various European Communist parties, in order to create a single party ideology with a centralization of authority in Moscow. The Italians were having enough internal problems and always considered themselves brethren not children of Moscow. They found COMINFORM both unsettling and distracting. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 105.

aimed, on the other hand, at fostering a vision that associated the United States with the values of freedom and reconstruction in opposition to the alleged dictatorship of the Soviet Union, and ultimately at aligning the former with the philosophy of holy Catholicism and the latter with agnostic Marxism.⁷⁹ The Vatican offered its full support to the US Marshall Plan under De Gasperi's donation of a portion of the funds secured through his adherence to the program, and consequently in 1949, Pope Pius XII proceeded to excommunicate the PCI, its electors, and all those who even read the communist press.⁸⁰

The Christian Democrats' new lead over Catholic voters prompted the Communist Party to issue a "call to arms" with the slogan "For the salvation of Italian culture" that situated the PCI as the victim of a reactionary offensive on the part of American imperialism.⁸¹ The political jockeying resulting from the foreign interference in national politics ultimately penetrated all discourses of art and culture, culminating with Togliatti's announcement of the imposition of the new cultural policy at the close of the 1948 Venice Biennial of Art and Architecture.⁸² This policy attacked the then

⁷⁹ Alberto Tarchiani, Italy's first postwar U.S. ambassador secured \$100 million for the DC at the condition that their new government explicitly marginalized the Communists and Socialists. The plan of the DC was to minimize the mythic-heroic status of the resistance and the role it had assumed as the liberator of Italy from the evil of fascism. In its place the DC inserted itself, claiming a role as the new liberator of the country from the hopeless ruination left by the war. Thus, De Gasperi created a new antithesis: Christian Democrats vs. Communists married to the opposition of freedom and rebuilding vs. Soviet dictatorship and holy Catholicism vs. agnostic Marxism. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 107-08.

⁸⁰ Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 119.

⁸¹ Ibid., 116.

⁸² Ibid., 107.

widespread interpretation of realism as an abstract and revolutionary art form, proposing its reformulation to follow the more “veristic” and populist formula of Soviet socialist realism. Although the objective of the policy was to reshape the direction of national politics, it ended up causing a deep controversy for its disregard for the way ideology actually connected with artistic expression, ultimately causing the artistic and political worlds to collide.⁸³

Dialectical Realism, Socialist Realism and the Cultural Politics of the Cold War

In the attempt to align the nation’s social consciousness with the political vision of the Soviet Union, Togliatti implemented a cultural policy aiming at the reinterpretation of the meaning of realist art in use during the immediate postwar period. This new policy was Togliatti’s way to target the transformation of society’s superstructure throughout the redefinition of a popular art form aligned with the vision and message of Soviet socialist realism, befitting the Stalinist approach to Marxism. As a consequence, two interpretations of the term realism existed concurrently for a brief period in Italy. The term “dialectical realism,” on the one hand, was forged through the anti-fascist experience of the resistance and referred to an abstract art based on a type of individualism corroborative of the collective interest. “Socialist realism,” on the other hand, promoted an approach to culture on the Soviet model, purposely introduced to align Italian communist ideology with the politics of the Soviet Union.

In particular, the term “dialectical realism” described a type of intellectualized art promoted by various groups of artists identified under the banner of the Italian Avant-

⁸³ Ibid., 75.

garde. These groups worked in a Picassian style to express their individualistic experience of reality and opposed the hermeneutic anti-intellectual ideology of fascist expressionism and all the other artistic principles embraced by the Fascist regime.⁸⁴ The very notion of hermeneuticism was considered a political degeneration of intellectuality responsible for preventing man's participation in concrete events, and as such was repelled by the movement.⁸⁵ Historian Walter L. Adamson's account of the fascists' approach to cultural policies overall explains the reasons hermeneuticism was rejected by the avant-garde movement and other anti-Fascist groups. Adamson suggested that, throughout all its duration, fascism evolved undermining all notions of nonconformity. Thus, he described the fascist ideology as an "anti-ideology" that celebrated its own lack of coherence as a virtue, disdained intellectualism overall, and embraced the call for spontaneous action. Elucidation of the evolution of fascist cultural policy was also provided by historian Marla Stone in the *State as Patron: Making Official Culture in Fascist Italy*. Stone described the regime's attempts to formulate a modern culture and gain popular consensus during the period that followed the initial phase of administrative

⁸⁴ *Corrente*'s manifesto called for "protest against those who amuse themselves in an impossible idyll, an extension of their earlier call for a free examination of reality." Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 24.

⁸⁵ "Hermeneuticism is characterized by the absolute absence of decision. The decision is replaced by stupor, a complete and confused stupor. In other terms, hermeneuticism is the attempt to render neutral the word of man, to prohibit them from participation in our most concrete events. It is possible to speak of hermeneuticism as a political degeneration of intelligence, as an intellectual retreat in a period of social constriction, as was fascism, a purely psychological fact born of the innermost torture of human nature. This is the peculiar physiognomy of expressionism its own irrational perturbation cannot but flow in a maniacal and contorted form. Expressionism is disintegration, convulsion, and the absence of order. Not even impulse, not even an evident revolt, but only anguish. It is necessary to reject the doctrine of naturalism. In the same way that philosophy is not science, art is not nature. Art is a relationship, which is born of a collision of man with the world. Eliminating one of the terms destroys the relationship. Expressionism is 'only man,' and naturalism 'only nature.'" Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 42-43.

reorganization in the early 1930s. Stone argued that this formative period was followed by a phase that formalized authority through repression, coinciding with the regime's embrace of the imperialist and militarist ideals of nationalist socialist policies, and with the adoption of a restrictive approach to cultural policies.⁸⁶ It was during this last phase of the regime that the Italian Avant-garde movement formed and started promoting an art disengaged from external constraints and disassociated from the function of fascist mythmaking. In contrast, the movement embraced a counter political radical intellectualism and attracted artists actively engaged in underground anti-fascist militancy.

The term "dialectical realism," used to describe the type of politicized visual abstract art produced by avant-garde artists, was coined by literary critic Elio Vittorini during his participation in *Corrente*, the artists' alliance that was active during the last decade of the fascist regime.⁸⁷ The purpose of this terminology was to describe a non-veristic visual language used to depict an individualistic perception of reality.⁸⁸ It also aimed at disassociating the group from the rhetoric of the expressionist fascist painters by repelling the image of national superiority and cultural exclusivity promoted by the regime. It

⁸⁶ Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 42-43.

⁸⁷ The art movement of the Italian Avant-garde was known for its association with the resistance against Fascism, counting pivotal figures of leftist politics such as Renato Birolli, Raffaele De Grada, Luigi Bartolini, and Elio Vittorini himself. The group *Corrente* was one of the first avant-garde groups, comprising an alliance of artists, critics, and philosophers active during the last decade of Mussolini's regime. The group's agenda was carried over in the postwar period to make a path for the groups of *New Front*, *Forma-1*, and *Movimento Arte Concreta*. *Corrente's* goals of artistic and political renewal invigorated an avant-garde that had endured traumas throughout the fascist years, and the group's effort ensured the survival and expansion of this artistic expression into the postwar period. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 11.

⁸⁸ Verism is a form of realism that first manifested in the Roman Republic, deriving from the Latin *verus* (true).

promoted instead the modernist ideas of internationalism and surrealism, and embraced the racial and sexual taboos of black musicians and hermaphrodites.⁸⁹ Hence, the ideology and working methodology connected to “dialectic realism” was based on an individualistic engagement with the world. It refused to connect with images of the national past and rejected the “hermetic call to order to serve the Fascist regime” typical of expressionist painters such as Mario Sironi and the *Novecento* Group.⁹⁰

The artists that practiced this type of avant-garde art were active members of the anti-fascist movement and worked underground throughout the most repressive years of the regime. At the onset of World War II, they abandoned their initial idealism for a more pragmatic call to action that made their paintings into instruments of revolutionary discourse. In this period their revolutionary message was exemplified by a style that used Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* of 1937 as the prototype for denouncing the atrocities of fascism, as well as for giving the movement an international edge.⁹¹ (See the early work of *Corrente*’s members Emilio Vedova and Renato Guttuso, Figs. 13 and 14).

⁸⁹ Ernesto Treccani published an article in support of internationalism in 1938, an idea very much in conflict with the philosophies of Italianità so dear to the regime. Giuseppe Marchiori in the journal *Corrente di vita giovanile* defended Italy’s intellectuals. He invoked every idea the Fascists considered threatening or subversive: intellectualism, the surrealists who according to fascism were Communist sympathizers, abstraction, and the racial and sexual taboos of black musicians and hermaphrodites. He invokes Stalin and Freud implying that Italy is secondary in interest to anywhere else. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 22.

⁹⁰ The point made by the artists of *Corrente* was the free interpretation of reality. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 23.

⁹¹ After the liberation of Rome in 1944, the exhibition *L’Arte contro le barbarie* was organized to which participated an emerging generation of young leftist artists that included Mario Mafai, Guttuso, Mirko Basaldella, Ceramist Leoncillo Leonardi, Nino Franchina, and Giulio Turcato. Thematically the works exemplified the idea of tyrannicide, a populist revolt against a foreign occupier, and the experience of the defense of capital cities. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 28-30.

Figure 7. *Europa '50*. 1949-1950. Oil on canvas, 126 x 123. Emilio Vedova (1919-2006). Image provided by Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova @Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova, Venezia.

Figure 8. *Massacre*. 1943. Oil on canvas, 59 x 53 Oil on canvas. Renato Guttuso (1912-1987). Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/search/?text=renato%20guttusopg>.

Elio Vittorini's notion of "dialectic realism" gave origins to Mario De Micheli's essay *Realismo e poesia* (Realism and poetry) that, published in February 1946, became a form of "militant criticism" widely read by left-wing intellectuals.⁹² De Micheli's essay articulated the idea of the "real" intended as a dialectical relationship between the artist

⁹² Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 28-30.

and the world, allowing the exploration of different pictorial idioms not necessarily linked to any “veristic” or naturalistic visual language.⁹³ It also forwarded an argument widely resembling Dada’s response to World War I, directed at shedding the liberal individualism of bourgeois society in favor of the populist politics of the “man working towards the single direction of collectivity.”⁹⁴

Togliatti publicly dismissed the politicization as well as the working methodology of the avant-garde movement at the First National Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Bologna, calling the pull of abstract work a “collection of monstrous things not describable as art.”⁹⁵ Togliatti’s harsh critique was published in the 1948 newspaper *Rinascita* shortly after the release of his cultural policy to redefine realism as a style closely linking realistic and figurative pictorial modes.⁹⁶ Ultimately, Togliatti’s intervention formalized the binary categories of realism and abstraction within the critical

⁹³ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁵ In October 17, 1948, the Bologna *Alleanza della cultura* (Alliance of Culture) inaugurated the first National Exhibition of Contemporary Art exhibiting contemporary Italian painting at the Bologna’s Palazzo Re Enzo on the city’s central Piazza Maggiore. The exhibition displayed works by artists of all genres, including *Corrente* and *New Front* members Renato Guttuso, Emilio Vedova, Afro and Mirko Basaldella, Corrado Cagli, Bruno Cassinari, Ernesto Treccani, Alfredo Chighine, and Emilio Greco. In November 1948’s issue of *Rinascita* Palmiro Togliatti, under the *pseudonym* the plume Rodrigo di Castiglia, published a one-paragraph review of the Bologna exhibition. He wrote: “It is a collection of monstrous things...how does one describe as ‘art,’ and even ‘new art’ this stuff, and how can one find in Bologna, which is a city of remarkable cultural and artistic traditions, so many good people willing to confirm with their authority, in front of the public, this exposition of horrors and stupidities as an artistic event? Let us speak the truth: these good people think like the rest of us; none of them believe or feel anything for these scribbling here produced to be works of art, but perhaps they believe that be ‘men of culture’ it is necessary, in front of these things, to give oneself the air of super connoisseur and superman and mumble things without sense. Enough! Have courage! Do like the young boy in Andersen’s fairytale and say that the Emperor wears no clothes; and that scribbling is scribbling.” Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 95-100.

⁹⁶ Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 90.

discourse of Italian art, causing the same leftist Marxist politics that had brought certain personalities together during the resistance to play a significant role in the overall fragmentation of the avant-garde movement.⁹⁷ This situation, however, led the most orthodox and politicized artists to move toward a figurative style, while others opposed the cultural policy and continued working according to Vittorini's notion of dialectical realism, sometimes even embracing a form of pre-Stalinist Soviet avant-garde.⁹⁸ (See the opposing approaches of Emilio Vedova in Fig. 15 and Renato Guttuso in Figs. 16 and 17).

⁹⁷ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁸ Togliatti's policy was resisted by the group of artists comprising Mario Alicata, Elio Vittorini, Antonio Banfi, Guttuso, Pizzinato, and Mario De Micheli. Elio Vittorini helped diffuse essential ideas and writings such as Roger Garaudy's 'A Communist Party Aesthetic do not Exist' in the PCI sponsored Journal *il Politecnico*. At that time Vittorini was one of the most influential minds of the PCI and embraced an elastic, inquisitive relationship between culture and politics. According to Vittorini, Garaudy's text offers the point of view of a noted theorist of French Marxism, Roger Garaudy, on the question of the possibility for art to be or tend to be Communist – in form, content, and so forth – in the society of today. Garaudy sets forth the ideal of a communist artist who lends his skills to the service of the greater good of society, to the creation and formation of 'the total, complete, man.' The essential criterion is not what these skills are or how they manifest themselves in art, but how they are used towards the collective good. Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 103.

Renato De Fusco explained that the ambiguity surrounding realism took an additional format in the southern regions of the country. Southern avant-garde groups reactionary to the Russian Stalinist repression interpreted socialist realism drawing from the work and ideals of the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s-1930s (constructivism, supremacism, cubism, and futurism), rather than from the Stalinist model. Renato De Fusco, "Astrattisti e realisti scontri tra artisti nel bar Moccia in via dei Mille," *La Repubblica*, January 7, 2016, 7.

Figure 9. *Immagine del tempo '51 (Sbarramento)*. 1951. Tempera on canvas, 130,5 X 170,4. Emilio Vedova (1919-2006). Image provided by Fondazione Emilio e Annabianca Vedova @Fondazione Emilio e AnnabiancaVedova, Venezia.

Figure 10. PCI Membership Card from 1945 (the first issued for the comeback of the Party in the postwar). 1945. Renato Guttuso. It includes a mandate by Palmiro Togliatti: Personal property purchased March 17, 2017.

Figure 11. *Van Gogh cuts his ear at the brothel in Arles*. 1978. Oil on canvas. Renato Guttuso (1912-1987). Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from the British Library Flickr Common Photo-stream.
<https://www.flickr.com/search/?text=renato%20guttusopg>.

In the attempt to annihilate the interpretation of leftist art by redefining the meaning of realism towards the politics of the Soviet Union, Togliatti meddled with the existing relationship linking artistic expression to political ideology, causing avant-garde art to split into two distinct categories of “socialist realists,” and “abstractionists.”⁹⁹ It had been, however, the avant-garde movement’s categorical rejection of fascism and its roots in the ideals of the Italian resistance that originated the concept of dialectic realism, exemplifying a synthesis of the meaning of art and politics according to which artists formally and ideologically engaged with the world.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Togliatti’s introduction of

⁹⁹ Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 4-6.

¹⁰⁰ The *Oltre Guernica Manifesto* stated that realism does not mean naturalism or verism but rather implies the concrete reality of the individual when it coincides with the reality of others. “Painting and sculpture are for us an act of participation in the total reality of mankind, in a specific time and place, a reality that is contemporary in its continuity, history. We, therefore, consider the positive function of individualism to be exhausted, and we reject those aspects in which it has become corrupted (escape, sensibility, intuition). Reality exists objectively, and man is part of it. Realism, therefore, does not mean naturalism or verism or expressionism, but rather the concretized reality of one person, when this

Cold War tension into the artistic discourse caused a shift in the relationship between culture and politics and had an impact on the nation's public consciousness as powerful as the attempted manipulation of religious ideology by the US Marshall Plan.

Rossi's years of intellectual formation correspond with this period of cultural ambiguity. His primary and secondary education was determined by the marked Catholic influence of the *Collegio Archivescovale Alessandro Volta* of Lecco that ran a theologically-oriented curriculum inspired by the technical model of the schools of nearby Switzerland. The institute differentiated itself from the totalitarian public education system at the time of fascism, which the *Balilla-Carta Bollai* mandate of 1941 had made into an instrument to fuel popular consensus. On the other hand, the institute supported the pupil's humanistic formation based on Christian principles, fusing the spiritual, cultural, and didactic education that built the foundation of Rossi's ethics. The synthesis of Catholic and Marxist ethics in Rossi's thinking also suggests a potential impact of the reasoning of the avant-garde movement of the immediate postwar period. Thus, the methodology used by the Italian Avant-garde bears a strong connection to

participates in, coincides with, and is equivalent to the reality of others; when it becomes, in short, a common measurement of reality itself. This common measurement does not imply a common subjection to pre-established canons, in other words, a new academy, but rather the common elaboration of identical formal premises. These formal premises have been provided to us, in painting, by the process that turns from Cezanne to fauvism (the rediscovery of the origins of color) and cubism (the rediscovery of structural origins). The means of expression are, therefore, line and plane rather than module and modeling. The painting's rhythm and reasons rather than perspective and space; color in and of itself, with its laws and prerogatives, rather than tone, ambiance, atmosphere. We further declare that the role of galleries has been exhausted, for their reason for existing is purely mercantile, and they force and bind art to a restricted predetermined category. The reality that we must express involves all people and therefore requires the possibility of being concretized by every suitable means. Today these means are great walls and blocks of stone, or even the single square or single sculpture, so long as they form part of a broader organism relating to the common activity and the common need." The manifesto was originally published in Numero 2, no.2 (March 1946), in *Sauvage*, 232-33, quoted in Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 48.

Rossi's work in terms of political message and pictorial technique. The quality of his graphics in particular iterates concepts of the *Oltre Guernica Manifesto*, advocating for the rediscovery of color in the transition from Cezanne to fauvism to provide ambiance and atmosphere. Rossi's use of "the line and the plane," on the other hand, recalls the structural origins of cubism, a pictorial style favored by the avant-garde movement. Ultimately, the fact that the Italian Avant-garde determined the artistic expression of Rossi's "politics of choice" during his upbringing leads to a fascinating hypothesis that unfortunately lacks substantial empirical evidence.

Socialist Realism in Architecture

Architecture was the artistic discipline used to fabricate the image of the socialist state of the Soviet Union that, ironically, found no mention in Togliatti's cultural policy. The exclusion of architecture from the executive directives of the cultural policy was probably due to Togliatti's awareness of the way the social history of Italian architecture had impacted the perception of neoclassicism, making the style irreconcilable with the ideology promoted by Soviet socialist realist architecture. On the other hand, Togliatti's cultural policy also suggests the implementation of a more extensive plan of cultural integration with the ideology of the Soviet Union, being enacted by targeting the wider and more general understanding of realist art.

The type of architecture introduced to the Soviet Union in the early 1930s during the program of urbanization and modernization that followed the Soviet October Revolution aimed to disassociate the new socialist government from the decadent lifestyle of the former bourgeois administration. It especially targeted the replacement of the avant-

garde constructivist architecture of the 1920s with a form of rationalism directed at establishing order, balance, proportions, and beauty through classical forms. The proportions and monumentality of this new form of neoclassical architecture were understood as the exemplification of the rationalist style par excellence, intended to build the basis of a new ideology for the Soviet government. Thus, this new public architecture was supposed to communicate the humanistic values embraced by the socialist state with the display of the allegoric symbolism of *Architettura Parlante*, ultimately bringing the Soviet people closer to the ideals of their government.¹⁰¹

Socialist realism was officially declared the national architectural style par excellence by the All-Union Congress of Soviet Architects, which was comprised of the institutions of the Union of Architects (created in 1932) and the Academy of Architecture (founded in 1934). The style was publicly introduced with the competition for the Palace of the Soviets (see Fig. 18), and was ultimately brought into the built environment by the Moscow General Plan of 1935.¹⁰²

Over the following decades, architectural socialist realism became a true doctrine for the Soviet Union, according to which architects were invested with the role of makers of Soviet society. According to socialist realism, architecture was considered to be able to shape the everyday lives of common citizens by broadly inspiring the proletarian masses in the fight for the construction of a socialist society, and was considered a fundamental

¹⁰¹ Katherine Zobovich-Eady, “To the New Shore: Soviet Architecture’s Journey from Classicism to Standardization,” *Berkley Program in East European and Eurasia Studies Working Paper Series* (Summer 2013): 7.

¹⁰² Zobovich-Eady, “To the New Shore,” 6.

factor in the building of communism.¹⁰³ Architectural education in particular assumed a prominent role in the making of the socialist Soviet state, and consequently, students received a strict education in classical architecture as well as training in thinking and working according to socialist principles. The basis for socialist realist architectural education was set during a program following the agenda of the All-Union Congress.

Figure 12. Design for the Palace of the Soviets, variation by Boris Lofan, never built. 1736. Boris Lofan. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British Library Flickr Commons Photo-stream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

This new program consisted of a national curriculum founded on studies of classical architecture, aiming at developing the student's sketching and painting skills. It specifically covered three main strands of European classicism to be used interchangeably for the design of buildings, consisting of the classicism of Greek architecture, the humanism and classical revival of the architecture of the Renaissance,

¹⁰³ Ibid., 6.

and the communicative properties of the Beaux-Arts and architecture of the French bourgeoisie revolution.¹⁰⁴

The use of *Architettura Parlante* became a standard for communicating not only the function of the building, but also the symbolism and purpose of building socialism. The way architecture was used to deliver the ideological ethos of Marxism through the combination of classical and socialist forms, for example, was reflected in the Red Army Theater's star-shaped plan by Karo Alabian and Vassillii Simbiresev (see Figs. 19, 20, and 21).¹⁰⁵

Figure 13. Moscow University–The highest of the seven Stalinist skyscrapers of Moscow. 1947. Designed by Lev Rudnev. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British Library. Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

¹⁰⁴ Soviet architects turned to three strands of European classicism for inspiration throughout the 1930s. These were represented by the classicism proper of the Greek period, the humanist architecture of the period of classical revival of the Renaissance, and the Beaux-Art architecture of the French Enlightenment. This version of neoclassicism sought to achieve rational design by turning both to antiquity and to the Renaissance for inspiration. These themes built upon one another and were used interchangeably throughout the 1930s.

¹⁰⁵ Zobovich-Eady, “To the New Shore,” 10.

Figure 20. Moscow Metró Ceiling. 1935. Designed as part of the 1935 Moscow General Plan. Labor and art work by Soviet workers. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British Library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Figure 14. Vystoki (Stalinskie). The Seven Sisters. 1947-1953. Group of Baroque and Gothic Style Skyscrapers that included: Hotel Ukraine, Kotelnicheskaya Embankment Apartments, Kudrinskaya Square Building, Hotel Leningradskaya, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Moscow University. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British Library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Soviet socialist realist architecture, although ultimately favoring typologies that were considered the symbolic expression of the architectonic forms of a specific classic epoch, also attempted to connect to local traditions by incorporating vernacular archetypes from local folk art and constructivism.¹⁰⁶ In this regard, historian David Hoffman argued that Leninism-Marxism had “assimilated and refashioned anything of value [of the bourgeois era] in the best elements of classical architecture,” thus the use of vernacular forms from each Soviet republic had allowed the development of a “national style that was neoclassical in form, but also socialist in content.”¹⁰⁷

In Italy, however, neoclassicism was made unpalatable for the portrayal of the image of a socialist society by the very social history of European architecture, particularly determined by the Nazis’ recent adoption of that style for the public buildings of the Third Reich. In this respect, Togliatti must have known that the formulation of a realist architectural style in Italy had to begin with the reinterpretation of realist art, and only then could a typology for a national architectural style “socialist in content” be researched within the peculiar history of Italian traditions. He probably also realized that the Italian university system did not offer the type of curriculum needed for the development of such a style. Thus, several educational trips to the Soviet Union were organized by the Italian Communist Party to expose architectural students to the proper working ethic and ideology of a socialist society.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Aldo Rossi participated in at least one of these organized trips in 1951 at the time when Togliatti's policy was being implemented only two years after his matriculation into the architectural faculty of the Polytechnic University of Milan. In the same year, he also joined a group of students who reacted to the way Italian universities taught rationalism, suggesting that architectural faculties should support the "alliance between the arts and the making of the whole man" rather than concentrate solely on teaching building technologies.¹⁰⁸ The group was ultimately named *i giovani delle colonne* (the youths of the columns) by libertarian socialist architect Giancarlo De Carlo because of the way its members liked to include stylistic elements in academic projects in a manner typical of the eclectic architecture of the 1800s.¹⁰⁹

The Role of Architectural Magazines in the Postwar: Ernesto Nathan Rogers and the Editorial *Casabella Continuità*

The introduction of the "youths of the columns" to the magazine *Casabella Continuità* started Rossi's long association with the director and chief editor Ernesto Nathan Rogers. Rogers's magazine *Casabella Continuità* was, with Giovanni Astengo's *Urbanistica*, one of the specialized publications that dealt with issues of architectural

¹⁰⁸ Matilde Baffa, et al., *Il movimento di study per L'architettura. 1945-1961* (Bari: Laterza, 1955), 497-528.

¹⁰⁹ In the article entitled "Problemi concreti per i giovani delle colonne" (Real problems for the youth of the columns) published in *Casabella Continuità* of 204 February 1955. De Carlo wrote about the "youth of the columns," some students of the Milan Polytechnic unsatisfied with the type of rationalism taught by the faculty. De Carlo wrote that these students profusely used stylistic elements in their design compositions in the manner of the eclectic architecture of the 1800s. De Carlo found this approach inappropriate because he believed the problem to be overall related to the urban context on a wider scale and that "this means give people house, districts, cities in which the quality of life is better." *Un dibattito sulla tradizione in architettura svoltosi a Milano nella sede del Movimento per gli Studi dell' Architettura (MSA)* (A debate on tradition in architecture conducted in Milan in the headquarters of the movement for architectural studies MSA) in the evening of June 14, 1955 also published in *Casabella Continuità*, 206 (July, August 1955): 42-52, quoted in Baffa et al., *Il movimento di study per l'architettura*, 497-528.

design, as well as with new laws impacting the building industry. These magazines became instrumental to the understanding of the city as a legible system rather than as an ensemble of buildings, offering ties to the critical perspective of organizations such as the *Congres International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) and of the *Movimento Studi dell'Architettura* (MSA). Several scientific committees also formed around the personalities of Rogers and Astengo, contributing to the development of new approaches to urban design and to the coinage of the specialization of “urbanist-architects.”¹¹⁰

Ernesto Nathan Rogers was a key figure in the birth of the discipline of Italian urban design and played a prominent role in the pedagogy and motivation of the early student movements of the 1950s. Rogers’s image was politicized as a consequence of his persecution during the fascist anti-Semitic raids and made into a monumental figure for the professionals involved with the movement of the resistance. The political role of Rogers became more prominent in the postwar period along with the foundation of a common cause and the establishment of polarized unitary thought around the magazine *Casabella Continuità*. His influence in architectural pedagogy, on the other hand, made him into an intellectual model for the young people who took part in the early student associations of the immediate postwar period and idealized the making of the ideological foundation of the Italian state.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Mario Ferrari explains that the terminology “architetti-urbanisti” [urbanist architects] comprised those that although working on specific disciplines were undertaking studies on the urban realm. This term was made-up because of the lack of an alternative terminology to describe the people taking part to the collective research conducted in the 1950s and 1960s. Mario Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia: 1940-1990* (Firenze: Alinea Editrice, 2005), 13.

¹¹¹ Enzo Spaltro, Robi Ronza, and Paolo De Carli, *Le associazioni studentesche cosa sono? Saggi bianchi* (Milano: Editoriale Jaca Book, 1967), 6-9.

Rogers's presence and ideas also led to a whole new line of urban research, fueled by the critical debate on the "city" and developed as a consequence of the introduction of the policies of the plan Ina-casa of 1949.¹¹² In time, he became the leader for studies and debates on the development of and experimentation with new models and technologies for infrastructure reconstruction and public housing, and used the magazine *Casabella Continuità* to propagate international perspectives on architecture and urban design. Rogers's magazine *Casabella Continuità*, together with Astengo's *Urbanistica (dell'Inu)*, was also credited with the production of the few early chronicles for research on the basis of urban theories developed in the 1960s.

Architecture in the Period of De-Stalinization of the Soviet Union

Significant changes in politics happened after 1953, deeply influencing the way leftist urbanist-architects dealt with the social issues of architectural production. Thus, the end of the Stalinist period in the Soviet Union, marked by the death of Stalin in 1953 and by the succession to the government of Gyorgy Maximilianovich Malenkov, soon followed by Nikita Sergeevic Khrushchev, caused a fundamental shift in paradigms in cultural policies, architectural production, and political thought.¹¹³ Khrushchev, the first Soviet leader to publicly denounce the crimes of Stalin, started the de-Stalinization of the country and established a relationship of transatlantic coexistence with the United States.

¹¹² The switch from the Istituto Case Popolari (Institute for Social Homes) built during the Fascist period, to the Coordinazione dell' Industria dell'Edilizia Pubblica (Coordination of the Public Building Industry) in the fourteen years of term Ina-casa.

¹¹³ Nikita Sergeevic Chruscev was the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin.

He replaced Gyorgy Maximilianovich Malenkov as premier of the Soviet Union in 1953 and became president of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) in 1954.

During the time Khrushchev served as the nation's premier, he started the process known as "de-Stalinization" through the alteration of government policies and the elimination of monuments and place names to eradicate the memory and influence of Stalin. He also initiated the shift of Soviet architecture from architecture-as-art to architecture-as-science by replacing Soviet realism with a new type of rationalism favoring practical construction methods, modern materials, and new building technologies.

Khrushchev targeted Stalin's reputation as the "great architect of communism" by declaring the old approach to architecture economically bankrupt, and by differentiating himself from the former leader with the introduction of an entirely new approach to architectural design. He announced this new architectural program at the Architectural and Building Conference of 1954 and subsequently included it in all decrees drafted between 1954 and 1955. The new curriculum attacked the material culture of the previous regime, particularly condemning projects of the late Stalinist period such as Moscow's neoclassical skyscrapers as symbols of excess and decadence. It prioritized, on the other hand, a program for cost-effective mass housing taking advantage of pre-fabricated construction.¹¹⁴ In the formulation of this new architectural program,

¹¹⁴ Khrushchev's main priority was to create mass housing. Wartime alliances had given Soviet architects opportunities to learn new techniques in pre-fabricated construction, especially in the occasion of the American-Soviet Building Conference of 1945. The move from communal to single family apartments that took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a crucial part of the reconfiguration of post-Stalinist state-society relations. Unlike the single-family dwelling built for the Stalin era's elites, housing under Khrushchev was distributed to the "one social group, the family" that cut across all social divisions. Zobovich-Eady, "To the New Shore," 12.

Khrushchev was primarily motivated by the economic imperatives of the postwar economic crises that, according to him, the Stalinist government had not been able to resolve. Thus, he declared the Soviet socialist realist approach to public architecture economically inappropriate, replacing the emphasis on design and ornamentation of the neoclassical method with a new standardized architecture that favored new building materials and progressive technologies. Khrushchev announced this change in the national architectural style at the Second Congress of the Union of Soviet Architects held in November 1955, officially shifting the national theoretical approach from architecture being conceived as an art to “architecture-as-a-science.” This transition towards a different approach to national architectural production also implied a dramatic change in the teaching of the discipline. Thus, the former emphasis on classical education, symmetry, and watercolor sketching was replaced with a technical curriculum emphasizing the rationality of the “grid” and the functionality of construction and space planning.¹¹⁵

Khrushchev argued that architecture had gotten off-track in its mission to satisfy the needs of society in the building of communism, and especially in finding a solution for the needs of reconstruction. Thus, according to him, the postwar housing shortage demanded the use of new technologies that allowed building rapidly and on a large scale, as well as of a theoretical approach suitable for this new type of architectural production. In the process of dismantling the Stalinist myth, Khrushchev reinterpreted many of the projects that were considered symbolic achievements of Stalinist architecture as evidence

¹¹⁵ Zobovich-Eady, “To the New Shore,” 8.

of Stalin's neglect of socialist values.¹¹⁶ The process of de-Stalinization ultimately culminated in the official rejection of neoclassical design following a declaration by the Central Committee of 1957, mandating the construction of mass housing as part of a new set of reforms. Throughout 1964, for the whole duration of Khrushchev's leadership, the Soviet Union revisited an ideology close to Leninism and opened its doors to a different way of life, introducing Soviet citizens to a new type of consumer culture.

The Role of Aldo Rossi in the Creation of an Architecture National in Form and Socialist in Content

Mario Ferrari noticed that Rossi's writings from the 1950s provided the early chronicles to document the formation of new urban theories. Therefore, Rossi's articles, reports, and notes taken at conferences and seminars held between 1953 and 1955 show the degree of influence that foreign ideologies had on national cultural production. Overall, his early involvement with the political Left and his visits to the Soviet Union during a time of drastic changes in both politics and architectural production had left a decisive mark on his professional development and system of values. The connection he maintained with the USSR also offered examples of the practical application of the theories of historical and dialectical materialism he had absorbed in his interaction with the CPSU.

Historical materialism as a theory of history and society holds that ideas and social institutions develop only as the superstructures of a material economic base. It is a philosophy parallel to the dialectic version of materialism that maintains the priority of

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 15-16.

matter over mind within the material basis of a reality that is constantly changing in a dialectical process. Rossi discussed these notions in an article from 1953, *La coscienza di poter dirigere la natura* (The awareness of being able to direct nature), written for the communist newspaper *La voce comunista* (The Communist Voice). In this article, Rossi addressed the correlation between culture and production stemming from the socialist economic basis of a post-Stalinist Soviet society, clearly externalizing the importance of the material aspects of economic production, which include society's organization, the possession of the appropriate tools for production, and the diffusion of knowledge. In this context, culture and knowledge are the products of social institutions such as the family, the church, and the state. These institutions, according to the philosophy of historical materialism, are governed by a predominant form of social thought that enshrines values unique to the economic bases upon which society is founded, reflecting the specific character of its economy. This system of values, also referred to as a "superstructure," has the overall function of holding together and motivating the individuals in society.¹¹⁷ Rossi quoted the argument discussed by Stalin's immediate successor Malenkov at the XIX Congress of the Communist Party of the USSR in 1952 [the original reads *XIX Congresso P.C. dell' URSS*], attributing to scientific education the fundamental role of forming the character of the individuals of society, for its potential to instigate "the awareness of being able to subjugate nature."¹¹⁸ He narrated the way in

¹¹⁷ Capitalist, Socialist, Communist societies will have very different and distinct superstructures.

¹¹⁸ In 1953 Rossi's article "La coscienza di poter dirigere la natura" (The awareness of being able to run nature) was published in the newspaper *Voce comunista* (Communist Voice). The article talks about the movie "Manchurian" where a Soviet scientist lectures the peasants of a remote Soviet village about Manchurian theories. The article describes the interest of the URSS in scientific research, especially

which the productive bases of Soviet society were built and strengthened through a “Manchurian” approach to state-building enacted with programs of early public education.¹¹⁹ Therefore, early education was considered essential to establish the division of labor determinant of the overall “relations of production” of society, as well as of society’s human relations.¹²⁰

The 1953 article, as well as other essays and documents written in the same period, reflects Rossi’s embrace of materialist philosophies and emphasis on the relations of production, namely the social norms in which people produce. In this regard, he

concentrating in agronomy. Thus Rossi wrote: [“It is unthinkable to think of the Soviet Union without this large and irresistible sentiment towards nature, as a population that has above itself an illimitate extension of land to cultivate, to study and to direct. The direction of nature is one of the most characteristic products of the Marxist culture of new humanism created by dialectic materialism, for which man actively enjoys the surrounding world, changing it to his own benefit...” The article enumerates the benefits of the development of a Manchurian agricultural system, as well as the agricultural socialist system. “The socialist system for agriculture opens wide perspectives to science, allowing spreading rapidly the success of science and to utilize the most advanced experiences, of making heritage of every furrow, machine, and tractor and so on (Malenkov-XIX Congresso P.C. dell’URSS). These words are heard by every Soviet citizen that participates in this experience. Given its extents this scientific and political interest, often profound and often naïve, easily becomes an artistic expression. Caught at its wellspring it reveals itself as a vivid interest of knowledge of nature and of oppressive fantasy, of poetry both new and ancient (thus, the majority of Latin poetry is scientific poetry). This vivid interest can be caught in the schools, in the same elementary schools where the naïve interest of young children for the plants they cultivate in small areas of land can be observed. The notions we teach in this regard are translated in a noble and broad form of education to mediate natural phenomena, caught with the passing of seasons, from the seeding to the sprouting, to the fruiting, to the death of the leaves. In the Soviet schools, it is possible to observe an extraordinary calendar where the children mark the days –the time-with an immediate graphic expression that gives back the atmospheric phenomena of its seasonal synthesis (the water, the gray, the sun, and the wheat). An archaic and extraordinary education of feelings; within this education, it is possible to see the sprouting qualities of a new great art that by interpreting nature in the way the Russian population does, it will express it within the new socialist culture.”—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, “La coscienza di poter dirigere la natura, fonte di cultura e d’educazione nell’URSS,” *Voce Comunista*, 1954, box 3, file 5, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹¹⁹ An agricultural method based on a system of selection developed by Ivan Vladimirovich Manchurian. Manchurian made an important contribution to the development of genetics and heredity based on the concept of ontogenesis an external influence for predominance.

¹²⁰ In chapter seven of volume one of the *Capital* Marx explains the relations of production as a two-fold. The first is among the individuals taking part to the production process and the second is between the owner of the means of production and those who produce.

suggested that the way humans subjugate nature to produce their means of subsistence is at the basis of society's productivity and that this process relies on the diffusion of appropriate tools and knowledge through education, allowing the empowerment of individuals in society. Hence, Rossi wrote that "the control of nature is one of the most characteristic products of a Marxist culture [based on] new humanism created by dialectic materialism, for which man actively enjoys the surrounding world, changing it to his own benefit."¹²¹ This idea of collective empowerment, attributing power over nature to man, connects with historic traditions of classic humanism that echoed throughout history from ancient Greece through the Renaissance and onto the neoclassicism of the Enlightenment. Rossi explained that these notions were imbued in Soviet pupils from a very young age through public education as "...an archaic and extraordinary education of feelings."¹²² Therefore, he wrote that "in this education it is possible to see the sprouting qualities of a new great art that, by interpreting nature in the context of the Russian population, will

¹²¹ "Questa direzione della natura è uno dei prodotti più caratteristici della nuova cultura marxista, del nuovo umanesimo creato dal materialismo dialettico, per cui l'uno gode in senso attivo del mondo che lo circonda, trasformandolo per il suo maggiore benessere."

[This direction of nature is one of the products most characteristic of the new Marxist culture, of the new humanism created with dialectic materialism, for which one enjoys an active sense the surrounding world, transforming it for one own benefit.—Trans.] Typescript of the article by Aldo Rossi, "La coscienza di poter dirigere la natura, fonte di cultura e d'educazione nell'URSS," *Voce Comunista*, 1954, box 3, file 5, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹²² "Nelle scuole sovietiche si può così vedere uno straordinario calendario dove i bimbi vanno notando le giornate-il tempo-con una espressione grafica immediata che restituisce il fenomeno atmosferico nella sua sintesi stagionale (l'acqua e il grigio, il sole e il grano); un' arcaica e straordinaria educazione dei sentimenti."

[In Soviet schools it can be seen an extraordinary calendar where children mark the days, the time with an immediate graphic expression that exemplifies the atmospheric phenomena in its regional synthesis (the water, the gray, the sun, and the wheat); it is an archaic and extraordinary education of feelings.—Trans.] Typescript of the article by Aldo Rossi, "La coscienza di poter dirigere la natura, fonte di cultura e d'educazione nell'URSS," *Voce Comunista*, 1954, box 3, file 5, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

express it with the new socialist culture.”¹²³ Here Rossi proposed that man is empowered through the process of subjugating nature to his own needs and, as such, to increase the productivity of labor. In the article, Rossi also emphasizes the importance of stimulating the “relations of production” among the productive forces of society by making available the knowledge that enables humans to produce, and by instigating egalitarian societal relations with the diffusion of humanist values.

The fact that Rossi often referred to architectural production as an evolutionary process in history should not come as a surprise, considering the nature of his ideas. Historical materialism, therefore, postulates that society moves through various types of modes of production in which production’s relations are determined by the character of the productive forces of society. The division of labor originating in these relations of production consequently places human resources on a hierarchical scale determined by the ownership of the means of production. The main exponent of the theory, philosopher Karl Marx, distinguished four main modes of production within this process. He categorized these as the primitive communism of tribal societies, the government of classic societies such as the Greeks and the Romans, the feudalism of the Middle Ages, and the capitalist systems of modern times. Marx suggested that in each phase, man exerted a particular interaction with nature to produce the material goods he needed to

¹²³ “In questa educazione sembra di vedere già le qualità germinative di una grande arte che interpretando la natura del popolo Russo la esprimerà nella nuova cultura socialista.”

[In this education, it is almost possible to see the germinative qualities of a great art that by interpreting the nature of the Russian population, it will express it in the new socialist culture.—Trans.] Typescript of the article by Aldo Rossi, “La coscienza di poter dirigere la natura, fonte di cultura e d’educazione nell’URSS,” *Voce Comunista*, 1954, box 3, file 5, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

live and reproduce, which he names the “means of subsistence.” He suggested that the productive relations of each phase arose from the given productive sources at the economic basis of each specific society. The economic basis of society, according to him, also determines the nature of society’s political institutions, laws, customs, culture, ideas, ways of thinking, and morality. Ultimately, these institutions constitute and determine society’s political and ideological superstructure, suggesting that the evolution of a society directly depends on the appropriate evolution of its modes and relations of production.

In a report of 1953 written for an academic assignment on the elements of composition [the original reads *elementi di composizione*] titled *La casa unifamiliare per salariati nel basso Milanese* (Single family home for agricultural workers in the lowland region of Lombardy), Rossi explained the applicability of this evolutionary theory to the discipline of architecture, with the aim of resolving the issues of livability and productivity of a traditional rural agricultural work-living facility (namely, the *Cascina*).¹²⁴ In this report, Rossi explored the connection between the design of this traditional agricultural enterprise and the crisis of contemporary modes of agricultural production and argued that being stuck in the feudalist phase prevented the nation’s superstructure from progressing. He proposed that an improvement of the typology of the worker’s housing unit could change the overall relations of production, enabling evolution away of the traditional latifundial system while preserving the occupants’

¹²⁴ Aldo Rossi, *La casa unifamiliare per salariati agricoli nel basso Milanese*, typescript composition, 1953, box 3, file 1a., Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

traditional pattern of social relations. Rossi suggested that the separation of the living quarters from areas of agricultural production could reform the morally inadequate work-living arrangement of this traditional enterprise, at the least ending the psychological dependence of the workers on the landowner for housing needs. He proposed that the elements of this new typology had to derive from the very problems that affected the enterprise of the *Cascina*, taking into consideration the needs of the trade as well as the social relations of the workers. Thus, the new workers' quarters should include adequate living environments, as well as areas for socialization, and be located outside of the agricultural compound to be drastically separated from the areas of production and integrated into the regional network. The new typology should also consist of a design derived from the adaptation of the *Cascina*'s traditional mode of production and social life within, but nevertheless detached from clichés of vernacular architecture.¹²⁵

Therefore, Rossi wrote that:

If this vernacular architecture is observed as a cultural phenomenon, we realize that it is purely determined by the need of peasants to build shelters using the most economical materials possible, and should not be taken as the “*pura magna*”¹²⁶ of rural architecture since the effective adherence to a phenomenological reality, observed in its seasonal routine, has determined these characters of rural arrangement throughout the personality of man. It is evident then if the understanding of these values would not exclude the study of the real

¹²⁵ Rossi suggests that the new homes for agrarian workers should be a cell part of an urbanistic aggregation inseparable from the overall urbanism of the region. The new homes should also develop a typology that adopts solutions suggested by the conditions dictated by rural life itself, with the kitchen serving as the central living area where the peasant spends his winter days, a function Rossi explains currently fulfilled by the stables, to be replaced by the portico and by an outdoor kitchen for the summer months. Rossi also explained that the typology of the rural home is dictated by the historical conditions of life in the fields, which for “some romantic reasons” is being described as vernacular architecture. Aldo Rossi, *La casa unifamiliare per salariati agricoli nel basso Milanese*, typescript composition, 1953, box 3, file 1a., Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹²⁶ *Pura Magna* – Absolute reality.

conditions of these homes. The rural home should then be posed in terms that we already mentioned, and we are sure that such solution depends on a total reform of the problem of the countryside.¹²⁷

Rossi concluded that architecture could eventually solve the “problems of society” only by targeting problems specific to particular environments with the development of appropriate typologies targeting the improvement of the living conditions of the residents, stimulating the relations of production, or maximizing the overall productive output of the enterprise. Thus, societal changes should not derive from the imposition of alien urbanistic and architectural models, as the modern movement suggested, but from the evolution of traditional uses typical of specific buildings.¹²⁸ Generally, this type of

¹²⁷ [Original quote reads: E in tale senso possiamo interpretare una storicità dell’architettura rurale e in quelle numerosissime soluzioni costruttive, mirabili statisticamente ed esteticamente, che ai nostri giorni, forse per un chiaro motivo romantico sono state comprese nel termine di architettura spontanea. Ora noi non possiamo credere a tale architettura spontanea, ma lo studio dell’architettura rurale, che di questa architettura spontanea costituirebbe la ‘magna pura’ mostra chiaramente come tali soluzioni siano date non da condizioni primogenite assolute, ma dall’osservazione spesso faticosa dei fenomeni naturali e dal bisogno di ripararsi da questi con mezzi poverissimi e con materiali di minimo pregio. L’aderenza effettiva alla realtà fenomenica, osservata nel suo svolgere stagionale, ha determinato attraverso la personalità dell’uomo questi spiccati caratteri delle soluzioni rurali. Ma che poi la comprensione di questi valori non escludono lo studio delle effettive condizioni di queste case è evidente. E che la casa rurale debba essere posta nei termini da noi già detti, e che tale soluzione dipenda da una ricerca totale del problema delle campagne pensiamo sia certo.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *La casa unifamiliare per salariati agricoli nel basso Milanese*, typescript composition, 1953, box 3, file 1a., Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹²⁸ “La casa delle campagne, ha sempre presentato caratteri di stretta necessità e nell’attaccarsi a questi caratteri, la nostra soluzione può considerarsi tradizionale, in quanto alla tradizione, ripete le condizioni creative. Motivi come il portico, sono indiscindibili dal problema dell’edilizia rurale e noi abbiamo ideato di risolvere tali problemi nelle stesse condizioni necessarie in cui si ponevano. La lettura del progetto offre da sola la spiegazione della propria semplice, eppure studiata soluzione, come i motivi chiaramente visibili della pianimetria della cucina estiva e invernale, del cantino e appunto del portico. Condizioni tipicamente offerte dalle condizioni di vita rurale, esempio la cucina per l’inverno che rappresenta un piccolo locale chiuso facilmente riscaldabile e dove il contadino passa le lunghe giornate invernali, luogo atto a sostituire la stalla, che tradizionalmente ha funzionato e funziona, con grande danno degli uomini e delle bestie, da soggiorno invernale nelle campagne.”

[The country house has always presented characters tied to the necessity and to the attachment to these characters, our solution can be considered as such incompatible with the problems of the rural building industry, and we have attempted resolving these problems in the same conditions in which they are posed. The reading of the project offers its own simple or studied solution, such as the motivation clearly

intervention on the agricultural compound of the *Cascina* could have enabled the superstructure to respond to the dialectical historical process of social causation needed for change to take place.

Rossi acknowledged the growing political presence of architecture and its fundamental role in the country's cultural production at an international conference of architectural students held in Rome in 1954. Rossi's speech urged architects to embrace a "new culture of responsibility of men toward their history," advocating for an architectural style "national in character and socialist in content."¹²⁹ He proposed that a national architectural tradition could only be built following the critical examination of elements fundamental to the nation's character, and by shedding all the prejudices toward past events connected with the generational struggle that built modern Italy.¹³⁰

visible in the site plan of the kitchen (summer and winter), of the cellar, and of the portico. Solutions typically suggested by the conditions of rural life, for example, the kitchen for the winter represents a small, closed, and easy to heat area where the peasant spends the long winter days. It substitutes the stables that traditionally have functioned, and currently function, with great damage to men and animals, as a winter living room, in the countryside.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *La casa unifamiliare per salariati agricoli nel basso Milanese*, typescript composition, 1953, box 3, file 1a., Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹²⁹ "...così si è andata in questi anni formando una nuova cultura, una cultura vasta, intesa come responsabilità degli uomini di fronte alla loro storia, pronti in ogni momento a creare la loro storia, e in questa cultura ha tentato di inserirsi la nuova architettura. L'architettura si è presentata in questi ultimi anni come la più impegnata delle arti tanto da porre spesso gli architetti direttamente nel discorso politico."

[...a new culture of responsibility of men towards their history. Within this culture, the new architecture has attempted at inserting itself. Architecture has presented itself in these years as the most involved of the arts and, as such, often places architects within the political sphere.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹³⁰ "...Non si tratta di cercare una tradizione architettonica nazionale, ma di indicare e vivere i problemi della vita italiana. Dice Gramsci: 'una delle ragioni per cui i problemi non sono stati trattati esplicitamente e criticamente è da trovarsi nel pregiudizio retorico che la nazione italiana sia sempre esistita da Roma antica ad oggi e su altri ideali e arie intellettuali ... inette criticamente ed in nitida istanza diventano un elemento di debolezza, perchè non permettono di apprezzare giustamente lo sforzo compiuto dalle generazioni che realmente lottarono per costituire l'Italia moderna.'"

According to him, this prejudice was the main reason preventing the understanding of the way art forms are associated with specific cultures, and of the way the introduction of extraneous styles in an attempt to change the consciousness of a society creates new artistic expressions by affecting the manner in which man expresses himself through art.¹³¹ He also suggested that architectural styles should be considered general directives rather than given recipes to construct buildings.¹³² These styles should not in any scenario be relegated exclusively to their nations of origin because this would limit the

[...It is not a matter of looking for a new national architectural tradition but rather to point out and live the problems of Italian life. Gramsci said that 'one of the reasons for which such problems were not treated simply and critically is to be found in the rhetoric prejudice that always existed in Italy, from ancient Rome to nowadays, as well in other ideas and intellectual manners...these have become elements of weakness because they do not allow to appreciate the struggle of the generations that fought to build modern Italy.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹³¹ "...E ancora non si há a intendere contestualmente che l'arte è sempre legata a una determinate cultura e civiltà e che lottando a modificare la cultura si giunge a modificare il contenuto dell'arte, si lavora a creare una nuova arte non dall'esterno (pretendendo un arte didascalica, a tesi, moralistica) ma dall'intimo, perchè si modifica tutto l'uomo in quanto si modificano i suoi sentimenti, le sue concezioni e i rapporti di cui l'uomo è l'espressione necessaria."

[...And again, we cannot comprehend that art is always tied to a specific culture and civilization, and that while we struggle to modify a culture we end-up changing the content of art, and work towards creating a new art, not from external sources but from the intimate, because we modify man since we modify his feelings, his conceptions, and the relationships of which man is the necessary expression.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹³² "...Terminiamo rispondendo a una facile obiezione che ci è stata e ci sarà fatta, d'altronde molto plausibile, non è questo eludere il preciso discorso riguardo all'architettura? In quanto architetti e futuri architetti, è nostro compito esaminare l'architettura non in quanto fatto raggiunto (dove, come si dice, le determinanti artistiche sono bruciate) ma proprio in queste determinanti che concorrono non solo materialmente nel nostro lavoro come attività febbrile. Possiamo dire che proprio qui la nostra posizione di assoluta libertà per lo specifico campo dell'arte, dell'architettura che tanto sinceramente ci preoccupa."

[...We conclude by answering an easy objection that has often been and will be posed, on the other hand very plausible, isn't this circumvention the precise discourse over architecture? as such architects or future architects, it is our duty to examine architecture not as a done fact (where the artistic directives are burned out) but exactly in these artistic guidelines that concur not only materially in our work as an activity of material construction. We can say that here our position is of absolute liberty in the area of art and architecture.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

use a different culture can make of an architectural form through the modification of its meaning.¹³³ With this consideration in mind, Rossi aimed to promote the critical use of stylistic components and a rationalist attitude towards architectural production, and to discourage the application of theories that regarded architectural phenomena as autonomous and abstract entities. A year later, at a convention of the communist architects of 1955, he also discouraged the application of the theories of Antonio Gramsci to resolve architectural problems, mainly because of their entanglement with the criticism that surrounded the birth of the modern movement.¹³⁴ According to him, these polemics

¹³³ “Non crediamo comunque sia possibile stabilire alcuni elementi tradizionalmente nazionali della nostra architettura, almeno in modo preciso, didatti così a al di fuori di un preciso ritorno stilistico, poichè sarebbe questo un limitare assai gravemente le infinite possibilità che una nuova cultura potrà dare all’architettura modificandone profondamente la ragione.”

[We do not believe it would be possible to establish some elements traditionally national of our architecture (at least in a precise way-didactically), even outside of a specific stylistic return, since this would be to seriously limit the infinite possibilities that a new culture could give to architecture by deeply modifying its meaning.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹³⁴ “Compagni, io credo sia mio dovere e compito rendere conto qui oggi, davanti a voi, di alcune posizioni che i giovani sono andati assumendo in questi ultimi tempi, anche perchè mi sembra che queste posizioni non siano prive di qualche originalità critica e anche perchè esse hanno l’ambizione, almeno, di svolgersi nell’ambito degli studi marxisti, rifacendosi in particolare alla profonda elaborazione che ha dato del marxismo, rispetto alla vita italiana, Antonio Gramsci. Io credo ci siano qui comuni alcuni problemi fondamentali, di natura culturale e più propriamente architettonica, i quali dobbiamo cercare di trattare e approfondire senza cadere in schemi e formule, entro cui ci ritroviamo poi come imprigionate, le vaste polemiche che nascono da quell fermento di idee e di avvenimenti che ci circonda. Uno di questi problemi, come dal presente dibattito risulta, è quello della critica, e dello studio, se volete, delle condizioni pratiche e ideali da cui è nata l’architettura moderna o meglio il movimento moderno in architettura. È questa conseguenza di una questione per noi fondamentale è possibile oggi un’ architettura realista, una architettura cioè che faccia fronte comune con le altre arti sulla strada del socialismo? È questa esigenza del tutto contraria alle promesse, ai fondamenti del movimento moderno in architettura?”

[Comrades, I believe it is my duty to recollect, here, today before you, of some positions that young people have taken in recent times. Also because it seems to me that these considerations do not lack of a critical originality, and because they have the ambition of developing within the field of Marxist studies, drawing from the deep elaboration of Marxism over Italian life (given) by Antonio Gramsci. I think here there are some common fundamental problems, of cultural nature and more appropriately architectonic nature. The latest which we have to try to deepen without falling into schemes or formulas within which are found entangled the wide polemics born from that fermentation of ideas from which we

were all based on preconceptions that interfered with the formulation of the new type of realist architecture needed to prepare the Italian road to socialism. Thus, this was a type of architecture that, according to him, should have derived solely from the gradual transformation of the historic architectural tradition specifically pertinent to the Italian nation.¹³⁵

Issues of Postwar Reconstruction and Housing Crises in Italy after 1953

In 1949, Italy consolidated the plan Ina-casa, consisting of a program that became fundamental for the production of architecture in the 1950s and early 1960s, specifically targeting the country's housing shortage and need for infrastructure reconstruction. The nation also faced other challenges due to the deterioration of the parliamentary alliance of the immediate postwar period caused by the meddling of foreign powers in national parliamentary alliances. The foreign policies implemented by the United States and the Soviet Union at the onset of the Cold War redefined the means of cultural representation

are surrounded. One of these problems, as it is shown by the present debate, is the critics, the study if you like, of the practical and ideal conditions from which modern architecture was born. Or better, the modern movement in architecture. This is a consequence of a fundamental question for us. Is a realist architecture possible today that would lead with the other arts on the road of socialism? Is this need totally against the promises, the fundamentals of the modern movement in architecture?—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l'istituto di studi marxisti dell Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹³⁵ “Le questioni come si vede si potrebbero ripetere ad un'altra più sostanziale esigenza: quella di un'architettura di grande comprensione storica, quindi comprensiva della sua tradizione e della nazione in cui si svolge e che via trasforma e vive questa tradizione. Che tutto questo possa ritrovarsi nel movimento moderno in architettura, e da questo possa svilupparsi è difficile affermarlo.”

[The arguments we see that could be transported towards another substantial need: That of an architecture of great historical understanding, therefore comprehensive of its own traditions and of the nation, of its development, gradually transforming and living this architectural tradition. It is hard to affirm that all this is found, or can be developed from the modern architectural movement.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l'istituto di studi marxisti dell Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

in a way that disregarded the national history, traditions, and values of Italian citizens. The Italian Communist Party in siding with the Soviet Union had, on the one hand, attempted to reformulate the meaning and expression of realist art by distorting the relationship between art and politics, aiming to disassociate the political Left from the pictorial traditions of internationalism and abstraction.¹³⁶ The Christian Democratic Party, on the other hand, supported the plan of the United States aiming to sever the Catholic population from the politics and artistic currents associated with the leftist politics of the anti-fascist resistance. Consequently, the young people who grew up and entered the architectural and artistic professions during this time inevitably were deeply affected by the cultural policies and shifts in national and international alliances.

Aldo Rossi's close involvement with the Italian Communist Party during his formative years put him in direct contact with the party's objectives of formulating a national version of socialist architecture based on notions of historical materialism and the rational use of architectural forms. Under the guidance of Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Rossi carried forward research started by the earlier generation of rationalist architects in cooperation with other personalities associated with the magazine *Casabella Continuità*. However, questions and issues explored by earlier rationalist architects were further complicated by the interference of international politics in national affairs, causing a constant testing of younger professionals' personal beliefs. Thus, in the course of only a decade, the communist interpretation of art and architecture had taken many different

¹³⁶ The Christian Democracy received consistent funding through the Marshall Plan aiming at the exclusion of socialist governments through the manipulation of Catholic voters. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, made a considerable investment in foreign politics, founding the country's economic recovery and industrialization well into the 1980s.

forms, both nationally and internationally. In Italy, it entailed two very distinct and contradictory approaches and understandings of realism, while it had distinctly changed direction in the Soviet Union, the country of origin of the style of socialist realist architecture. Furthermore, the shift in theoretical approach to the architectural discipline in the Soviet Union had introduced a different interpretation of rationalism altogether. Thus, the rationality of reason of former neoclassical Stalinist architecture, entailed by the dialectic function of architecture to communicate humanist ideals was replaced with the rationality of functions, expressed by a return to the functionality of forms, materials, and construction techniques. Khrushchev used this ideological shift in architectural theory to change the country's image, to cope with the economic necessities of the postwar period, and to support the changes in politics necessary to lead the Soviet Union into a new political phase.

Italy, on the other hand, took a different route and developed an internal strategy to deal with the postwar crisis that simultaneously targeted the country's most tenacious issues of unemployment, housing shortage, and economic underdevelopment. Furthermore, the succession of Amintore Fanfani to the presidency of the Christian Democratic Party upon Alcide De Gasperi's retirement in 1953 reduced the dependence of the DC on the Catholic Church and widely promoted studies on urban design introduced with the plan *Ina-casa*. The studies connected with the plan were eventually carried forward by the magazines *Casabella Continuità* and *Urbanistica*, and led to the formulation of the morphological approach to urban design and to the theories of Aldo Rossi and his contemporaries.

Chapter Two

The Years of Changes: 1953-1959, Ina-Casa and the Public City; Urban Morphology and the Debate on Modernism

This chapter explores the social, political, and cultural landscape of Italy after 1953, the directives and influence of the Ina-casa project on the reconstruction of national real estate heritage, the debate on modernism undertaken by the members of the leading trade publications, and the formulation of new models of urban design. In particular, it examines the position of Aldo Rossi in the debate over the philosophical pursuit of the modern movement in architecture through a synthesis of the writings he produced during his first decade with the study center at *Casabella Continuità*.

The political events of 1953 encouraged the development of new economic strategies, which changed the production and management of public housing, improved the living condition of the working class, and drastically transformed Italian society, culminating with the making of the model of the “public city.” It all started with Law no.43, introduced in 1949 to address the country’s housing shortage and unemployment, proposing policies that took advantage of postwar infrastructure reconstruction. The most significant outcome of this new law was the drafting of the Ina-casa plan, consisting of a radical program for funding and managing public residential projects. The strategy that Ina-casa relied on was based on a partnership between the private and public sectors, aiming overall at resolving the postwar housing shortage and unemployment through the promotion of new professional and business opportunities. The program associated with the plan also triggered new research on social housing, making the publishing houses of Rogers’s *Casabella Continuità* and Astengo’s *Urbanistica (dell’Inu)* into research centers,

as well as a mean of exchanging new ideas in national and international architecture and urban design. Furthermore, academic support for the Ina-casa initiative facilitated the involvement of major national universities and led to further research and experimentation on theoretical models of city planning.

Most importantly, this period saw the development and implementation of new theories on the morphological approach to urban design forged by architect and academic Saverio Muratori, as well as the emergence of a movement that revisited early notions of the rationalist experience of the 1930s.¹³⁷ The contrasting political association and philosophical approach to design embraced by the exponents of these new movements

¹³⁷ "...tra via Harar, via Novara e via San Giusto, con 942 alloggi e 4.800 vani, il quartiere Harar (1951-1955), su progetto urbanistico di Figini, Pollini e Ponti-come scrivono i progettisti nella relazione illustrativa - 'non è da considerarsi come un quartiere satellite, ma come un nuovo quartiere urbano, a contatto del quale si verranno saturando le altre aree adiacenti.' Sorge in prossimità dell'omonimo borgo rurale, ma in posizione meno periferica, Baggio I (1950-53), tra via delle Forze Armate e via Cividale del Friuli, progettato dallo Studio sociale di architettura (con il contributo di Albini), costituito da case in linea di cinque piani, senza che vi sia un'area centrale dell'intero nucleo. Tra i fratelli Zoia, via delle Forze Armate e via A. Olivieri, Baggio II (1950-53), uno dei più periferici, con progetto urbanistico di Cerruti e Marescotti, si sviluppa su case in linea di cinque piani intorno a uno spazio comune, dove sorge la chiesa della Madonna dei Poveri su progetto, non concluso, di Figini e Pollini (1952-54), il campo sportivo, un area verde attrezzata. Il linguaggio architettonico di questi progetti fa riferimento all'esperienza razionalista del periodo antecedente la guerra, a volte in aperta polemica con le indicazioni progettuali della gestione Ina-casa, ma ne propone una versione umanizzata dove gli elementi spaziali, definiti dai telai delle strutture e dalle pareti che sottolineano il godimento estetico di un principio industriale (la ripetizione della serie), sono movimentati da particolari architettonici.

[...between via Harar, via Novara and via San Giusto, with 942 housing and 4,800 units, the quarter Harar (1951-1955) on the urban design of Figini, Pollini, and Ponti—as described by the planners of the report – 'it is not to be considered as a satellite quarter, but as a new urban quarter, in contact with which the surrounding areas will be saturated.' It rises in proximity of the homonym rural borough, but in a less peripheral position. Baggio I (1950-53), one of the most peripheral, with the urban project of Cerruti and Marescotti, develops linear homes of five floors around a communal space, where the church of the Madonna dei Poveri is erected according to an unfinished project of Figini and Pollini (1952-54), the soccer field (sport field) and an equipped green area. The architectonic language of these projects references the rationalist experience of the period antecedent the War, sometimes in open polemic with the design guidelines of the management Ina-casa, but it proposes an humanized version where the spatial elements defined by the frames of the structures and by the walls that underline the aesthetic pleasure of an industrial principle (the repetition of the series), are put in motion by the architectonic details.—Trans.] L'iapc di Milano dal 1909 al 1950, *Casabella* no.437 (1978): 15, quoted in Alice Sotgia, "Un modello per la città pubblica: Il piano Ina-casa e l'idea di quartiere," *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, no. 1 (2006): 214-18.

generated opposing views, causing the ideological conflict that characterized the initial years of operation of the Ina-casa plan. On the one hand, the Christian Democratic Party and the Vatican favored Muratori's traditional organic approach to architecture and urban design, which centered on self-contained housing units contextualized within their surroundings by an affinity of materials and architectonic elements (see Fig. 22).

Figure 15. *Palazzo Sturzo, Roma*. 1955-1958. Headquarter of the Christian Democratic Party until 1992. Saverio Muratori. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. [@urbiexphoto 2008](https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary).

By contrast, the administration of the political Left was mainly concerned with the equalization of the relationship of production between cities and the surrounding territories; thus, it supported a different approach to planning that allowed the development of wide-ranging urban and regional networks and favored a rationalist approach to architecture and urban design.

The Start of a New Phase in National and International Politics

A new phase of international politics began in 1953, when Khrushchev took over the leadership of the Soviet Union and engaged in a dialogue with the United States. This period of peaceful coexistence was accompanied by important cultural reforms that encouraged the country's exposure to other cultures and led to the divulgence of Western music and to the revelation of the art of Picasso, which was first exhibited in Moscow. The new Khrushchev government changed the country's approach to cultural policies in a way that ultimately favored the emergence of a vibrant youth culture and new forms of artistic expression.¹³⁸ However, the most significant change in the country's traditions was the dramatic shift of communist ideology initiated by Khrushchev's "secret speech" entitled "On the Cult of Personality" delivered in 1956 at an informal session of the Twentieth Party Congress of the Soviet Union.¹³⁹ Ultimately, Khrushchev's open denunciation of the crimes committed by Stalin encouraged the detachment of European Communists from philosophies of authoritarian Stalinist Marxism and induced the Italian Communist Party to revisit a better suited "Gramscian" approach to political representation.

This change in political leadership reverberated over the architectural production of the Soviet Union and induced a new generation of architects to break with former

¹³⁸ Zobovich-Eady, "To the New Shore," 5.

¹³⁹ Khrushchev denounced the deceased Soviet leader Joseph Stalin at a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The speech although read to groups of the Party activists and at several of the Party meetings was never officially made public. In 1989 it was finally printed in full. It gave rise to the Khrushchev's "thaw" and to the release of political prisoners. It also contributed to the revolt in Hungary and Poland that weakened the Soviet Union's control over the Soviet bloc. Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 84th Congress, 2nd Session of May 22, 1956-June 11, 1956, C11, pt. 7 (June 4, 1956), 9389-9403.

traditions of Stalinist neoclassicism and to embrace a new type of functionality. Thus, the former 1920s' constructivist mantra of "form follows function" was reintroduced, this time at the insistence of the CPSU, bringing back a type of avant-garde modernist architecture that emphasized functionality but dismissed all types of constructivist utopia.¹⁴⁰ This newly rediscovered sobriety of design in Soviet national architecture also led Italian communist architects to reconsider their approach to the profession and to embrace pragmatic design methodologies.

Italy underwent major changes in political leadership during this time, which affected mainly the territories more heavily influenced by leading national parties, such as the Christian Democrats (DC) and the PCI.¹⁴¹ In 1953, the DC drastically changed its approach to politics with the succession of Amintore Fanfani to the party's leadership upon the retirement of former president Alcide De Gasperi. Fanfani, who also assumed the role of Councilor of Ministries in 1954, was a proponent of the economic theory of *corporativismo* (corporatism), which stood as the basis of the relationship between Catholic culture and the former Fascist state. This economic doctrine had often been used by Italian political leaders to counter-balance Italian society between the models of capitalist liberalism and the dogmas promoted by the Catholic Church. However, Fanfani favored the corporatism of the fascist rather than the Catholic model and assumed a significant role in ending the dependence of the Christian Democratic Party on the Vatican. During his political career, Fanfani demonstrated his support for free enterprise

¹⁴⁰ Zobovich-Eady, "To the New Shore," 4.

¹⁴¹ Duran, *Painting, Politics, and the New Front of Cold War Italy*, 121.

by formulating and implementing some of the strategies that led the country out of postwar recession and allowed the reconstruction of infrastructure. His approach to economic policies finally led Fanfani to join Aldo Moro, Piero Nenni, Giuseppe Saragat, and Ugo La Malfa in turning the political center-left (stipulation of the Historic Compromise of the 1960s).¹⁴² The implementation of the plan Ina-casa for fair housing in 1949 was one of the most effective legislative acts in Italian history and was Fanfani's major career achievement. The plan initiated the funding and implementation of programs for the reconstruction of public infrastructures and social housing and drastically reduced unemployment and homelessness. It stimulated the local economy by enacting a set of strategies that relied on the collective support of the population and the cooperation between the public and private sectors. The plan also revamped the architectural profession by supplying the "masses" as a new clientele and opening the road to the national research for new architectural and urbanistic solutions.¹⁴³

Project Ina-Casa: The Neorealist Approach to the Morphology of Architecture and Urban Design

The Italian government implemented the Ina-casa project in 1949 as a program of national urban reconstruction that primarily targeted the shortage of public housing.

Overall, the plan consisted of a set of policies based on a parliamentary legislative act

¹⁴² Amintore Fanfani became secretary of the DC in 1953; in 1954 he was awarded the presidency to the Council of Ministries, and finally in 1968 became the president of the Senate for the first time. Fanfani was president of the Senate three times (1968-1973, 1976-1982, and 1985-1987), president of the Council of Ministries five times (1954; 1958-1959, 1960-1963, 1982-1983, and 1987). He was secretary and president of the Christian Democratic Party twice (1953-1959 and 1994-1999 when the DC became the Partito Popolare Italiano PPI), and Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Home Affairs-Home Office, Ministry of the Treasury, Budget and Economic Planning, and became Senator for Life in 1972.

¹⁴³ Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 14-17

that favored “procedures to promote the employment of the proletariat by increasing the availability of public housing.”¹⁴⁴ The plan consisted of two main phases, one that dealt with the management of the monies coming from public investments and another that oversaw the planning, design, and implementation of individual construction projects. The first phase of the project was managed by the *Gestione Ina-casa*, a branch of the public agency *Istituto Nazionale Assicurazioni INA* (National Institute of Insurances), while the planning and execution of individual projects was operationalized by a pool of professionals comprising the main names of national architecture. The plan Ina-casa was intended to run for seven years, but was eventually extended for an additional term and lasted until April 1956. It finally resulted in the shift of the services of the national building industry towards the masses that followed the example of programs for economic development already implemented in Frankfurt, Berlin, Amsterdam, and Vienna.¹⁴⁵

In his roles as the Councilor of Ministries and the Minister of Labor and Social Security, Amintore Fanfani was the founder and chief promoter of the Ina-casa initiative, often also referred to as *Piano Fanfani*. In drafting the plan, Fanfani was inspired by the economic theories of Keynes and by Britain’s Beveridge Plan to make a practical application of strategies for dealing with economic recessions and to propose the

¹⁴⁴ “Decreto Legge 43” published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* no. 54 (March, 1949), quoted in Paola Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione: Il piano Ina-casa e l’Italia degli anni cinquanta*, Stotia e scienze sociali (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2001), 14.

¹⁴⁵ The plan Ina-casa was extended from 1956 to 1963 with Law no.1148 of November 26, 1955 (prorogation of the procedures to increment the profession of the industrial workers and/or proletariat by increasing proletarian housing). Published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* no. 284 of December 10, 1955, quoted in Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 14.

maximization of the national output through the fulfillment of the aggregate domestic demand. Therefore, the goal of the Ina-casa initiative ultimately was to fulfill a dual purpose in providing for the country's economic development by rebuilding national infrastructures and in solving the issues of unemployment and housing shortage that had been plaguing the nation for many decades.

The plan's primary objective was to revitalize the national economy by resolving underlying societal issues, especially relying on the support of the proletarian classes for its implementation.¹⁴⁶ In particular, it encouraged a public-private partnership enacted through a pool of innovative strategies and depended largely on the efficiency of the public agency entrusted with its management. Fanfani assigned the overall management of the plan to the National Institution of Insurance (INA), a public entity administered by the Ministry of Industry and Economics that already functioned as the financial repository of public savings and offered strong insight into how best to achieve an economic stimulus. However, Fanfani chose this public agency because of the institution's existing ties with the building industry, real estate investments, and large

¹⁴⁶ Keynesian economics are theories allowing dealing with a national economic recession by maximizing the economic output through the satisfaction of the aggregate national demand. Theories presented by British economic John Maynard Keynes during the great depression of 1936. Keynesian economics advocates for a public-private partnership to allow for government interventions during national recessions. It was a standard economic model during the Great Depression, World War II, and the postwar economic expansion (1945-1973). Britain's Beveridge plan was modeled accordingly to the Beveridge Report (also Social Insurance and Allied Services). It was an influential document for the founding of the welfare state chaired by Economist William Beveridge after the victory of the Labor Party in the 1945 general elections. Beveridge identified five giant evils in society: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease and proposed a series of reforms to address these issues.

public works projects, which determined the successful management of the reconstruction programs.¹⁴⁷

The most revolutionary aspect of the Ina-casa plan was its objective to revamp the national economy and to renew Italian society through a spirit of national solidarity. It relied on the cooperation and working equilibrium among the proletariat, their employers, and the state to accumulate the funds for the construction projects and to resolve the condition of high unemployment by allowing all individuals to enter the production process. It demanded a deduction from the workers' wages to be used towards the funding of the new housing projects, allowing the creation of new jobs and stimulating local economies by circulating construction contracts back to local building companies.¹⁴⁸ The planning process took an innovative approach, comprising a body of consulting professionals assigned to oversee the administration of individual architectural and urban design projects, exercising executive power over the design, construction methods, and choice of materials. The social impact of the newly built urban complexes was also closely monitored to evaluate and improve the design of future housing models. In 1954, social services units were included in each neighborhood center for a study mandated at the beginning of the second term of Ina-casa, aiming at measuring the users'

¹⁴⁷ Franco Pocaccini, "L'Ina contribuisce alla ricostruzione dell'Italia," in *Il piano Fanfani Ina-casa: Una risposta ancora attuale: Atti del convegno Firenze, Auditorium del Consiglio Regionale 16 Gennaio 20*, ed. Omar Ottonelli (Firenze: Polistampa, 2013), 79-82.

¹⁴⁸ Law no. 43 of 1949 established that the plan Ina-casa was to be funded by the State and by employers, and by a monthly deduction from workers' wages. Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 12.

response to the newly built urban environment.¹⁴⁹ The Ina-casa project ultimately became the largest program of national construction of public housing to ever take place in Italy. It set the basis for “the public city” of the 1960s (*la città pubblica degli anni 1960s-1970s*), a planning model envisioning the city as a wide public-private partnership taking advantage of the re-investment of private savings into public infrastructure by the mean of a system of “social loans” (*prestito sociale*).¹⁵⁰

The Ina-casa plan relied on the participation of planners, engineers, surveyors, and many prominent architects such as Ernesto Nathan Rogers with the BBPR group.¹⁵¹ The massive inclusion of the architects in the program began when Arnaldo Foschini became president of the implementation committee upon the retirement of Filiberto Guala.¹⁵² Arnaldo Foschini, who was a practicing architect as well as a professor at the architectural faculty of Rome, took advantage of the program to favor the inclusion of the country’s most prominent professionals, making them the real players of this phase of national reconstruction.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 12; Pocaccini, “L’Ina contribuisce alla ricostruzione dell’Italia,” 79-82.

¹⁵⁰ Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 14.

¹⁵¹ These included Irenio Diotallevi, Mario Ridolfi, Carlo Aymonino, Franco Albini, Ignazio Gardella, Pier Luigi Nervi, Vittorio Gregotti, Alberto Burri, Enea Manfredini.

¹⁵² The president of the implementation committee was Filiberto Guala, a public worker and former partisan tied to the group of left-wing Catholics close to Giuseppe Dossetti, Giorgio La Pira and Amintore Fanfani. He was also the president of the RAI (radiotelevisione italiana S.p.A) from 1954 to 1956. In 1960 Guala left all public services and joined the order of the *frati trappisti* (Trappisti Monks). Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 14.

¹⁵³ After assuming the leadership, Arnaldo Foschini appeared in an interview to outline the priorities of the Marshall Plan: “La vastità del programma edilizio di questo piano richiede un particolare senso di responsabilità. Si tratta di evitare qualsiasi spesa superflua pensando che ogni vano che si riesca a costruire in più del previsto andrà ad alleviare il disagio di un lavoratore privo di abitazione; si tratta d’altra

Overall, Ina-casa greatly contributed to the transformation of postwar Italian society by drastically increasing home ownership among the lower economic strata of the population, and by providing local employment and business opportunities for the whole length of the program. It also provided a new clientele for Italian architects, drastically revamping the architectural profession and opening the horizon to a new market focusing on the production of real estates for the masses.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the participation in the

parte, di studiare gli ambienti e gli spazi in maniera di non far risultare la preoccupazione economica del progettista e di riuscire nello stesso tempo a dare all'abitazione un aspetto lieto ed accogliente, oltre ad una perfetta funzionalità; si tratta infine di contribuire con i complessi edilizi che verranno creati, a raggiungere quell'armonia architettonico – urbanistica che è sempre stata vanto del nostro paese nei secoli scorsi, quando si curavano in sommo grado non soltanto i centri monumentali, ma anche i centri più modesti.”

[The vastity of the construction program of this plan needs a particular sense of responsibility. It consists of the avoidance of any superfluous expense, thinking that any additional unit that we are able to build on top of what is foresought will alleviate the discomfort of a homeless worker. It consists, on the other hand, of the study of the environments and of the spaces in a way to avoid displaying the concern on economic issues of the designer and to give them a pleasing look, beside a perfect functionality. Finally, it is a matter of contributing with the building complexes that will be created, to the end of an architectonic and urbanistic harmony, which was the pride of our country in past centuries when we cared greatly not only for the most monumental centers, but also for those more modest.—Trans.] Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 14.

¹⁵⁴ Italian architects thanks to the plan Ina-casa had finally found a new clientele in the masses. These new clients had no culture and needed authorship, and the architects were the professionals able to provide the mediatory services between the bureaucratic services of the building industry. “Gli architetti, nella nuova società democratica che emergeva dalle immani distruzioni belliche, afferma Bruno Zevi, sentivano l’urgenza di non agire più alla periferia dell’industria edilizia. Erano alla ricerca di una nuova clientela. “Ma dov’era questa clientela? Come si poteva servirla? Era evidente: questa clientela di operai, di contadini, di impiegati non aveva né cultura, né possibilità finanziaria di rivolgersi alle classi professionali; voleva una casa, qualunque casa. Erano clienti, sí, ma clienti inafferrabili, anonimi inarticolati, personaggi in cerca di autore. Chi potevano essere gli autori? Gli autori dovevano essere gli architetti, i liberi professionisti, questa grande riserva di energia e di competenza. La mediazione tra burocrazia e clientela non poteva essere fornita che dagli architetti. Inserire l’anello professionale nella catena dell’industria edilizia era dunque il problema. L’Ina-casa lo ha risolto.”

[The architects, in the new democratic society that emerged from the enormous ravages of the war, affirmed Bruno Zevi, felt the need not to be relegated to the periphery of the building industry. They were looking for a new clientele. But where was this clientele? How could it be served? It was obvious that this clientele of proletarians, peasants, and clerical workers had neither the culture nor the economic capabilities to employ professionals, and wanted a home, any home. They were clients, yes, but elusive clients, anonymous, inarticulate, characters in search of an author. Who could be these authors? The authors had to be the architects, the freelancers that great energy reserve of competence. The mediation between bureaucracy and clientele could not be provided but by the architects. The issue was to insert the

plan of the major names of national architecture conferred the construction programs with an organic character, allowing the architects' creative input to impact the research for new solutions for all areas of the living space.¹⁵⁵

The studies connected with the Ina-casa plan allowed the experimentation of the neorealist theories of Saverio Muratori then popular for their emphasis on the sociological and psychological reinterpretation of the architectonic space. Shortly, Muratori's neorealist block became the favorite urban model for the production of large neighborhoods at the fringes of cities, as exemplified by the Tiburtino Quarter of Rome designed by architects Mario Ridolfi and Ludovico Quaroni (see Figs. 23 and 24).¹⁵⁶ The studies connected with the plan Ina-casa, however, also originated a methodology closer to the approach of former rationalist architects that was expressed in the early projects of *Le Spine Bianche* in Matera by architects Michele Valori and Carlo Aymonino, and in the

professional link in the chain of the building industry. The plan Ina-casa had solved it.—Trans.] Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 17.

¹⁵⁵ Pocaccini, "L'Ina contribuisce alla ricostruzione dell' Italia," 79-82.

¹⁵⁶ Muratori's methodology and architecture exemplified the traditional relationship between architecture and politics, providing an example of a modernized version of traditional Italian architecture for public institution. Muratori's architectural production in the post war period suddenly shifted from public projects such as the *Palazzo del Littorio* of 1934, the Auditorium a *Porta Capena* in Rome of 1935, the *Piazza imperiale* dell'E42 in 1937-1938, to a series of religious projects executed during the immediate post war (probably due to the needs of reconstruction). These included the *Chiesa Parrocchiale* of *San Giovanni al Catano* in Pisa and the Church of *S. Antonio a Recoaro Terme* in 1947, the church of *S. Maria Maggiore* of Francavilla Mare in 1948 and the project for the church and vicarage of the *Assunzione di Maria Santissima* in the Tuscolan quarters of Rome in 1954. Between 1948 and 1967 Muratori, while engaged in a large variety of Ina-casa projects, also designed the auditorium for the National Academy of *S. Cecilia* in 1950, the palace of ENPAS in Bologna in 1952, areas of Naples' Central Station in 1954, the Central Quarters for the Christian Democratic Party (DC) in 1955, and participated to the competition for the new building of the Chamber of Deputies in 1967.

Villaggio del Sole of Vicenza executed by Antonio Cattaneo and Sergio Ortolani (see Figs. 25 and 26).¹⁵⁷

Figure 16. *Quartiere Tiburtino*, Rome. 1949-1954. Designed by Mario Ridolfi e Ludovico Quaroni. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. [@ LO_SO](https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary).

Figure 17. *Quartiere Tiburtino*, Rome. 1949-1954. Designed by Mario Ridolfi e Ludovico Quaroni. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. [@ Andreas Bushman](https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary).

¹⁵⁷ The *Spine Bianche* was the work of architects Michele Valori and Carlo Aymonino, while the *Villaggio del Sole* was by Antonio Cattaneo and Sergio Ortolani.

Figure 18. *Quartiere Villaggio Del Sole, Vicenza*. 1960-1962. Designed by Antonio Cattaneo and Sergio Ortolani. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/@Giovanni Bersani>.

Figure 19. *Quartiere Villaggio Del Sole, Vicenza*. 1960-1962. Designed by Antonio Cattaneo and Sergio Ortolani. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/@Giovanni Bersani>.

The Two Diverging Approaches for the Production of New Housing Complexes: The Neorealist and the Rationalist

The implementation of the Ina-casa plan depended primarily on the support of the proletarian classes to provide the monies for the new housing projects. Thus, the emphasis that the plan placed on social solidarity was essential for this type of collaborative undertaking and needed a suitable planning methodology to properly address the new social aspect of architecture. The type of multidisciplinary undertaking that the plan required was perfectly compatible with the neorealist approach to planning based on Saverio Muratori's theory of city morphology.¹⁵⁸ Muratori's method offered the greatest potential for contextualizing new development within the existing fabric of historic cities by emphasizing the social aspect of architecture and the collective spirit of the urban space. Overall, it was based on the idea that urban design should be "approached with a universal historical perspective, dealing with cities not as inert things, but as organisms in continuous evolution that can be understood only as totalities."¹⁵⁹ Muratori's ideas set the basis for the whole concept of urban morphology. It encompassed the "broad range of critical and practical instruments that fulfill the role of a disciplinary bridge between history and urban design" and proposed a reconsideration of

¹⁵⁸ The aim was to organically interweave the cell with the apartment, the apartment with the building, and the building with the whole surrounding space. It was to shape the environment, not only on the basis of a theoretical program but with a feeling for volumes, forms, and concrete materials adhering to the diverse sentiment of the local spirit in all its vital and human reality. Marco Maretto, "Saverio Muratori, Towards a Morphological School of Urban Design," *Urban Morphology* 17, no. 2 (2013): 22.

¹⁵⁹ Maretto, "Saverio Muratori," 25.

the “aggregative form of historic cities and of their mechanism of transformation and adaptation over time.”¹⁶⁰

His involvement with Ina-casa led Muratori to abandon all of the principles that had characterized his former work, including such design elements as the traditional architectural square and arcade, in favor for a new emphasis placed on proportions, materials, and the individuality of design. He officially introduced this new methodology with a neorealist manifesto in which he stated: “The social values of everyday life were to become those of a new architecture of the people, declared anti-functionalist and anti-rationalist.”¹⁶¹ Throughout the whole duration of his practice, Muratori executed projects that exemplified organically integrated urban structures articulated through systems of polarities, fabrics, routes, and topography. The Neapolitan neighborhood of *La Loggia* and the *Quartiere Magliana I e II* in Rome were the best exemplifications of an early neorealist approach to urban design that greatly contributed to the development of Muratori’s theory of urban morphology (see Figs. 27 and 28).¹⁶²

Muratori believed that the historical process should be understood as “a whole condition,” which potentially allowed the application of its fundamental principles to the critical foundations of urban design. Hence, he professed the different types of urban fabric to derive from a variety of processes that affect cities over time and that include their economic, social, cultural, and political transformations. According to Muratori, the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶² Ibid., 27.

“traces” left behind by these processes were the elements that allow the “reading” and “writing” of the history of an urban environment at all of its scales. He declared that “the total value of an urban organism is grasped only in its historical dimension,” a concept he clearly exemplified in his Venetian projects, which showcased three overlapping systems of urban textures that had developed over time to form the urban fabric of the city.¹⁶³

Figure 20. *Quartiere Tuscolano II*, Rome. 1950-1956. Designed by Mario De Renzi and Saverio Muratori. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

Figure 21. *Quartiere Tuscolano II*, Rome. 1950-1956. Designed by Mario De Renzi and Saverio Muratori. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>

¹⁶³ Ibid., 27-29.

In the studies sponsored by the Ina-casa plan conducted between 1950 and 1955, Muratori focused his research on the nexus at the basis of the structure of the city that constitute the mechanism of its gradual development. He conducted this research by meticulously surveying each neighborhood's individual structure and phase of development to permit him to grasp "the indissoluble nexus that connects the individual to society and the individual's world to the language, technology, and economy of the age."¹⁶⁴

Muratori's approach to urban design was made official in 1954 during the competition held by FIE (*Fondo per l'investimento edilizio*) on the theme of the redevelopment of the rural borough. However, Muratori's model inspired an alternative approach to morphological design that focused on urban and regional integration and that was introduced in the same period with an exhibition at the X Triennial of Milan of 1954 (*X Triennale del 1954*) curated by architects Giancarlo De Carlo, Carlo Doglio, and Ludovico Quaroni.¹⁶⁵ Many of the architects and theoreticians involved with the Ina-casa

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 27.

¹⁶⁵ La X Triennale di Milano del 1954 nella sua sezione dedicata all'urbanistica, curata da Giancarlo De Carlo, Carlo Doglio e Ludovico Quaroni, rappresenta in effetti una novità sia nei contenuti che nell'allestimento. Questa si articola in tre sezioni: la prima dedicata allo "spazio in cui si vive" (composta da: Introduzione, lo spazio nel quale viviamo, lo spazio disarmonico, lo spazio armonico), la seconda dedicata a "spazio e società" (spazio della società contemporanea ed intervento dell'urbanistica), la terza sezione è caratterizzata dalle immagini di tre cortometraggi dal titolo "cronache dell'urbanistica Italiana," "la Città degli uomini," ed "una lezione di urbanistica"). Al di là dei suoi contenuti formali, la mostra illustra quella voglia di comunicare i nuovi valori dell'urbanistica già individuate da Quaroni ed è alla base di quell'atteggiamento che già aveva contagiato Olivetti portandolo a parlare di "forma dei piani."

[The X triennial of Milan of 1954 in its section dedicated to urban design, curated by Giancarlo De Carlo, Carlo Doglio, and Ludovico Quaroni, was a novelty for its contents and display. This was articulated in three sections: The first dedicated to the "living space" (comprised of introduction, the space where we live, the discordant space, the harmonic space), the second dedicated to space and society (the space of contemporaneous society and urban intervention), the third section comprised the projection of three short films by the title "chronicles of Italian urban design," "the city of men," and "a lesson in urban

plan encouraged the development of an urban design methodology as an alternative to the approach of Saverio Muratori, which led to the development of two opposing trends in planning during the first term of the program. Mario Ferrari in *Il progetto urbano in Italia 1940 -1990* (The urban project in Italy 1940-1990) proposed that a new methodology had emerged from the construction of neighborhoods with a strong rationalist component that opposed the neorealist block in scale and scope. These neighborhoods, explained Ferrari, were the products of exponents of regional integrative planning such as Luigi Figini and Gino Polloni, authors of the General Plan for the Val d'Aosta of 1936. Ferrari explained that these projects employed "larger grain development" and aimed to integrate urban and suburban areas by means of regional transportation networks. Ultimately, according to Ferrari, these grandiose methods for project planning would become a prerogative of a new rationalist approach used to target the wider suburban territory and areas of rupture within or surrounding cities (*vuoto periurbano*). This rationalist approach to morphological planning was used sparsely during the first decade of the Ina-casa project, but it ultimately replaced the neorealist method for the optimal solution that it offered for the integration of new development.¹⁶⁶

design." Beside its formal content, the exhibition exemplified the longing to communicate new values of urban design already identified by Quaroni and it was at the basis of the attitude that had affected Olivetti leading him to talk about the "form of the plans."—Trans.] Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 39.

¹⁶⁶ Piano Fanfani primo settennio: La tendenza rationalista. All'interno della vasta produzione dei quartieri del primo settennio Ina-casa é possibile individuare diversi modi d'approccio. Complessi quali il Dessie, Canton Vesco oppure Ponte dei Diavoli possono essere inseriti nel novero di quei progetti influenzati ancora da una forte componente rationalista nella cultura compositiva degli autori. Non a caso due dei tre interventi sopra menzionati sono firmati da architetti quali Fiocchí, Nizzóli, Ponti, Figini e Pollini, autori di questi ultimi, della più importante iniziativa Italiana di questo secolo: il Piano Regolatore della Valle d'Aosta del 1936. È riconoscibile una forte eco delle modalità di intervento già adottate in quegli anni nel progetto che proprio Figini e Pollini, insieme a Ponti, pensano per il quartiere Harar a Milano. La forte somiglianza tra quest'ultimo ed il piano per il centro turistico di Cormayeur, induce a

Overall, this new rationalist method sought a solution to a condition that Astengo noticed in 1951 and described as the self-contained and self-sufficient state of neorealist neighborhoods that successfully created *civitas* (or communities) but failed to form *urbi* because of the way their integration with existing urban networks was prevented.¹⁶⁷

pensare alla volontà di recuperare il principio, già sperimentato in Vål d'Aosta, della grande scala come strumento di progetto. Le grandi masse dei due interventi, pur in contesti differenti, si assumono il ruolo di intermediari con situazioni pregresse fortemente caratterizzate: la vastità della Valle in un caso, il vuoto periurbano nell'altro. Questa interpretazione del rapporto edificio-città è quella che in questo momento meno attrae il grosso del gruppo degli architetti urbanisti, presi da sperimentazioni interdisciplinari. Destinata ad un immediato insuccesso, questa tendenza – con i dovuti assestamenti – risulterà vincente quando, stanchi del quartiere neorealista, gli architetti-urbanisti si orienteranno in questa direzione suffragando, tra l'altro, le idee olivettiane.

[First seven years of the Fanfani Plan: The rationalist trend. Among the large production of neighborhoods of the first seven years of plan Ina-casa it is possible to discern several approaches to planning. Complexes such as the Dessie Canton Vesco or the Ponte dei Diavoli can be included among the projects still influenced by the strong rationalist component of the compositional culture of their authors. It is not by chance that two out of the three interventions mentioned above are signed by architects such as Fiocchi, Nizzoli, Ponti, Figini, and Pollini; the latter the authors of the most important Italian initiative of this century: The General Plan for the Valle d'Aosta of 1936. It is discernible a strong echo of the modalities of intervention already adopted in those years with the project that Figini and Pollini, together with Ponti, ideated for the neighborhood Harar in Milan. The strong resemblance between the latter and the plan for the touristic center of Cormayer suggests the intent to recover the principle of the "large scale" as an instrument for planning, previously experimented in Vål d'Aosta. The large grain of the two interventions, even if they happened in different contexts, takes on the role of intermediaries with prominent past situations: the valley's vastness on one hand, and the urban void on the other. This interpretation of the relationship between the building and the city is at this moment of little interests for the urbanist-architects, being absorbed with interdisciplinary experimentations. Although initially ignored, this trend will in the end predominate with the needed adjustments; when, the urbanist-architects, tired of the neorealist neighborhood, will reorient in this direction substantiating, among others, Olivetti's ideas.—Trans.] Mario Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 37.

¹⁶⁷ Astengo wrote about the project for Valco San Paolo, the first of Rome's Ina-casa neighborhood: "Its composition is based on the plastic element of a Y and their contrast with the low houses; every building is made vibrant by the articulation of the surfaces that delimit it: It is a stereometrically defined solid, an object, and remains such in the composition, which gathers together the various elements. In this formal research, there is no interest in characterizing the external spaces. A precise determination of the social life in the neighborhood is lacking." Former works by Muratori, and planning tools adopted for Aprilia, Cortoghiana and Messina, such as the architectural square and arcades were foregone, to be substituted by the architectonic scale, the materials, clarity of relation between structure and casing, with particular attention to the individuality of the dwellings. Only a few typological elements contributed to the overall design governed by the forms of the individual dwellings. These elements had to be skillfully coordinated to create a *civitas*. Yet this *civitas* will never become an *urbs*, because development was self-contained and self-sufficient. Giovanni Astengo, "Nuovi quartieri in Italia," *Urbanistica*, no. 7 (1951): 9

The Study Center at the Editorial *Casabella Continuità*, the Italian Urban Project, the Debate on Modernism, and the Critique of Architectural Modernism as a Social Movement

Casabella Continuità's editor in chief Ernesto Nathan Rogers introduced Aldo Rossi to the professionals frequenting the magazine's study center in the early 1950s. In 1955 Rossi joined the group of Guido Canella, Roberto Gabetti, Aimano Isola, and Vittorio Gregotti in the research sponsored by the Ina-casa program, contributing several articles to the magazine's published work and establishing important connections with future leaders of Italian urbanism, Carlo Aymonino and Francesco Tentori. The writings Rossi produced during his time with *Casabella Continuità* are mentioned in Mario Ferrari's book *Il progetto urbano in Italia 1940-1990* (The urban project in Italy 1940-1990) as the early documentation of the urban research conducted by Rogers and Astengo's magazines, which led to the evolution of the theories of the mid-1960s.¹⁶⁸

Rogers' magazine *Casabella Continuità* aimed primarily at popularizing new ideas about architecture and urban design by exposing Italian architects to transnational perspectives. The study group that Rogers had gathered around the publishing house also allowed participating professionals to engage in debates with the European chapters of CIAM, an organization with the objective to divulgate the principles of the modern movement.¹⁶⁹ The debates and discussions that the architects and critics at *Casabella* held with CIAM's exponents concerned the interpretations of current methodologies of

¹⁶⁸ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 63.

architecture and urban design, often igniting arguments about the ethics associated with these disciplines.

Rossi entered the study group when Rogers was engaged in a notorious debate about modernism with British critic Reyner Banham.¹⁷⁰ Banham, who was particularly hostile to the approach that Italian architects had taken to design, became notorious for accusing Rogers and his associates of betraying the orthodoxy and ideals of the modern movement, openly criticizing such projects as Rogers's *Torre Velasca* and Roberto Gabetti and Aiman D'Isola's *Bottega d'Erasmus* (see Figs. 30 and 31).¹⁷¹ Alan Colquhoun suggested that the disagreement among these personalities was attributable to a form of ostracized modernism predominating, at the time, in some northern European nations. Thus, Colquhoun described postwar modernism as a "monolithic discipline" that associated the modern movement with the victory of democracy over fascism and denying overall any form of internal criticism.¹⁷² He explained that the critique started by Italian architects over the movement's leading philosophies questioned mainly the ambiguous relationship between modern architecture and the former Italian Fascist state and the overall speculative nature of modernist minimalist projects.¹⁷³ Theirs was a criticism, according

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² "...in the 1930s with the fading of postwar optimism in Russia and Western Europe and with the rise of Fascism these conflicts become critical. The traditionalists surfaced in Germany, Italy, and Russia, promoting various forms of socialist realism. *Heimatsstil* and state classicism in Germany, the projects of Marcello Piacentini in Mussolini's Rome, and the promotion of a 'bourgeois' realism in Russia. These trends were closely related, and similar tendencies existed in the United States." Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 12.

¹⁷³ Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 12.

to Colquhoun, based mainly on rejecting the belief that architectural modernism, unlike other artistic movements connected with the political Left, could bring about an actual revolution in the social realm. Consequently, professionals reacting against the philosophies of the modern movement typically embraced the theories of Lukacs and incorporated principles of socialist realism in their work, originating the critical discourse on the dialectic of architecture later developed by Aldo Rossi and his contemporaries.¹⁷⁴

Figure 30. *Torre Velasca, Milano*. 1956-1958. Designed by Ernesto Nathan Rogers. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>.

¹⁷⁴ Modern architecture found its promise largely on the belief that technology could solve the practical and artistic problems of modern social existence. Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 8.

Figure 31 *Bottega d'Erasmus, Torino*. 1953-56. Designed by Roberto Gabetti and Aimano Isola. Accessed March 9, 2017. Image taken from The British library Flickr Commons Photostream. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary>

In Italy, Ernesto Nathan Rogers rigorously voiced this debate. Rogers dismissed the revolutionary role of modernism and framed its essence in continuity with the “vital forces of the past.”¹⁷⁵ Thus, he claimed that the modern movement could no longer be considered revolutionary because it fell within the process of “continuity” that addresses a mutation in the order of tradition, rather than a “crisis” representing a break, or discontinuity caused by the influence of new factors characteristic of a period of

¹⁷⁵ Luca Molinari, “Tra continuità e crisi,” in *Continuità e crisi: Ernesto Nathan Rogers e la cultura architettonica italiana del secondo dopoguerra*, ed. Anna Giannetti and Luca Molinari (Firenze: Alinea Editrice, 2010), 27.

revolution.¹⁷⁶ Hence, he emphasized the importance of continuity in the historic process to which the modern movement subscribed, according to which it had to be regarded as the evolution of a tradition rather than a revolutionary moment.

Rossi's most significant contribution to this debate was his participation in the various conferences that propagated the vision of the Casabella's group among younger architects. At the international conference of architectural students held in Rome in 1954, Rossi voiced his thoughts about the contemporary crisis of the modern movement in connection

¹⁷⁶ Rogers explained that for continuity of the historical process he did not intend a stylistic choice but rather a cultural attitude; therefore, stating that history can be seen all as continuity or as a crisis, depending if we want to accentuate its permanence or emergences. In a recent essay, Luca Molinari explains that Rogers's choice is related to Siegfried Giedion's explanation of the relationship between continuity, history, and tradition in the essay "the development of a new tradition" (*lo sviluppo di una nuova tradizione*) in *Space, Time and Architecture (Spazio, tempo e architettura)*. "...e la scelta di Rogers, come di Giedion con accenni diversi, vá nella direzione di una continuità dei processi storici in cui il movimento moderno é iscritto, non come scelta stilistica ma come atteggiamento programmatico e culturale. Nel testo del 1957 Rogers rafforza i contenuti dell'editoriale dell'anno precedente, che tendono ad eliminare il movimento moderno come esperienza rivoluzionaria per trasformarla in un azione di continuità con le energie vitali del passato. In questo senso i riferimenti alla prima parte del volume di Siegfried Giedion *Spazio, Tempo, Architettura* che porta come sottotitolo *Lo sviluppo di una nuova tradizione* e che affronta nel primo capitolo il rapporto tra continuità, storia e tradizione, appare fondamentale. All' interno dell'editoriale la sequenza dei passaggi fondamentali infatti segue questa linea: 'L'architettura può sviluppare le premesse del movimento moderno o sta cambiando rotta? ... Considerando la storia come processo, si potrebbe dire che é sempre continuità o sempre crisi a seconda che si vogliano accentuare le permanenze piuttosto che le emergenze ... il concetto di continuità implica quello di mutazione nell'ordine della tradizione.' Crisi é rottura-rivoluzione-cioé il momento di discontinuitá dovuto all'influenza di fattori nuovi non reperibili nei momenti precedenti se non come contrari a quelli che scatiscono, per opposizione, dall'impellente esigenza di novità sostanziali."

[...and the choice of Rogers, like that of Giedion but with different outlines, goes in the direction of historical processes which the modern movement embraces. Not as a stylistic choice but as a cultural and programmatic attitude. In the text of 1957 Rogers reinforces the content of the publication of the previous year that dismisses the modern movement as a revolutionary experience and (portrays it) in an action of continuity with the vital forces of the past. In this respect, it seems fundamental, the reference to the first part of the volume of Siegfried Giedion *Spazio, tempo e architettura* that carries the subtitle *Lo sviluppo di una nuova tradizione* and that explains, in the first chapter, the relationship between continuity, history, and tradition. Therefore: 'Can Architecture develop the premises of the modern movement or is it changing its direction? Here it is the problem: Continuity or crisis? Considering history as a process, we could say that it is always continuity or always crisis depending if we want to accentuate permanence rather than emergence. The concept of continuity implies that of mutation in the order of tradition.' Crisis is the break—the revolution—therefore the moment of discontinuity due to the influence of new factors not available in previous moments if not as contrary to those that stem, for opposition, from the compelling need of substantial new ways.—Trans.] Molinari, "Tra continuità e crisi," 27.

with the objective of the political Left to create an architectural style “national in character and socialist in content.” He explicitly opposed the modern movement’s belief that social problems could be solved by architecture, maintaining that it was rather architecture that had to evolve accordingly to provide solutions for societal issues.¹⁷⁷ Rossi explained that these solutions consisted of the research for architectural programs, as well as for a typology, to accommodate traditional uses allowing improving space’s livability and maximizing dweller’s productivity. Rossi believed that the crisis of architectural modernism was primarily caused by the realization that architecture alone could not change society in the way the modern movement had claimed possible.¹⁷⁸ According to him, the origins of this crisis could be discerned by researching the history of the society that had produced the modern style, and by scrutinizing the philosophies

¹⁷⁷ “Non crediamo piú dopo le esperienze europee dell’architettura moderna, che l’architettura potrà cambiare il mondo, sarà piuttosto il contrario.”

[We no longer believe after the European experiences of modern architecture that architecture can change the world, but rather the opposite.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁷⁸ “Credo siamo tutti consci come le cause di questa crisi siano da ricercarsi non già nell’architettura stessa, ma nella società di cui questa architettura é logico prodotto. Anzi proprio qui possiamo trovare il punto di divergenza rispetto ai maestri, o profeti dell’architettura moderna. L’architettura segue le vicende della società e non di una propria astratta continuità. Solo questa coscienza potrà permetterci di risolvere questa situazione di crisi. Crisi che, maturate appunto tra lo sfacelo della società borghese, é stata sí denunciata dal movimento moderno, ma in maniera sostanzialmente errata, tanto da farlo presto piombare nell’attuale vuoto formalismo che tutti conosciamo.”

[I believe we are all aware that the causes of this crisis are to be researched not in architecture itself, but in the society of which this architecture is the logical product. On the contrary, right here we can find the point of divergence with respect to the masters or prophets of modern architecture. Architecture follows the events of history and not of its own abstract continuity. Only this conscience could allow us to resolve this situation of crisis. The crisis which, therefore matured among the disrepair of bourgeois society, it was denounced from the modern movement, but in a substantially wrong way, so much to cause it to plunge into the empty formalism that we all know.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

and ideologies of the modernist masters. In this way, he believed it would be possible to compare the scope of modernist ideologies with the philosophies embraced by the national political Left, and to expose their fundamental incompatibility.¹⁷⁹

In 1955, Rossi elaborated this critique further at the convention of the communist architects held at the Institute for Marxist Studies of the Frattocchie in Rome. On this occasion, he recognized that the very critique of the origin of the modern architectural movement interfered with the formulation of the type of realist architecture needed to pave the Italian road to socialism.¹⁸⁰ He found the reasons for this incompatibility to be at the very philosophical roots of the modern movement that, by being founded on the phenomenological and existential thought of philosopher Edmund Husserl, unraveled the theoretical logic of the “philosophy of the crisis.”¹⁸¹ Rossi explained that this particular

¹⁷⁹ “In secondo luogo questo discorso non vuole essere profetico rispetto a una più specifica teoria della architettura, ma deve essere posto concretamente per essere inteso e anche sviluppato, escludendo ogni teoria in qualche modo autonoma del fenomeno architettonico, come entità astratta.”

[In second place this discourse does not want to prophesize on a more specific aspect of architecture, but to be posed realistically to be understood and developed, excluding any theory somehow autonomous of the architectonic phenomena, as an abstract entity.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Architettura moderna e tradizionale*, typescript essay, 1954, box 3, file 1, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸⁰ Aldo Rossi, *Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie*, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸¹ “Le questioni come si vede si potrebbero riportare ad un’ altra più sostanziale esigenza: Quella di una architettura di grande comprensione storica, quindi comprensiva della sua tradizione e della nazione in cui si svolge e che via via trasforma e vive questa tradizione. Che tutto questo possa ritrovarsi nel movimento moderno in architettura, e da questo possa svilupparsi, è difficile affermarlo.”

[The arguments we see that could be transported towards another substantial need: That of an architecture of great historical understanding, therefore comprehensive of its own traditions and of the nation where it develops that gradually transforms and lives this architectural tradition. It is hard to affirm that all this is found or can be developed out of the modern architectural movement.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie*,

philosophy abided to the principle of a “world of nothing else but words” described by philosopher Martin Heidegger, and as such embraced all its associated ideologies.¹⁸² The Bauhaus itself was funded on these philosophical bases that, as a consequence, had to reflect on all the art and architecture produced by the institution. Thus, Rossi believed these philosophies were the reason that made Bauhaus art and architecture very clear, extendable, and reducible to the infinite, to the point that the function of a city could be used to plan for the productivity of an entire region.¹⁸³ He, however, made a very clear distinction between the ideologies of Heidegger and those of Husserl by saying that while

Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸² “E ancora: Anche la sua forma (dell’architettura) sarà chiarissima e inconclusa, prorogabile e riproducibile all’infinito, fino a designare la funzione di una città, a pianificare la produttività di una regione, a tracciare le linee direttive del mondo; di quel mondo che, diceva Heidegger *let nie sondern Velet*. Mi sia permesso accomunare allora quest’ultimo allo Husserl nei fondamenti ideologici della Bauhaus. Il fine é l’origine di questa filosofia, la formazione di questi intellettuali, ci é largamente nota.”

[And again: Also its form (of architecture) will be very clear and inconclusive, extendable, and reducible to the infinite. Up to the point to designate the function of a city, to plan the productivity of a region, and to trace the guiding lines for the world, of that world that Heidegger said: ‘*let nie sondern weltet*.’ Let me allow aligning the latter with the fundamental ideology of the Bauhaus. The end and the origins of this philosophy, the formation of these intellectuals is well known to us.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸³ “Le radici del movimento moderno in architettura si potranno tutte ritrovare chiaramente espresse con piena coscienza nella Bauhaus. Agivano su questo movimento varie correnti filosofiche, vediamo quali, anzi lasciamo parlare un critico assai notoriosamente favorevole a quell movimento, G.C. Argan: La razionalità che Gropius sviluppa nei processi formali dell’arte é affino alla dialettica della filosofia fenomenologica ed esistenziale (specialmente dello Husserl) cui é di fatto storicamente collegata.”

[The roots of the modern movement in architecture can be found expressed with a full conscience in the Bauhaus. On this movement acted several philosophical currents, let's see which ones, actually, let's hear it from a critic favorable to that movement. G.C. Argan: ‘The rationality that Gropius develops in the formal processes of art is aligned with the dialectic of phenomenology (the philosophy of phenomenology) and existentialism (especially of Husserl) to which, by fact, it historically connects.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

Husserl's ideas could be associated with the ethics of a progressive society, Heidegger's thought should be considered a negative connotation of humanity. He explained that, in evaluating Marx's dialogue on the "relations of production," Heidegger had distorted Marxist thought by reducing man and society to fetish objects, proposing an abstract and negative understanding of man, whose "motive of scandal [was] not the estranged objectivity, but objectivity as such."¹⁸⁴ Rossi, therefore, attributed Heidegger's thought with the ability to lead society to the "abandonment of those material existential conditions that were elaborated throughout a long and tormented development of history to constitute the fundamentals for human emancipation."¹⁸⁵ According to Rossi, this led

¹⁸⁴ Seppure essi siano casi tutti tipici rappresentanti della filosofia della crisi penso sia utile qui differenziarli. Di uno sviluppo storico del pensiero dello Husserl é inutile parlare, come della possibilità di una sua tradizione pratica in una società progressista. Più aperte, meno astratte le preoccupazioni di Heidegger, che a un certo punto, osservano la realtà che lo circonda, si occupa del marxismo, parla anzi dell'importanza di un dialogo produttivo con la concezione marxista, superiore a tutte le altre. Ma dove Marx parla del carattere del feticcio degli oggetti del lavoro là dove essi diventano merce, Heidegger deformando la concezione marxista reduce l'uomo stesso, la società dell'uomo a feticcio, a fatto, a cosa. Questa strada si richiude ancora in una concezione astratta e negativa dell'uomo, e trova il suo motivo di scandalo non nella oggettività estraniata, ma nella oggettività come tale (Marx).

[Even if these are typical cases representative of 'the philosophy of the crisis,' I think it is useful here to differentiate them. Of an historic development of the thought of Husserl, it is useless to speak, as of the possibility of an apt practical translation of a progressive society. More open, less abstract the worries of Heidegger, at a certain point observing the reality that surrounds him, he takes on Marxism, actually talks about the importance of a 'productive dialogue' with the Marxist conception, superior to all others. But where Marx talks about the character of the fetish of the tools of labor, there, where they become goods, Heidegger through a deformation of the Marxist conception reduces the same man, society of man to a fetish, to a thing. This road closes itself again in an understanding abstract and negative of man and finds its motive of scandal not in the estranged objectivity, but in objectivity as such (Marx).—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l'istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸⁵ "... e come osserva un noto studioso, il Coletti, 'può portare solo a rinnegare quelle condizioni materiali di esistenza, elaborate attraverso uno svolgimento lungo e tormentuoso della storia, che costituiscono il fenomeno e la promessa reale per l'emancipazione umana.'"

[...as a notorious scholar observed, Colletti 'can only lead to an abandonment of those material existential conditions, elaborated throughout a long and tormented development of history that constitute the fundamentals and the real promise of human emancipation.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al

the nineteenth century bourgeoisie that had created modern art to fail to address the problem and conditions experienced by other social classes, resulting in the empty formalism of the style.

According to Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Gropius had expressed the conscience of modern architecture in the textuality of the “minimum existence” to describe the moral conditions of a collectivist society.¹⁸⁶ Rossi, however, found that Gropius’s ideas were more the reflection of a capitalist system’s caution in tackling the issue of minimum expenditure for projects of public housing. Thus, he thought Gropius’ endorsement of socialist ideas could have been valid if instead he had taken into consideration actual ethics of collectivist societies such as utopian thought. Rossi warned the public to resist the collectivist society of the “minimum existence” and not to idealize the work of the German master, because it was unrealistic to think it possible to have a rupture between

convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸⁶ “Gropius, come diceva Rogers, esprime la coscienza dell’ architettura moderna, ne quell’ architettura si può considerare distaccata dal suo problema morale. Il critico già citato, con cui io credo il discorso sia interessante, Argan, diceva: il minimo d’esistenza che nella textuality del suo enunciato potrebbe parere una cautela della società capitalistica per affrontare col minimo dispensio il problema dell’abitazione popolare, é invece nel pensiero di Grupius, la condizione morale per una società collectivistica.”

[Gropius, as Rogers said, does not express the conscience of modern architecture, nor that type of architecture can be considered detached from its moral problem. The critic already quoted, with whom I believe the discourse is interesting, Argan, said: ‘The minimum of existence that in the textuality of its enunciated could be seem as a caution of capitalistic society to tackle with the minimum expenditure the problem of public housing, is on the other hand in the thought of Gropius the moral condition of a collectivist society.’—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

Italian society and its traditions.¹⁸⁷ He added that the theme of rupture contributes to a dangerous ideology irreconcilable with a progressive vision of history. It is a concept able of externalizing, on the one hand, the “general crisis of traditional relationships in the age of monopolistic capitalism,” but on the other, inevitably causing to precipitate in the abyss of nihilism.¹⁸⁸ Rossi, therefore, believed that it was impossible to produce an analysis of the current state of Italian architecture or of any architecture originated from the modern movement without considering its philosophical and moral implications.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ “Il giudizio mi sembra giusto se in sostanza viene rovesciato; cioè se si vogliono guardare bene le condizioni di una società collectivistica, come utopia, esse si ritrovano ancora, come cautela, stavolta più generale, del sistema capitalistico. A questo punto noi non possiamo oltre ritrovarci nell’opera del maestro Tedesco. Poiché ci sembra impossibile, e abbiamo cercato di documentarlo, ritrovarci nella sua ideologia, perché non crediamo che esista rottura tra noi e la tradizione—esiste per noi una contrapposizione di natura dialettica—non crediamo, ma anzi combattiamo la società collectivistica del *minimum existens*.”

[This opinion seems right if it is substantially reversed; if we consider the conditions of a collectivist society, such as a utopia, it can still be found as a precaution, these time more in general, of the capitalistic system. At this point, we cannot further identify with the work of the German master. Because it seems impossible, and we try to document this, to find ourselves in his ideology because we do not believe that a rupture exists between us and traditions—for us exists a contraposition of dialectic nature, we do not believe, but we rather battle the collectivist society of the minimum existence.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸⁸ Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti dell Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁸⁹ “Io credo che senza queste critiche fondamentali sull’ideologia base del movimento moderno in architettura non sia possibile un esame approfondito della situazione dell’architettura italiana, di quella architettura che indubbiamente nasce da quel movimento. Poiché solo compiuto questo passo noi possiamo guardare a fondo alla nostra situazione e districare quanto in essa vi sia di positivo e di storicamente progressista.”

[I believe that without these fundamental critiques the underlying ideology of the modern movement in architecture, it is not possible a deep analysis of the state of Italian architecture, of that architecture that without doubts is born from that movement. Therefore, only through this step we can look deep into our situation and unravel what in it is positive and historically progressive.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

He supported instead the emphasis placed on humanism by historical materialism and considered it the theoretical approach best suited to forward the practical and ideological conquests and the progressive social transformation achieved by society over time.¹⁹⁰

A New Type of Realism: Aldo Rossi and the Experience of the Soviet Union

Rossi discussed the debate on architecture held in the Soviet Union at the Turin conference of 1955. On this occasion, he explicitly addressed the need to investigate the artistic forms used to shape citizens' aspirations and ideals within particular social systems.¹⁹¹ He explained this concept through the historical contexts leading to the different interpretations of modern architecture, particularly related to the drastic switch

¹⁹⁰ “Mentre il materialismo storico cercherà, nel suo sviluppo, di portare innanzi le conquiste della borghesia dell’800, gli intellettuali che si trovano al di fuori di questo vasto movimento del pensiero e della società si limiteranno a constatare la tragica realtà esistenziale della classe a cui appartengono e da cui d’altro canto non riescono a staccarsi, la crisi definitiva di quella classe. Aspetto senz’altro coraggioso e utile, ma posto in una problematica senza soluzione, di cui non vede possibilità pratiche di uscita, poiché essi al massimo sono consci, con l’Adorno che ‘...la rivoluzione industriale, l’economia, la tecnica, portano indelebile il peccato originale dell’essenza borghese, dell’estraniarsi dell’uomo nella società obiettiva.’”

[While historic materialism will seek, in its development, to bring forward the conquests of the bourgeoisie of the 1800s, the intellectuals that are outside of this broad movement of thought and society will limit themselves at proving the tragic reality of the class to which they belong and from which, on the other hand, they are not able to detach themselves, the definitive crisis of that social class. An aspect courageous and useful, but posed within a problematic without a solution, from which cannot see practical opportunities for an exit, since they are at the most aware, with Adorno that ‘...the industrial revolution, the economy, the techniques, carry forward the original sin of the bourgeoisie essence, of the estrangement of man from an objective society.’—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁹¹ In this conference, they were discussing a recent debate in the URSS regarding architecture. “...il bisogno di risalire attraverso l’indagine delle forme artistiche, della cultura di un paese alla realtà profonda di un certo sistema sociale, alle condizioni effettive da cui scaturiscono le aspirazioni e gli ideali di un popolo.”

[...the need to uncover, through the investigation of the artistic forms of a country’s culture, the profound reality of a certain social system, the actual conditions from which arise the aspirations and ideals of a population.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

in the meaning of the style that went from representing the image of the socialist government of Weimar Germany, to becoming the embodiment of the vaguely progressive ideology of corporate capitalism.¹⁹² Rossi believed modern architecture's potential to be exercised as a formal methodology was the main factor enabling the detachment of its original socialist content from the signifier, allowing its meaning to be altered through a reinterpretation of the signified. However, he found the real cause to be the style's origin in a society that created a new government by the mean of a culture that induced citizens to identify with its politics, instead of seeking a solution to existing crisis. Furthermore, he believed that the recent association of modern architecture with the image of the corporate world conferred the modern style with a meaning unsuitable to represent a socialist society, overall contributing to the situation of crisis of the modern movement responsible for the current critical phase of European architecture.¹⁹³

¹⁹² "...ci sembra che l'architettura in Europa e nel mondo sia in una fase estremamente critica e complessa...circa l'esame critico che si deve applicare ad ogni architettura, ma ognuno di noi é convinto che oggi in particolare non esistono soluzioni optimum. E non esiterei a identificare questa cultura con la particolare cultura del movimento moderno in architettura. Un movimento che sorto principalmente, almeno nella sua più lucida enunciazione, nella germania di Weimar si é poi diffuso nel mondo per una sua innegabile ideologia vagamente progressista, e in sostanza per la sua capacità di sostituire, magari con una negazione, un certo mondo formale ormai distaccatosi da un contenuto reale."

[...for architecture: in Europe, architecture is undergoing a phase extremely critical and complex. Each one of us is convinced that no optimum solutions exist nowadays for its critical examination. I would not hesitate at identifying this culture with the particular culture of the modern movement in architecture. A movement born mainly in its most lucid enunciation in the Germany of Weimar, and then spread throughout the world for its undeniable connection with a precise economic condition and with an ideology vaguely progressive. And substantially for its ability to substitute, perhaps with a negation, a certain formal methodology, at this point detached from its real content.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁹³ "Il movimento moderno in architettura, voi sapete, si diffuse spesso con motivi originali che qui non importa sottolineare anche in Russia ed anzi all'albore della società socialista che su quelle terre andava sorgendo esso addirittura si impose come architettura ufficiale capace di rappresentare lo stesso movimento socialista, una sua traduzione nel mondo formale. Come questa fosse un'illusione o un abbaglio non ci interessa qui dimostrare, poiché si può ricavare abbastanza semplicemente dagli eventi; ne

Rossi explained that yet a different meaning was embodied by the form of architectural modernism, known as constructivist architecture, popular in the Soviet Union of the 1920s and early 1930s. Thus, constructivist architecture was considered the former artistic expression of the bourgeois that, together with other forms of avant-garde art had fallen into disuse in 1933 when Stalin officially introduced the socialist realist style. According to Rossi, the Soviets were then faced with the task to rebuild the image of the country to suit their new collectivist society, and were presented only with the option to disengage from any form of modernism and to reformulate their national architectonic tradition according to a different type of rationality. He mentioned that even prominent figures of the Russian avant-garde had to renounce the style, including the futurist poet Vladimir Majakovski and social activist and founder of literary socialist realism Maxim Gorky. Rossi, however, claimed that it was not possible for the former constructivist style to convey values analogous to those of neoclassical architecture,

il parlare di imposizioni dittatoriali ha molto significato se appena si vogliono guardare i fatti nella loro realtà con qualche esattezza. Ci basti osservare che da un lato l'architettura del movimento moderno si trovava nelle condizioni, a causa del suo stesso nascimento, di descrivere una situazione di crisi (o solo di constatarla) e dall'altro si trovava una società, un mondo, il cui fine non era tanto la soluzione di una crisi specifica o generale di una società, ma la creazione di una nuova civiltà e di una cultura che, identificandosi con la politica stessa era direttamente partecipe alla formazione del paese. Nell'ambito di questa nuova situazione era evidente come l'urgenza di significazioni che i nuovi contenuti pretendevano, dall'arte non poteva attingersi della tematica dell'arte d'avanguardia la quale spesso finiva per significare soltanto se stessa o si riduceva a una nuova academia."

[Initially the modern movement established itself as a representative of the socialist movement, a translation of its formality. This was an illusion. However, the architecture of the modern movement described a situation of crisis. On the other hand was a society, a world, which end was not so much the solution of a specific societal crisis, but rather the creation of a new civilization and of a culture that by identifying with politics was able to take part in the formation of the country. In the context of this new situation, it was obvious that the content of the vanguard art was not suitable as it often ended up signifying only itself and was reduced to a new academy.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

because its visual vocabulary was too similar to that of European modernism, a style formally connected with the bourgeois origins of the modern movement.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the Soviets reformulated their national architectonic tradition by going against all the logic guiding other artistic movements and integrated the new socialist philosophy within the overall character of the Soviet Union as a nation. They formulated a “new type of rationality” that took into consideration the reality of the country’s current productive conditions and was applied according to the logic of economics.¹⁹⁵ Rossi proposed that

¹⁹⁴ “Lo stesso Majakovski avvertendo l’urgenza dei nuovi contenuti, doveva rinnegare il movimento d’avanguardia che pure aveva completamente condiviso. Il giudizio di Gorky é significativo: ‘Majakovski ha un respiro immenso, una personalit profonda. Qui non c’entra il futurismo. Esiste solo Majakovski poeta. Un grande poeta.’ E nel travalicare i limiti della propria esperienza nell’ambito di una tecnica avanguardistica Majakovski stesso poteva dire: ‘la rivoluzione una rottura con la tradizione.’ Esisteva per gli architetti la possibilit di un analogo agire? Era cio possibile verificando il movimento costruttivista sulla base delle esigenze della societ sovietica investirlo dei nuovi compiti e ricondurlo ad esprimere valori analoghi a quelli che erano stati espressi dalle antiche architetture? difficile crederlo, soprattutto notando la fragilit della tradizione architettonica russa, per quanto riguarda l’architettura ufficiale oltre un certo periodo, e la sua lontananza sostanziale dal linguaggio architettonico moderno, sorto in condizioni del tutto diverse nella parte occidentale dell’Europa. Non restava che svincolarsi polemicamente dall’esperienza costruttivistica e tentare di ricostruire la tradizione architettonica nazionale e adeguarla, cio compierla trasformandola nel nuovo mondo. Solo cos l’architettura poteva porsi come elemento di una cultura organica e rappresentare in maniera originale il nuovo significato rivoluzionario, integrando entro limiti assai vasti i nuovi contenuti socialisti e i caratteri tipici di tutta l’Unione Sovietica.

[...The same Majakovski had to renounce the vanguard movement that he had himself supported... Gorky: Majakovski himself could have said that ‘the revolution is not a rupture with tradition.’ Existed then for architects the possibility of analogous actions? Was it then possible to verify the constructivist movement on the basis of the needs of soviet society, investing it with new duties and taking it back to express analogous values to those that were expressed by ancient architecture? This is hard to believe especially according to the fragility of Russian architecture, at least for what concerns official architecture past a certain period and its detachment from the language of modern architecture, originated in totally different conditions in Western Europe. The only option was to polemically disengage from the constructivist experience, and to attempt at rebuilding and adapting the national architectonic tradition, namely, to fulfill it by transforming it into the new world. Only this way architecture could pose itself as the element of an organic culture, and to represent in an original way the new revolutionary message. This integrates within large lines the new socialist content and the typical characteristics of the whole Soviet Union.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁹⁵ “Non quindi possibile giustificare o negare l’architettura sovietica sempre verificandola o confrontandola all’ architettura del mondo borghese: quel mondo formale non stato n tradito n migliorato, ma in un certo periodo semplicemente scartato. In questo tentativo di costruire una grande

the dynamics behind the formation of the Soviet socialist realist architectural style can only be understood through the examination of the way Soviet artists dealt with the shifting nature of their society. He claimed Soviet culture was expressive of this shifting nature for the way it stood in between national traditions and artistic currents originated in other countries, making the new socialist realist style into its most tangible exemplification.¹⁹⁶

architettura si é andati certamente oltre tutte le ragioni e i movimenti che qui si possono aver indicato, spesso si sono superati, spesso l'artista é rimasto come impigliato.”

[It is not then possible to justify or to deny Soviet architecture by verifying it or comparing it with the modern architecture of the bourgeois world. Of the formal world which was neither betrayed nor improved but within a certain time only discarded (swept aside). In this attempt at constructing a great architecture we went beyond all the reasons and the movements that we have mentioned, with which often the artist has been tangled up.—Trans.]

“Significava tutto questo il rifiuto a considerare i problemi attuali dell’edilizia, della produzione industriale nell’edilizia, delle condizioni moderne, insomma e modernissime del costruire? No certamente. Le condizioni produttive sono una realtà obbiettiva di cui ci si deve servire secondo modalità razionali ed economiche. In questo senso tutte le architetture sono state razionali.”

[Did this all mean the refusal to take into consideration the current problems of the building industry, of industrial production, and of the modern conditions of the building process? Certainly not. The productive conditions are an objective reality that has to be used according to a rational and economic methodology. In this sense all architecture is rational.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁹⁶ “...il bisogno di risalire attraverso l’indagine delle forme artistiche, della cultura di un paese alla realtà profonda di un certo sistema sociale, alle condizioni effettive da cui scaturiscono le aspirazioni e gli ideali di un popolo.”

[...the need of reaching through the investigation of artistic forms, of the culture of a country deep into the fact of a particular social system, into the effective form which aspirations and ideals of a population are derived.—Trans.]

“...su questo piano noi dobbiamo francamente riconoscere come gli artisti sovietici accettino i problemi sempre nuovi che nascono da una società in continuo superamento dialettico delle proprie posizioni.”

[...on this level we must frankly recognize how soviet artists come to accept problems always new, born from a society in constant change; therefore able of expressing a constant dialectic overcoming of its own position.—Trans.]

Rossi suggested that, following the schooling of the Soviets, Italy needed a type of revolutionary architecture, detached from the formality of architectural modernism, because it was a style too far removed from the country's traditions and cultural heritage, interpreted in a way substantially different from its country of origin. He wrote that, on the other hand, Soviet architects often avoided modern architecture by entirely rejecting functionalism, embracing as a consequence all types of formulations in its opposition. He found that this widespread attitude was a misinterpretation of Khrushchev's message, who with the claim that "only with rational means the struggle against constructivism can be carried on," only intended to present architects with their real and practical responsibilities.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, he found Khrushchev's mandate responsible for starting

"Mi sembra che nell'aprire un dibattito come é nostra intenzione sui problemi specifici della architettura sia assai utile conoscere il panorama generale della cultura sovietica quale essa si era andata conformando dalle sue origini fino a questi ultimi anni e quale a noi é dato conoscere maggiormente attraverso il cinema e la letteratura. A nessuno di voi io credo sar sfuggito lo spirito che ha animato il recente congresso degli scrittori a Mosca dove si é cercato di illuminare e criticare, ad esempio la concezione dell'eroe positivo, del romanzo realista, della dimensione psicologica del romanzo cercando cos di approfondire il rapporto tra lo scrittore e la societ in cui esso vive e tra una certa letteratura nazionale e l'espressione letteraria di altri popoli e di altri paesi. Considerazioni tutte quindi che importa fare poich esse illuminano problemi che sono anche nostri e che possono approfondire la nostra stessa esperienza."

[...to open a debate on the specific problems of architecture, it is necessary a general knowledge of Soviet culture and the way it has conformed from its origin to recent years, and it is known to us through cinema and literature. Nobody presumably has missed the spirit that has animated the recent congress of novelists in Moscow where a criticism was attempted over the understanding of the positive hero, of the realist novel, and of its psychological dimension attempting deepening the relationship between writer and society where he lives in between the national literary tradition and that of other countries. These considerations also shed a light on our own national problems, and can deepen our own experience.—
Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁹⁷ " questo un presupposto necessario alla forma architettonica, inscindibile ma non determinante. In ogni caso il difetto proprio nel pensare la forma come determinate dal processo produttivo: La forma architettonica motivate da alter ben pi sostanziali ragioni. Ora sembra che nell'Unione Sovietica il fenomeno si ha avuto in forma contraria, ma non per questo meno sbagliata, l'errore che si pu riscontrare in gran parte dell'architettura moderna dove si pretende di ricavare una architettura da veri presupposti tecnici. Cio molti architetti sovietici hanno creduto di rinunciare a certi dati della moderna produzione, quasi questi potessero inquinare con aspetti "funzionali" il sentimento

a debate that ended up involving a large part of the Soviet Union that ultimately brought Soviet architects to the realization that "...it can be dangerous to fall prey to the empty decorations of an architecture that we consider abstract from its practical, existential conditions."¹⁹⁸

tradizionale e nazionale della nuova architettura. Questa mi sembra, é in sostanza la critica mossa da Kruscev nel discorso ai costruttori, il quale parla, con felice espressione "di costruttivismo alla rovescia." È questo il punto principale, per quanto riguarda l'architettura, vale a dire per una critica vera e propria dell'architettura. Kruscev pone cioè gli architetti di fronte alle loro precise responsabilità, ricordando come il non voler considerare certi sviluppi tecnici significa averne paura, non poterli comprendere e, in ultima analisi, non cogliendo più la realtà, nel suo insieme, rifugiarsi ancora in un'arte di evasione. Come tale errore di impostazione possa poi risolverli in un ritardo e in un'azione spesso negativa nei riguardi dell'enorme lavoro che si compie oggi nell'Unione Sovietica anche nel campo dell'edilizia, ha tenuto a sottolineare il discorso di Kruscev. Auspicando un maggior legame dell'architettura con la produzione degli elementi costruttivi (che sono poi il presupposto di ogni architettura) Kruscev ha aggiunto sottolineando come solo con mezzi razionali possa e debba condursi la lotta contro il costruttivismo."

[This is a prerogative necessary of architectonic form inseparable but non decisive. In any scenario the fault is in thinking the form to be determined by the productive process, while the architectonic form is motivated by other substantial reasons. Now it seems that in the Soviet Union the phenomenon has had a reversed format, but not less wrong. Many soviet architects have believed to renounce to certain data of modern production almost these could pollute with functionalist notions the national traditional sentiment of new architecture Khrushchev in his speech to builders spoke of reversed constructivism. Khrushchev placed architects before their real responsibilities. Recalling that behind the refusal of taking into consideration some technical aspects is the fear of not understanding them, and to take refuge into an art of evasion. Khrushchev has underlined (with reason) that only with rational means the struggle against constructivism can be carried out.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

¹⁹⁸ "Non meno interessanti sono stati gli interventi di molti architetti e membri dell'accademia di Architettura dell'URSS. In seno al convegno si é acceso un vivace dibattito ricco di spunti polemici, dibattito che presto investirà più larghi strati di intellettuali e di cittadini, come sempre avviene nell'Unione Sovietica. Tutti gli architetti hanno rilevato le questioni su esposte, ricordando come può essere pericoloso cadere nel decorativismo più vuoto di un'architettura che si voglia per così dire considerare astratta dalle sue condizioni pratiche di esistenza."

[Not less interesting are the interventions of many architects and members of the architectural academy of the URSS. In the midst of the convention spurred a lively debate rich of controversial ideas, a debate that soon will involve larger stratum of intellectuals and citizens, as it always happens in the Soviet Union (where it is hard to find people disinterested in cultural matters) and from which soon we will witness the results. All architects have noted the above issues, remembering how it can be dangerous to fall prey of decorativism emptier of an architecture that we to consider abstract from its practical existential conditions.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Turin Conference, 1955, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

Soviet Shift from Architecture-as-Art to Architecture-as-Science

The official shift in the theoretical approach from architecture-as-art to architecture-as-science was the result of a series of decrees seeking a solution to build on a large scale quickly and economically, as well as a way for the new government of Khrushchev to symbolically dissociate from Stalinist politics. This new approach to building started a debate that spanned through the whole decade of the 1950s, causing a change in the label of the doctrine of socialist realism by pitting neoclassicism against technological innovation. The overall change in approach of the discipline particularly impacted didactic curricula and brought drastic changes to the structure of academic institutions. The Academy of Architecture, for example, was made obsolete, dissolved, and ultimately replaced on August 23, 1955 with the new Academy of Construction and Architecture, aiming at establishing a new theoretical methodology and at re-orienting architectural education towards a scientific approach that favored the use of standardized construction technologies and materials.¹⁹⁹

The change in the theoretical approach to architecture ignited several debates in the Soviet Union, allowing traditional architects and younger professionals who were supporters of the scientific method to confront each other.²⁰⁰ Many of these discussions questioned the use of history in design and focused on the issue of “innovation and heritage.”²⁰¹ On the occasion of the pre-congressional debate of October 1955, for

¹⁹⁹ Zobovich-Eady, “To the New Shore,” 18-19.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 20.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 18-21.

example, architect Pavel Abrosinov and other practitioners faithful to the old system took a stand against supporters of the new scientific approach led by Georgii Gradov.²⁰²

Gradov firmly defended the new scientific method arguing that “the task of the architect was to solve problems arising in society at a time when the old system is an obstacle to further development” and that “the real meaning of innovation lies in the fact that at a certain stage of development it is necessary to eliminate the discrepancy between

architecture’s new content and its outdated forms.”²⁰³ Gradov, like other younger

architects supportive of the scientific approach, regarded neoclassicism as an archaic methodology, whose forms of the past conflicted with the economics of modern life.

However, Gradov went beyond the appearance and construction technology of individual structures, calling for a revolutionary approach to construction to be enacted at the urban and regional scale for the planning of entire cities, and even regions.²⁰⁴ Ultimately, these newly established architectural canons were made official on the occasion of the Second All-Union Congress of Architecture of November 1955, when vice-president of former Academy of Architecture Nikolai Baranov addressed the importance of a new scientific approach in architectural education rooted in the “contemporary requirements of architecture and construction technology.”²⁰⁵

²⁰² Ibid., 21-22.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Nikolai Baranov, vice –president of the former Academy of Architecture, addressed the Second Congress of 1955 on the topic of architectural education. Zobovich-Eady, “To the New Shore,” 18.

Rossi profusely drew from the Soviets' experience in his comparison of the different methodologies for architectural production.²⁰⁶ At the 1955 convention of the Communist architects, Rossi admitted that architecture was largely neglected in the debate surrounding the various sectors of Soviet culture, even if it was the discipline most commonly used to represent their collective society. According to Rossi, the international public had shown little interest in the USSR Congress of the Academy of Architecture, generally misinterpreting the arguments that were presented, and dismissing them as artificial and sectarian.²⁰⁷ He reproached even the most honest critics for

²⁰⁶ "...e prima fra tutte le esperienze che si sono compiute e si vanno compiendo nel paese del socialismo, nell' Unione Sovietica. Su questo, compagni, io so che molti di voi non sono d'accordo, per varie e forse buone ragioni. Mi sembra però meno giusto che sui problemi dell'architettura sovietica, anche a proposito dell'ultimo dibattito dell'accademia di architettura e del discorso del compagno Kruscev non si sia mai riusciti a suscitare un dibattito ed una critica seria che superasse la negazione o addirittura la battuta più o meno spiritosa."

[...and before all, among all the experiences that are undertaken and we are undertaking in the country of socialism, in the Soviet Union. Over this, comrades, I know that many of you do not agree, for various and perhaps for good reasons. It seems to me less right that on the problems of Soviet architecture, even in regard to the last debate of the academy of architecture and of the speech of comrade Khrushchev, we were never able to start a debate or a serious critic that went above the negation or the funny remark (joke).—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l'istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955*, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²⁰⁷ "In questi ultimi tempi é parso che il dibattito attorno a determinati settori della cultura sovietica si sia svolto in termini ora enfatici, ora generici, evitando anche nella sede piu condone di organi qualificati l'impostazione di un discorso scevro del conformismo caratteristico di una parte o, peggio, da una avversione incontrollata. In questo dibattito l' architettura sovietica é stata forse la più trascurata, nonostante che proprio nell' architettura si esprimino largamente i caratteri distintivi di una società per quel suo sorgere da una pubblica partecipazione. Non deve per questo stupire se così poca o nessuna risonanza ha avuto presso di noi l'abbastanza recente congresso dell'Accademia di Architettura dell'URSS, quel poco che se ne é ditto é servito piuttosto a sviare il fondo reale del dibattito e a darle una interpretazione settaria e artificiosa."

[It seems that in latter times the debate around determinate sectors of Soviet culture has developed in terms sometimes emphatic and sometimes generic, avoiding also qualified organs, qualified to the formulation of a discourse free from the conformism characteristic of a side, or worse by an unbridled aversion. In this debate Soviet architecture was perhaps the most neglected, even if it is in architecture that is largely expressed the distinctive characters of a society and its rise in public participation. It is not surprising if so little or no interest had here the relatively recent Congress of the Academy of Architecture

mistakenly reporting the Soviet Union's intention to replace "monumental" Stalinist architecture with the simplified canons of architectural modernism. Rossi explained that this was not the argument presented by Khrushchev at the Bulgarian speech he made to clarify the role of architecture and of architects in Soviet society. He proposed the Soviet debate had to be interpreted critically to avoid the dismissal of the past role of socialist realist architecture, important for its success at glorifying, through art, the conditions of man in a socialist society. Thus, he considered the Moscow Subway and the buildings of the University classical examples of this undertaking, incorporating in their original design the new formulation of art in a socialist culture. On the other hand, he believed that practical issues of the building industry and use of new construction techniques should not be overlooked, since the more advantageous productive conditions should always be taken into consideration according to a rational logic.²⁰⁸ He claimed this was

of the URSS. The little that was said served more to derail the real base of the debate and to give it a sectarian and artificial interpretation.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l'istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955*, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²⁰⁸ "Io credo sia nostro compito condurre e sostenere questo dibattito nella maniera il più ampia possibile per potere, in primo luogo, conoscere con completezza quanto si è detto nell'Unione Sovietica al riguardo e inoltre cercare di interpretarlo con una esatta visione critica. Negli scorsi anni gli architetti sovietici hanno cercato di elaborare un linguaggio architettonico capace di esprimere il nuovo sentimento dei paesi del socialismo e di celebrare la libertà del cittadino attraverso un'arte che esprimesse in maniera gloriosa la condizione dell'uomo nella società socialista. Un esempio classico che voi tutti conoscete, è quello della metropolitana di Mosca o dell'università, opera certamente criticabili da molti punti di vista, ma indubbiamente di originale e nuova concezione, aderenti cioè a quella impostazione nuova della vita dell'arte che è compito della cultura socialista. Significava tutto questo il rifiuto a considerare i problemi attuali dell'edilizia, della produzione industriale nella edilizia, delle condizioni moderne del costruire? No certamente. Le condizioni produttive sono una realtà obiettiva di cui ci si deve servire secondo modalità razionali ed economiche.

[...I believe it is our duty to conduct and sustain this debate in the broadest way to be able, in the first place to have a comprehensive understanding of what was said in regard to the Soviet Union, besides attempting to interpret it with a correct critical vision. In the past years, Soviet architects have tried to elaborate an architectural language able of expressing the new sentiment of the countries of Socialism and

what Khrushchev meant by asking architects to face their responsibilities.²⁰⁹ On the other hand, he believed that some architects had misinterpreted his message and associated socialist realist architecture with the obligation to renounce all types of modern techniques, as if their functionality would pollute traditional national sentiments. Hence, he felt the need for Italian architects to engage in an appropriate and unbiased discussion over this matter, in order to critically evaluate the Soviet experience and create the conditions for a national socialist architecture.²¹⁰

to celebrate the liberty of the citizen through an art that would express, gloriously, the conditions of man in a socialist society. A classical example that you all know is that of the Moscow's metropolitan system and the University, work certainly debatable from many points of views, but with no doubt of original and new conception, adhering, therefore, to that new formulation of the life of art within a socialist culture. Did this all mean a refusal to consider the actual problems of the building industry, of industrial production in the construction industry, of the modern conditions for building? Certainly not, the productive conditions are one objective reality which we must use according to their rational and economic modality.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Typescript Report of 11-20-1955, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²⁰⁹ “Ora sembra che molti architetti sovietici, e probabilmente solo alcuni di loro, hanno creduto di dover rinunciare a certi dati della moderna produzione nel campo dell’ industria edilizia, quasi questi potessero inquinare con aspetti ‘funzionalisti’ il sentimento tradizionale e nazionale della nuova architettura. Questa, mi sembra, é in sostanza la critica mossa da Krusciov, per quanto mi é dato di sapere, agli architetti sovietici. Si pongono cioè gli architetti di fronte alle loro precise responsabilità ricordando come il non voler considerare certi sviluppi tecnici, significa non poterli comprendere e, in ultima analisi, non cogliendo più la realtà nel suo insieme rifugiandosi ancora in una arte di evasione. Come tale errore di impostazione possa poi risolversi in un ritardo e in un’ azione spesso negativa nei riguardi dell’enorme lavoro che si compie oggi nell’Unione Sovietica anche nel campo dell’edilizia ha tenuto a sottolineare Krusciov.

[Now it seems that many Soviet architects, and probably only some of them, believed to have to renounce to certain aspects of modern production in the building industry, almost if these would pollute with functionalist aspects the traditional national sentiment of a new architecture. It seems this is substantially the critic moved by Krusciov, for what is known, towards Soviet architects. Therefore architects are posed before their actual responsibilities remembering how not to want to consider certain technical developments, meaning not to be able to understand and, in an ultimate analysis, not to grasp the whole reality by taking shelter, again, in an art of evasion. How such a mistake of formulation could then resolve itself in a delay and in an action often negative in regard to the massive work that is carried out today in the building industry of the Soviet Union, wanted to point out Krusciov.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Typescript Report of 11-20-1955, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹⁰ “Non é qui il caso di trattare ulteriormente questa questione che ci interessava porre solamente nei suoi aspetti generali, per quanto cioè essa può interessare il dibattito culturale nell’Unione Sovietica.

In 1955, Rossi proposed that the formulation of a “national realist architectural style” foremost required the disengagement from the European modernist experience. He found this disassociation was necessary given the modern movement’s negative connotations of humanism attributable to its origins in the hermeneutics of Heidegger, and its recent association with the image of corporate capitalism.²¹¹ On the other hand, he considered

Dibattito che sappiamo quanto sia vivace e capace di profondi sviluppi nel mondo della cultura socialista e che quindi ci auguriamo possa svolgersi senza conformismi anche da noi, e svilupparsi per quanto in particolare ci é di comune interesse. Perché questo possa avvenire chiediamo, in occasione del congresso, una documentazione iconografica esauriente, la pubblicazione completa, per quanto possibile, delle dichiarazioni più recenti al riguardo auspicando che dal seno stesso dell’associazione sorga l’impegno di suscitare un incontro tra gli architetti italiani, capace di discutere e impostare criticamente l’esperienza della architettura sovietica e più in generale la possibilità e le condizioni di una architettura socialista.”

[It is not here the case of further treating this argument that we were only interested in presenting generally, as such it can concern the cultural debate of the Soviet Union. A debate that we know how vivacious and able of broad developments it can be, in the world of socialist culture, and then we hope it can develop without conformism here as well. And to unravel what we have as common interest in regard. For this to happen we ask, in occasion of the congress, a comprehensive iconographic documentation, the publication, as complete as possible, of the most recent declarations in this regard, hoping that from the bosom of the association can spur the commitment to induce a meeting among Italian architects, able to critically organize the experience of Soviet architecture and more generally the possibility and the conditions of a socialist architecture.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Typescript Report of 11-20-1955, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹¹ “Compagni, io credo che su questi ultimi punti esista tra di noi una sostanziale concordanza di vedute, o che almeno sia importante raggiungerla, poiché solo una grande giustezza critica può darci l’avvio verso una azione profonda di rinnovamento culturale. Non credo poi sia possibile, almeno per ora, una uguale concordanza sugli elementi sicuramente positivi che ci appartengono, e sulla situazione presente dell’architettura in Europa e nel mondo, e sui suoi rapporti con la nostra situazione nazionale. Ricordo qui una bella citazione che Aynomino ha tratto da Gramsci: ‘Un carattere é nazionale quando é contemporaneo ad un livello mondiale (o europeo) di cultura che ha raggiunto questo livello.’ É possibile oggi indicare una esperienza europea in architettura a questo livello? É molto difficile, io credo, rispondere. Io credo che oggi non sia possibile considerare questo ‘livello’ studiare queste esperienze, se non considerandole nel loro insieme.”

[Comrades, I believe that on these last points exist among us a substantial agreement of views, or that at least it is important that one is reached. Since only a great critical truth can give us the push for a profound action of cultural renewal. I do not believe that it could be possible, at least for now, the same concordance on the elements, surely positive that belong to us, and on the present situation of architecture in Europe and in the world, and in its relationship with our national situation. I remember here a beautiful quote Aynomino took from Gramsci: ‘A character is national when it is contemporaneous on a worldwide level (or European) of a culture that has reached this same level.’ Is it possible to indicate a European experience in architecture at this level? I believe it is very difficult to answer to this. I believe, anyhow, that today it is not possible to consider this ‘level’ to study these experiences, if not to consider them in their whole.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto

some of the examples of Soviet realist architecture representative of a meaningful collective experience, achievable by revisiting grand themes at the foundation of national art that the Soviet realist style had embraced.²¹²

Rossi expressed the need to research the national events connected with the development of the neoclassical art and architecture of the period of the Italian *Risorgimento*. He proposed that the formulation of the neoclassical style characteristic of this national version of the Enlightenment was part of the territorial expansion of the European bourgeoisie as a new social class. Thus, uncovering the parameters under which the ideology and the artistic expression of this period had formed could help to explain the subsequent degeneration of the progressive politic of the Enlightenment.²¹³

di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹² “Per noi le esperienze compiute in questo campo nell’Unione Sovietica sono esperienze fondamentali dell’arte socialista e la complessa causalità e originalità di opere come l’Università di Mosca e la Metropolitana, io penso, vada oltre la sua immediata soluzione, per abbracciare un’ esperienza più vasta e comune. Non si tratta di voler applicare alla nostra cultura architettonica citazioni lontane e straniere: noi crediamo piuttosto che solo riproponendo e agitando quei grandi temi che sono stati il fondamento dell’arte nazionale e che il socialismo ha saputo e dovuto abbracciare, si possa uscire da un linguaggio che, partito da una negazione drammatica si é ormai ridotto a un triste e caotico squallore.”

[For us the experiences in this area of the Soviet Union are a fundamental experience of socialist art and the complex causality and originality of works such as the Moscow University and the Moscow underground. I believe it goes beyond its immediate solution, to embrace a wider and collective experience. It is not a matter of wanting to apply to our architectonic culture remote and estranged quotations. We rather believe that only by revisiting and shaking those grand themes that were the foundations of national art and that socialism was able, and was required to embrace. We can depart from a language that started from a dramatic negation and is now reduced to a sad and chaotic squalor.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹³ “Questo ci spinge per prima cosa allo studio sincero della nostra tradizione, quale essa é stata raccolta e quale si andava conformando nel nostro Risorgimento nazionale. Studiare come essa finisca per crollare nel cupo abisso del futurismo, proprio quando la borghesia rinuncia a una funzione progressista nel paese, quando all’interesse nazionale si sostituisce quello privato. In un suo nobile discorso Camillo Boito, dopo avere elencato gli edifici tipici delle società passate, primi fra tutti gli edifici dei liberi comuni, e i palazzi e le ville del Rinascimento, opere tutte in cui alta rivalse l’architettura italiana, si domanda quali

Therefore, according to Rossi, the architectonic solutions formulated in the nineteenth century transposed progressive ideas to particular national traditions and led architects to create a new realist art directed at solving real problems and transforming reality.²¹⁴ He

siano gli edifici tipici della società contemporanea e così conclude: ‘...ed oggi invece il tipo sta nella casa-nella casa da pigione-nella casa da speculazione. Non é egli un miracolo che molti di codesti casamenti, i quali giungono al massimo dell’altezza consentita dal regolamento edilizio e si dividono nel massimo numero di piani, alti il minimo possibile, e quando non siano quasi ignudi, sfoggino una decorazione destinata solo a rialzare il prezzo dei quartieri interni, solleticando la vanità o gli interessi degli inquilini e dei bottegai, non é egli un miracolo che molti siano davvero artistici e grandiosi? La verità quando si rinuncia alle grandi opere e ai grandi temi nazionali si assiste alla abdicazione più completa verso un mondo di forme che sembrano dettate più dal profitto che dall’economia, dalla speculazione più che dall’utile.’”

[This pushes us, on the first hand to honestly study our tradition, such as it was recollected and was conformed in our national Risorgimento. To study how it (tradition) ends up collapsing in the gloomy abyss of futurism when the bourgeoisie renounced to take a progressive role in the country’s politics. When to the national interest was substituted the private. In one of his noble speeches Camillo Boito, after quoting the typical buildings of past societies first, before all the buildings of the free communes (*Comuni*), and the palace and the villas of the Renaissance, works of high Italian architecture, asked himself which ones were the typical buildings of contemporary society and concluded: ‘Today the typology is in the home, in the rental home—in the speculative home. It is not a miracle that many of these apartment buildings, which at the most reach the height allowed by the building code and are divided into maximum number of floors, are almost naked, and flaunt decorations only destined to increase the price of the rental units, by tickling the vanity and the interest of the renters or of the shop owners. Isn’t it a miracle that many are actually artistic and grandiose? The truth is that when we renounce to great works, and to great national themes we witness the complete resignation towards a world of forms that seem dictated more by profit than by frugality, more by speculation than by need.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie*, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹⁴ “Secolo che in maniera assai drammatica si é cimentato su questi problemi, spesso risolvendoli, spesso lasciandoli incompiuti, mai evitandoli; che ha saputo creare una grande arte realista sostanzialmente sui problemi della realtà, rispecchiando, trasformata, la realtà. Come ci avverte uno di questi grandi artisti della realtà (Stendhal), guardiamoci però dall’attendere con eccessiva sicurezza a questo compito, o dal pretendere di chiudere la realtà in qualche schema ancora astratto, secondo quel male accademico che sempre rischia di colpire la grande arte realista, la grande arte politica e sociale. “L’arte é lo splendido frutto di una fermentazione generale e profonda nella vita di un popolo. Imitare con mezzi artificiali e attraverso gli effetti é fare dell’accademia.”

[A century that was dramatically cemented on these problems, finding solutions and often leaving them incomplete, but never avoiding them. That was able to generate a great realist art, substantiating it on the problems of reality, and reflecting this transformed reality. As one of the great artists of reality warns us (Stendhal): “Let’s not behave with excessive self-confidence and pretend to lock up reality in some abstract scheme, according to the academic disease that always threatens to affect the great realist art, the great political and social art. Art is the splendid fruit of a general and deep fermentation of the life of a population. To admire with superficial means the exterior signs under which this fermentation is hidden

suggested that the task of reformulating a similar type of national realist art required a reconciliation of the nation's cultural development with its proper heritage. This task included the avoidance of the autonomous application of Marxist-Leninism in favor of a more suitable interpretation of the materialist theory, remaining true to Gramsci's suggestion that "ideas are not born from other ideas, but are only the innate expression of the historical development of art."²¹⁵ Rossi mentioned that even Togliatti had proposed that "...the appearance of Marxism in Italian thought and culture is in response and provides the solution to problems that matured here as they did elsewhere, but here in specific forms, responding to the character, to the content, current, and to the ideal culture and tradition of the greatly tormented century that was the 1800s."²¹⁶ Thus, Rossi

and to wait for its effects is to do academia."—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l'istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955*, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹⁵ Handwritten notes: "Realism like a data spanning from ancient Greece to nineteen century, romanticism and baroque as popular art. All this can only witness for the difficult construction of a national realist (and populist) art, and for how much it is important a nonconformist critique especially careful at not falling in the mechanistic applications of Marxist-Leninism. I hope, to conclude that the current debate was able to trigger new reasons, new interests on how to deepen our critical appreciation of all the problems that the battle of ideas in the Soviet Union, not differently from the way our country, is subjecting us to. I, therefore, believe it is our duty to go back to problems that concern us closely, those of our country, and of our culture that we observe in the rest of Europe, especially in socialist countries, where the future society is in the making. And if we know how to reconcile every aspect of our cultural development for complex this can be in its real origin, only then we have an exact vision of the real evolution of events. "Ideas are not born from ideas, but are always the renewed expression of the real historical development." [Le idee non nascono dalle idee, ma sono l'espressione sempre rinnovata dello sviluppo storico del reale.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, *Turin Conference, 1955*, typescript report and speech, box 1, file 6, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹⁶ "Compagni, io mi auguro che dalle nostre stesse forze si sappia suscitare lo studio di questi temi, si voglia conoscere la nostra tradizione, e tentare per quanto ci sia possibile, di condurla innanzi. Che presto le polemiche dell'architettura ritornino ad essere polemiche culturali, che i nostri artisti non siano considerati dei tecnici e, peggio, dei tecnici chiusi in un linguaggio da setta, ma la loro opera torni a circolare nel discorso più vasto della nostra cultura o ne interpreti la ricca problematica. E la critica marxista sia la prima a interpretare, come essa deve fare per la sua stessa natura, i problemi nella loro complessa casualità, quali si ponevano e si pongono nel passato e nel presente. Diceva il compagno Togliatti: '...l'apparire del marxismo nel pensiero e nella cultura italiani é risposta o soluzione che doveva

claimed that “when the polemic of architecture will again turn into a polemic of culture, our artists will not be considered just mere technicians enclosed in a hermetic language for sects but will circulate in the larger cultural discourse, and the Marxist critique will be again used to interpret problems in their complex randomness.”²¹⁷

Rossi’s research on the development of nineteenth-century neoclassical art culminated in various articles published between 1956 and 1959. In the first article entitled *Il concetto di tradizione nella architettura neoclassica Milanese* (The concept of tradition in neoclassical Milanese architecture), Rossi discussed the way that neoclassical art and architecture had served the local bourgeoisie in their societal takeover and territorial expansion, overall exemplifying the Marxist’s process of social causation. Thus, Rossi explained that the bourgeoisie had mapped its presence on the urban realm of European cities with neoclassical art and architecture. The expression of this new art had accompanied their expansion over the whole European territory, articulating a new type

essere data a problemi che maturavano da noi come altrove ma da noi in forme particolari, rispondenti all’indole, al contenuto, alle correnti, alla tradizione ideale e culturale nostra in quel secolo grande ma tormentato che fu l’ottocento.”

[Comrades, I hope that from our own strength we are able to engage with the study of these themes. We want to get to know our traditions and try, for how much it is possible to us, to bring it forward. That soon the polemics on architecture will go back to be cultural polemics, and our artists will not be considered technicians, and worse, technicians enclosed in a hermeneutic language for sects, but their work will return to circulate in the larger discourse of our culture, or to interpret its rich problematic. And the Marxist critique will be the first to interpret, like it has to do for its own nature, problems in their complex randomness, such as they were posed and are posed in the past and present. Comrade Togliatti used to say “...the appearance of Marxism in the Italian thought and culture is in response and the solutions to problems that matured here as they did elsewhere, but here in specific forms, responding to the character, to the content, to the currents, to the ideal culture and tradition of that great tormented century that was the 1800.”—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti delle Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

²¹⁷ Aldo Rossi, Relazione tenuta al convegno degli architetti comunisti presso l’istituto di studi marxisti dell Frattocchie, Roma 7, 8, 9 Ottobre [October] 1955, typescript report, box 3, file 8, Aldo Rossi Papers, 1943-1999, 880319, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

of humanism and becoming the repository of the experience of the social, political, and economic conditions of the time.

Rossi was particularly interested in the relationship between neoclassical art and rationalist thought that made neoclassical architecture part of an evolutionary process that employed forms that communicated the history of society.²¹⁸ In this context, he proposed that the creation of architecture became an issue of historical ethic, maintaining this position until neoclassical art turned into “a trivial repetition of barren formalism,” in the beginning of the twentieth century.²¹⁹ He finally connected the crisis experienced by neoclassical architecture with the degeneration of this evolutionary process, which occurred when neoclassicism turned into a style that extracted ideas from the past according to a scholarly concept of tradition.²²⁰ Rossi explained that, in this way, neoclassicism expressed its own failure to become the manifestation of the encounter of life with art through the externalization of the real events that are part of the process of historical continuity.²²¹

²¹⁸ Aldo Rossi, “Il concetto di tradizione nella architettura neoclassica milanese,” *Società* 12, no. 3 (1956), 483.

²¹⁹ Rossi, “Il concetto di tradizione,” 14.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ “...anche il Milizia aiutava quella posizione controclassica che finiva per risolversi in una raggelata arte da cose morte, da tombe e da cimiteri, in cui la stessa potenza emotiva del tema sepolcrale, che l’arte neoclassica ha sempre altamente interpretato, diventa ripetizione banale di forme, arido formalismo. Da queste basi si svilupperà la crisi del pensiero architettonico, e si pretenderà di trarre da idee, da schemi astratti, magari da stili di forme passate, banalmente ripetute secondo uno scolastico concetto di tradizione, la vita stessa dell’arte: quella vita e quella forma dell’arte, che solo gli avvenimenti potevano e possono offrire, poiché, riprendendo la limpida formulazione di Gramsci, “le idee non nascono da altre idee, ma sono espressione sempre innata dello sviluppo storico dell’arte.”

[...even Milizia advocated that anti-classicism typically exemplified in the cold expression of dead object, of tombs and cemeteries, where the same emotional power of the theme of the burial, which

Rossi believed that the crisis of neoclassical architecture was closely related to the degeneration of the morality of bourgeois society, when their democratic aspirations were replaced with speculative interests.²²² He explained that this was the same type of crisis that was exemplified with the popularity of the contemporary rental apartment block for its potential to increase the profitability of investments by maximizing the buildable

neoclassical art has always interpreted, becomes trivial forms, arid formalism. On these basis the crisis of the architectonic thought will develop, and we will pretend to extract from ideas, abstract schemes, maybe from past styles, trivially repeated according to a concept of tradition, the life of art itself: the life and the art form that only real events could and can offer, since they renew the clear statement made by Gramsci, "ideas are not born from other ideas, but are the innate expression of the historic development of art.—Trans.] Rossi, "Il concetto di tradizione," 14.

"...si é cercato di mostrare che l' architettura neoclassica fú, nella sua linea principale di sviluppo, arte realistica, e cioè rappresentó in sintesi, nel suo aspetto tipico, la societá che la esprimeva; si é cercato di caratterizzare storicamente questo realismo, e da qui la possibilitá di separare in margine, aspetti non realistici a questi subordinati. Per l'architettura, nel periodo che vá dalla metá dell'ottocento alla nascita del movimento moderno, questo processo di giudizio vá ancora compiuto; essa, cioè, per un giudizio preciso e storicamente reale, ancora richiede di essere individuata appieno nelle sue caratteristiche storiche. Il giudicare, o magari scoprire, come oggi si tende a fare, gli architetti del nostro Risorgimento come casi felici nella generale miseria artistica..."

[...we attempted demonstrating that neoclassical architecture was realist art in its primary line of development. That it represented in synthesis a society that expressed it in its most typical aspects. We have attempted to characterize this realism, historically, and from here the opportunity of marginally separating nonrealist aspects. For architecture comprised between the middle 1800s to the birth of the modern movement, we still have to evaluate this aspect. Thus, it still requires being fully identified in its historical characteristics, to get a real historical evaluation, and to rediscover the architects of our *Risorgimento* as the cheerful examples of this artistic misery.—Trans.] Rossi, "Il concetto di tradizione," 22.

²²² "... resti il fatto che la crisi dell' architettura italiana corrisponde alla crisi della societá italiana e al contrasto sempre piú approfondito nel seno della gente dirigente, che, se da un lato, ancora accompagna il moto di progresso della societá e cerca di indirizzarlo, dall'altro si chiude in una politica in cui l'interesse privato soffoca le nuove aspirazioni democratiche. È significativo che gli architetti accompagnino la loro tendenza verso una grande architettura nazionale alla critica di una societá che si rivela incapace di esprimere o sostenere nuovi e validi contenuti." In un suo discorso sulla situazione dell'architettura italiana della sua epoca."

[...it remains the fact that the crisis of Italian architecture is related to the crisis of Italian society. It is within this contrast that it is more than ever deepened within the leaders, who, if from one side drive the progress of society and attempt directing it, on the other close themselves within a politics where private interests suppress all new democratic aspirations. It is meaningful that architects see the trend of a great national architecture, to criticize a society unable to express and sustain new and valid contents.—Trans.] Rossi, "Il concetto di tradizione," 22-23.

space and by using decorative elements to increase its market value.²²³ Rossi considered the peak development of Italian humanist architecture to have taken place between the eighteenth century and the unification of the country around 1871, corresponding with the time of the progressive activities that accompanied the expansion of the bourgeois. He believed that this new social class was able at the time to summarize and put into use all that was valid in national tradition. Thus, he wrote:

I think, in this sense, the interest in neoclassical architecture is valid, whose art was realist and populist, not because the population took part in it, but because it was the conscientious expression of a progressive movement of society, of a class in expansion that knew how to recollect under the push of events what was valid in tradition, and was able to represent this in typical and decisive terms. Therefore, with this meaning and within these limits its importance was not based on one lesson rather than on another, but rather in a predetermined content entirely represented in the nexus of practical issues of the reality of its time.²²⁴

²²³ “Camillo Boito, dopo aver elencato gli edifici tipici delle società passate, si domanda quali siano gli edifici tipici della società contemporanea, e così conclude: ‘ed oggi invece il tipo sta nella casa di pigione, nella casa di speculazione. Non é egli un miracolo che molti di codesti casamenti, i quali giungono al massimo dell’altezza consentita da regolamento edilizio, e si dividono nel massimo numero di piani alti il minimo possibile, e quando non siano ignudi sfoggiano una decorazione destinata solo a rialzare il prezzo dei quartieri interni, solleticando la vanità degli inquilini o dei bottegai; non é un miracolo che molti siano artistici e grandiosi?’”

[Camillo Boito, after inventorying the typical buildings of past societies, asked himself which could be the typical structures of contemporary society, and as such he concluded: ‘And today the type is in the rental home, in the speculative home. Isn’t it a miracle that many of those housing, which reach the maximum height allowed by building regulations, and are divided into the maximum number of floors of the minimum height, and when they are not naked they externalize a decoration destined only to increase the price of the internal units, tickling the vanity of the lodgers and of the shopkeepers, isn’t it a miracle that many are artistic and grandiose?—Trans.] Rossi, “Il concetto di tradizione,” 22-23.

²²⁴ “In questo senso, e non altrimenti, mi sembra lecito considerare chiuso lo svolgersi dell’architettura umanistica in Italia negli anni che vanno all’incirca dalla metà del secolo XVIII all’unità nazionale e penso che in questo senso sia valido l’interesse per l’architettura neoclassica. La quale fu arte realista e popolare, non perché il popolo vi partecipasse, ma perché fu espressione cosciente di un movimento progressista della società, di una classe in espansione, che seppe raccogliere sotto la spinta degli avvenimenti quanto la tradizione aveva in sé di valido e rappresentarlo in termini tipici e decisive. Con questo significato, ed entro questi limiti, la sua importanza non risiede quindi in una certa lezione piuttosto che in un’altra, ma nell’avere, respingendo un contenuto predeterminato, altamente rappresentato quel nesso di problemi pratici e ideali che costituivano la realtà del suo tempo.”

[In this sense, and not otherwise, I think right to consider closed the development of humanistic architecture in Italy in the years that run from the mid of the eighteenth century to the unification of the

In his 1957 article entitled *L'influenza del romanticismo Europeo nell'architettura di Alessandro Antonelli* (The influence of European romanticism in the architecture of Alessandro Antonelli), Rossi explored the transition from the romantic to the neoclassical style in the architecture of nineteenth-century engineer Alessandro Antonelli. Rossi discerned in Antonelli's most famous work, *Mole Antonelliana*, the making of a new type of architecture derived from the rationalization and execution of the ancient technique of the Roman domes with the modern methodology of metal framing.²²⁵ Rossi found that Antonelli's building exemplified the intersection of the baroque architectural style with

country. I think that in this sense the interest for neoclassical architecture is valid, which was art realist and populist, not because the population took part to it, but because it was the conscientious expression of a progressive movement of society, of a class in expansion that knew how to recollect under the push of events what was valid in tradition, and was able to represent it in typical and decisive terms. Thus, with this meaning and within these limits its importance was not based on a lesson other than in another, but rather in a predetermined content totally represented in the nexus of practical issues of the reality of its time.] Rossi, "Il concetto di tradizione," 23.

²²⁵ "Le cupole antonelliane sono fra le più grandi applicazioni di sistemi misti nei quali gli elementi elastici, telai, collegati da elementi trasversali, catene, tiranti, in modo di eliminare ogni azione di spinta, fanno sì che il piedritto riceva solo azioni di peso consentendo forti riduzioni di sezioni, o come ebbe a definirle più brevemente Chevalley: staticamente l'autore cercò di assimilare la costruzione laterizia a quella metallica."

[The 'Antonellian' copulas are among the largest application of mixed systems in which the flexible elements, frames, connect with transverse elements, chains, rods, in a way to eliminate all expansion, allow the abutment to only absorb the weight allowing reduction of sections, or as Chevalley briefly defined them statistically the author attempted integrating the lateral construction with the metallic structural system.—Trans.]

"Cerardini disse di Antonelli: A. Antonelli é nato in un brutto momento dell'arte; egli ha dovuto dibattersi tra due classi di esclusivisti; i classicisti e i medioevalisti, entrambi del pari tiranni e parassiti... per quanto vissuto in un tempo di confusione e di ibridismo anche in fatto di arte, spese tutta la vitalità sua attorno ai suoi edifici che, come tutte le opere degli iniziatori, sono incomplete ma che, unici nel nostro secolo, hanno in sé un midollo di convinzione e di fede."

[Cerardini said about Antonelli: A. Antonelli was born in a bad moment for art; he had to deal with two classes of exclusivists, the classicists and the medievalists, both equally tyrannical and parasitic...insofar as having lived in a time of confusion and of hybridism also in matters of art, he spent all his vitality around his buildings that, like all work of the initiators, are incomplete but which, unique of our century, pertain a core of belief and faith.—Trans.] Aldo Rossi, "Il romanticismo europeo nell'architettura di Antonelli," in *Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città 1956-1972* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), 41.

modern building technologies, originating the architectonic language precursor of constructivist and functionalist architecture.²²⁶ Rossi noticed that Antonelli's most remarkable talent was his ability to incorporate new technologies into classical and regional typologies without causing radical breaks in traditions, thereby synthesizing the essence of romanticism as a mean to understand the reality of its time.²²⁷

In 1958, Rossi discussed the relationship between ideology and the architecture of the French Enlightenment in the article entitled *Emil Kaufmann e l'architettura dell'illuminismo* (Emil Kaufmann and the architecture of the Enlightenment). In this article Rossi attempted to discern the most significant aspects of the revolutionary architecture formulated during this critical time of French history, such as the employment of innovative construction materials, "the sincere" character of the new

²²⁶ Rossi, "Il romanticismo europeo," 41.

²²⁷ "...se é quindi giusto affermare che l'Antonelli sentí i nuovi problemi dell'età moderna e questi cercó di rappresentare soprattutto nella originale architettura della Mole di Torino bisogna tener presente come egli reso radicato alla tradizione e ai costumi della sua epoca e del suo Piemonte. A un mondo quindi che egli sentí l'esigenza di condurre avanti senza però giungere ad alcuna violenta rottura."

[...if it is then right to affirm that Antonelli felt the new problems of the modern age and tried to portray them, especially with the original architecture of the *Mole* of Turin. We must take into consideration the way, he, deeply-rooted in the tradition and the customs of his time and of his dear Piedmont, to a world that he felt the need to bring forward without, however, making a violent rupture.—Trans.]

"...le suggestioni del romanticismo furono da lui accolte nei loro caratteri essenziali ed in modo del tutto degno di una grande personalità artistica quale egli era; non quindi come un dato scolastico, come una esperienza accademica da sostituire a quella neoclassica, ma come un mezzo valido per meglio comprendere la realtà del suo tempo."

[...the influence of romanticism was embraced by him in its essential character and in a way worthy of the great artistic personality he was, thus not as a scholarly form, an academic experience to substitute to the neoclassical, but as a valid mean to better understand the reality of his time.—Trans.] Rossi, "Il romanticismo europeo," 43-44.

buildings, and the shedding of excessive decorations.²²⁸ He emphasized the continuity and interconnection among the different currents of neoclassicism characterizing the work of individual architects, who, despite the rejection of past stylistic traditions often reused former architectonic elements.²²⁹ He proposed that the clarification of the ideology connected with this revolutionary architecture required an analysis of each architect's individual personality to develop essential stylistic guidelines.²³⁰ Thus, he explained that each personality had idealized the role of architecture differently.²³¹

French architect Claude Nicolas Ledoux, for example, practiced a type of socially

²²⁸ “Questo libro, egli scriveva, si avventura in un territorio inesplorato. Esso intende preparare un solido fondamento per lo studio dell’architettura del periodo che culmina nella Rivoluzione Francese. ‘... questi architetti (della rivoluzione) erano uomini che avevano assorbito i nuovi grandi ideali della cultura del loro tempo e che cercavano essi stessi, nella loro opera, più o meno consistentemente, di esprimere questi ideali. Nessun storico serio della rivoluzione Francese si chiuderà nell’analisi dei fatti e dei misfatti di quegli anni dalla distruzione della Bastiglia alla Restaurazione. Egli studierà piuttosto come il concetto dei diritti dell’uomo e del nuovo ordinamento (democratico) della società si sviluppa e si afferma nei decenni precedenti il 1789; come si diffondono le nuove idee preparando la via agli sviluppi futuri. Lo storico dell’arte, allo stesso modo, deve incaricare la crescita e lo svolgimento delle idee prima di giudicare i loro risultati.”

[This book, he wrote, ventures in an unexplored territory. It wants to prepare a solid foundation for the study of the architecture of the period that culminated with the French Revolution. ‘...these architects (of the revolution) were men that had absorbed the new great ideals of their culture and of their time and that were looking, themselves, with their work, more or less consistently, to express these ideals. No serious historian of the French Revolution will limit himself to the analysis of the facts and of the misdemeanors of those years, ranging from the destruction of the Bastille to the Restoration. He will study, on the other hand, how the concept of human rights and of the new ordinance (democratic) of society developed and affirmed itself in decades preceding 1789; and how the new ideas were diffused preparing the way to future development. The art historian, in the same way, must entrust the growth and the unwinding of ideas before judging their results.—Trans.] Emil Kaufmann, *Three Revolutionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu*, quoted in Aldo Rossi, “Emil Kaufmann e l’architettura dell’illuminismo,” in *Scritti scelti sull’architettura e la città 1956-1972* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), 56.

²²⁹ Rossi, “Emil Kaufmann,” 58.

²³⁰ Ibid., 59.

²³¹ These architects included: Claude Nicolas Ledoux, Jean-Jaques Lequeu, Etienne-Louis Boullée, John Soane, John Nash, and Giuseppe Valadier. Rossi, “Emil Kaufmann,” 59.

oriented architecture aimed at ordering and reconstructing society.²³² The architecture of British architect John Soane, on the other hand, was not socially oriented but rather incorporated an unpredictable use of classical motifs in formal interventions.²³³ Each one of these architects employed antiquity for different objectives. Ledoux used it in a revolutionary manner, opting towards the elementary reconstruction of the form (geometric themes and structures) to confer architectonic elements with new meanings. Soane employed antiquity for its revivalist function, which was achieved with formal variations operationalized through a large selection of styles. In the end, all of these architects fulfilled the role of mediators between architecture and society, even if their work brought back the occasional baroque and romantic theme. Rossi explained that the architecture of this period relied mainly on the formulation of new meanings for new building uses, on establishing deeper connections through the composition of architectonic forms, and on the theatricality of baroque art.²³⁴

Rossi proposed that the work of the French architects exemplified the different phases of Enlightenment architecture spanning from the time of the French revolution to that of the restoration, constituting a tangible example of its innovative spirit. Each one of these revolutionary architects—Jacques-Francois Blondel, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, and Jean-Nicolas-Luis Durand—introduced different innovations to the architecture of this period. Blondel was the first to employ the idea of the purity and autonomy of forms. In contrast,

²³² Rossi, “Emil Kaufmann,” 59.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid., 62-63.

Ledoux used simple geometric forms that were synonymous with egalitarianism, externalizing issues of social and political nature. Durand, on the other hand, used the same geometric forms to formulate the basic notions that underline and summarize all humanist architecture at the bases of modern buildings.²³⁵ As a whole, these innovations constituted the *vrais* principles of French rationalist architecture, communicating in a logical manner the needs of man in modern society.²³⁶ In time, however, the revolutionary content of these forms was lost as the *vrais* principles were normalized as elements of modern culture.²³⁷ Beauty was itself posed as the final objective in works that synthesized, without transcending, the aspirations and needs of humanity. It allowed the architecture of “the time of reason” to acquire its own equilibrium and an intimate naturalism, diffusing it, accompanying the growth of the modern city, and leaving its mark on the great European capitals.²³⁸ Architecture was at the nucleus of modern culture during the years of the Enlightenment, allowing a critique over the renewal of traditions. France was the European country most engaged in innovative schemes in terms of architecture and urban design and became the place where the neoclassical tradition reached its highest degree of perfection. In contrast, in England, neoclassicism was promoted mainly by bourgeois culture, while, in Italy, it was the work of such personalities as Giuseppe Valadier and was expressed by the regional and local currents

²³⁵ Ibid., 63.

²³⁶ Ibid., 64.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

of the *Trattatisti*, and of the neoclassical culture of Milan. During this time, Italian national architecture reached a level of quality never to be repeated in modern times, though the development of modern culture was brutally interrupted during the years of fascism, which ultimately changed the meaning of modern architecture.

In 1958, Rossi wrote another article entitled *Una critica che respingiamo* (A critique that we reject), in which he carefully observed the relationship between architecture and society during the period of the Nazi takeover of Europe. In this article, he specifically undertook an investigation of the way the ideologies of the Enlightenment translated into architecture, and of the conditions that caused the decadence and alienation of the modern movement.²³⁹ Rossi interpreted the search for purity at the foundations of modern art as a negative concept that ultimately led to the idealization of the absence of all extraneous elements. According to him, this search for purity also ultimately led to the romantic critic of autonomous art and to the critics' condemnation of the Enlightenment as the period of the hermeneutic expression of the modern man.²⁴⁰

Rossi found that the very basis of the crisis of modernity rested on the way the bourgeoisie had devalued the historical process at the emergence of modern art. Thus, bourgeois society had chosen to represent itself according to the image of egalitarianism and the progress of this new artistic expression, reinterpreting the role of the social classes in the French Revolution.²⁴¹ This progressive image became the ideological node

²³⁹ Aldo Rossi, "Una critica che respingiamo," in *Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città 1956-1972* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), 45.

²⁴⁰ Rossi, "Una critica che respingiamo," 46.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

for all currents associated with modern art, extrapolating to architecture at the turn of the nineteenth century. Consequently, neoclassical architecture became synonymous with the philosophies of the Enlightenment and ended up paving the road for the European expansion of the bourgeoisie as a new social class.²⁴²

Rossi explained the new phenomenon that took place in the making of the artistic expression of this period. He noted that Enlightenment art was not generated from society's superstructure but was rather formulated by the bourgeoisie to accompany and support their territorial expansion as a new social class.²⁴³ The neoclassical humanist architecture of the Enlightenment was the first manifestation of the new modern culture that spread throughout Europe supporting the ideal of the modern city and becoming an essential constituent of its progressive movements.²⁴⁴ In a short time, this new architecture characterized the built environment of most European cities, and the art of the Enlightenment became the constant variable at the basis of any form of expression of this modern society.²⁴⁵

Rossi claimed that there was a fundamental distinction between modern art's original meaning and its recent association with Heidegger's anti-humanist philosophies. This distinction was expressed with the repudiation of the progressive content of modern art

²⁴² Ibid., 48.

²⁴³ Ibid., 49.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 48-49.

on the behalf of artistic currents associated with surrealism.²⁴⁶ Thus, Rossi explained, modern art's progressive content was exemplified by its association with the bourgeois socialism of the Weimar Republic during the interwar period.²⁴⁷ This alliance between modern art and the democratic socialist government, however, was broken by the progression of Nazism, which lead to the annihilation of modern art's original meaning and the beginning of its reactionary theory.²⁴⁸ He also claimed that the philosophies associated with this new critique of modernity derived from the encounter of a branch of Hegelian thought with a Nietzschean polemic, aligning along the critique of the *Massenkultur* of "an art detached from man and reduced to an element of consumption in

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 50.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 51.

²⁴⁸ "Proprio a Vienna, in questa città così significativa per la storia dell'Europa moderna, un artista come Otto Wagner aveva denunciato, tra lo scandalo della classe dirigente asburgica, che proprio la Heimat-Kunst, legata al motivo della Ursprung tedesca, avrebbe significato la fine, o come si esprimeva, il crollo dell'arte."

[Particularly in Vienna, in this city so significant to the history of modern Europe, an artist like Otto Wagner had denounced, with the scandal of Habsburg ruling class that the Heimat-Kunst, tied to the motives of the German Ursprung, could have meant the end, or has he expressed it, the collapse of art.—Trans.] Rossi, "Una critica che respingiamo," 52.

"Per quanto riguarda poi lo scioglimento dell'alleanza tra arte moderna e potenze social-rivoluzionarie, secondo le sue parole, si doveva, a mio parere, accennare al problema, dal momento che lo si é posto, in U.R.S.S. Si tratta evidentemente di un problema assai complesso ammesso che non lo si voglia ridurre artificiosamente entro i confini generici di uno Stalinismo di maniera. Esso rappresenterà piuttosto, e recenti opere sull'argomento hanno solo sfiorato il problema, una insufficienza del socialismo, per lo meno in un certo momento del suo sviluppo, a comprendere i molti e complessi motivi che stanno alla base della cultura moderna."

[For what concerned the dissolution of the alliance between modern art and the social revolutionary powers according to its own words, we had, in my opinion, outlined the problem, from the moment that we posed it in the URSS. It evidently consists of quite a complex problem, given that we want to contain it artificially within the generic boundaries of a Stalinist mannerism. It will rather represent, and recent work on the argument has only skimmed the issue, a deficiency of socialism, at least at a certain point of its development, to understand the many complex motives that are at the basis of modern culture.—Trans.] Rossi, "Una critica che respingiamo," 53.

its most commercial sense.”²⁴⁹ Hence, this criticism ultimately offered no alternative but the negation of modern culture, reinterpreted by Rossi as the crisis associated with the corruption of the ideologies of the Enlightenment.²⁵⁰

Architecture in the Post-Stalinist Era

The change in direction of the national approach to architecture in the Soviet Union was finalized during the 1958 conference of the International Union of Architects (UIA) held in Moscow that addressed the topic of postwar reconstruction and publicly dismissed the use of false classicism.²⁵¹ Subsequently, the passing of the older generation of architects encouraged the making of technological modernism into the new stylistic convention.²⁵² The new rooting of architecture in scientific expertise led to the formulation of an architectural vocabulary suited to the fast-paced construction of new housing units, which adopted the linguistic and graphics of city planners and engineers and made the “grid” into the new favorite urban model.²⁵³ The new direction of architecture in the post-Stalinist period also shifted the training objective of Soviet

²⁴⁹ “In sostanza il motivo di dissenso decisivo é ancora questo: che questo tipo di critica non indica una prospettiva di sviluppo, un’alternativa nella cultura moderna, e si pone come negazione nella cultura moderna.”

[In substance the decisive motive of dissent is still this: That this type of critique does not indicate a perspective of development, an alternative to modern culture, and it poses itself as a negation of modern culture.—Trans.] Rossi, “Una critica che respingiamo,” 55.

²⁵⁰ Rossi, “Una critica che respingiamo,” 45-51.

²⁵¹ Zobovich-Eady, “To the New Shore,” 18.

²⁵² Ibid., 26.

²⁵³ Ibid., 25.

architects from a process conceiving of composition in terms of style and symbolism to one concentrating on the abstraction of economic efficiency.²⁵⁴

The position Soviet architects took on historicism, however, was not always so categorically inclined towards standardization. Architect Iurii Iaralov, for example, responded to a younger professional, Georgii Gradov's critique of history by proposing that, the fact that socialist architecture was to take a scientific approach did not "eliminate ...[the] task of an architecture that was national in form [and] socialist in content."²⁵⁵ Hence, Iaralov reasoned according to a materialist logic proposing that the historical development of national culture had caused the loss of some of its prominent characteristics while favoring the evolution of others. For example, he argued that while the social differences of the former class system had been erased by the socialist regime, other elements of national culture such as folk art and conditions tied to the geographic territory had persisted in the Soviet Union. These elements, according to Iaralov, contributed to the peculiarities of national forms, which he found were, unlike neoclassicism, a necessary element of socialist style. Thus, he believed elements of national heritage had the potential to provide modern architects with the tools for creating a new Soviet architecture.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 23.

²⁵⁵ In October 1955, Iaralov had responded to Gradov's critique of history with what he deemed the direction new socialist architecture should take. He stated that the standardization of design did not eliminate the task of creating an architecture that was "national in form, socialist in content." National traditions according to Iaralov should not be mined simply for forms, but for the progressive elements inherent in each culture." Zobovich-Eady, "To the New Shore," 22-23.

²⁵⁶ Iaralov used the logic of historical development and asserted that as national cultures mature, some of the characteristics died off while others flourished and progressed. He argued that "under the socialist system, equal conditions of development gradually erase the difference in life and culture of the

In 1959 Rossi wrote an article on the Greek Order (*l'ordine Greco*), connecting these different approaches to architecture with a logic of the classical Greek world that aligned art and science under the banner of technique. This logic, according to Rossi, reflected on the constructed rationality of the architectural language of the Greek Doric temple, especially in the way its meaning and principles were internalized by later generations. He found the essential elements of this process expressed in the temple's spatial autonomy, representative of the spirit of its era, and in the symbiosis of its architectural forms. Rossi, in order to establish which elements of the temple's beauty escaped formal analysis, examined a text by Grenoble Arthaud and Francois Cali discussing its symbolic role in the context of the archaic order of Greek society. Rossi concluded that the temple's self-representation was the main reason behind its alleged perfection, as well as of its evocation of the tension between knowledge and the unknown.²⁵⁷ Thus, he explained, art in ancient Greece was referred to as a "technique" when its highest level of development was reached, and only then did it become invested with the role of "knowledge" and production.²⁵⁸ He mentioned that Mies Van Der Rohe had also supported a similar concept by expressing a hope for architecture and technology to develop along similar parameters, and to ultimately become the expression of one

people of the USSR. But on the other hand, the objective conditions of existence (landscape, climate, construction materials) and the uniqueness of the various elements of culture and the arts contribute to the preservation of national peculiarities. At the hearth of Irailov's position was the claim that national form, unlike neoclassicism, was a necessary element of socialist style. When used by the modern architect, he argued, national heritage could be a powerful means for creating the new Soviet architecture the profession hoped to achieve. Zobovich-Eady, "To the New Shore," 22-23.

²⁵⁷ Aldo Rossi, "L'ordine greco," in *Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città 1956-1972* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), 67.

²⁵⁸ Rossi, "L'ordine greco," 69.

another.²⁵⁹ Rossi, however, concluded that this understanding of art was transcended by the Platonic discourse brought forward with the metaphysical vision of the temple's geometrical and mathematical relationships, in time leading to the loss of the real meaning of its beauty.²⁶⁰ He explained that the Platonic discourse had become the basis for the abstract relationship of mathematical formulas used to translate the temple's alleged perfection, originating both a scholarly concept and the theological notion of beauty.²⁶¹ He mentioned that by contrast, contemporary political critic Xenophanes had explained the beauty of the Greek temple not to exist outside of reason, in the same way man's thought cannot exist outside of the thinking man. It was for this reason that the early Renaissance architect and theoretician Leon Battista Alberti considered the classical experience not to be a random notion of aesthetics but rather to have the same norm of a life's model. Furthermore, Rossi recalled that Francois Cali sustained the interpretation of the temple to be distorted because of the improper translation of Greek terminologies. Thus, the Italian concept of symmetry corresponded to the Greeks' notions of analogy and proportion, resulting in the embracement by the Latin world of this idea as a composite (*apta membrorum composito*) of juxtaposed anomalies rather than analogies. Therefore, the Latin translation expresses a concept of the Greek Doric temple different

²⁵⁹ "...our hope is that they (architecture and technology) grow together, to one day the one become the expression of the other." Rossi, "L'ordine greco," 69.

²⁶⁰ Rossi wrote that Pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Anaxagoras and social and political critic Xenophanes best explained the Platonic abstraction of the Doric temple. Xenophanes narrated that the god, mobile and free, represents man's thought, and like man's, though does not exist for himself outside of the thinking man. In such a way, the beauty of the temple cannot exist outside of reason, of his existence as a temple. Rossi, "L'ordine greco," 69.

²⁶¹ . Rossi, "L'ordine greco," 70.

from its original meaning, while Vitruvius's discovery of errors in the computation of its measurements also questioned its perfection.²⁶²

Francois Cali insisted that the technique of the Greek temple was used to establish the essence of technique in architecture. Thus, according to him, the "classic academia always looked for a universal law to transcend Greek architecture with a numeric formula, and in the attempt at reproducing this formula lost itself in a dead end schematic construction."²⁶³ According to Rossi, this was the precise moment at which art became a science. It corresponded with the time when the classic academia formulated a universal law to transcend Greek architecture. This universal law consisted of numeric formulas that sought to reproduce a dead-end schematic construction.

Rossi claimed that the study of Greek architecture in itself has no meaning, because according to the ancient Greeks, art belongs to the wider world of knowledge. Therefore, for them, the expression of art was part of the logical world of words, of the speech, rather than of the images. He explained that, in this sense, it is logical to talk about the rationality of Greek monuments, since rationality is constructed within relationships that are constantly renewed and that often produce new techniques.²⁶⁴

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ "Questa non potrà mai essere compresa come astratta speculazione o come mera strumentalità. L'accademia classica cercherà invece proprio in una legge universale che trascende l'architettura greca nella sua realtà una certa disposizione numerica nel tentativo di riprodurre questa disposizione si perderà in una costruzione schematica senza uscita. In particolare, in questo caso più che mai, studiare di per sé l'architettura greca non ha alcun significato. Noi sappiamo che presso i greci l'arte apparteneva al più vasto mondo della conoscenza; la tendenza all'arte faceva parte della tendenza verso il mondo logico della parola, del discorso, piuttosto che verso quello delle immagini. In questo senso quindi conviene parlare della razionalità di quei monumenti, poiché la razionalità si costruisce nei suoi rapporti, essa si rinnova continuamente e da luogo a tecniche sempre nuove."

Rossi proposed that the research for a new architectural style had to entail a progressive reading of monuments allowing consideration of the role of history and the technical aspect of construction. He considered fundamental the undertaking of a critical analysis of the style's role in communicating certain values and of the way in which these values were likely interpreted by other cultures.²⁶⁵ Rossi considered the experience of the Soviet Union to be significant for the process leading to the formulation of this new architectural style and not for the actual form that the style was to take. Thus, he believed that the form of this new style had to be the unique expression of a particular nation's culture and subjected to the societal changes affecting its country of origins.

In the late 1950s, the urban landscape of the Soviet Union acquired a great deal of standardization following the massive building of identical housing units to form micro-districts in areas outside most Soviet cities, drastically contrasting with traditional imperial structures and Stalinist neoclassical architecture.²⁶⁶ The adoption of new technologies brought about the popularity of the "superblock," a residential structure that

[This will never be understood as an abstract speculation or as a mere instrumentality. The classic academia will look instead for an universal law that transcends Greek architecture in its reality with a certain numerical disposition. In the attempt at reproducing this disposition it will lose itself in a schematic construction with no end. In particular, in this case more than ever, to study Greek architecture has in itself no meaning. We know that among the Greeks art belong to the vast world of knowledge; the trends of art belonged to the logical trends of the spoken word, of speech, rather than to that of images. In this sense it is worth of the rationality of those monuments, because rationality is constructed in its relationship, it constantly renews itself and give place to always new techniques.—Trans.] Rossi, "L'ordine greco," 70-71.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 70.

²⁶⁶ Zobovich-Eady, "To the New Shore," 23.

became a cliché for many European countries in search of pragmatic solutions to the postwar housing shortage.²⁶⁷

In Italy, the studies connected with the Ina-casa plan continued into the decade of the 1960s, allowing a full development of theories on urban morphology. These studies developed elements of Muratori's methodology, such as the interpretation of traces from historical architecture to identify the structural nexus and gradual temporal development of cities. Thus, according to Muratori's methodology, a city could be considered unified in his conception, yet infinitely plural in its phenomenological manifestation, and its histories and identities could be interpreted as the expression of the different civilizations that inhabited it.²⁶⁸ The nexus of a city, according to Muratori, combined analysis with synthesis and interpretation with design, over time allowing its structures to become the bearers of its social, economic, and cultural life.²⁶⁹ In this respect, urban morphology became the expression of all associated urban life, as well as the constant variable for cross-referencing the "particular" and the "universal," with the "individual" and the "civitas."²⁷⁰ In the decade of the 1960s, urban morphology became the instrument over which the Italian school of urban design was funded, and constituted the basis of Aldo Rossi's theory.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁶⁸ Maretto, "Saverio Muratori," 30-34.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 34.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

Chapter Three

Aldo Rossi and the Urban Project in Italy 1960-1966: The Birth of a New Theory of City Morphology

This chapter discusses Aldo Rossi's involvement with the urban research undertaken at the study center of the magazine *Casabella Continuità*, as well as the events that contributed to the development of his theory and the publication of his book *The Architecture of the City* in 1966.

The 1960s brought more changes to the social and political landscape of the country. All of the research associated with the Ina-casa plan of the previous decade ended in 1963 with the completion of the second term of the program. The political nature that these studies had assumed ultimately caused the departure of Ernesto Nathan Rogers from the magazine *Casabella Continuità* in 1964, marking the end of the study center and of all the research it had supported. Overall, the plan Ina-casa had enabled the Christian Democratic Party and the Italian Communist Party to monopolize the national real estate market, causing the everlasting “politics of the home” to be ostracized from the foundation of the Italian political system.²⁷¹ A big step in support of these politics was the successful enactment of a strategy based on the constructed argument of the “ideology of the crisis,” derived from the body of concepts forming the basis of several plans for national recovery. Thus, the “ideology of the crisis” acted through the promotion of a structure acutely sensitive to the centralization and reinvestment of unproductive income (savings) into capital for public expenditure. It also gave the “party

²⁷¹ Sergio Bologna, “The Tribe of Moles,” in *Italy: Autonomia – Post-Political Politics*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer, Christian Marazzi, and Edward Goodman, Semiotext (e). Intervention Series 1. (New York: Capital City Press, 1980), 42.

system” a new power over the shaping of public consciousness that was no longer limited to the “production of social classes,” but that now targeted the establishment of a new class cohesion conditioned by the threat of lingering economic and political crisis.²⁷²

On the political front, the death of PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti in 1964 caused a profound change in the philosophical undertaking, as well as in the internal organization of the Italian Communist Party, beginning its transition away from Stalinist cultural models and ultimately to the embrace of philosophies of Eurocommunism. In the same year, a shift in the political domain was asserted with the stipulation of an alliance between the Christian Democrats (DC) and the Socialist Party (PSI), becoming a precursor of the initial phase of the Historic Compromise (*Compromesso Storico*).

Although this coalition was partly a bid for the centrist politics of the DC to gain national attention, the stipulation of the Historic Compromise also aimed at establishing an alliance to cope with the economic recession of 1964 by introducing new programs of economic development with the nationalization of corporations operating in the electrical and chemical sectors.²⁷³ Although weakened by the new coalition, the Italian Communist Party maintained a strong political presence in the industrialized areas of Northern Italy, Emilia Romagna, and Tuscany, as well as in a few neighborhoods in Naples.²⁷⁴ The party did, however, drastically change direction upon Togliatti’s death, ultimately

²⁷² Bologna, “The Tribe of Moles,” 43.

²⁷³ Ibid., 38.

²⁷⁴ Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, “The Return of Politics,” in *Italy: Autonomia – Post-Political Politics*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer, Christian Marazzi, and Edward Goodman, Semiotext (e). Intervention Series 1. (New York: Capital City Press, 1980), 17; Henri Weber, “In the Beginning was Gramsci,” in *Italy: Autonomia – Post-Political Politics*, Sylvere Lotringer, Christian Marazzi, and Edward Goodman, Semiotext (e). Intervention Series 1. (New York: Capital City Press, 1980), 88.

detaching from philosophies of Stalinist communism and delegating all working-class affairs to the trade unions alone.²⁷⁵

The estrangement of the PCI from negotiations of the proletariat led to the formation of extra-parliamentary groups, starting a new phase of internal politics that tremendously weighed on Italian society for years to come. These independent political groups operated outside of the formal parliamentary system and identified themselves as a wider movement of *autonomia operaia* or *autonomismo* (proletarian autonomism or autonomism). Autonomism initially consisted of an organized effort to politicize the proletarian struggle that was originally backed by the Communist Party and founded its guiding ideology on a type of Marxism at work in other European countries, which largely drew inspiration from the French Situationists and the American Labourists. The movement, however, took a highly utopian, anti-authoritarian turn by formulating its own theoretical system out of proletarian communism (*Operaismo*), and providing “an edge” to leftist politics by targeting issues such as the country’s social diversity and the unbalanced development between the North and the South.²⁷⁶ By 1965, Autonomism had crystallized at the national level as a form of collective action, comprising independent regional organizations and a multitude of theoreticians who communicated through a system of free press. It was composed of various independent regional units that relied on cooperation among social groups such as the proletariat and the student bodies, and

²⁷⁵ Bologna, “The Tribe of Moles,” 38; Lotringer and Marazzi, “The Return of Politics,” 17.

²⁷⁶ Lotringer and Marazzi, “The Return of Politics,” 8-17.

connected with similar movements active at the international level.²⁷⁷ In the late 1960s, several autonomous groups became involved in an intricate class struggle, culminating in the first students' revolt of 1968 that finally led to the movement's dissolution in the late 1970s. Autonomism, however, did continue as a cultural current and produced homegrown theoreticians that, in time, embraced the postmodern critique of labor and capital, drawing from and often reformulating the reactionary ideas of Guy Debord, Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari.

The interaction of extra-parliamentary groups in national politics ultimately exacerbated the existing friction between parliamentary polarities and became the main point of leverage in the strategy of "tension," which was considered an attempt of the state to sabotage autonomist politics.²⁷⁸ The culmination of the activities of these autonomous groups also coincided with the social breakdown of the "years of lead" (*anni di piombo*), consisting of the period spanning from the late 1960s to the 1980s, named after the sociopolitical "heaviness" of those years. Ultimately, the "years of lead" caused a considerably high level of social unrest at the continental level, culminating in Italy with the populist revolts and climate of latent civil war of the late 1960s and 1970s.

²⁷⁷ Mario Tronti, Toni Negri, Sergio Bologna, Franco Piperno, Oreste Scalzone, and Valerio Morucci were active members of *Potere Operaio*. Lotringer and Marazzi, "The Return of Politics," 9.

²⁷⁸ The strategy of tension began during the main phase of the struggle, lasting from 1969 to the oil crisis of 1974. According to Sergio Bologna, this strategy implied the use of secret services, clandestine proto-fascist activity backed by the state, with considerable use of fascist personnel. During the first phase, the party system was still divided in sharp oppositions between an executive, mobilizing the clandestine levels of the State (from the secret services to the Magistracy) and an opposition reviving the democratic values and traditions of the anti-fascist resistance. The strategy of tension lasted from the bombing of Piazza Fontana (Milan December 1969) to the elections of June 1979. Bologna, "The Tribe of Moles," 45.

The Making of the Public City

The model of the “public city” (*la città pubblica*) was officially introduced by Law no.43 and the Ina-casa plan of 1949. This new civic model involved the deployment of programs for public-private partnership especially formulated for the reconstruction of the country, leading in time to a complete transformation of Italian society. This period also witnessed the implementation of the most consistent production of subsidized housing and large areas of public space the country was ever to experience. It finally culminated with the introduction of law 167 in 1962 that officially made the building industry for the masses into a new sector of the national economy.

Throughout the first half of the 1960s, the studies inspired by Muratori’s theory of urban morphology played a fundamental role in the making of the public city. Muratori focused his planning methodology on the interpretation of the structural substance of places and societies, as well as on the logic behind the morphology of the territory. He considered the concept of urban morphology to be the essential expression of urban life, comprising continuous cross-referencing between the particular and the universal and between the individual and the “cività.”²⁷⁹ Thus, according to Muratori, the city was unified at its inception, but also plural and phenomenological in its manifestations, with histories and identities consistent with the way the territory was interpreted by its former inhabitants.

Muratori believed these latent “identities and histories” to be the underlying substrate of any urban center, manifesting as traces laden with semantic value to testify to the

²⁷⁹ Mareto, “Saverio Muratori,” 34.

activities of previous generations. These traces, according to him, exist independently from formal design and point directly to the structural substance of places, following a logic that regards each urban center as an individual layer of the existing territory.²⁸⁰

Muratori explained urban morphology as a discipline especially concerned with the interpretation of these traces, allowing the identification of the structural nexus at the foundation of the gradual temporal development of a city. Thus, he considered cities to be the bearers over time of many social, economic, and cultural structures, formed according to a dynamic temporal process. He explained that this structural consciousness of the past was reflected in different textures of urban fabric, constituting a visible outcome from different types of economic, social, cultural, and political situations. Muratori believed the different textures of urban fabric to be understandable through the study of their semantic content. According to him, these underlying structures could guide the planning of new models of housing quarters and neighborhoods, often to the point of conditioning the planning of a city's future.

By the time the Ina-casa plan ended in 1963, the Institute INA was considered to have contributed the most to improving the living conditions of Italian families. It had provided access to real estate ownership through the amortization of the cost of the home, giving tenants the opportunity to purchase their living spaces. It had also played a significant role in the revamping of the national economy by instilling a spirit of solidarity, exemplified by the participatory working equilibrium instrumental to the implementation of the nation's recovery and reconstruction. The whole experience of the

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 30-34.

Ina-casa plan ultimately marked the beginning of a public-private partnership designed to manage the collective welfare and economic growth of the country, to ease the pressure on the public budget, and to create a new national market for insurance services by valorizing the branding of INA Assitalia.²⁸¹

The main outcome of the Ina-casa plan had been a new urban design approach to deal with the contemporary city based on public-private partnerships. In time, the plan became an exemplary economic model founded on cooperation, deriving from a variety of theories and techniques that allowed redefining physical space and the economics of the social realm.²⁸² Most importantly, the plan enabled the production of public infrastructures according to a logic no longer regulated by demand and offer, but rather adjusted according to the nation's collective needs. Thus, the Ina-casa plan often required city plans to align with the constant readjustment of the value of public goods, and urban design to become part of the grand plan for social and economic politics associated with the action of reformers responsible for the formation and development of the social state.²⁸³ In this context, urban designers expressed their conviction regarding the role of public goods in determining both the urban form and the morphology of different areas of the territory, as well as the potential of architectural typology to be a product of common collective interest.²⁸⁴ Law no.60, named "Clearance sale of housing

²⁸¹ Pocaccini, "L'Ina contribuisce alla ricostruzione dell' Italia," 79-82.

²⁸² Di Biagi, *La grande ricostruzione*, 4.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 6.

produced under the management of Ina-casa,” concluded the public housing program in 1963, offering tenants the option to purchase their home. Upon its lapse, the Ina-casa plan was ultimately replaced by the Plan Gèscal and Law 167 for the production of public housing and planning social architecture.²⁸⁵

However, the experimental nature of these planning programs led to results that were not always entirely satisfactory. Neighborhoods constructed during the early years of the Ina-casa plan often became areas of social and urban decay and succumbed to the debilitating conditions of the “problem of the suburbs,” which became a common issue for suburban areas throughout the 1960s. Mario Ferrari and Paola Di Biagi determined that this condition arose from a lack of urban integration of residential developments built at the beginning of the undertaking of the Ina-casa plan, which led in time to the social segregation of some neighborhoods.

The Final Years of the Study Center at Casabella Continuità and the New Dimension (*Nuova Dimensione*)

In 1964, just a year after the completion of the second term of the Ina-casa plan, Ernesto Nathan Rogers resigned from the position of editor at *Casabella Continuità*, ultimately contributing to the dissolution of the study center at the publishing house.²⁸⁶ The closure of the study center was a significant setback for the outlook of the architectural discipline, causing the discontinuation of all urban research started during the previous decade. The study center had operated throughout the 1950s and for the first

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁸⁶ Chiara Spangaro, “Biografia,” Fondazione Aldo Rossi, Milano, <http://www.fondazionealdorossi.org/home/1254-2/> (accessed March 8, 2017).

half of the 1960s, becoming indispensable to the emergence and growth of the new specialization of urbanist-architect and contributing to the new dynamic destined to shape a whole new brand of professionals.²⁸⁷ Above all, it had assumed a pivotal role in the conceptualization of new theories of urban morphology by supplying the physical space to conduct the collective research that led to the publication of the first edition of Aldo Rossi's book *The Architecture of the City*.

The initial framework of Rossi's theory was articulated during the last five years of the center's existence, along with the research for a program on the "peripheral sector" conducted between 1960 and 1963. The findings from these studies on the peripheral sector were subsequently used to develop the conceptual framework for the project of urban revitalization of Zona Farini in Milan, and for the directional center Locomotiva² in Turin.²⁸⁸ The research on the "peripheral sector" had primarily originated in response to the degeneration of the living conditions in the suburbs, targeting issues arising from the speculative nature of some of the new housing blocks, as well as the failure of these suburban areas to integrate with the surrounding city fabric. It initiated the search for alternative methodologies to increase livability and integration, comprising an investigation of their social qualities and an evaluation of the methodology used for their planning.²⁸⁹ These studies resulted in the formulation of an experimental urban design

²⁸⁷ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 63.

²⁸⁸ Rossi participated in the research programs with colleagues Piero Cosulich, Giancarlo Melchiodi, Carlo Melograni, Gian Ugo Polosello, Francesco Tentori, and Guido Veneziani.

²⁸⁹ The term "quartiere neolitico" (The Neolithic City Model) was used by Ludovico Quaroni in the article "La politica del quartiere" (The Politic of the Neighborhood), published in *Urbanistica* on July 22, 1957. quoted in Marcello Panzarella, "Le impostazioni teoriche in risposta alle 'sei domande' di

methodology that promoted a catalytic function of the city form by extending beyond the microcosm of individual neighborhoods.²⁹⁰

The new urban design methodology took inspiration from several international theories addressing the physical and psychological integration of urban and regional areas, including Kevin Lynch's *Environmental City*, Cullen's *Townscape Planning*, Ebenezer Howard's *Garden City*, Lewis Mumford's *Regional City*, and several others promoted by *Casabella Continuità*. It overall extended and elaborated a new direction in planning that had started with a 1959 debate between Giancarlo De Carlo and Ludovico Quaroni, envisioning the obliteration of the boundaries of the urban realm and the gradual replacement of representational elements with administrative structures. This new visionary approach to city design embraced by De Carlo and Quaroni became known as the "*nuova dimensione*" (new dimension), *la città-territorio* (the city territory), and *la città regione* (the city region). It employed Kevin Lynch's theory of legibility and adaptability of the urban environment and aimed at finding a mean for architecture to perform at the wider urban scale with the example of British town design. It also largely relied on Patrick Geddes' concepts of "regions" and "conurbations" and took advantage of principles derived from Lewis Mumford's *Regional City Theory* to allow expanding new development at a regional scale.²⁹¹ Mumford's notion of urban decentralization

Casabella, 251, 1961," in *Edoardo Caracciolo, urbanistica, architettura, storia*, ed. Nicola Giuliano Leone (Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 2014), 17.

²⁹⁰ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 15-17.

²⁹¹ A conversation about the urban theories of Mumford, Howard, and Geddes was reported by Ludovico Quaroni following his experience at MIT. Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 19-20.

through “satellite cities” was reinterpreted by Italian urbanist-architects as “directional centers” (*centri direzionali*) to serve as the nodes for an outward expansion of the city.

In 1962, Mumford’s concept of the Regional City was discussed as a new potential methodology for urban design at the ILSSES convention in Stresa and at the urban research workshop in Arezzo. Meanwhile, the theory was widely popularized by the magazine *Casabella Continuità* to such an extent that, in 1962 alone, it dedicated two issues to the theory of the City Region and its reinterpretation into directional centers. It was, however, the new university curricula promoted by Ludovico Quaroni and Carlo Aymonino that successfully facilitated the switch from Muratori’s methodology and formed a new generation of professionals supportive of the new rationalist approach.²⁹²

Manfredo Tafuri described the scope and meaning of projects conducted according to the methodology of the *nuova dimensione* in a later article in 1979.²⁹³ He referred to these large-scale projects as “urbatecture,” implying their association with a type of architecture that expanded regionally, externalizing the organic growth of an informal system of independently adapting and mutating elements. He described this system as a state of permanent transition, being formed by elements in dynamic communication that performed as a coherent “whole.”²⁹⁴ These, he claimed, acted in an unconstrained interaction between heterogeneous variables comprising all types of urban elements

²⁹² Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 72.

²⁹³ Mary Lou Lobsinger, “Urbatecture: Opulent Urbanism,” in *Proceedings: Architecture in Communication: Challenge and Opportunity in Building the Information Age: 90th ACSA Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 11-14, 2002*, ed. Jill Bambury and Rodolphe El-Khoury (Washington, DC: ACSA Press, 2004), 225.

²⁹⁴ Lobsinger, “Urbatecture,” 226.

affecting the system's organization. Tafuri ultimately reinterpreted this idea and all its principles, including population mobility, highway networks, and gestalt notion of legibility in Marxian terms as the "need to integrate and equilibrate" the relation between the city of "consumption" and the surrounding productive territory.²⁹⁵

Rossi's findings from the studies on the peripheral sector, although aligned with the Marxian idea of "integration and equilibration of the productive forces of the territory," overall clashed with De Carlo and Quaroni's enthusiasm for the process of undifferentiated urban expansion. Therefore, Rossi's approach to urban revitalization combined Muratori's notions of urban morphology with redefinitions of principles of population mobility, transportation networks, and gestalt notion of legibility proposed by the *nuova dimensione*. Rossi, however, opposed the methodology of Muratori in favor of the relationship that he believed actually existed between the architectonic object, the city, and their associated urban, social, or economic phenomena.²⁹⁶ He also firmly supported the idea that the aim of architecture should not be the production of buildings as works of art, but rather as the solution to "the problem of the individual through the architecture of the city." Thus, Rossi claimed that only within this discourse could monuments take on meaning in the context of the collective memory of a particular society, in a specific urban environment, of a precise moment in history.

Rossi rejected the very idea of neorealist architecture, describing it as a backward style that denies cities their "chance for social progress and opening to modern culture."

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 225.

²⁹⁶ The group: Ognibene, Rossi, Ceccarelli, Dardi, Cusmano, Neri, Tafuri, Bisogni, e Quistelli and by Quaroni, Detti, Cerutti, and De Carlo.

The several articles Rossi wrote between 1960 and 1961, including *Il problema della periferia nella città moderna* (The problem of the suburb in the modern city), *Risposte a sei domande* (Answers to six questions), and *La città e la periferia* (The city and the suburb), exemplified his disengagement from the vernacularism of the neorealist architectural style, as well as from all associated planning methodologies.²⁹⁷ In the article *La città e la periferia* of 1961, Rossi expressly described vernacular architecture as a style relegating the working class to secular conditions of poverty and rendering them unable to ameliorate their living conditions. Muratori's neorealist district, according to him, expressed a vivid reminder of the "little home for the humble," resembling the typical social housing block built during the Fascist regime. According to Rossi, the act of building in this way prevented the emancipation of those areas of the city "where the productive forces of society resided by purposely inflicting upon the working class an image of poverty and backwardness."²⁹⁸

Rossi believed social progress entailed opening up the city to modern culture by harmoniously integrating working-class residential areas into the main urban fabric.²⁹⁹ He suggested that this type of integration required the "productive structure of urbanities" to undergo a new evolutionary phase, achievable only by the removal of the suburbs from their current role as areas of quarantine for migrants from the countryside and from the

²⁹⁷ Aldo Rossi, "La città e la periferia," in *Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città: 1956-1972* (Macerata: Qualibet, 2012), 161.

²⁹⁸ Rossi, "La città e la periferia," 158-60.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

south.³⁰⁰ He pleaded with architects and planners to formulate wider schemes of “national reality.” Thus, he proposed that this new approach had to involve the task of “interpreting this reality in a new way,” including the creation of harmonious living conditions for the workers by “dismissing all myths of spontaneous architecture, since there was no reason for this style to exist in the context of planned urbanities.”³⁰¹ Rossi encompassed these issues under the banner of the “problem of the suburbs,” consisting of the symptomatic manifestation of wider problems at the core of the structure of society, ultimately accentuated by the segregation of these suburban areas. He suggested both the models of the neorealist and the modernist block to be subjected to self-segregation, causing the residents’ exclusion from civic services and preventing their overall integration into the urban community.³⁰²

Rossi proposed a type of urban rehabilitation responsive to the logic of historic city plans, especially taking into account Otto Wagner’s proposal for the expansion of the XX District of Vienna and Hendrik Petrus Berlage’s plan for the extension of South Amsterdam. He pointed out that these historic examples had in common the rehabilitation of the neighborhood’s original structures to be used as the “skeleton” to orient new development. This “skeleton” constituted the “connective tissue” of the urban environment and comprised fundamental elements of the original city plan, consisting of

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Rossi cited Carlo Aymonino: “Our specific task that of interpreting in a new way this reality and organize housing for a future and harmonious life, ‘burning’ all myths of spontaneous architecture that it has no reason to exist in a condition of planned urbanities.” Aldo Rossi, “Il problema della periferia nella città moderna,” in *Scritti scelti sull’architettura e la città: 1956-1972* (Macerata: Qualibet, 2012), 124.

³⁰² Rossi, “Il problema della periferia,” 124.

historic corridors (streets) and existing buildings. The new development, he explained, was to be configured around this primary “structural skeleton” by taking the relationship with the old city center into consideration, as well as local traditions and ways of life. The new residential areas, on the other hand, were to be planned with an emphasis on spaces for collective activities to allow the formation of the “social group,” eventually destined to resemble (and possibly replace) the unity of the family.³⁰³

Rossi brought all these ideas together with the project for the rehabilitation of Zona Farini, aiming at resolving issues of social isolation due to the fragmentation of the urban fabric around a former industrial area in the suburbs of Milan. This project mainly focused on repairing the city fabric by filling the “urban voids,” by taking advantage of the areas of rupture that constituted the very cause of the problem. Rossi referred to this process of mending the city fabric as making areas of “rupture” into areas of “suture.” With the Zona Farini project, Rossi restructured the corridors of an existing network of streets to create new connections with the center of the city. These corridors became the “skeleton” used to orient new development and comprised a type of architecture that emphasized the legibility of the urban environment and favored both mobility and connectivity.

Mending the Fabric of the City: The Rehabilitation of Zona Farini and the Project of Locomotiva²

A multitude of problems with the neorealist and the modernist neighborhoods surfaced in the early 1960s, encouraging the development of new planning models for

³⁰³ Ibid., 134.

citywide and regional development. These new methodologies proposed the integration and equilibration of the relationship of “production and consumption,” and held former planning approaches responsible for the disruption of social progress. As a result, solutions for long-range planning were promoted to allow reconnecting suburban areas to centrally located administrative services.

This situation led the several research groups operating at the magazine *Casabella Continuità* to ultimately embrace two very distinct approaches to the research of new planning solutions. One, supported by personalities associated with the *nuova dimensione* such as Giancarlo De Carlo and Ludovico Quaroni, embraced the foretold methodology derived from Mumford’s model of the City Region that enabled the city to expand outward through peripheral nodes (*centri direzionali* or directional centers), functioning as cores of community life.³⁰⁴ A second methodology to be adopted at the city level was developed by Rossi and his associates Gian Ugo Polosello and Francesco Tentori. This method reformulated notions of Muratori’s morphology to be applied towards the integration and revitalization of inner areas of the city, proposing the reuse of permanent elements of city plans as the structural basis to create physical connections for newly infilled urban areas. The unification of space was to be achieved with the visual integration of the new structures through the activation of the gestalt legibility of the street, by means of strategically placed architecture and monuments. The first intervention of this kind to be executed on the physical realm of cities was the rehabilitation of Zona Farini in 1960, consisting of a project aiming at reconnecting areas

³⁰⁴ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 31-51.

of rupture in the city fabric (*vuoto periurbano*). Zona Farini was a peripheral neighborhood located in an industrial district of Milan with various areas of “rupture” in the urban fabric caused by defunct industries, blocks of proletarian housing, traffic corridors, and a neoclassical walled cemetery. This area was the prototypical urban suburb, containing elements typical of most industrialized neighborhoods and exemplifying a clearly disrupted connection with the city center.³⁰⁵ The project developed by Rossi and his team for Zona Farini envisioned the transformation of these areas of “rupture” into areas of “suture” through localized interventions aiming at restoring the connection with the center of the city. The plan that was developed for this area envisioned the preservation and enhancement of the existing urban fabric by strengthening the presence of the street, and by introducing civic facilities and public spaces to serve and represent the community “through...[their] civic architecture.”³⁰⁶ The neighborhood’s main street became the backbone of this intervention. Its street-front was strengthened with the revitalization of existing historic structures and infilled with a type of civic architecture that complemented and enhanced the existing buildings, creating a uniform “urban edge” consistent in style and significance.³⁰⁷ Ultimately, the

³⁰⁵ Peter Arnell et al., *Aldo Rossi: Building and Projects*, ed. Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 21.

³⁰⁶ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 30; Arnell et al., *Aldo Rossi, Building and Projects*, 21.

³⁰⁷ “...which consisted of a type of civic architecture designed to transpose the [existing] social and architectural structure of the city in function and iconography onto these fragmented areas.” Arnell et al., *Aldo Rossi, Building and Projects*, 21-22.

urban character of the street was reinforced with a series of monumental towers to ground the newly constructed public space.³⁰⁸

The project of Zona Farini culminated a series of studies on suburban areas. It proposed a new methodology that allowed looking at the suburbs not only as solvable problems, but also as actual opportunities for a new direction in urban development. Rossi had often suggested that solutions to social issues should evolve from the problem's very nature. He mentioned that on this occasion, since the suburbs overall reflected the relations of society, they presented urban designers with an opportunity to change society in a positive way. He explained that the suburbs were directly shaped by the interaction of productive forces because of their role as both loci of proletarian dwellings and areas of production of capital. Hence, their physical qualities resulted from the transposition of specific modes of production onto society's social structure, exemplifying the nation's political philosophies and governmental model. Rossi proposed that a recurrent problem with these areas was a lack of consideration for the mass and volume of industrial structures, and their inappropriate contextualization with nearby proletarian housings.³⁰⁹ He believed that this fragmented urban environment prevented the workforce's proper integration with the urban community, negatively affecting the productive process and the overall socioeconomic evolution of society.³¹⁰ Thus, Rossi proposed that the "problems" exemplified by Italian suburbs were the

³⁰⁸ Arnell et al., *Aldo Rossi, Building and Projects*, 21-22.

³⁰⁹ Rossi, "Il problema della periferia," 112.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

phenomenological manifestations of wider social issues caused by the exclusion of these peripheral communities from civic life.³¹¹

Rossi embraced Mumford's view of the suburbs as areas of "retardation" of the urban structure, necessary for the evolution of society because they functioned as zones of transition between the city and the countryside, and as such offered the potential to establish meaningful connections.³¹² Rossi thought a suburb could be either geographical or social. Hence, he considered geographical suburbs to be those areas at the fringes of cities or in small peripheral towns ("*corree*") with industrial centers and immigrant housing. He considered a social suburb, on the other hand, to be any area of rupture in the city fabric that lacked essential urban connections.³¹³ According to Rossi neighborhoods containing social housing typically generated a suburb, regardless of their architecture, because of their location in districts of the city characterized by cheap land and bad urban connections. He particularly noted that the residents of these areas could barely cope with primary existential needs, having their precarious living conditions typically worsened by the inappropriate spatial arrangement of the residential blocks.³¹⁴

Rossi considered Zona Farini to be the exemplification of the typical social suburb, allowing transposing ideas for this type of intervention to the physical plane of the city. In Zona Farini, Rossi utilized existing historical housing to strengthen the city corridor,

³¹¹ Ibid., 112.

³¹² Ibid., 113.

³¹³ Ibid., 118-119.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

replaced the most degraded buildings with new housing, and introduced needed public infrastructure features such as schools and public spaces. The area was planned “as a whole” by following the guiding principles of the existing city plan to preserve vital connections with nearby areas. The neighborhood’s primary structures were configured to be the backbone of the new development, to preserve the relationship with the old city center, and to maintain a connection with the life and traditions of the historic urban fabric. Rossi intentionally avoided planning this area in detail because he believed the transformation of the city should not be conducted according to a prototype plan, but should rather evolve over time and allow for future interventions.³¹⁵

Rossi’s research group also experimented with the methodology for outbound development during the 1963 municipal competition for the design of Turin’s directional center Locomotiva2 (*centro direzionale Locomotiva2*). This competition followed a mandate of the City of Turin General Plan of 1959 (*piano regolatore generale*) calling for the creation of an area to synchronize the circulation between the city’s historic center and the periphery.³¹⁶ The project’s objective was to connect the city with the wider regional territory through several types of transportation networks. It primarily envisioned a monumental structure to visually anchor a new transportation node, which overall gave little consideration to the dense city fabric or to the spatial relationship with

³¹⁵ “...without standard formulas for planning to avoid the juxtaposition of pieces of the city like parts of a machine [and]...an anarchy of individual expression should be avoided, rather recovering that capacity of a diffused common language, like it has been done in the past.” Rossi, “Il problema della periferia,” 129.

³¹⁶ Lobsinger, “Urbatecture,” 225.

the historic center.³¹⁷ The location of the new directional center was to be near a former railway workshop at Porta Susa and aimed at revitalizing an area containing various dilapidated structures, including relics of industrial buildings, an abattoir, and several disused railway hangars.

Mary Lou Lobsinger described the design proposed by Rossi's team as a "monumental and austere cube being fed by a road system to allow for the movement of vehicles to and from the new center and into the territory beyond without slowing down," being described by its authors as a type of "architecture at a metropolitan scale...radically urbanized."³¹⁸ Lobsinger claimed that this cube would be erected on top of a large parking platform to house the amenities of the new civic center. She also explained that its driving-through experience would compare to traveling to the Boston City Hall from the elevated highways, which she recalled to be very popular projects among the Italian urbanists of the 1960s for their bold approach to urban revitalization in the context of an historic center.³¹⁹

The writings of Mary Lou Lobsinger and Mario Ferrari offered two very different interpretations of the project *Locomotiva*². According to Lobsinger, the project proposed a new way to look at the city, allowing its understanding as a "whole set of structures," as an urban continuum, and as a system of elements performing as a coherent whole in

³¹⁷ Ibid., 227.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 228.

³¹⁹ Lobsinger, "Urbatecture," 228.

dynamic communication.³²⁰ Lobsinger's comment allows connecting the experience of driving across Turin's directional center with a study of the Boston highway that explored the aesthetic and integrative qualities of highway travel. Thus, she claimed that:

In the early 1960s Italian architects turned to economic and communication theories...to support projects that dispensed with architecture for, or dispensed architecture within networks of communication. For a brief optimistic moment, the idea of the traditional city was supplanted by the City as a continuum of responsive elements within a complex dynamic.³²¹

Mario Ferrari, in contrast, advocated for the contribution of Locomotiva2 to the revaluation of the role of architecture in the process of urban unification, particularly exemplified in this project by the rehabilitation of derelict buildings typically destined for demolition.³²² Thus, Ferrari's writings are in contradiction with Lobsinger's idea, proposing that the concept of the traditional city was not put aside by this competition. On the contrary, he wrote that projects such as Locomotiva2 supposedly exemplified an encounter of the concept of the "traditional city" with the "city as a continuum" of responsive elements within a complex dynamic system. According to Ferrari, Rossi's project externalizes a response to the calibration of architecture to an urban scale, as well as to the redimensioning of the city as a geographic territory, exemplifying the point of abandonment of the neighborhood unit and the embrace of the notion of urban design.³²³ The projects of Locomotiva2 and of Zona Farini, Ferrari suggested, ultimately enabled

³²⁰ Ibid., 225.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 40.

³²³ Lobsinger, "Urbatecture," 225.

the identification of elements codified by Rossi as “primary” in his theory of city morphology in the book *The Architecture of the City*.³²⁴

Aldo Rossi and Saverio Muratori in Contrast

Rossi’s architectural typology, although of the autonomous type, relied on the cultural particularities of a materialist interpretation of the architectonic language. Rossi’s interpretation of the notion of urban morphology was determinant for the understanding of common shapes found in the built environment of cities. It responded to a dynamic fundamentally different from the gestalt process determining the understanding of modernist art and architecture and relying on the autonomous decoding of primary shapes. Thus, unlike the followers of *nuova dimensione*, Rossi believed in the cultural evolution of historic urban facts, attributing the meaning embedded in the architectonic forms of the urban environment with the role of syntax, conferring architectural forms with their significance as constituent of the city’s collective memory.

Rossi historicized the reasons behind the hierarchy of the “primary” elements constituting his theory on city morphology in the book *The Architecture of the City*. In this text, Rossi firmly argued the fundamental role of city plans in the process of urban transformation and their instrumentality at enacting social and political changes.

According to this rationalization, Rossi also proposed the conditions affecting the suburbs to be phenomena deriving from the interaction of functional elements determining the different areas of city plans, such as zoning and land use regulation. Therefore, Rossi attributed these plans with the ability to establish the hierarchy of the different areas of

³²⁴ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 52-56.

the city by functionally organizing the urban environment and relegating administrative activities to the center and the industry to the suburbs. He explained that this logic originated along with the establishment of the early industrial centers at the time of the formation of the modern city, giving place to a “...type of evolution tied to the naturalism of urban dynamics,” in time triggering the phenomena of the suburbs.³²⁵

The evolution of industrial activities, according to Rossi, served as a catalytic force for the transformation of the urban realm. He proposed that the development of this mode of production started at the end of the feudal period and continued throughout the capitalist period. Rossi explained that this process consisted of three phases, each of which corresponded to a particular stage of development of the industry. The first phase, took place in the medieval city with the initial detachment of the site of work from that of residence and originated the worker's quarter as an independent unit. The second phase followed a dramatic increase in industrial activities, causing the radical separation of the residence from the workplace. Finally, the third phase witnessed the development of the means of transportation, allowing the relocation of the industry far away from residential areas and causing the ultimate designation of specific zones of the city to either residence or production. Rossi explained that this decentralization of the place of residence from that of work allowed the city to be organized functionally according to city plans. Ultimately, this functional organization resulted in the drastic separation of the activities of administration from those of production, shifting administrative and governmental functions to the center of cities and relocating the industry to the fringes. It also

³²⁵ Aldo Rossi, *L'architettura della città* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2012), 183.

generated a hierarchical relationship between people's workplace and their residences based on their ability to commute and on the time of the commute.³²⁶

Rossi, however, mentioned that, even if the functional organization of the city was determined by the evolution of the mode of production, its form was conditioned mainly by the politics that governed the relations of production and by the hierarchy of social relations of the classes taking part to this process. Thus, according to Rossi the three stages of evolution of the mode of production alone were not enough to explain the dependence of the form of the "urban artifact" on the "politics of choice," which consisted of the politics governing the relation of production in an urban center. The element of the "politics of choice" is also the fundamental difference distinguishing Rossi's version of the theory of city's morphology from that of Muratori. Thus, according to Rossi, the morphology of the city is not merely an organic outcome of history, as Muratori claimed, but it results from specific modes of production and reflects the social relations of a particular time.

The last chapter of the 1983 edition of the book *The Architecture of the City* synthesizes Rossi's lifelong study of the forces affecting the form of cities and of the economic and political dynamics that catalyze cyclical changes in urban morphology. Rossi chose the theses of Maurice Halbwachs and Hans Bernoulli to explain this process of transformation in the morphology of urban areas. He used Halbwachs' theory on the phenomena behind the expansion of the social group to explain the process of collective memory conditioning the dynamic of transformation of urban morphology. Additionally,

³²⁶ Rossi, *L'architettura della città*, 182-83.

he thought that Halbwachs' description of the economic process of expropriation was connected to the dramatic changes in the physical and social realm of urban areas. Thus, Halbwachs found the economic factors associated with this process of expropriation to be responsible for the manifestation of particular historic conditions and the materialization of certain events.³²⁷

In contrast, Rossi used Bernoulli's thesis to interpret the effects of the privatization and division of urban land and the way that the nature and quality of the city's public structures could be affected by its collectivization.³²⁸ Rossi believed that, according to a naturally occurring process, cities undergo drastic changes within intervals of roughly fifty years. He proposed that these cyclical changes can be predicted in modern cities through the analysis of legislative factors that directly affect the zoning of urban land.³²⁹ However, Rossi warned that acts of financial speculation could function as independent variables that negatively affect this process of changes throughout abstract economic laws.³³⁰ Otherwise, he found the process of expropriation to be the most common phenomena potentially affecting urban morphology with dramatic changes. This process, he explained, if politically motivated, can easily induce the replacement of one social group with another. Thus, it consists of a process instrumental to the control over the

³²⁷ Ibid., 159-60.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid., 158.

³³⁰ Ibid.

morphology of the city for its historical association with city plans, conditioned by the economic forces exemplifying the mechanism of city growth over the urban realm.³³¹

In the article *Il problema della periferia nella città moderna* (the problem of the suburb in the modern city) of 1960, Rossi commented upon the Haussmann's plan for Paris considering it to be the typical example of an act of political expropriation directed at transforming the urban environment to allow the takeover of the bourgeoisie. In this case, the shaping of the urban landscape was directly conditioned by the political motive of the plan, which drastically exemplified the shifting sociopolitical relation of Parisian society. Rossi, however, noticed that the various forms of expropriation enacted to intervene in the relations of urban societies were mapped on the plans of most major cities.³³² He mentioned, in this sense, the urban realm of the American megalopolis that clearly allowed discerning this process through the exemplification of the dynamics of the City Region. He suggested, on the other hand that August Parrot's plan for the city of Le Havre exemplified the ideal use of publicly owned land, and Hendrick Petrus Berlage's extension of the area south of Amsterdam to optimally propose the redistribution of space through disencumbering.³³³

Ultimately, Rossi found Piermarini's plan for Milan to exemplify best Halbwachs' thesis on the forces acting behind expropriation. As early as 1956, Rossi had described this plan drafted by the local bourgeoisie to reconfigure the city of Milan as constructing

³³¹ Ibid., 159.

³³² Ibid., 183.

³³³ Rossi, "Il problema della periferia," 125-27.

a “politic of space.”³³⁴ Piermarini’s plan, enacted during a time ending a long period of decadence and corruption in the city’s administration, marked the rise of the bourgeoisie as Italy’s new emerging social class. The plan was inspired by the progressive reforms imported with the European expansion of the French bourgeoisie, which were communicated by means of a new form of neoclassical humanist architecture and the reformulation of the city’s public domain. Thus, the plan’s main objective was to create collective support for the city’s new ruling class by modernizing the city fabric and by marking public spaces with new monuments in a style evocative of the humanist values of the Renaissance.³³⁵

Piermarini’s plan, also known as the General Plan for Milan of 1807, fundamentally differed from other neoclassical plans by avoiding overlapping new schemes onto the existing urban fabric. The plan considered the history of the city by enhancing structures and buildings through the disencumbering of congested medieval quarters, reformulating space and preserving selected historical features and monuments.³³⁶ It expressed the progressive action of the new social class by proposing a series of interventions that allowed the city of Milan to transition from a disordered medieval town into a modern city. The plan also played a significant role in the bourgeoisie’s expropriation of the

³³⁴ Rossi, “Il concetto di tradizione,” 1.

³³⁵ Rossi wrote that “the architecture that gets built, and that remains is the only valid, and is always attributable to the dominant classes, even if it is right to think that sometimes the artist that creates it is at the opposition, he always must find a way to reconcile his innovatory needs with the specific reality of the entrepreneur, and it is not possible as far as Milanese neoclassical architecture is concerned to look beyond the bourgeoisies after it takes over the public administration.” Rossi, “Il concetto di tradizione,” 9.

³³⁶ Rossi believed that was “reminiscent of theatrical paths that created scenes like of the backstage of a surrealist performance.” Rossi, “Il concetto di tradizione,” 21.

city's government from the local aristocracy ultimately to become the blueprint for the uprise of this new social class. As such, it clearly displayed the bourgeoisie's new economic initiative expressed in the reconfiguration of space following the same strategy of the plan of "the artists" used to remove properties from the ownership of the clergy by the French National Assembly.³³⁷

Rossi concluded that this time in the city's history was in striking contrast with the period that followed shortly thereafter and that coincided with Austria's exercise of a new reactionary politic dominated by notions of rationalist positivism and emphasis on metaphysical beauty. According to him, this time preceded a period that led ultimately to the decadence of art, architecture, and society and was characterized by the borrowing and repeating of ideas, abstract themes, and styles from the past in a manner that followed an academic concept of tradition.³³⁸

The Formulation of New Theories of City Morphology

The nationwide quest for urbanization came up short when public funds started to decline and was particularly impacted by the shift in the position of "the politics of the home" in reaction to the sometimes speculative nature of some of the construction projects. The introduction of Law 167 in 1962 ultimately shifted the production of public residential quarters from the construction of suburban blocks to the rehabilitation of historic city centers. The new policy also redirected all public investments towards

³³⁷ Rossi, *L'architettura della città*, 169.

³³⁸ Rossi, "Il concetto di tradizione," 9.

historic rehabilitation and placed a decisive end to new development.³³⁹ In 1963 the second term of the Ina-casa project came to an end, and Togliatti's death in 1964 caused a shift in the internal organization of the Italian Communist Party leading to the ultimate abandonment of Stalinist politics. As a result of these changes, the workers' unions became independent, and the presence of extra-parliamentary groups in politics was made official along with the materialization of the first phase of the Historic Compromise in 1964. All the research associated with the "urban project" also ultimately came to an end by 1965 with the closure of the Ina-casa project and the transition in management of the editorial *Casabella-Continuità* from Ernesto Nathan Rogers to Gian Antonio Bernasconi. Rogers's departure from the magazine caused a dramatic change in its character, resulting in the dissolution of the study center and in the extinguishment of all collective research.³⁴⁰ The new editor Bernasconi kept exploring international ideas such as the study of Kevin Lynch, the theory of the evolutionary city of Sjöberg, and the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss. He, however, adopted a stringent attitude towards studies and debates surrounding the Italian urban project and cut off the study groups from using the magazine as a platform for exposing their research and ideas.

Hence, the dissolution of the study center meant the loss of the place to hold collective research and forced the architects to embark on individual projects. Personalities such as Aldo Rossi, Francesco Tentori, Ludovico Quaroni, and Carlo

³³⁹ Legge n. 167 *sull'edilizia di tipo economica e popolare*. Sindacato Inquilini Casa e Territorio, SICET, 18 Aprile 1962, <http://www.sicet.it/index.htm> (last visited March 28, 2016). Also quoted in Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 44-48.

³⁴⁰ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 67.

Aymonino undertook independent studies that culminated in the production of texts fundamental to a new morphological approach to city planning.³⁴¹ The results of these individual studies were four essential books that, even if fundamentally very different from one another, reached similar conclusions. Aymonino's *Origini e sviluppo della città moderna* (the Origin and Development of the Modern City) of 1965 was followed by Rossi's *L'Architettura della città* (the Architecture of the City) in 1966, and by Quaroni's *La torre di Babele* (the Tower of Babel) in 1967. All these texts were published and distributed by the publishing house *Polis* of Marsilio, of which Rossi had become the manager and editor in chief.³⁴²

The New Direction of the National Urban Research

The national crisis of 1965 caused an increased imbalance of political power between the unequally developed northern and southern regions of the country.³⁴³ These years were also characterized by a fall in research that caused publications such as *Casabella Continuità* to turn into minor commentaries papers, relegating the few new theories imported by traveling professionals to academics. Major international trends, such as the philosophies of Buckminster Fuller and the models of Archigram's Plug-in Cities, on the other hand, were too far removed from the national reality even to receive any significant attention from the academic world. Urban research in Italy was not re-engaged until the

³⁴¹ Ibid., 68.

³⁴² These works were all contemporary with the exception of Giuseppe Samonà who had already written a book on urban design in 1958, considered the first Italian book written on the discipline. Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 108.

³⁴³ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 80-82.

decade of the 1970s when the publications of *Controspazio* and *Lotus* started a new decade of studies on the extrapolation of the disciplines of semiotics and structuralism from the literary tradition onto the formal analysis of cities. The discipline of structuralism, in particular, became a new trial methodology for urban research because it allowed, in its most abstract interpretation, to formally focus on the investigation on the *genius loci*.³⁴⁴

The Application of Structuralism to Urban Design

Structuralism focused on the formal analysis of urban areas by placing the main scope of the research on the city's *genius loci*. It was a method motivated by the belief that the means of urban design centered on zoning and land-use were not sufficient for a through scrutiny of complex urban entities. The study of the semiotic character of cities, on the other hand, allowed to group all the elements present in the urban landscape under a formal analysis rather than split them into different categories.³⁴⁵ Aldo Rossi and Ludovico Quaroni were the researchers at *Casabella Continuità* who pursued the structuralist methodology in the effort to expand the relationship between urban fabric and monuments proposed by their theories. Quaroni illustrated the way he applied structuralism to urban design during a series of seminars held in Venice in 1966 on the occasion of the VII International Course of High Culture, where he discussed themes

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 88.

³⁴⁵ Among the several studies on cities conducted during this period Christopher Alexander's analysis of the semiotic character of the city of Naples is especially representative.

later included in his design for the General Plan of Bari of 1966-1970.³⁴⁶ Quaroni believed that ancient cities had the same quality of children's books in the way the focus of the reader is emphasized and guided through text, illustrations, and color tables. In the formulation of his theory, Quaroni referenced many theories learned during his residence at MIT, becoming particularly drawn to Kevin Lynch's way of making the American highway into a "structural component" of urban design that allowed the connection among urban elements and maximized their spatial freedom.

Quaroni's theory bore a striking similarity to Rossi's approach to the design of a residential unit for the *quartiere San Rocco* in Monza implemented in cooperation with Giorgio Grassi in 1966.³⁴⁷ This project consisted of the design for a new area of the city based on the interconnection of several monuments that relied on the use of a multitude of facets representing the plethora of personalities, different experiences, and myths encompassed by the city's collective phenomena.³⁴⁸

The Development of a New Typology and a Theory for City Planning

Alan Colquhoun described the failure of modernism in architecture and urban design both as psychological and ideological. On the one hand, he referred to the inability of

³⁴⁶ The seminars held by Ludovico Quaroni in 1966 in Venice during the "VII International Course of High Culture" were titled "The Design for the City: Cultura, Espressione, Comunicazione, Politica."

³⁴⁷ Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 90.

³⁴⁸ This unitary design consisted of a "project for a modern city made out of areas and monuments interconnected in a unified scheme, designed in its multitude of facets, where like in all collective matters (revolutionary for example) emerge the different personalities with their experiences and their myths representing a great hope and an alternative to the ugliness, the short-sighted, the exploration, the limits of any type of city." Aldo Rossi, "Introduzione a Ludovico Quaroni: La torre di Babele," in *La torre di Babele* (Padova: Marsilio, 1982), 1-6.

architecture to deliver an effective solution to social problems; and on the other, to the concern with the hijacking of the image of the modern movement to represent the interest of private corporate groups.³⁴⁹ Colquhoun found the strongest criticism to be directed towards the architectural version of minimalism, considered the type of modern architecture commonly adopted in the postwar period to build rapidly and on a large scale.³⁵⁰ He suggested that the criticism against modernism had ultimately been extended to all systems of ideas linked to the “behavioral” system of functionalism, most closely associated in architecture with the current of minimalism. According to Colquhoun, this overall rejection of functionalism had created the conditions that made the onset of structuralism possible in all its artistic expressions.³⁵¹ He proposed that starting in the 1960s, the current of structuralism in Italy had found its application as a “weapon against functionalism,” and was essentially proposed as a philosophy to support the ideologies of the extreme political left for its ability to transpose the concept of labor to all groups of society.³⁵² According to the philosophical current of structuralism, all elements of human culture can be understood in terms of an overarching system of intelligibility working

³⁴⁹ Colquhoun, “Postmodernism and Structuralism,” 8.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 9.

³⁵² By the 1960s, just at the time that some architects had reduced the idea of functionalism to what would be a behaviorist system; a weapon against functionalism became available that seemed to possess all the credential of a positive science. This was structuralism as inaugurated by Ferdinand de Saussure and developed by Roman Jakobson, Claude Levi-Strauss, and Roland Barthes. According to this approach the ability of signs to convey meaning within any sign system whatever, depends on the arbitrary and conventional structure of relationships within a particular system, and not on the relation of signs to pre-existent or fixed referents in outside reality. The application of this linguistic model to architecture enabled “function” to be seen as the false reification and naturalization of a set of culturally determined values that might or might not be considered a part of the system of meaning constituted by a building. Colquhoun, “Postmodernism and Structuralism,” 9.

according to immutable and abstract laws, and promoting the triumph of syntax and system over meaning.³⁵³ Thus, by supporting the idea that structures exist for their own sake, structuralism, can help to explain, through the exploration of the intersubjective unconscious of society, the laws of the systems shaping people's costumes and cultures.

Mario Ferrari and Marcello Pazzaglini wrote that structuralism was mainstreamed in Italian literature in the middle 1960s and found, during this time, an application to architecture and urban design. Pazzaglini in the book *Dibattito sulla città e sul territorio* wrote that "...in 1964...in Italy, two aspects of urban design were explored. On the one hand, the research connected with structuralism as a literary current, and on the other its application to public projects in connection with the growth of the city. It [structuralism] was, at the time, the only tangible instrument for controlling these forms..." Thus Pazzaglini, along with others, considered these to be the years when the city and the territory were considered "texts" and their analysis became formalized. Christopher Alexander, on the other hand, provided an example of the early application of structuralism to the urban realm with a study that Ferrari quoted as the "crowning of the research of the design for the city and its *genius loci*."³⁵⁴ Alexander had applied the

³⁵³ Structuralism as it was described by structuralist Paul Ricoeur.

³⁵⁴ "1964 in Italia in questo periodo vengono tenute presenti due questioni relative al disegno urbano: da un lato la ricerca connessa allo strutturalismo come corrente letteraria, la seconda legata all'edilizia pubblica che ancora influenza la crescita delle città e, per il momento, rappresenta l'unico serio strumento di controllo della loro forma. See the text of Marcello Pazzaglini, *Dibattito sulla città e sul territorio*, in Confronto, De Giorgi, Muntoni, Pazzaglini. Il dibattito architettonico in Italia 1945-1975, Bulzoni, Roma, 1977: "Sono gli anni in cui la città e il territorio divengono il "testo" e la loro analisi diviene appunto formale. Un esempio é la ricerca di Christopher Alexander. Il corollario della ricerca del disegno per la città, della sua vocazione o, se vogliamo, del "genius loci," nell'analisi del testo che racconta..."

methodology of structuralism by starting with a formal examination of the Neapolitan territory to produce, in the end, a semiotic analysis of the city of Naples that took into consideration natural and artificial elements of the landscape as they were part of a unitary structure, instead of categorizing them as different values.

The late 1960s were the years when the structuralist methodology was fully implemented in its application to the built environment, possibly in support of the radicalization of leftist politics.³⁵⁵ Later in the 1970s, structuralism offered a formula to communicate certain political values through the Marxism of Althusser; which, thanks to notions fundamental to structuralism's own state of existence, allowed leftist political

[1964 in Italy in this period two issues related to urban design are being considered: on the one end the research connected to structuralism as a literary current, the other tied to the public building industry that is still influencing the growth of cities and that represents at this moment the only serious instrument over the control of their form. "These are the years when the city becomes a text and its analysis formal. An example is the research of Christopher Alexander. In this regard, it is significant the work of Christopher Alexander and the university Thesis by Salvatore Bisogni e Agostino Renna on the investigation of the Neapolitan territory to discern the semantic characters of the city of Naples, taking into consideration elements of the landscape (natural and artificial), as parts of a formal and unitary structure, rather than different categories with different values. Thus, the corollary of the research for the design of the city, or of its vocation if we like, of the genius loci, was in the analysis of the text.—Trans.] Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 86-87.

³⁵⁵ "Strutturalismo e disegno urbano: La metà degli anni sessanta é caratterizzata dal fenomeno dello strutturalismo nel campo della letteratura come in quello dell'architettura. In particolare gli architetti italiani sono particolarmente interessati alle teorie di Christopher Alexander sulla crescita delle città. La scrittura priva di punteggiatura di Bernari rende possibile osservare in maniera a-critica la struttura del discorso. Alla stessa maniera, per comprendere il modo di porsi degli architetti si deve osservare la tesi di laurea di Salvatore Bisogni ed Agostino Renna, divenuta nota grazie anche alla pubblicazione su di un noto numero di edilizia moderna (diretta in quel breve periodo da Vittorio Gregotti), l'emblema del modo strutturalista di pensare ed usare le parti di un tessuto urbano."

[Strutturalism and urban design: the mid 1960s is characterised by the phenomenon of literary and architectural structuralism. In particular, Italian architects are interested in the theories of Christopher Alexander on the growth of cities. The writing style without any punctuation of Bernari allows the a-critical observation of the discourse (speech). In the same way, in order to comprehend architects' way of presenting themselves, the thesis of Salvatore Bisogni and Agostino Renna must be read, made available thanks to their publication on a famous edition of Edilizia Moderna (directed for a brief time by Vittorio Gregotti). These explain the emblematic way of the structuralist of thinking and of using the urban fabric.—Trans.] Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 109.

ideas to easily blend to commonplace values already rooted in the collective consciousness of the Italian population through religion and traditions.

Overall, structuralism imbued a positive popular reception of the concept of collectivity, fundamentally supporting philosophies of egalitarian communism that tied to leftist politics.³⁵⁶ The mechanism at the basis of the methodology that could have helped promote a system of leftist politics was therefore a connotation of its very nature. Structuralism, as a derivation of a particular branch of social and psychoanalytic sciences, assumes the character of a philosophical model promoting the primacy of the “collective” over the “individual.” It, overall, carries forward the quest of a debate founded in the *Locus Classicus* by Glaucon and Socrates (in the Republic) on whether the social is an empirically acquired characteristic of man, or innate and native to man’s very nature.³⁵⁷ It perpetuated the social model and notion of the primacy of the collective over the individual advanced by Durkheim and carried forward by Mauss, and explicitly opposes the traditional French existentialist philosophy of Sartre and Descartes. Although structuralism embraces most areas of modern social thought, including the fields of philosophy, sociology, psychology, linguistic, and literature, it was the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss who was the first to break with the tradition of individualism in French philosophy by placing the “collective” over the “particular.” Thus, it is in the field of

³⁵⁶ These contemplated solutions for new public housing, policies for the effective distribution of redevelopment funds, and reconstruction of cities’ infrastructures allowing an adequate interaction between all means of production.

³⁵⁷ The question to ask is: do men make the social (Glaucon) or does the social forms men (Socrates)? Lévi-Strauss infantile thought is a common denominator for all thoughts and all cultures (syncretism of child thought, therefore, the social make men). Thomas Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss: Social Psychotherapy and the Collective Unconscious* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), xi.

anthropology that the synthesis of elements of early social thought and sociological theories, linguistics, and psychoanalysis is most evident.³⁵⁸ Lévi-Strauss, therefore, attempted at demonstrating that at the most basic stages of human consciousness, expressed in the syncretism of infantile thought, the “social” forms “men,” rather than the other way around.³⁵⁹ Straussian structuralism, therefore, departs from the assumption that the collective is ontologically prior to the individual, and proclaims that individuality is founded upon the division of labor, resting on inter-subjectivity exchanges.³⁶⁰ This type of logic is also found in psychoanalysis in the Freudian idea of the unconscious and Marx’s notion of praxis.³⁶¹ These notions, as well as Straussian structuralism, are founded on the same denial of the Cartesian *Cogito* internalized in Lacan’s self and the

³⁵⁸ In itself, structuralism builds upon the philosophy and early social thought of Rousseau, St. Simon, and Sir Charles Moore and on the redefinition of the sociological theories of Durkheim and Mauss. It also ties to a reworking of the Freudian Model (Lacan's). It was prominent in the field of linguistic and anthropology, where the synthesis of sociology (Durkheim and Mauss), linguistic (Jakobson) and psychoanalysis (Lacan) is the most evident. Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 1-6.

³⁵⁹ Anthropologists Lévi-Strauss conception of infantile thought as a common denominator of all thoughts and all cultures wants to demonstrate that a syncretism of infantile thought exists. With this point Lévi-Strauss is attempting to demonstrate that in reality it is the social that forms men, in reply to the answer on whether the social is an empirically acquired characteristic of man or it is innate and native to man’s very structure, therefore proving Socrates point over Glaucon. Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 21-51.

³⁶⁰ Lévi-Strauss position on a reciprocal exchange as the basic interrelation of citizens with the state is, again, similar to Plato's. “A state... arises, as I conceive out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficing, but all of us have many wants. Can any other origin of a state be imagined? There can be no other. Then, as we have many wants, and many persons are needed to supply them, one takes a helper for one purpose and another for another, and when these partners and helpers are gathered together in one habitation the body of inhabitants is termed a State.” True, he said. And they exchange with one another, and one gives, and another receives, under the idea that the exchange will be for their good. Ver true. (XII.) The dialogue of Plato, trans B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937): 632, quoted in Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, xi-xii.

³⁶¹ Straussian structuralist ideas are also at the foundation of all Marxist anthropology. These include the reinterpretation of the Freudian unconscious (Lacan). The sociological notion of Durkheim of the total social fact, and its reinterpretation by Mauss (the totality of social exchange in reciprocity). Durkheim's notion of collective consciousness and philosophical of Rousseau. Similar notion as the Marxist's Praxis. Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 1-20.

“other,” and can be connected to larger political and religious ideas (the Catholic gospel also denies the Cartesian *Cogito*). This mechanism of cultural structures is most evident in the notion of collective memory that, in the context of Straussian structuralism is a re-interpretation of Freud within the framework of the Durkheim-Mauss ethnological traditions.³⁶² Collective consciousness is, therefore, according to Durkheim, the totality of beliefs and feelings generated by individuals belonging to the same group or society. Hence, although collective beliefs are inherently different from the beliefs of each individual member of society, these two levels of consciousness are mutually interdependent in connecting each generation to the next.³⁶³ Durkheim’s ideas (the notion of the “total social fact”) mentioned above were reinterpreted by Mauss in his theory of “social exchange” where he views social phenomena in their totality, placing each phenomenon within its relationship with all the spheres in which society operates (economical, juridical, and moral).³⁶⁴ Mauss reinterpreted Durkheim’s notion of social phenomena as part of a totality based on the role of “exchanges,” in society, and in the

³⁶² Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 1-51.

³⁶³ In Durkheim notion of the “total social fact,” collective consciousness differs from “particular consciousness.” Durkheim believed that collective beliefs are of a different nature from the distinct beliefs of each individual member of society, but that nevertheless, these two levels of consciousness are mutually interdependent and do not change among generation but rather connects each generation to the next. Therefore, the ensemble of beliefs that makes up the collective consciousness of society according to Durkheim does not change with successive generations but rather creates a connection between each generation to the next. Émile Durkheim and Alvin Ward Gouldner, *Socialism and Saint-Simon: Le socialisme*, ed. Marcel Mauss (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1958), 91-108; Marcel Mauss, introduction to *Socialism and Saint-Simon: Le Socialisme*, ed. Marcel Mauss (Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1958), v-xxvii; Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 62.

³⁶⁴ “The circuit of man within the social-historical world,” Marleau-Ponty, “whole systems in their entirety,” Marcel Mauss quoted in Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 62.

way these operate for the formation of the collective unconscious.³⁶⁵ He finally determined that the same psychological inter-subjective pattern within a specific mechanism of exchange is essentially found in every social institution. This mechanism results in a “principle of reciprocity” operating as the logic of the system of exchanges, and it is mainly based on three obligations each individual takes upon himself as a member of the collective order of society (giving, receiving, and repaying).³⁶⁶ Therefore, Mauss took the Durkheim’s notion of “prestation” (gift exchange) a step further and was a major influence in Levi-Strauss’ studies of conscious and unconscious social phenomena to explain the structures of a society.³⁶⁷

Structuralism came along with an abundance of research connected to semiology, which was extrapolated from its literary tradition into applications for the formal analysis and design of cities. In its most abstract interpretation, structuralism became an effective methodology for the formal research on urban centers placing the main scope of the investigation on cities’ *genius loci*.³⁶⁸ Rossi, as well as other architects, initially adopted

³⁶⁵ “...be these exchanges economic, matrimonial, or religious.” Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 4-6.

³⁶⁶ Mauss calls this principle of reciprocity the *total prestation*. Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 4-6.

³⁶⁷ According to Durkheim, law, language, logic, art, and religion are aspects of the social (where the social is almost considered a metaphysical entity). Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand, stated that these are the interrelations of various specific functions or codes. While according to Mauss social fact is not an underlining cause but it is conceived as composed of many distinct and interconnected levels. Mauss’s work was fundamental in explaining the structures of a society (consisting of the way in which exchanges are performed), fundamentally based at attempting the explanation of the intermediate character between things and ideas of a society based upon exchange. Shalvey, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 1-6.

³⁶⁸ These are the years the cities become the text and their analysis become formal. E.g. Christopher Alexander and the semiotic character of the city of Naples that considers all elements of the landscape under a whole formal analysis rather than categories with different values. The main scope is in the research of the design for the city, in its vocation or in the *genius loci*. According to Alexander the

this methodology for the development of theories explaining the relationship between urban fabric and monuments, ultimately using its mechanism to articulate studies performed on architectural typology and on parameters of urban design.³⁶⁹ The studies conducted by these architects began the research for a new abstract architectural typology departing from Giulio Carlo Aragon's re-elaboration of Quatremere de Quincy's notion of type (contained in the *Dictionnaire historique d'architecture*), and from Rogers's idea of continuity between modern architecture and history. Colquhoun suggested that this was an interpretation of "architectural type" that related to certain aspects of Enlightenment rationalist modernism and comprised the notion of the repetition of certain morphologies in the history of architecture that kept reappearing independently of technological changes. This notion, according to Colquhoun, also seemed to relate to a theory of history put forward in the early nineteenth century that in part interpreted cultural phenomena through the metaphor of organic development.³⁷⁰ In a process, Colquhoun suggested, responsible for the logic behind modern architecture and closely connected to the aesthetic theory of romanticism, operating on organic analysis and placing cultural practices on an evolutionary time scale as part of a casual-temporal

means of classic urban design (zoning and so on) are no longer enough. Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 88.

³⁶⁹ In 1966 Ludovico Quaroni held two seminars in Venice during the "VII international course of high culture." These were called *Il disegno della città: cultura, espressione, comunicazione, politica*, contained a series of affirmations that clearly expressed his position in respect to utopias, concepts tied to structuralism and more generally to those of urban design. These ideas were later tested by Rossi and Giorgio Grassi in the project of a residential unit in "Quartiere San Rocco," in Monza. Aldo Rossi, "Introduzione a Ludovico Quaroni," 1-6; Ferrari, *Il progetto urbano in Italia*, 90-91.

³⁷⁰ Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 1.

chain.³⁷¹ Colquhoun suggested that structuralists' ideas can apply to architecture through the notion of type, by means of which forms and meanings are generated through the logic of a mechanism analogous to language. He also suggested that meanings can be conveyed in architecture, as well as in language, because of the persistence of earlier forms allowing the formulations of systems through their interaction with particular tasks.³⁷²

He explained that architectural types and archetypes that form architectural syntaxes are sublimated through of the mimesis of shapes. This process, according to him, has persisted in architecture because of the consistency of the form and structure of basic buildings through time. As such, the basic geometry of particular utilitarian buildings has translated into standardized shapes, becoming associated with specific uses that can be systematically drawn from memory.³⁷³ He also explained architectural syntax in terms of its similarity to music, a concept that was illustrated particularly well by Lévi-Strauss's discussion on the cultural structuration and natural degree of dissonances.³⁷⁴ Both the musical and architectural systems, explained Colquhoun, depends on the composition of

³⁷¹ This aesthetic theory explains the structure of artistic forms with organic analogies, and that of cultural practices by their position on an evolutionary time scale and as part of a casual-temporal chain. Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 9.

³⁷² Colquhoun advanced the idea that architectural systems preexists particular periods or architects as well as language preexists a group of individual speakers. Thus, it is only through the persistence of earlier forms that meanings can be conveyed. Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 10.

³⁷³ Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 10.

³⁷⁴ In music meaning (that is musical meaning) is only imaginable if the sonic material has already been given structure; new meaning can only emerge through the modification of an inherited structure. In music, the basis for any cultural structuration already exists in the natural degree of dissonance. It can be argued that a similar basis exists in architecture, which like music can be regarded both as a natural and arbitrary system. Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," 10.

preformed rhetorical figures that can be explained spatially (rather than temporally), and where the meanings of periods interrelate.³⁷⁵ This allows the meaning of a structure to be formulated according to its relationship to all other parts of that particular system, and historical forms to act as a continuation of the past and to create new meanings in the present.³⁷⁶ According to this logic, the changes in cultural structures manifesting in the Enlightenment identified by Lévi-Strauss in the form of variations reflected in the syntax of music and mythology, could have, alone, provided a valid reason for studying this period.³⁷⁷

Structuralism offered a way to materialize the abstract notion of collective memory onto the physical environment of cities, in its application to architecture and urban design. It allowed the formulation of syntax at the level of the architectural space that strictly related to Lévi-Strauss mechanism of systems of structures. Throughout this process, the

³⁷⁵ Colquhoun explained that architecture like music and other arts has traditionally depended on the arrangement or composition of a number of preformed rhetorical figures. It is what Charles Rosen, speaking of music but using an architectural metaphor, calls the use of “large blocks of prefabricated material.” The architecture of the 1920s sought to banish these tropes and formulae and to replace them with atomic elements that were considered formally and functionally irreducible. The meaning was to be derived from the formal and functional context of the work itself, supposedly independent of the stylistic clichés and rhetorical gestures handed down by the tradition. Colquhoun, “Postmodernism and Structuralism,” 9.

³⁷⁶ Colquhoun, “Postmodernism and Structuralism,” 10.

³⁷⁷ Lévi-Strauss found changes in structures in the Enlightenment, “... it was about the time when mythical thought—I would not say vanished or disappeared—but passed to the background in western thought, during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century. It coincided with the time when the first novels began to appear to replace stories built on the model of mythology. It was also at the time that we witnessed the appearance of the great musical styles characteristic of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. It was as if music had completely changed its traditional shape during this time to take over the function—the intellectual as well as emotive functions—and mythical thought was abandoned. The music that took over the traditional function of mythology is not any kind of music but music that appeared in the early seventeenth century with Frescobaldi and in the early eighteenth century with Bach. It was music that finally reached its full development with Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books, 1979), 44-46.

human mind makes sense of sublimated shapes and symbols, and through the interaction in the social space, society perpetuates myths and traditions.³⁷⁸ Rossi exemplified this idea with the use of platonic shapes and archetypes drawn from memory for the formulation of a new architectural typology, allowing quotations from common knowledge and the transposition of elements of collective memory upon the urban environment of cities, essentially expressing a concerned with the social role of architecture.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁸ The way architectural space was manipulated through variation in scale and use of platonic forms directly related to what Lévi-Strauss described as the working mechanism of structures, exemplified by the way the human mind processes semiotic codes and reconstructs geometric shapes. Lévi-Strauss mentioned on the cognition of structures that “the origin of the mathematic ideas, the idea of the line, of the circle, and of the triangle could be explained with two classical theories. One of these regarded the mind as *tabula rasa* with nothing in it at the beginning, and where everything comes to it from experience. It is from seeing many round objects, none of which perfectly round that we are able to abstract the idea of the circle. The second classical theory, he explained, is attributable to Plato, who claimed that the impressions of the circle, of the triangle, of the line, are perfect, innate in the mind, and it is because they are given to the mind that we are able to project them, so to speak, on reality, although reality never offers us a perfect circle or a perfect triangle. Ultimately, contemporary research on the neurophysiology of vision teaches us that the nervous cells in the retina are specialized. Of these some cells are sensitive only to straight direction, in the vertical sense, somewhere between mind and experience. These are conditioned by the way our nervous system is built and it mediates between mind and experience.” Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, 7-8.

³⁷⁹ Colquhoun, “Postmodernism and Structuralism,” 12.

Conclusion

To conclude, the aim of this research was not to reinterpret a theory but rather to disclose the actual circumstances surrounding the formation and iteration of Rossi's ideas. Thus, this study has sought to articulate the chronological development of the principles that Rossi idealized to be the expression of the urban structure and architectural language of collective societies. These principles comprised the pragmatic, culturally dependent logic associated with the nation's historical and artistic evolution, which Rossi believed to be at the very basis of the formation of rationalist architecture. Rossi iterated that any version of the rationalist style should derive from both a country's materialistic needs and its cultural tradition. In this context, he essentially emphasized the need for architecture's humanist content and capability to be inclusive of all citizens to represent a collective society. This new type of architecture was also meant to employ a typology that followed an historical continuity especially developed from the country's architectural traditions and was to be invested with a fundamental role in the shaping of the nation's collective consciousness by communicating a specific political ethos. Finally, the new architectural typology was not only to act as a language but also to preserve the common notion of tradition, in the same manner, a myth perpetuates culture, while the urban realm was to become the set for performing the rituals essential to the preservation and continuation of this urban myth.

The hypothesis for this study was inspired by the review of various texts written by the American critic Charles Jencks. Jencks recognized that the decoding of architectural language mainly responded to the opposing linguistic traditions of the Peircean semiotic

and the Saussurean semiology. The analysis of Jencks' writings suggested that Rossi intended his typology to respond to the dichotomy of the Saussurean tradition. Jencks, therefore, iterated the contradictory values of Rossi's architecture, describing it as ranging between the collective and the fascist and overall confirming its dichotomy. He additionally described Rossi's architecture style as both bourgeoisie and anti-bourgeoisie, suggesting that Rossi had successfully formulated a classless architectural style.

My translation of the documents, conference speeches, and reports that Rossi wrote early in his career allowed uncovering his political ideas and his embrace of theories of dialectic materialism. Thus, these ultimately allowed establishing a clear connection between Rossi's theory and the Saussurean taxonomy of the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss. Jencks, however, merely reinforced this connection, as Rossi had explicitly used Lévi-Strauss's theory in several of his writings to explain the transposition of the notions of collective memory onto the urban realm of cities. Rossi's embrace of materialist theories, on the other hand, suggested that materialism was the approach better suited for the analysis of his work, consequently requiring the reconstruction of the sociopolitical environment of the early years of his professional life, as well as the application of the many philosophies mentioned in his writings. Rossi's attempt to formulate an architectural typology became apparent through the reconstruction of these early events. Ideally, this typology was intended to respond to an intellectual logic in response to the country's secular traditions, and to be based on the fundamental principles of historical rationalist architecture.

Rossi was also inspired by the developmental dynamic of Soviet rationalist architecture for the tangible example that it provided in exemplifying the image and ideals of a socialist government. However, in the formulation of a new typology, he carefully scrutinized the cultural particularity of the Italian nation, maintaining continuity with the country's secular traditions, and aiming to formulate a typology properly understood by the masses. In this process, Rossi learned from historic mistakes made by others before him and rejected the straightforward application of preconceived stylistic components. Instead, as Jencks had noted, Rossi aimed to formulate a typology of archetypes communicative of a classless architecture.

Rossi researched the essence of architectural continuity, concentrating on the dynamic of the internal process that allows generating new artistic expressions as a consequence of the forced introduction of foreign directives. This research also led him to study the moment architecture evolved from baroque into modern, allowing depicting the effect of modern materials and techniques over the transformation of the style. Therefore, Rossi believed that the adaptation of traditional forms to new construction technologies, materials, and uses constituted the revolutionary process at the very basis of rationalist architecture, ultimately leading to the emergence of most of the modern architectural styles of the twentieth century. According to Rossi, this evolutionary process had enabled baroque architecture to extrapolate onto the neoclassical style of the Enlightenment and onto the constructivist architecture of the Soviet Union, which explained the overall continuity of the neoclassical humanist tradition.

Rossi researched the meaning of rationalist architecture by analyzing the origins of the neoclassical tradition of the Enlightenment. In this respect, he examined the potential of architecture and urban design to induce political and social changes by the way in which architectural typology could communicate new uses, and spatial configuration could impact human consciousness and behavior. Rossi particularly analyzed the connection of certain philosophical currents that conditioned European architecture with particular political agendas. And he found that a new national version of rationalist architecture should perpetuate, rather than discontinue, the humanist component of past architectural traditions. He explained that this humanism is embedded in all forms of modern architecture derived from the classic formulation and referencing the proportions of the human body. Rossi explained that this consisted of a type of architectural humanism representative of times of egalitarian state government especially exemplified in the design of civic Greek architecture and in the structural organization of the free *Comuni* of the Renaissance. Hence, he proposed that this type of architecture enabled conferring the essence of a democratic society to be reclaimed as the essential component of the modern social state.

Rossi found that the way in which modern architecture broke with these humanistic traditions rendered it an unsuitable style for the representation of a collective society. Thus, he believed that modernism's lack of connections with the Italian architectural tradition prevented the style from being understood and caused the masses' alienation from civic life. He, therefore, found that modernism could not be representative of a collective society because of this innate negation of the humanist qualities of classical

architecture and because of the ability to alienate individuals spatially through the separation of uses, the subordination of the pedestrian street, and the dismissal of the “human scale.” On the other hand, Rossi found the modernist tradition to be perfectly suitable to the corporate environment because of the ability of the style to subordinate the human element to the entity of the enterprise by reducing it to a fetish object.

Rossi researched various historical interpretations of rationalist architecture, their transcultural and transgenerational decoding, and their consolidation into academic traditions. He concluded that, whenever a style becomes part of a scholarly tradition, it is destined to lose its revolutionary content and to fall into an empty formalism. He found this fact manifested in most classical architecture of the egalitarian progressive states of the Greeks and the Renaissance, in the neoclassical architecture of the Enlightenment, and in the socialist realism of the Soviet Union.

Rossi also researched the relationship between forms and human perception conferring the architecture of the French Enlightenment with both revolutionary and reformatory qualities. He attempted to replicate forms behavior with the gestalt process, attributing them with the function of perpetuating the cultural patrimony of the past. Thus, the architecture of the city, according to Rossi, assumes the same collective function of rituals in perpetuating myths to future generations. It turns into a type of architecture conferred with the same nature of permanent reality of myths in eluding the action of time, a property Lévi-Strauss described as the notion of permanence. Thus, Rossi wrote in the book *Architecture of the city*:

Myths come and go, passing slowly from one place to another; every generation recounts them differently and adds new elements to the patrimony received from the past; but behind this changing reality, there is a permanent reality that in some way manages to elude the action of time. We must recognize the true foundation of this reality in religious tradition. I believe that the importance of ritual in this collective nature and its essential character as an element for preserving myth constitutes a key to understanding the meaning of monuments and, moreover, the implications of the founding of the city and the transmission of ideas in an urban context. I attribute an essential importance to monuments, although their significance in the urban dynamic might be at times elusive. For the ritual is the permanent and conserving element of myth, then so too is the monument, since, at the very moment that it testifies to myth, it renders ritual forms possible.³⁸⁰

This connection of Rossi's theory with the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss is particularly significant for exemplifying Durkheim's notions of societal coherence standing at the very basis of any collective society. These ideas later became intertwined with the political theory of Althusser (1971) and were expanded in various directions to encompass every very notion of collectivity. Rossi's theory finally provided an opportunity for these ideas to be externalized onto the urban realm of cities.

Although this research examined events preceding Rossi's proper re-definition of neo-rationalism that occurred after the Milan Triennial of 1973 and the full development of his style, it attempts to frame his ideas within a realistic ideological content. Subsequently, Rossi's response to the national political dynamic was deeply affected by the social unrest of the "years of lead" and by the revolts of 1968 and 1977, causing his architectonic language to reach full development and to start communicating as phenomenology.

³⁸⁰ Aldo, Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, (New York: The Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies, 1982), 82.

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