



## Quarticciolo

A suburb as dissonant heritage

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### Abstract

Applying case study methodology, this article addresses problematics related to the identity and origin of the Italian fascist-era residential satellite areas constructed around the capital, Rome. The article focuses on one such suburb, Quarticciolo, built mainly between 1940 and 1943 on the eastern periphery of the city. Three narratives contributing to the formation of the area's identity are identified and presented: Quarticciolo as (i) an expression of the fascist government's aspirations, (ii) a significant centre of anti-fascist resistance, and (iii) an example of modern rationalist architecture.

The three narratives, along with their constitutive elements, are then compared, and counterarguments to them are presented. It is argued that although all the narratives, in different ways, are connected to historical facts, each one of them on its own offers a one-sided interpretation. The narratives are then connected to the process of the public memorialization of the fascist era and the resistance, and to broader ongoing discussions concerning the architecture of totalitarian and dictatorial regimes as 'dissonant heritage'.

**Keywords:** Italy, 1930s–1940s, fascism, residential architecture, urban planning, cultural heritage, identity

### Introduction

Cultural heritage produced by the totalitarian and dictatorial regimes of twentieth-century Europe stirs charged reactions due to the complex memories and meanings attached to those historical periods. This heritage may be characterized as 'difficult', 'contested' or even 'undesirable', which in turn may be regarded as subforms of the wider concept of 'dissonant heritage'.<sup>1</sup> In Italy, the architecture and art of the fascist era (1922–1945) have also given rise to various contemporary discussions.<sup>2</sup> These discussions often concern public buildings and monuments, the evidently controversial character of which easily sparks strong reactions.

Mundane architecture and the everyday residential environment, in contrast, have drawn less attention in discussions concerning the dissonance of the

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of 'dissonant heritage' was introduced by Turnbridge and Ashworth (1996), who used it to characterize the discrepant and incongruous elements that are inherent to cultural heritage. For them, dissonance is "intrinsic to the nature of heritage", and hence the term is not exclusively reserved for *difficult* or *actively contested* forms of heritage (Turnbridge & Ashworth 1996, 21). The latter may thus be viewed as more restricted subforms of heritage dissonance. Macdonald (2009, 1) defines 'difficult heritage' as deriving from a historically significant period in the past which, due to its contested nature, is difficult to reconcile with "a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity".

<sup>2</sup> For recent research on the contested heritage of the Nazi and fascist regimes, see e.g. Bodenschatz et al. (2015) and Höckerberg (2018).

architectural heritage built during the dictatorship of Benito Mussolini. Accordingly, this article focuses on the problematics related to the identity and origin of the fascist-era residential satellite areas around the Italian capital, Rome, using the suburb of Quarticciolo as a case study object. Three different narratives regarding Quarticciolo's identity can be recognized, viewing Quarticciolo (i) as a creation of the fascist regime, (ii) as an important centre of partisan resistance, and (iii) as an area of avant-garde architecture that combines modern elements with tradition.

These narratives – the first two of which reflect disharmonious memories related to the fascist era and the resistance – have all contributed to the construction of Quarticciolo's identity. While the first narrative presents Quarticciolo as a creation of the fascist regime, the other two offer alternative interpretations of the area and aim to remove the stigma related to its fascist origin. Various elements – including accounts given in popular historiography, images produced by mass media, oral histories, and citizens' personal memories – have contributed to the narratives. Although partly incompatible, the narratives do not entirely invalidate each other but are parallel. Each narrative, when observed alone, offers a one-sided and limited view of the complex process of development of these residential areas.



**Figure 1. The twelve satellite areas around Rome, constructed by the Istituto Fascista Autonomo per le Case Popolari (IFACP) between the 1920s and 1940s. 1. Primavalle. 2. Trullo. 3. Tor Marancio. 4. Gordiani. 5. Quarticciolo. 6. Prenestina. 7. Tiburtino III. 8. Pietralata. 9. San Basilio. 10. Tufello. 11. Val Melaina. 12. Acilia. Of these, Primavalle, Trullo, Quarticciolo and Tufello are almost completely preserved today. Map: Rossi (1991, 71).**

### The *borgata* Quarticciolo

Quarticciolo is the last of the twelve *borgate ufficiali* (Figure 1), the so-called official satellite villages<sup>3</sup> constructed during the fascist era in the peripheral area around Rome,<sup>4</sup> planned by architect Roberto Nicolini<sup>5</sup> of the Istituto Fascista Autonomo per le Case Popolari (IFACP, Institute for Public Housing).<sup>6</sup> The building projects formed part of a social housing programme of affordable rental apartments for working-class people.<sup>7</sup> Many factors contributed to the growing need for apartments: population growth and internal migration, increasing rental prices, a desire to get rid of the shanty towns around Rome, the decentralization efforts of the regime, and the demolition projects undertaken in the city (Insolera 1962, 104–160).



Figure 2. Quarticciolo seen from the north in the 1950s. Photo: Insolera (1959, 53).

<sup>3</sup> 'Official' in contrast to the spontaneous construction projects that were characteristic of the surrounding peripheral areas during the post-war decades. The term *borgata* derives from the word *borgo*, meaning village (Insolera 1962, 139). Insolera saw it as a derisive name for an area that was "neither city nor countryside", an area where "the only possible social activity is dreaming" of a better future (Insolera 1959, 45). Today, the term *borgata* is considered obsolete and somewhat inappropriate and pejorative. For more on the origins of the word *borgata*, see Bartolini (2017).

<sup>4</sup> The new 1931 Piano regolatore (PRG, Master Plan) for Rome did not determine the location of Quarticciolo; the area was located outside the PRG, together with most of the twelve satellite areas built between 1924 and 1940 (Insolera 1962, 145, 159). Most of the goals of the 1931 PRG were never achieved, and the plans were changed. This change was enabled by the totalitarian nature of the regime: Rome's self-government was abolished, and the city was placed under a governor who was directly responsible to the regime (Fried 1973, 29–39).

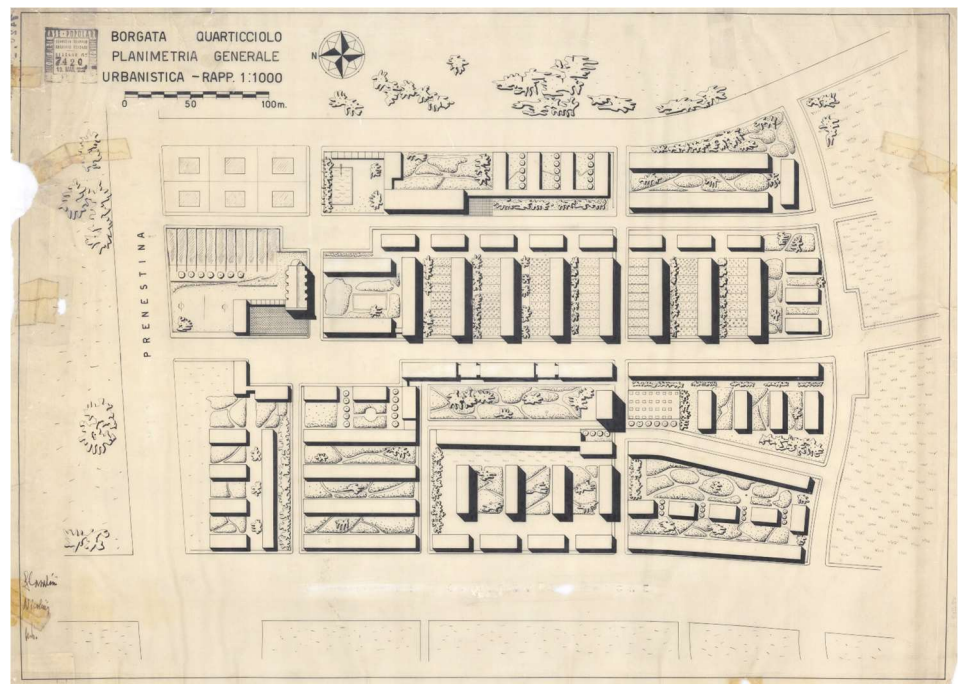
<sup>5</sup> Nicolini (1907–1977) became director of the Ufficio Tecnico of the IFACP of Rome in 1940. Following his graduation as an architect in 1934, his career at the IFACP was characterized by peripheral residential projects such as Tiburtino III (1936–), Trullo (1939–) and Villaggio Breda (1939–), co-designed with architect Giuseppe Nicolosi. In the same period, Nicolini took part in competitions for the new towns of Aprilia and Pomezia in Lazio, and in the planning of the town of Inconata in Puglia (Nicolini 2010, 15). In Quarticciolo (1940–), he further developed the solutions trialed in his earlier projects. For more on the planning and construction of Quarticciolo, see Villani (2012, 249–259) and Farina & Villani (2017).

<sup>6</sup> The IFACP was founded in 1904. From 1923 until 1943, its director was Alberto Calza Bini.

<sup>7</sup> This was a contribution to the Modern Movement's search for cost-effective minimum housing. The minimum dwelling was examined by, for instance, the second International Congress of Modern Architecture (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, CIAM) in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1929.

Quarticciolo, the main part of which was constructed between 1940 and 1943, is located roughly nine kilometres east of the city centre. Work on the area was decelerated by the Second World War, which Italy entered in 1940, but the IFACP's construction sites were not completely halted (Rossi 2003, 601–615). The area's last buildings were finished during the early post-war years. (Figures 2–3)

I will begin by describing and problematizing the three narratives. I will then proceed to elaborate on the politics of memory in relation to the fascist era and the resistance, and on contemporary discussions concerning the architectural heritage of the fascist era.



**Figure 3. General plan of Quarticciolo.** Roberto Nicolini, 13 March 1940, drawing no. 7420. Courtesy of: ATER del Comune di Roma (former Istituto Autonomo per le Case Popolari della Provincia di Roma), Archivio Disegni, Rome.

### Narrative I: the fascist legacy

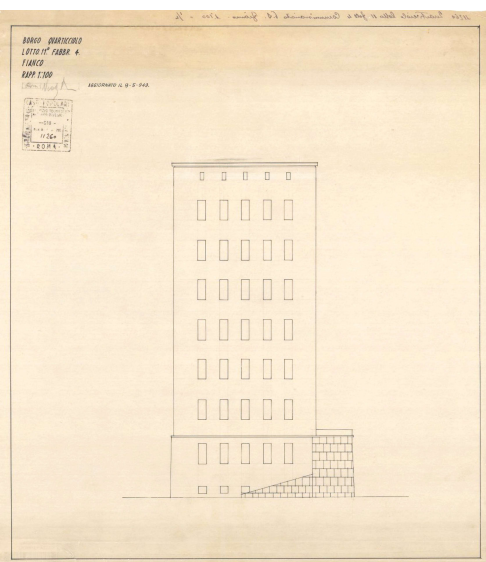
The first narrative is closely related to the area's genesis. In the collective memory of Rome's citizens, Quarticciolo has been stigmatized as an area built by the fascists,<sup>8</sup> and it is often seen as an expression of the fascist regime's desire to control citizens by means of urban planning. Furthermore, there has even been the belief – repeated in interviews with local people – that when seen from the air, the buildings of Quarticciolo form the word *DUCE* or *DUX*, or the letter *M* referring to Mussolini.<sup>9</sup>

*In the 1940s, let's say, more or less [...] Mussolini made ... this structure, let's say. Actually if you travel, once, when it was constructed, ... from an aeroplane, in the shots from the aeroplane one saw written: 'DUCE', there is really written 'DUX'.<sup>10</sup>*

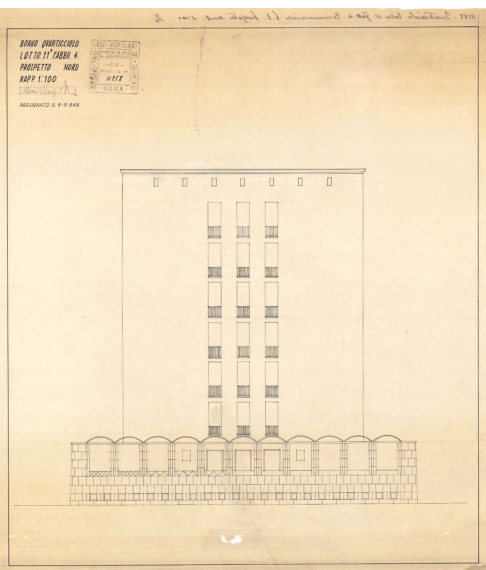
<sup>8</sup> "I lotti costruiti da Mussolini" ("the blocks constructed by Mussolini", my translation). Memory recounted by Giancarlo Conte in Bogliolo (2013).

<sup>9</sup> "mi dicono che, dall'alto, il Quarticciolo riproduce la Emme di Mussolini" ("I have been told that, [when seen] from the air, Quarticciolo reproduces the M of Mussolini.", my translation.) Interview with Mario Michele Marlino in Casalena & Merlino (2018); see also Cianfarani (2020, 255).

<sup>10</sup> "Ner Quaranta, diciamo, più o meno [...] Mussolini ha fatto ... questa struttura, diciamo. Infatti se lei, se viaggia, una volta, quando è stato costruito, ... dall'aereo, le riprese dall'aereo si vede scritto:



**Figure 4. Former Casa del Fascio and police station, Quarticciolo, east façade.** Roberto Nicolini, June 1940 (modified 9 May 1949), lotto 11, fabbricato 4, drawing no. 11260. Courtesy of: ATER del Comune di Roma, Archivio Disegni, Rome.



**Figure 5. Former Casa del Fascio and police station, Quarticciolo, north façade.** Roberto Nicolini, June 1940 (modified 9 May 1949), lotto 11, fabbricato 4, drawing no. 11258. Courtesy of: ATER del Comune di Roma, Archivio Disegni, Rome.

This narrative of Quarticciolo as an urban and architectural creation of fascism has many facets stressing different aspects of the regime's aspirations to control.

### Quarticciolo and forced resettlement

Quarticciolo's origins have been connected to evictions and the forced displacement of people. According to this account, the area was built for a socially homogenous group of lower working-class people who were evicted from their homes in the historic centre and forcibly transferred to the new area on a remote periphery of Rome, in the middle of deserted fields.<sup>11</sup> Their old homes were demolished together with vast areas to realize Mussolini's plan for the monumental Third Rome, the capital of the fascist state. According to this story, involuntary transfer to the *borgata* meant a dramatic decline in living conditions, and the people became totally isolated from daily life in Rome's centre (Berlinguer & Della Seta 1960, 59–64, 79–97; Insolera 1962, 130–145; Ferrarotti 1970, 56–69).<sup>12</sup> The association between the *borgate* and the dictatorial regime remains evident in the recollections of local interviewees (Bartolini 2017, 141; Ferrarotti 2009, 104–108; Portelli 2003, 61–64).

This 'myth of origin', which believes the demolition projects in the historic city centre to have been the reason for the construction of the *borgate*, was especially kept alive during the early post-war decades, when the population transfer to the periphery was generally contested as a 'segregation policy' to separate the elite from the lower classes (Berlinguer & Della Seta 1960, 79–80). However, to condemn this simply as 'discriminatory mass deportation' would be to give a one-sided image of a complex historical process.

At the beginning of the 1940s, when the Quarticciolo construction started, *sventramenti* (demolition projects) were executed, for example, in the areas of the Borgo (the future Via di Conciliazione), Via delle Botteghe Oscure, and the surroundings of the Capitoline Hill (Insolera 1962, 132–133, 142–143).<sup>13</sup> Even though the demolitions and the construction of the *borgate* were parallel phenomena, this does not mean that they were as interconnected as the narrative suggests. Later studies (Salsano 2010; Villani 2012) have described the complex social structure of the IFACP residential areas in Rome and have shown that people evicted from the historic centre comprised only a minority of those to whom apartments were allocated.<sup>14</sup>

The residents were selected by the Ufficio di Assistenza Sociale of the governorship of Rome according to certain criteria.<sup>15</sup> The majority of Quarticciolo's first 300 apartments were allocated in 1942 to large families with at least seven children, to applicants with fascist political or military merit or who had been widowed or maimed by the war, and to *squadristi* and *combattenti* (*Il Messaggero* 1942, cited in Farina & Villani 2017, 46).<sup>16</sup> Besides, in July 1943

'DUCE'; c'è proprio scritto 'DUX'." Memory recounted by Quarticciolo resident Vincenzo Pujia, quoted in Ferrarotti and Macioti (2009, 104, my translation).

<sup>11</sup> Such stories are not limited to Rome, however. Similar memories about evicted people are narrated in Milan, for instance (Sica 1985, 435–437).

<sup>12</sup> In addition to Quarticciolo, this myth of origin is associated with e.g. Pietralata, Tor Pignattara, Gordiani, La Garbatella, Tor Marancia and Primavalle (Trabalzi 1989, 38–39; Painter 2005, 95; Sinatra 2006; Camarda 2007; Ficacci 2007; Viccaro 2007, cited in Salsano 2010, 225).

<sup>13</sup> On the demolition projects, see Etlin (1991, 391–403) and Cederna (2006).

<sup>14</sup> However, it has been noted that in Primavalle, 17.5 per cent of the apartments (240 out of 1363) were allocated to people from the historic centre, especially from the Borgo area (Villani 2017, 37).

<sup>15</sup> Salsano (2010, 214) has noted that in many cases, in order to win approval for their application for an apartment, people appealed to *equità fascista* (fascist equality) or *bontà del Duce* (the benevolence of Mussolini) and claimed to have *sincera fede fascista* (sincere fascist faith), a real or pretended support for the regime. A letter of recommendation from a local association of the National Fascist Party was often also useful.

<sup>16</sup> *Squadristi* were armed fighting groups of fascists; they played a decisive role, especially at the beginning of the dictatorship. Each local squad had its own distinctive name, banner and membership



**Figure 6. Former Casa del Fascio and police station, Quarticciolo.** Photo: Cinquant'anni di vita dell'Istituto Autonomo per le Case Popolari della Provincia di Roma. 1953. Roma: Istituto Grafico Tiberino. p.81.



**Figure 7. Casa del Fascio in Tiburtina III.** Photo: Capitolium, Rassegna mensile del Governatorato, "Il nuovo centro assistenziale per la borgata Tiburtina III", no. 1, January 1939. p.180.

Quarticciolo received a number of people who had been left homeless by the bombing of the areas of San Lorenzo and Prenestino (Villani 2012, 257–258). Generally, the majority of the satellite areas' residents typically belonged to the city's lower working class and had either come from surrounding peripheral areas or migrated from other parts of Italy, especially from the south (Ferrarotti 2009, 104–105; Painter 2005, 92). Thus, the residents of Quarticciolo were a heterogeneous group consisting of people from diverse backgrounds.

Contrary to the narrative, a transfer to peripheral areas also did not automatically mean a deterioration in living conditions. This recollection may have been sustained by the memory of the *borgate rapidissimi*, residential areas – such as Gordiani and Prenestina – that were rapidly built on the periphery in the early 1930s by the IFACP or the city government. These areas were of low quality with no services and they typically consisted of one-storey houses that were often meant to be temporary. (Berlinguer & Della Seta 1960, 95–97; Villani 2017, 173–177). Areas designed at the turn of the 1940s, such as Primavalle (1938–1954), Trullo (1939–1940), Tufello (1940–1947), Villaggio Breda (1940–1948)<sup>17</sup> and Quarticciolo (1940–1943), were of higher quality, offering basic services and apartments with kitchens and running water (Insolera 1962, 143).<sup>18</sup> However, inadequate local maintenance and the destitution of the war years meant a decline in living conditions. The long distance to the centre and the lack of an adequate transport system deprived people of normal city life and rendered the situation difficult for those who worked in the centre.

### Surveillance by means of architecture and urban planning

In addition to forced displacements, the narrative is connected to recollections of the control and surveillance of residents. According to the story, many of Quarticciolo's first residents were anti-fascists and revolutionaries. Due to the social segregation and isolation of the periphery, people who were considered politically suspicious could easily be kept under control (Rossi 1996, 154, cited in Painter 2005, 95).<sup>19</sup> In addition, there are memories of experiences of supervision in other comparable Roman suburbs, such as Primavalle (Trabalzi 1989, 43) and a *case popolari* area on Via di Donna Olimpia (1930–1938), about which the following memory was collected from a resident:

*I lived in Donna Olimpia. They built these big projects, the [so-called] skyscrapers and in my way of thinking, these projects were not conceived in order to give a home to working people. They were conceived in order to concentrate people who were adverse to Fascism in strategic places, where they could be controlled easily.*<sup>20</sup>

In the middle of Quarticciolo there is a high-rise tower, originally a combined Casa del Fascio<sup>21</sup> – the local seat of the fascist party – and a police station

card (Cannistraro 1982, 515–517). *Combattenti* were veterans of the First World War, assisted by the organization Opera Nazionale Combattenti.

<sup>17</sup> Trullo and Tufello differed from the other Roman *borgate* in respect of their intended residents: they were constructed for *rimpatriati*, migrant Italians returning to their home country from abroad due to the Second World War (Villani 2017, 38). Villaggio Breda was constructed in Torre Gaia for workers at an armament factory (Società Italiana Ernesto Breda, established in 1866).

<sup>18</sup> When Giuseppe Bottai became Rome's governor in 1935, the role of the IFACP strengthened, and a new building programme was initiated in 1936 (Villani 2012, 122). This meant that the 'second-generation' *borgate*, planned between 1937 and 1940, were of higher quality.

<sup>19</sup> Exile to a place where an opponent of the regime could be controlled was used as a disciplinary measure during fascism. One experience of such internal exile is described by Carlo Levi in his book *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (*Christo si è fermato a Eboli*, 1945). He was exiled to a remote area of southern Italy between 1935 and 1936.

<sup>20</sup> Recollection by Goffredo Cappelletti (Portelli 2003, 61).

<sup>21</sup> The construction work of the building was given out to the company Quoiani in February 1942. (Archivio di Stato di Roma, fondo Genio civile di Roma, b. 536, cited in Villani 2017, 46.) On Casa del Fascio, see De Bernardi and Guarracino, eds. (1998, 196). In ancient Rome, the *fascio* (Latin, *fascies*) comprised a bundle of rods with a single-headed axe, representing authority (Cannistraro 1982, 205).

(*commissariato*, Figures 4–6). The height renders it the most important building in the area, and certain features, such as the thin gaps in the façade, make allusions to a fortress with portholes. From the top of the tower, the whole neighbourhood would be visible.<sup>22</sup> The square in front of it, Piazza del Quarticciolo, was for civil gatherings and rallies. (Villani 2012, 253; Villani 2017, 46)<sup>23</sup> Buildings for the central institutions of the fascist regime – such as Casa del Fascio,<sup>24</sup> the Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia,<sup>25</sup> and Gioventù Italiana del Littorio<sup>26</sup> – were typically located in the new settlements created during fascism (Figure 7).

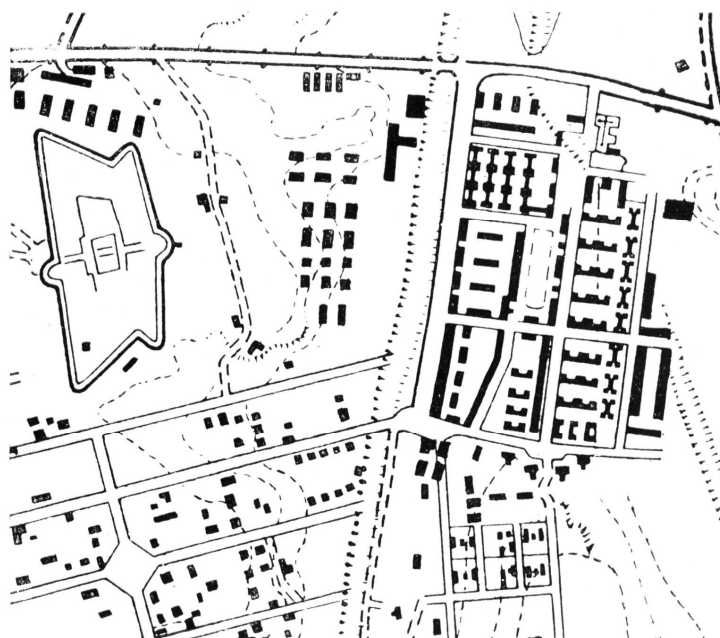


Figure 8. Forte Prenestina fortress and Quarticciolo. Map: Insolera (1959, 53).

In relation to the theme of supervision, it has been noted that Quarticciolo, like many of the other Roman *borgate* planned between 1935 and 1940, is located in the vicinity of a military fortress – intentionally so, according to suggestions by a few historians (Insolera 1962, 108–109, 142–143; Sica 1985, 415).<sup>27</sup> There is indeed a circle of fifteen fortresses and three batteries that were built around Rome between 1877 and 1891, after the unification of Italy, with the aim of

<sup>22</sup> Some residents recall in interviews that the entire area would have been controlled from the top of the tower. See: Associazione Sguardoingiro, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> In plans dated June 1940, the ground floor of the building has separate police cells for men and women, and the first floor has rooms for the political squad. On the fourth to sixth floors there are barracks for over sixty people (Nicolini, R., 1940. *Commissariato di P.S. e Caserma Agenti P.S. Borgo Quarticciolo, Lotto 11, fabbricato 4*, drawings no. 11250–11257. Rome: ATER del Comune di Roma, Archivio Disegni). In the early post-war years, the building was used as a police station, a common fate for many former Case del Fascio.

<sup>24</sup> Casa del Fascio was also constructed in Pietralata (1934), Primavalle (1938), Tiburtino III (1939, see Figure 7) and San Basilio (1940–) (Villani 2012, 78, 172–173, 183–184, 253–254, 269).

<sup>25</sup> The Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia was a fascist propaganda association that assisted mothers and infants. Established in 1925, it was one of the measures designed to strengthen the Italian family and remove women from the workforce. (Cannistraro 1982, 202–204)

<sup>26</sup> The Gioventù Italiana del Littorio was a fascist youth organization. Established by the regime to mobilize the support of young people, it was a powerful instrument of political persuasion. Fascist youth organizations comprised over five million children, adolescents and young adults by 1940. (Cannistraro 1982, 569–573)

<sup>27</sup> In 1929, Raffaello Ricci argued that “*borgate rurali* of 1000 to 1500 people” should be constructed so that they would be under the surveillance of “a police station or military volunteers, for reasons of security of the state” (Ricci 1930, cited in Insolera 1962, 108–109, 143; see also Bossalino et al. 1975). In addition to Quarticciolo, the suburbs of Pietralata (1935–1936), Tiburtino III (1936–1937) and Primavalle (1938–1954) are all located near fortresses. For more on the fortresses around Rome, see Iacobone (2006).

protecting Rome from possible attacks after its nomination as the new capital in 1870. Forte Prenestino, beside which Quarticciolo is located, was built between 1880 and 1884 to guard Via Prenestina, which leads to the Porta Maggiore gate in the city wall (Iacobone 2006, 87, Figure 8). The fortress could facilitate a military intervention if needed, and – like the tower of the Casa del Fascio – its presence would be a constant reminder to residents of the power of the regime (Cianfarani & Porqueddu 2012, 112).

A strong psychological factor is thus at play in the presence of fascist institutions and military fortresses in these areas. Indeed, the emphasis on the areas' fascist origin has sometimes even driven people to create recollections of fascist symbols that turn out to be illusory. The recollections quoted above, which claimed that letters referring to Mussolini would be visible when Quarticciolo was viewed from the air, may be taken as examples. Aerial photographs and maps do not support the claim that the buildings of Quarticciolo would form any particular letter or word.



**Figure 9. The borgata San Basilio near Via Tiburtina, 1944.** Note the buildings forming the word *DUCE*. Photo: ICCD Aerofototeca (Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione) in Bonomo (2006, 152).

However, the formation of letters through the arrangement of buildings was not uncommon in Italy in those years. For instance, in San Basilio – constructed north-east of Quarticciolo by the IFACP between 1940 and 1942 – a group of buildings was configured to form the word *DUCE* (Figure 9). Among these buildings were a school, a kindergarten and a small church. The area consisted mostly of low-quality single-storey houses for large families. The text could be seen from an aeroplane until the buildings were demolished during the 1950s (Villani 2012, 268–276). In addition, the city of Latina (formerly Littoria, founded south of Rome in 1932) is known to have Palazzo M, a former Casa del Fascio constructed in 1943 in the shape of the first letter of Mussolini's surname. The fact that similar recollections were connected to Quarticciolo shows, I believe, that stories and memories concerning different areas have interacted and overlapped with each other.

Nevertheless, there were also other reasons for placing these suburbs on the periphery besides those related to control and social segregation. Under fascism,



the population of Rome almost doubled (Insolera 1962, 146).<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the regime introduced a deurbanization policy, implemented through the depopulation of cities (*sfollamento*). Population growth, which was a goal of the regime, was thus intentionally directed towards the countryside and supported by means of propaganda (Villani 2012, 256).<sup>29</sup> In publications overseen by the regime, the new satellite areas were marketed with images of fresh air and sunlight, the 'healthier life of the countryside', with services and lower-density housing, and in opposition to the old, dense and unhealthy quarters of the historic centre (Painter 2005, 94). As a part of the propaganda, the fascist regime wanted to represent itself as improving living conditions and helping poor families to acquire new homes, while at the same time also striving to get rid of anything that might threaten the image of the new modernized Rome (Salsano 2010, 224).

Furthermore, decentralization was also regarded as an answer to the question of air raid protection for citizens. The Italian National Union of Air Raid Protection and the Commissione per le borgate satelliti, of which the architect Gustavo Giovannoni was the leader, set out a plan for satellite villages around Rome in 1938 (Cohen 2011, 160). A system of small rural agglomerations around the city was to be located in areas where there was nothing of strategic importance that would interest the enemy (Stellingwerff 1940, 7–9).

While narrative I correctly captures the fact that Quarticciolo was constructed as part of the fascist era's plans for urban development, the observations above imply that both the regime's aspirations to relocate its opponents in the peripheries and its attempts to control its citizens by means of city planning are overemphasized in this narrative.

## Narrative II: resistance

The second narrative can be seen as a kind of counter-reaction to the first, challenging the idea that fascism was the constitutive feature of the area's identity. This second narrative – supported by the recollections of local people and by public historiography – is built around the story of a person called Il Gobbo, the 'hunchback of Quarticciolo'.<sup>30</sup> According to the story, he was the leader of a partisan band called Basilotta (Majanlahti & Guerrazzi 2010, 129), which fought in the resistance during the nine-month German occupation of Rome between 1943 and 1944.<sup>31</sup>

The partisans had a number of supporters in Quarticciolo, and the suburb served as a hiding place for Il Gobbo's band, which was "always on the edge between anti-fascist struggle and common crime" (Portelli 2003, 64). Il Gobbo was born in Calabria in 1927 and moved to Rome with his family in the 1930s. Aged only seventeen, he was especially active during the first months of the German occupation in 1943. He earned his reputation as a benefactor by organizing attacks, stealing from Germans and fascists, and giving the loot to the poor of the area; he gradually became one of the most wanted resistance fighters (Vidotto



**Figure 10.** Memorial plaque on the façade of the former Casa del Fascio and police station in Quarticciolo, dedicated by "the anti-fascists of Rome" to "the partisans of Quarticciolo". Dated 24 April 2010. Photo: author (2018).

<sup>28</sup> At the end of the 1930s, Rome's estimated annual population growth was 50,000 people (*Capitolium* 1938, 81–86, cited in Painter 2005, 92).

<sup>29</sup> On these events, see Kallis (2014, 175–186).

<sup>30</sup> His real name was Giuseppe Albano. He gained the nickname 'Il Gobbo', which means a hunchback, due to a malformation of his back.

<sup>31</sup> The resistance can be defined as both a civil war and a patriotic war since it targeted both the fascist Italian Social Republic (ISR) and the Nazis. Support for the regime reached a peak after the invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, but it then started to decline, due to the alliance established with Germany and the anti-Semitic laws that came into force in 1938. In addition, the impact of the Second World War increased anti-fascist sentiment among the people (Portelli 2003, 10). Mussolini was voted out of power by the fascist grand council on 25 July 1943, and soon after this the Germans occupied Rome. Nonetheless, it was not until April 1945 that the whole country was liberated and the ISR came to an end.

2001, 238). He was later killed in unclear circumstances (Portelli 2003, 64).<sup>32</sup> In addition to Il Gobbo's band, there were several other small partisan groups (Villani 2012, 258). Quarticciolo's association with partisan resistance is something that people living in the area have often recalled in interviews (Portelli 2003, 63–64; Ferrarotti & Maciotti 2009, 111–112).<sup>33</sup> (Figure 10)

Consequently, during the post-war decades, Quarticciolo was remembered as one of the most important centres of anti-fascist resistance in Rome, together with several contemporary peripheral areas, such as Pietralata, Gordiani and Tor Pignattara (Camarda 2007; Ficacci 2007; Viccaro 2007). The peripheral areas were even called *la cintura rossa* (the red belt) of Rome. The role of the periphery in the anti-fascist resistance was especially highlighted by the political left (Bartolini 2017, 138–139). Residents' support for leftist parties showed in their voting behaviour: in the election of 25 May 1958, more than 60 per cent of Quarticciolo's residents voted for the political left (Berlinguer & Della Seta 1960, 107–108).<sup>34</sup>

The first years of Quarticciolo corresponded with the years of the Second World War and the period of Rome's occupation<sup>35</sup>; thus, the events of 1943–1944 essentially defined the early identity of the area. Although the population of the periphery was mainly working class, the residents of Quarticciolo and the surrounding areas came from diverse backgrounds, as pointed out above. From a microhistorical perspective, the recollection that residents were active opponents of fascism is understandable, as it reinforces the area's identity. Nonetheless, from a broader perspective, the process of national memorialization of the resistance and the fascist period may be considered problematic.

### **Narrative II and the collective (loss of) memory**

The public memorialization of the fascist era has indeed passed through several phases, with attitudes towards the recollection of that period varying depending on the political emphasis (Fogu 2006, 151–165). Besides local memories, popular historiography and the mass media have also contributed to how the fascist era and the resistance are remembered in Italy. It has been argued that this historiographical process has created a strong collective memory of the resistance as covering the whole of Italy, and an image of Italians as anti-fascist from the beginning (Fogu 2006, 149–151). In this process, the twenty years of fascism that preceded the resistance have often been forgotten.

However, the partisan movement in Italy was largely a northern phenomenon, and it emerged mainly during the *biennio* of 1943–1945 – the two-year period of the fascist Italian Social Republic (ISR), which Mussolini, controlled by the Germans, directed from the town of Salò. The experiences of this period were very different in northern Italy (from north of Milan to south of Rome), which was administered by the fascists and occupied by the Germans, and in southern Italy, which was administered by the Italian monarchy and liberated by the Allies (Fogu 2006, 148–149).

Hence, after the Second World War, the word 'resister' primarily referred to a person who had opposed the nineteen-month ISR regime, not to an opponent of the whole fascist period, which had begun when Mussolini took power in 1922. Certainly, the resisters also included long-term opponents of fascism. Although

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<sup>32</sup> For more on the character of Giuseppe Albano, see Recchioni and Parrella (2015) and Gemelli (2009).

<sup>33</sup> See also Ferrarotti & Maciotti 2012; Associazione Sguardoingiro 2012; and Scuola Media di via Pirota & Scuola Media di via del Pergolato 2015.

<sup>34</sup> The main leftist political parties were the Christian Democrats, Italian Socialist Party and Italian Communist Party.

<sup>35</sup> Most of the plans for the buildings in Quarticciolo were dated spring 1940, just before Italy entered the Second World War in June 1940.

the Italian resistance was the largest such movement in Western Europe – the number of partisans reached 250,000 by the time of Italy's liberation in 1945 – the ISR still had about 487,000 members and almost 400,000 soldiers in the spring of 1944 (Ben-Ghiat 2001, 201–204). Pollard (1998, 116–117) has noted that although the efforts of the partisan bands were important, it was ultimately the Allies who defeated the fascists and Nazis in Italy.

The somewhat exaggerated emphasis on the resistance movement is only one example of how collective responsibility for the fascist period was downplayed in the years after the fall of the regime. In 1944, the philosopher Benedetto Croce called the fascist dictatorship a pathological “parenthesis” in the nation's history (Croce 1963, cited in Ben-Ghiat 2001, 207), thus implying an image of fascism as something that was not innate to Italy but stemmed from external origins. Furthermore, the post-war decades saw the creation of an image of the fascist dictatorship as a rather benign form of totalitarianism, “a ‘lesser evil’ with respect to National Socialism” (Ben-Ghiat 2004, 137; see also Focardi 2004). Similarly, the Italians of the fascist period were often seen as *brava gente* (good people), victims of the Nazis and fascists. In the post-war years, many Italian films, such as Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*, 1945), supported these images of the past (Fogu 2006, 147).

Yet, in response to Croce, the author and journalist Giame Pintor argued as early as 1950 that the dictatorship “was not a parenthesis, but a grave malady that had corroded every fiber of the nation” (Pintor 1950, cited in Ben-Ghiat 2001, 207). The image of Italians as *brava gente* has worked as an “exculpatory paradigm”, demonstrating the citizens' innocence and releasing them from feelings of guilt regarding the events that took place under fascist rule (Fogu 2006, 169). The fact that most of the Italian Jews survived, and their deportations to concentration camps did not start until 1943, has undoubtedly contributed to this image.

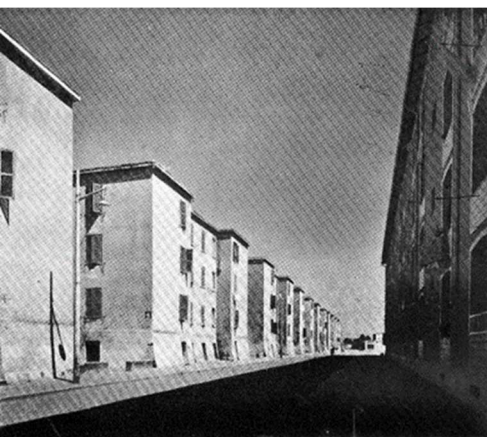
According to the historian Emilio Gentile, when it comes to looking back at the *ventennio* – the twenty years of fascism – Italians as a nation suffer from *amnesia collettiva*, a public memory loss (Gentile 2009; Lonigro 2018). Some parts of the memorialization process – such as the fascist era's absence from the history taught in Italian schools for several decades after the war – can even be called an “active process of forgetting” (Mezzana 1997, cited in Fogu 2006, 150).

The public memorialization of the resistance and the preceding twenty years of fascism may thus be considered an obstacle to the nation's coming to terms with its dictatorial past. In this respect, the Italian reaction to fascism differs considerably from the German path of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (dealing or coping with the past) with regard to the Nazi era.

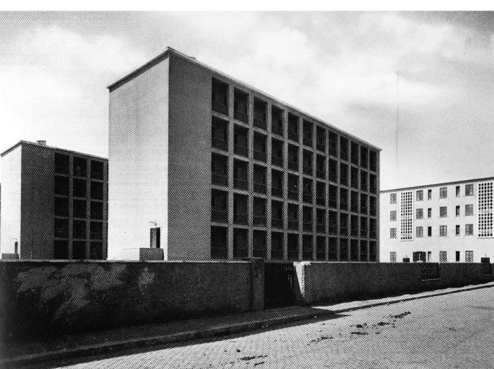
### Narrative III: rationalist architecture

While the first narrative condemned Quarticciolo as an oppressive creation of the fascist regime, and the second emphasized the role of the resistance, the third narrative offers alternative perspectives. Like narrative II, it also denies that fascism is the main factor determining the area's identity. In contrast to the negative description of Quarticciolo as a monotonous, desolate and squalid area where “all the buildings are oriented in the same way, the main axis in north-south direction” (Ferrarotti 1974, 80–81; Ferrarotti & Macioti 2009, 104), the area is represented as an avant-garde example of Italian rationalist architecture and as anything but monotonous. This narrative sees the whole area in a different light, as influenced simultaneously by classical and vernacular architectural traditions and the international Modern Movement (Figures 11–12).

According to this interpretation, Quarticciolo's orthogonal street network follows a rectangular pattern, inspired by the model of an ancient Roman settlement

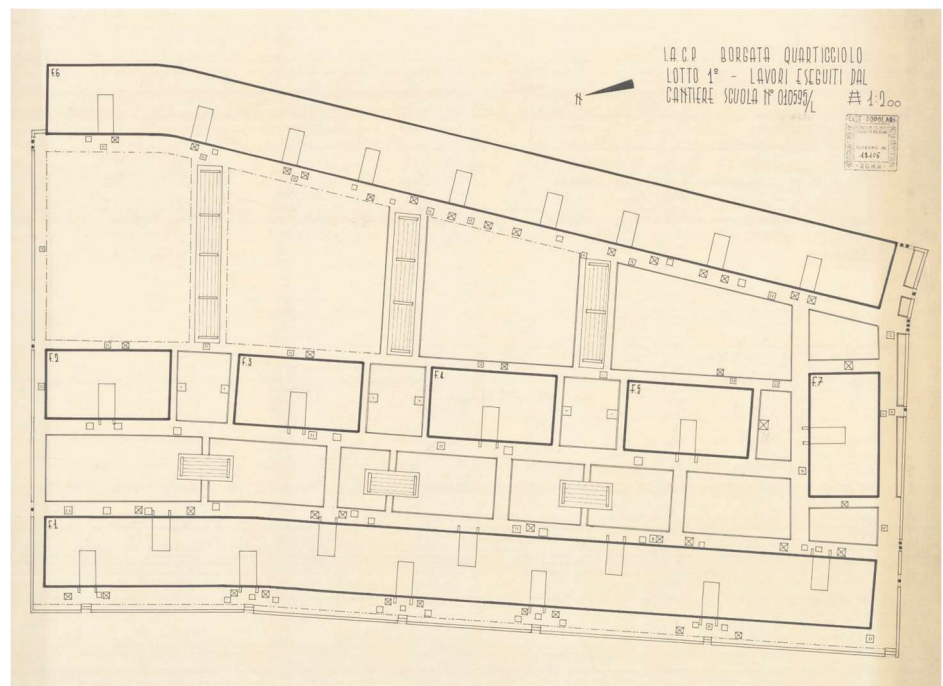


**Figure 11. Residential buildings in Block 8 along Via Ugento, Quarticciolo.** Photo: Cinquant'anni di vita dell'Istituto Autonomo per le Case Popolari della Provincia di Roma. 1953. Roma: Istituto Grafico Tiberino. p.80.



**Figure 12. A balcony-access building type (casa a ballatoio) in Block 2 along Via Ostuni, Quarticciolo.** Photo: Nicolini (2010, 69).C

outlined by *cardo* and *decumanus* streets (Via Manfredonia and Via Ostuni) (Nocera 2010, 37; Cianfarani & Porqueddu 2012, 117).<sup>36</sup> The series of separate but still connected religious and secular piazzas, and the gradual emergence of the tower-like building in the middle of the area, have been construed as inspired by Austrian urban theorist Camillo Sitte's (1843–1903) studies of medieval public spaces (Farina 2017, 94). Furthermore, following the interpretation, the plain, simplified building typologies reflect the interest in *architettura rurale*, the vernacular architecture of the Roman countryside (Cianfarani & Porqueddu 2012, 117). In contrast to these aspirations, the area has also been praised for its experimental architecture, especially for the development of the strictly rational, grid-façaded, balcony-access building type (*casa a ballatoio*, Figure 12), which enabled the creation of numerous small apartments at a reasonable price (Angeletti et al. 1984, 22). It has been argued that the area was particularly inspired by the functionalist German *Siedlung* settlements and the idea of *Existenzminimum* (the 'dwelling for minimal existence'), a shared ambition among European architects (Cianfarani & Porqueddu 2012, 118).



**Figure 13. Plan of quarter 1, between Via Castellaneta and Viale Palmiro Togliatti, Quarticciolo.** Roberto Nicolini, 1940, drawing no. 12105. Courtesy of: ATER del Comune di Roma, Archivio Disegni, Rome.

When the area is observed more closely, a myriad of valuable features can be noted. At the area level, Quarticciolo clearly differs from the surrounding miscellaneous post-war neighbourhoods thanks to its well-defined spatial structure, uniform appearance and strong architectural character. At the quarter level, despite the buildings' plain appearance, the area is rendered spatially versatile by the rhythm of the open spaces and building volumes, and by the continuous sequence of public spaces from the church piazza (Largo Mola di Bari) to the main piazza (Piazza del Quarticciolo), which is dominated by the tower-like building (the former Casa del Fascio and police station) indicating the location of public and commercial functions.

<sup>36</sup> *Cardo* and *decumanus* were terms used in town planning, based on the ancient Roman *castra* settlement, where the main horizontal axis was *cardo maximus*, and the central vertical axis *decumanus maximus* (Nissen, Höcker & Prayon 2006). Admiration and mimicry of ancient Rome, *romanità*, was also a central feature of the fascist regime. On *romanità*, see Visser (1992).



Figure 14. Lamellar houses (*casa in linea*) in Block 9 along Via Manfredonia, Quarticciolo. Photo: author (2018).



Figure 15. Long lamellar house with nine staircases in Block 1 along Via Castellaneta, Quarticciolo. Photo: author (2018).



Figure 16. Lamellar houses in Block 8 along Via Ugento, Quarticciolo. Photo: author (2018).

There is plenty of variation in building typologies and in the way the buildings are arranged. The comb-shaped quarter structure, repeated in different ways, affords a series of semi-private, enclosed courtyards between the residential buildings (Villani 2012, 251, Figure 13). The building types consist of different versions of lamellar and balcony-access houses from three to five storeys high.<sup>37</sup> The variation continues at the level of the façades, enriched by the open grids of the staircases and the arched vaults of the balconies and loggias. (Farina 2017, 91–134) The ideals of international functionalism and contemporary social housing production are visible in Quarticciolo's grid structure and open quarters, the arrangement of the dwellings' main rooms in favourable directions, and the plain plastered walls with minor ornamentation.

Besides rationalism and the classical, medieval, and vernacular traditions, the architecture of Quarticciolo<sup>38</sup> (Figures 14–17) was strongly shaped by the policy of autarchy, the national self-sufficiency programme executed by the fascist regime.<sup>39</sup> In fact, the interest in vernacular architecture – common among architects internationally at the time – and the fascist policy of autarchy led to somewhat similar results. The economic principles of autarchy required e.g. the saving of steel, cement and wood, and promoted the use of local materials. This in turn caused a return to traditional construction techniques, such as masonry bearing-walls and vaulted openings, and stimulated the development of new structural experiments. (Farina 2017, 126)

Most of the characteristics described above are shared with the other Roman *borgate* from the turn of the 1940s – in planning many of which Nicolini had participated – demonstrating their high architectural quality in comparison with earlier such projects. These architectural features are undoubtedly an important factor in creating a sense of belonging to place among the residents (Farina 2017, 134).

While the first two narratives were supported and sustained by residents' and citizens' oral histories, the third narrative has mostly been promoted by specialists such as art historians, architects and researchers. It is also of later origin than the first two, having emerged in recent decades as scholars have become increasingly interested in the peripheral areas. However, this narrative, which focuses only on the area's architectural features, also offers a one-sided perspective on Quarticciolo if considered in isolation.

When we examine the architecture of a totalitarian or dictatorial regime, according to urban planner and sociologist Harald Bodenschatz, instead of evaluating the buildings and urban planning projects as “products alone” we also need to pay attention to the political, social and cultural context in which the architecture was created. This is crucial for understanding “why and how the products emerged and why they took a particular shape and character”. (Bodenschatz 2017, 144, 153) However, the Italian rationalist architecture of the fascist era is often described, for instance, as *razionalismo degli anni Trenta* or *architettura*

<sup>37</sup> There are roughly 2300 apartments in the area (Angeletti et al. 1984, 82–83).

<sup>38</sup> Roman modernism had a strong association with history and tradition. In this respect it differed from the more standardized rationalism of the northern Italian architects, who had closer connections with the International Style. The Roman Modern Movement, led by the architects Marcello Piacentini and Gustavo Giovannoni, strived to mix international ‘universal architecture’ with the contextual approach (Etlin 1991, 271–279, 323–325).

<sup>39</sup> The general director of the IFACP of Rome sent a letter to the IFACP chief of offices, and also to Roberto Nicolini, in January 1940. In the letter, he ordered the *borgate* to be constructed according to the principles recently validated by Mussolini: ‘*autarchia – economia – rapidità*’. This especially meant making savings in materials and work hours, aiming for rapidity of construction and ‘good enough’ apartments for the masses without risking the quality of construction (Ordine di servizio N° 2 “Criteri per la progettazione e l’esecuzione dei nuovi gruppi”, 6 January 1940. [letter] Rome: ATER del Comune di Roma, Archivio atti Direzione Generale).



Figure 17. Lamellar house in Block 1 along Viale Palmiro Togliatti, Quarticciolo. Photo: author (2018).

*metafisica*,<sup>40</sup> with no mention of fascist ideology, which is considered problematic. For instance, the fascist-era city of Tresigallo, which markets itself as the *città metafisica*,<sup>41</sup> has been accused of the “complete removal of its political past” (Capresi 2019, 43). A growing number of researchers and historians view with caution the tendency to consider the architecture and art of the fascist era in isolation from its ideological and political meanings (see e.g. Carter & Martin 2017, 355).

## The narratives and post-war identity formation

At this point, it is advisable to sum up the most important points related to the narratives. The first narrative illustrates the strong association between the satellite areas and the fascist regime, foregrounding the segregation, control and surveillance of residents, especially those adverse to fascist ideology. The second narrative, recalling the area’s role in the resistance, may in turn be interpreted as a counter-narrative to the first. The emphasis on the memory of active anti-fascist resistance may be regarded as an emancipatory remedy that strives to remove the stigma of the suburb’s totalitarian origin.

Indeed, the first two narratives seem to share the view that the majority of the suburb’s inhabitants were opponents of the fascist regime. With regard to the population flow towards the periphery, it has been suggested that “the most extensive slice of the Fascist ‘third layer in Rome’” was largely a consequence of the “strategy of making people invisible” (Kallis 2014, 185–186). Narrative II, in turn, presents a story of these ‘invisible people’ uniting their forces in the partisan resistance. The historical reality, as pointed out above, is more complex.

The narrative of forced displacement and resistance has probably united people, as Luciano Villani has suggested, to fight against the isolation of the periphery and affirm a sense of belonging. The hard times they experienced together increased solidarity among the residents, who felt underprivileged and marginalized (Villani 2017, 38, 49).

The need for such possibilities was urgent in the post-war decades, which were characterized by waves of migration, congestion, unemployment, destitution and poverty. Quarticciolo, among the other areas, suffered from an absence of healthcare services, electricity and transport (L’Unità 1944, 1945, cited in Villani 2012, 255). The difficult living conditions on the periphery during the post-war years were criticized especially strongly in the 1950s and 1960s (Berlinguer & Della Seta 1960; Insolera 1962; Ferrarotti 1974). These aspects of the marginalized periphery were portrayed in cinema, for instance, in the short film *Terzo mondo sotto casa* (Giuseppe Ferrara, 1970), which also showed glimpses of Quarticciolo. However, this documentary film has been criticized for conflating the problems of the shanty towns and areas of provisional and spontaneous construction (*baraccopoli*)<sup>42</sup> and the higher-quality official *borgate* into a homogenous whole (Villani 2017, 51).

Many of the earlier provisional residential areas on the periphery deteriorated quickly, and most of them – such as Gordiani, Prenestina, Pietralata, Tiburtino III and San Basilio – were demolished between the 1950s and 1970s, whereas most areas from the turn of the 1940s – Primavalle, Trullo, Tufello, Villaggio Breda and Quarticciolo – remained largely intact (Farina & Villani 2017, 51–55). In 1976, after a long period of Christian Democrat administration, Rome’s city

<sup>40</sup> This refers to the Italian artistic movement ‘*pittura metafisica*’, which was started in the 1910s by the artist Giorgio De Chirico, and which also inspired modern Italian architecture.

<sup>41</sup> See: Associazione culturale Torri di Marmo, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> New waves of migration in the 1950s created a housing shortage and a market for illegal construction work outside the city’s official residential districts. By the 1980s this ‘unauthorised city’ had expanded to 800,000 inhabitants (Della Seta & Della Seta 1988, 241, cited in Bonomo 2009, 39).



**Figure 18. Former Casa del Fascio and police station, Quarticciolo.** The upper floors have been converted into apartments. Photo: author (2018).



**Figure 19. Former Casa del Fascio and police station, Quarticciolo.** The ground floor is occupied by the association RedLab Quarticciolo. The façade was covered with a mural in 2018–2019. Photo: author (2018).

administration was won by the political left, and efforts were made to improve living conditions on the periphery (Vidotto 2001, 334–335).

Today, these satellite areas have gradually become part of the expanding metropolis, and the experience of isolation has become less dominant. Nor is the contrast between centre and periphery as pronounced as it used to be (Ferrarotti & Maciotti 2009, 58). Similarly, the fascist stigma that oppressed Quarticciolo has started to become less prominent (Villani 2017, 47). This may also imply that the time is ripe for a re-evaluation of Quarticciolo's history. Of the three narratives, the third, stressing the modern traits of the suburb's architecture, is chronologically the most recent, and it provides possibilities to view Quarticciolo in a new light.

Recently, social associations established by the residents have started to fill in the lack of communal services in Quarticciolo. For instance, in 2007 the old market hall was transformed into the Teatro-Biblioteca (Villani 2017, 46–47), a library and cultural centre that organizes lectures and theatre plays, including works of an anti-fascist character.<sup>43</sup> The tower-like former Casa del Fascio (Figures 18–19), used as a *commissariato di polizia* until the 1980s and then left abandoned, was occupied in 1998 and is now used as the RedLab autonomous cultural centre, which promotes social-political initiatives in defence of 'solidarity' and housing rights. The upper floors are used as apartments. The former military fortress Forte Prenestino was occupied as early as the 1980s for use as the autonomous cultural centre Centro Sociale Occupato Autogestito, which offers diverse activities such as a restaurant, sports and music.

Compared with the other remaining Roman *borgate* from the turn of the 1940s,<sup>44</sup> the role of autonomously led social initiatives is emphasized in Quarticciolo. The significance of this is increased by the fact that two of these initiatives are located in the former Casa del Fascio and the fortress, which have thus been transformed from instruments of control into common public spaces directed by residents.

Another means to enliven the cityscape and direct attention to conditions in the peripheries' residential areas is street art. In addition to Quarticciolo, many other public housing areas, such as Tufello, Trullo, Primavalle and Tor Marancia, have recently become known for their murals. Even though murals alone do not offer a solution to the problems faced by these areas, they can be an important channel for participation in activism against marginalization (Villani 2017, 55).

The activities described above continue, in their specific ways, the tradition of the battle for better living conditions and the 'right to the city' – residents' active involvement as equal citizens of Rome. They can also offer a model for similar suburbs suffering from the common problems of peripheral areas. Although the void left by the lack of public services cannot be completely filled by such residents' initiatives, they are highly likely to reinforce the feeling that one is able to have an influence.

## Discussions concerning 'dissonant heritage'

The three identity-forming narratives concerning Quarticciolo, along with the recent developments in the area, can be related to contemporary discussions about dissonant heritage in the context of the *borgate* and the city of Rome more widely.

<sup>43</sup> On these events, see, for instance: Roma Today 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Primavalle, Trullo and Tufello have plenty of small companies and outlets. In addition to these, there is a cultural centre in Tufello, an autonomous cultural centre next to Trullo (CSO Ricomincio dal Faro), and a library, theatre and cinema in Primavalle. Primavalle's 1950s market hall (*mercato coperto*) is going to be renovated.

The apparently incongruent, parallel narratives about Quarticciolo are symptomatic of the heritage dissonance I addressed in the introduction. The dissonance in tangible and intangible heritage is manifested dissimilarly between Quarticciolo and central Rome, where the vast layer of fascist-era architecture has started to draw more attention, creating polemics of various kinds. Questions about how to negotiate difficult heritage, or how to manage material remains that represent a difficult past, are now more frequently posed in contemporary discussions concerning Italian modern architecture.

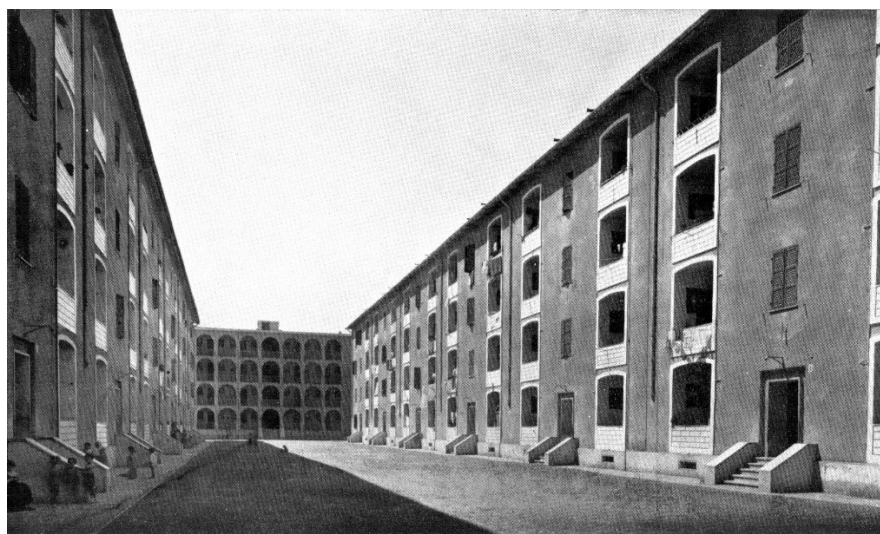
Indeed, fascist-era architectural heritage and art has stirred many reactions in Italy. One active party in the discussions concerning how this heritage should be treated is the Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia (Anpi), founded in 1944. For instance, Anpi demands that certain monuments, artworks and inscriptions that are reminiscent of fascism should be demolished or removed from public buildings (Corriere della Sera 2015; Il Messaggero Veneto 2015; Valsusa Oggi 2017). This illustrates the strong ongoing memory of the resistance, which sparks polemics about the justification for contested monuments remaining in public space.

Alongside the demands for demolition, an increasing number of fascist-era buildings have been announced as accredited architectural heritage that should be preserved. However, there is concern about the 'uncritical' preservation of this heritage, and a growing group of scholars and historians (e.g. Arthurs 2010; Carter & Martin 2017) argue that the ideological and political message that this architecture and these monuments carry should be contextualized, reinterpreted or transformed.



**Figure 20. Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana (1938–1943), EUR, Rome.**

The same modern neoclassical architectural motifs are visible in both the Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, one of the landmarks of fascism, and the residential architecture of Quarticciolo (see Figures 21 and 22). Photo: author (2018).



**Figure 21. Residential buildings in Block 7 between Via Trani and Via Ugento, Quarticciolo, constructed between 1951 and 1953.** A balcony-access building with arcade corridors in the background. In Italy, there was no immediate disengagement from the modern neoclassical architectural style after the Second World War – unlike in Germany, for instance. This continuity is also visible in the satellite areas completed during the 1940s and 1950s, especially Quarticciolo, Tufello and Primavalle (cf. Figures 20 and 22). Photo: Cinquant'anni di vita dell'Istituto Autonomo per le Case Popolari della Provincia di Roma. 1953. Roma: Istituto Grafico Tiberino. p.101.

Such discussions have typically revolved around the fate of rhetorical public buildings and monuments. Demands for demolition do not, however, threaten Quarticciolo's architectural heritage, which is devoid of conspicuous inscriptions or artworks alluding to the fascist regime (Figures 20–22). In fact, as narrative II shows, although the area was originally a creation of the fascist IFACP (Institute for Public Housing, cf. narrative I), it was adopted into the narrative of resistance



from early on. Instead of making demands for demolition, present-day activism in Quarticciolo focuses on the challenges of everyday life, as discussed above.

Concerning architectural heritage, Quarticciolo's value was recognized in the 2008 Piano Regolatore Generale (PRG, the master plan for Rome), together with other *borgate* from the turn of the 1940s and many post-war residential areas such as the INA-Casa areas of the 1950s.<sup>45</sup> The recognized values are especially connected to the area's architecture as a creation of modernism, as described in narrative III above.



**Figure 22. Buildings constructed between 1951 and 1953 in Primavalle (cf. Figure 21).** Photo: Cinquant'anni di vita dell'Istituto Autonomo per le Case Popolari della Provincia di Roma. 1953. Roma: Istituto Grafico Tiberino.

*The testimonies of local people show that a recollection of a difficult past does not necessarily make the place related to that memory undesirable.*

## Concluding remarks

This article has addressed problematics related to the identity and origin of the peripheral areas of Rome, focusing on one fascist-era residential satellite area from the early 1940s as a case study object. Three narratives contributing to the formation of the area's identity have been examined and connected to contemporary discussions concerning Italian reactions to the nation's dictatorial past and its fascist-era architecture as dissonant heritage. Although the events related to the narratives I and II took place during a rather short temporal phase, their role in the identity formation of the area is highly pronounced.

This case study of Quarticciolo shows that areas that bear a stigma and a heavy historical-social burden, such as these fascist-era *borgate*, are not one-dimensional. An assumption naturally presents itself that dissonance in heritage might easily prevent people from being proud of the place where they live. However, as discussed in this article, the testimonies of local people show that a recollection of a difficult past does not necessarily make the place related to that memory undesirable. The residents of Quarticciolo generally share a strong identity. Despite ongoing problems, residents have reported feelings of pride in

<sup>45</sup> The areas are defined as follows: "T8 – Tessuti di espansione novecentesca con impianto moderno e unitario, i complessi di edilizia pubblica disegnati, secondo i principi progettuali del Movimento Moderno così come interpretati dalla cultura urbanistica e architettonica italiana" ("Areas of the 20th century expansion of modern and uniform structure, public housing complexes planned according to the principles of the Modern Movement, as interpreted in Italian urban planning and architecture"). Carta per la qualità: "Tessuti caratterizzati dall'impianto volumetrico degli edifici" ("Areas characterized by the volumetric structure of the buildings". Piano Regolatore Generale di Roma, 2008.)

and belonging to their home district (Ferrarotti & Maciotti 2009, 60). Similarly, results from the Italian cities of Predappio and Forlì – both closely linked to the person of Mussolini – show that “a community can create a strong tie with its cultural heritage even when dissonance is perceived and the memory is contested” (Battilani et al. 2018, 1420, 1432). Recent experience in Germany likewise suggests that the material remains of a difficult past do not need to be considered a “disruption to positive identity formation” (Macdonald 2016, 13–19). Especially when seen against the backdrop of the three narratives discussed above, contemporary developments in Quarticciolo reveal the complex dynamics through which an everyday urban area and its significances are constantly shaped and reinterpreted – on the public level, in historiography and through grassroots activities.

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