Difficult heritage and children's summer camps of Fascist Italy

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2

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Abstract

The Fascist regime helped itself to a diverse collection of children's institutions, including summer camps, or colonie, which it put its stamp of ownership on, expanded, and adapted into a tool for indoctrination of youth under the guise of benevolent welfare. This research focuses on the legacy of the colonie built during the years of the Fascist regime whose current situations include demolition, abandonment, ruination, continuing use, and unfinished and successful renovations. The research explores how these spaces have fared over the years since they were established, and speculates as to what the future may hold for them as the problematic and ambiguous heritage of a totalitarian regime. The study is conducted through investigations into their past, present circumstances and speculative futures. Research methods include studies of primary and secondary texts, walking, photographic practice, and appropriation and reuse of archival and other imagery. The research is framed within concepts of heterotopia and difficult heritage, which it uses to expose ambiguities in representations of the colonie system, alongside an intrinsic 'fuzziness' in the Fascist regime's ideology. The practical outcome of the research and practice comprises a set of photographic images and representations in the form of a photobook, in which ambiguities and contradictions are revealed through juxtapositions and sequences of images and the spaces between them. A nuanced approach allowed for understandings of the regime's attitude towards the health and indoctrination of youth to emerge. The research concludes that consequences of Fascism's appropriation of the colonie system are complex and multifaceted. Scholars acknowledge that further research is needed, and this study makes a contribution towards situating the architecture and memory of former Fascist colonia as heritage worth preserving, irrespective of inherent difficulties.

Abstract in italiano

Il regime fascista si è appropriato di variegate e molteplici istituzioni per l'infanzia, inclusi i campi estivi -o colonie- sui quali ha impresso il proprio marchio di proprietà, espandendoli e adattandoli in strumenti di indottrinamento giovanile, sotto il benevolo pretesto di promuovere il benessere. La presente ricerca si concentra sull'eredità delle colonie costruite durante gli anni del regime fascista, attualmente in via di demolizione, abbandonate, cadute in rovina, oppure utilizzate di continuo o ristrutturate (con lavori conclusi o meno). La presente ricerca esplora anche come questi spazi abbiano resistito nel corso degli anni dalla loro fondazione e specula sul futuro che potrebbero avere come patrimonio, certamente problematico ed ambiguo, di un regime totalitario. Lo studio si basa su indagini sul loro passato, sulle circostanze attuali e sul futuro speculativo. I metodi di ricerca comprendono lo studio di testi primari e secondari, sopralluoghi in situ, fotografia dei luoghi, e lo studio e il riutilizzo di immagini di archivio o altre immagini. La ricerca è contestualizzata all'interno dei concetti di eterotopia e "patrimonio difficile", che vengono utilizzati per mettere in luce le ambiguità nelle rappresentazioni del sistema delle colonie, accanto a una intrinseca "sfocatura" dell'ideologia del regime fascista. Sul lato pratico, lo studio comprende un insieme di fotografie e rappresentazioni sotto forma di libro fotografico, in cui le ambiguità e le contraddizioni vengono messe in risalto attraverso giustapposizioni e sequenze di immagini e di spazi. Un approccio graduato ha permesso di comprendere l'atteggiamento del regime nei confronti della salute e dell'indottrinamento della gioventù. In conclusione, le conseguenze dell'appropriazione del sistema delle colonie da parte del fascismo sono complesse e poliedriche. Gli studiosi del settore riconoscono che ulteriori ricerche sono necessarie, ed il presente studio contribuisce a posizionare l'architettura e la memoria delle ex colonie fasciste come patrimonio degna di essere preservata, a prescindere dalle intrinseche difficoltà.

Contents   Page

Introductions

Foundations

Research and practice

Colonia matters

Fascism, architecture, aesthetics

Tables and figures

Introductions

Preface

During the summer of 2014, I participated in a workshop led by photographer Seba Kurtis, as part of the Adriatic Coast to Coast photography project (adriatic coast to coast, 2012).

On the afternoon of June 28th, I took a train to the Adriatic seaside resort of Igea Marina on a whim as I found the name appealing. A little way along the coast from the station, I noticed an imposing building in its own grounds and set back a little distance from the beach. It looked neglected and had clearly been abandoned some time ago, surround by scruffy trees and shrubs, with windows broken, downpipes leaking, walls stained, plaster cracked and falling off. I wondered whether it had been a hospital, boarding school, asylum, convent, or something else? Spotting a red door, open wide enough to reveal a dark interior, I pushed it open further, stepped over the threshold, and entered inside.

After climbing a flight of stairs, I found myself in what appeared to be a never-ending maze of similar rooms, in a darkness that would have been complete were it not for streaks of light piercing drawn blinds. My assumption that the building had been an institution was confirmed when I found myself in a large room furnished with wooden cupboards, drawers, and pigeonhole compartments. Scattered about

the room were piles of mouldering, mildewed, softcover books. I took a few photographs, and put a couple of the books, and a small broken wooden crucifix, into my bag to examine later, conscious that I ought to be heading back for a review of the day's work

The building that I had stumbled upon turned out to be the long abandoned Colonia Roma, one of a number of residential summer camps built for children and orphans of railway workers during the 1930s. The books were children's medical records from the 1960s, presumably discarded and left behind when the building closed for good. The title of this book is a response to this building and its comrades that I went on to discover, which seem to watch over the history within their walls, kept apart from the time and activities of the world outside.

I began this doctoral research in 2018, four years after my encounter with Colonia Roma (Figure 1).

Colonia O.P.A.F.S. / Roma
Tim Brown
June 28 2014

Figure 1

Introduction

Colonia: a settlement of Roman citizens

Originally, coloniae were founded in enemy territory; later, colonia became an honorific title (Livius, 2020).

Elena Mucelli observes that the term and its various forms (*colonia marina, colonia estiva, colonia di vacanza*, etc.), appear to have entered common usage in Italy during the mid 1930s, a period that coincided with the transition, from medical foundations, built on the model of the hospice, to Fascist institutions for the manufacture of political consensus in the young (Mucelli, 2009, p. 102).

This research investigates the phenomena of Fascism's use of colonie, or children's summer camps, with reference to literature and theory, spatial models, historical sources, walking and ways of negotiating space, photography and archival imagery. At the heart of the research is a question of how effective was Fascism's appropriation of the colonia, as a preexisting model of child assistance and welfare, and whether reverberations from the past can affect the present day legacy of the remains of hundreds of colonia buildings.

Research into Fascism and colonie, and the architecture of Fascism in general, was apparently quietly ignored for decades following the fall of the regime. However, a growing body of literature suggests a renewed interest in the physical remains of Fascism and totalitarian regimes, generally understood in terms of difficult heritage. In the case of Fascist colonie, a near silence reigned for more than forty years, as if these notable examples of rationalist architecture had simply ceased to exist. In 1985, an edition of Domus, featuring a photomontage of Grace Jones and Colonia XXVIII Ottobre on the cover, was perhaps the spark that ignited new interest in the phenomena of the colonia. The majority of research concerns itself with the Adriatic coast, as this is where most colonie, including some of the most architecturally iconic examples, are located. There has been less research into those on the Tyrrenhian coast, and less still into mountain colonie.

Prior to this research, Fascist colonie had not generally been considered in terms of difficult heritage. While a few texts have referred to them as heterotopias, the notion of colonie as examples of Michel Foucault's theory had not been extensively researched either. As a critical framework for research, theories of difficult heritage and heterotopia may not initially appear to be closely aligned, and I am not aware of any prior research that has attempted to integrate the two. However, I consider that they can complement each other, and may effectively be combined to form a robust critical framework for this research.

Difficult heritage has typically been applied to places and sites with complex social and political histories, which could also be regarded as heterotopias, as spaces apart from the outside world that challenge understandings of history and memory. Sites

of difficult heritage may give rise to critical reflection on historical narratives and structures of power, consistent with Foucault's ideas of spaces that disrupt the conventional order of things. Difficult heritage sites could be compared to palimpsests or brecciation (Bartolini, 2014), as carriers of multiple layers of meaning that may challenge perceptions of history. Similarly, heterotopias, as spaces of otherness, question understandings of reality and temporality. In addition, difficult heritage and heterotopias both result in spaces in which the otherness of space, history, and memory may be encountered, confronted, and reflected upon.

While the *casa del fascio* and *casa del balilla* have been studied as distinctly Fascist typologies, the colonie also deserve attention for other reasons, as examples of Fascism's appropriation of an existing structure and system, while their postwar continuity also differentiates them from these other types. Their decline and present day near-demise were brought about, not by the fall of the Fascist regime, but by prosperity in the 1970s, after a period of dramatic growth in the number of seaside colonie during the 1950s and 60s. Unlike the vast majority of researchers of Italy's colonie, I am not an architect or architectural historian, and neither am I Italian. In acknowledging that my perspective on Italy's Fascist past and response to the colonie is likely to be out of the ordinary, and this research aims to exploit such differences to its benefit. For some academics, Fascist era colonie are irrevocably tainted through association with the regime. However, this research strikes a middle course and considers them as situated in a no-man's land between welfare and political indoctrination, an idea inspired by Umberto Eco's notion of Fascism as a fuzzy totalitarianism.

While other colonia-based photobooks record a photographer's response to encounters with the present day architecture and spaces of colonie, the photobook, produced as the main practical outcome of this research, plays on themes of ambiguity and fuzziness, multiple purposes and times of the colonie, and in doing so, conflates the past, present, and dreamed of futures. Several authors have acknowledged the need for further research into the colonie, and this thesis and creative practice address and aim to fill a number of gaps in current knowledge.

Aims

- To investigate the architecture and spaces of children's summer camps associated with the Italian Fascist regime, as ambiguous and potentially difficult heritage.

- To investigate how working with images and photographs might provide information and clues towards understanding the history, present situation, and potential future of former Fascist colonie.

- To consider ways in which the past might still influence and affect plans to develop and reuse the remains and sites of Fascist colonie in the present day.

Objectives

- To examine the present day situations of a number of former Fascist colonie

through outcomes of walking, photography, and image-based research methods.

- To investigate Fascist colonia as a distinct architectural and functional typology, in the context of heterotopia and as the heritage of a totalitarian regime.

- To seek to reveal relationships and connections between the past, present, and speculative futures of a number of former Fascist colonie, through processes of editing and sequencing images including archives, contemporary photography, and speculative future imaginings.

Outcomes

The research comprises a written thesis, a number of image-based case studies, and a photobook which may provide the basis for published work.

Research trips

I made six research trips to Italy between October 2018 and February 2020.

	Date	Investigations	Colonie	Notes	Photography
1	Oct 2018	Exploring feasibility of Adriatic coast as scope of project with over 250 colonie dating from 1920s to 1970s.	UNES/ENEL, Stella Maris, Reggiana	Stella Maris as a possible case study.	Digital
2	Feb 2019	Postwar colonia area around Cervia with utilitarian designs and construction	Novarese, Varese, Bologna	Novarese as case study.	Digital
3	May 2019	To see reuse by Palloncino Rosso and art exhibition in Colonia Bologna. Considering colonie on Lido di Venezia.	Mater Dei, Padova Bologna, Novarese, Ferrovieri, Varese	Varese and Novarese as possible case studies.	Digital
4	Oct 2019	Colonia Fara renovated as luxury hotel spa plus mountain colonia at Rovegno.	Rovegno Fara Fiat Ettore Motta	Torre Fara behind schedule.	Medium format film and digital
5	Jan 2020	Part of Christmas vacation. Venice and	Ferrovieri Varese	Novarese, Varese, and	Medium format film and digital

		Adriatic coast.	Novarese Montecatini XXVIII Ottobre	XXVIII Ottobre as case studies.	
6	Feb 2020	First official trip of 2020. Restored colonia Padana, Pesaro and colonia exhibition	Padana Pesaro Varese Montecatini AGIP	Padana and Varese as case studies.	Medium format film and digital images
7-10	2020-2021	To develop and refine photographic strategies. Repeat photography, panoramic, infrared…		Indefinitely postponed due to Covid travel restrictions.	

Table 1.

Four further photography based trips were planned, one to the Adriatic coast, one to the Tyrrhenian coast, one to the mountains, and one kept in reserve. In the event, my last and final PhD research trip to Italy was to be in early 2020. I arrived in Bergamo on February 20, the day before Europe's first case of Covid-19 was detected in the area. Over the week that followed, I came to appreciate the solitude of abandoned colonie as places in which to relax and take refuge from the uncertainty of the world outside. I wondered whether Italy's Fascist heritage really mattered in the face of the unfolding crisis, which appeared threaten the wellbeing of the population. I presume that my responses to the travel restrictions that followed, would be familiar to any photographer, deprived of being able to engage with their passion for making images. However, I had PhD research to complete and

I concluded that an ingenious, imaginative, creative approach was required in order to continue with the research. The photographs I had already made became more significant, in the light of the fact that I had to make the best of them. I explored a variety of alternative resources, including archival newsreel footage, architectural CGI visualisations, and Google Street View. The multifaceted approach ensures that the practical outcomes stand apart from the photography of Dubowitz, Mini, Tazzari, and others. In addition, it provides tools for investigating the pasts, present day situations, and possible futures of the colonie.

Colonia history

The idea of the Colonia—whether at the seaside, in the mountains, or as a sun-therapy clinic – is one of the most challenging themes ever offered to architects… The organisation simultaneously comprises part hotel, part school, and part clinic…Everything in them – from the abstract lines and forms to the development of the plans, which trace the itinerary of communal life; from the width and type of windows to the design of the balustrades; from the plaster to the pavings, colours and materials; from the refectory to the rooms for washing, dormitories and gymnasia – comes together to produce an image which is realised and never forgotten in the minds of the children, the memory of their stay in the Colonie (Labò, 1988).

Before Fascism

Richard Russel (1687-1759), pioneered a clinical therapy based on administering seawater orally, and externally through bathing, which led to the foundation of the Sea-Bathing Infirmary in Margate in 1791, claimed to be the earliest specialist orthopaedic hospital harnessing the benefits of sunshine, fresh air and seawater in the treatment of non-pulmonary tuberculosis (Historic Hospitals, 2017). However, Giuseppe Barellai (1813-1884), promoted the establishment of seaside hospices to improve the health of sickly urban children in Italy, and could be considered the founder of the seaside colonia. The first Italian seaside hospice was built at

Viareggio, with a total of twenty hospices established by 1875. The first to appear on the Romagna coast were built near Rimini, at locations chosen to keep them segregated from the resort's exclusive tourist beaches. The findings of an Italian census in 1919 recognised a number of types of childhood hospice, including prophylactic nurseries, vacation colonie, summer camps, open-air schools, heliotherapeutic stations, seaside hospices, and summer and permanent seaside and mountain colonie. While the emphasis was on a medical hospice model rather than summer, vacation colonia, the report noted that there was a confusing mix of architectural styles and in what they offered (Balducci, 2019 pp. 107-108).

Under Fascism

The Fascist regime created organisations with specific responsibilities for overseeing, administering, and controlling the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of Italian youth, primarily through the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB), subsumed in 1937 into the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (GIL), which transferred direct control to the Fascist Party. The *Opera Nazionale del Dopolavoro* (OND), provided after-work activities for adults, while the *Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia* (ONMI), oversaw maternal and infant welfare. The regime expanded the colonia system, and created categories, depending on whether establishments were daytime (diurnal), temporary (summer), or permanent (open all year) residences. They were also classified according to their situation within the landscape, with coastal, mountain, river, lakeside colonie. In addition, colonie were grouped according to the type of therapies provided, including sunlight, seawater, salt and iodine, sun and air (PNF,

1939). Their history and origins distinguish them from other architectural typologies of the Fascist period, such as the c*asa del fascio* and *casa del balilla*, which came into being, blossomed, and died with the end of the Fascist regime.

It appears there was an appropriate colonia for each and every child's circumstance. There were colonie for children of war veterans; of workers in industry (Fiat, Olivetti, Piaggio, Montecatini, etc.), transport (railway, trams, mariners), public services (electric, postal), cities and regions (Bologna, Milan, Varese, etc.), as well as for children of Italians overseas. Winkelmann's survey lists fifteen residential colonie for the children of railway workers, for instance (Winkelmann, 2015). Luca Rossi (2019, p. 105), comments that the construction of colonie offered substantial job creation, with financial opportunities in a variety of sectors. Construction, infrastructure, energy, food supplies, and all the necessary elements for running the colonie, provided welcome opportunities for work in a time of chronic unemployment.

1935 to 1936

Claudia Baldoli's (2003), study of Fascism's efforts to reach out to Italians abroad, as part of the greater Fascist community, provides insights into the importance the regime placed on the summer camps for the children of Fascists abroad. She considers the case of Italians living in Britain, as part of the *Italian Fasci Abroad,* whose primary purpose was to fulfil Mussolini's wish of eliminating the concept of the Italian emigrant, and replacing it with *italiani all'estero.* The significance of the

colonia lay more in the potential for propaganda than in benefits for the relatively small number of children able to participate. However, the *Italian Fasci Abroad* regarded the colonia as a factory for the production of new Italians (p. 25), and *L'Italia Nostra,* the newspaper of the London Fascio, reported endlessly on the summer camps. With Italy's war with Ethiopia in 1935, *L'Italia Nostra* featured summer camps and the war side by side, with the word *colonia* referring to *colonia estiva* and *colonia italiana in Africa.* London's Victoria Station became the meeting point for the departure of children on their way to summer camps, and of volunteer soldiers for the war in Ethiopia (p. 76). After the Fascist conquest of Ethiopia in 1936, MI5 security recognised a build up of propaganda associated with the colonia programme. Consequently, they designated the summer camp as a dangerous institution of the *Fasci Abroad,* and kept records of the children who travelled from Britain to stay in the colonie.

1937

A significant change of direction for youth assistance and education occurred in 1937, with the formation of *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (GIL), under control of the Fascist party, and presided over by ardent Fascist Achille Starace. The change was accompanied by revised colonia regulations, including the importance of defending the Italian race, and an increased amount of time allocated to pre military training. Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi (1997, pp. 100-118), describes an emphasis on *style* under Achille Starace who was obsessed with the minutiae of behaviour, under the belief that appropriate gestures and behaviour would create the new Fascist man.

25

GIL activities came to occupy every moment of free time, through organised outings and after-school clubs. Starace also implemented the *Fascist sabbath*, accounting for what had previously been free time on a Saturday afternoon.

1940

It seems generally accepted, and would perhaps make sense, that the residential summer colonia programme came to a halt with Italy's entry into the war in 1940. However, a significant number of summer colonie appear to have carried on operating, and I came across references to a largely forgotten story of Italian settlers' children while reviewing a couple of *Istituto Luce* newsreels I had seen previously without realising their significance:

September 1940. *Bambine e ragazze italiane figlie di coloni libici ospiti di una colonia marina a Rimini: Saggio ginnico* (Archivio LUCE, 2023e)

November 1940. *La colonia marina Fara di Chiavari ospita i figli dei coloni libici* (Archivio LUCE, 2023f)

Both films appear to have been made several months after Italy entered the war. I wondered which colonie were still in use and who were these Libyan children? This section relates to the logistics of their arrival and stays in colonie and other establishments. In this regard, 1940 could be regarded as marking the final Fascist incarnation of the colonie, when the sheen of welfare and social care was stripped

away, to reveal a system of barracks as places of military preparation and discipline. *Il Palloncino Rosso* reports that there were thirty-seven active colonie along the Adriatic coast during the summer of 1940, hosting around 20,000 children from African colonies and from other Mediterranean countries. In 1941, due to evolving wartime requirement, most of the colonie on the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic sides were evacuated and repurposed for other uses, such as military hospitals, leaving 67 operational colonie, mainly on the Ligurian Riviera and the Adriatic coasts. The press at the time portrayed the situation positively, but, the reality was rather different (Il Palloncino Rosso, 2023). Mabel Berezin (1997, p. 157), comments that in 1941, despite Italy being at war, the Veronese Fascist youth organisation offered a full calendar of activities, including summer camps for the children of soldiers.

Nicola Perugini and Tommaso Fiscaletti describe how the Fascist regime transported thirteen thousand Italian children from Libya, crossing the Mediterranean to the Adriatic summer colonies, to discover their homeland and train their bodies and souls for the role of future conquerors in Africa (Perugini & Fiscaletti, 2022), and Alessandra La Ruffa (2018), tells of 13,000 children of Libyan settlers, whose colonia summer resulted in them being stranded in Italy for the duration of the war and beyond. Governor of Libya, Italo Balbo brought thousands of settlers over from Italy, to farm the semi desert lands of Italy's newly acquired province. 120,000 Italians were settled in Libya in 1940, when Mussolini decided to that the children of these settlers should spend the summer in Italian colonie, having assured parents that they would be returned after a few weeks. It was also considered desirable to remove them from a developing war scenario in Libya. On June 10, 1940, a day after the children's arrival on Italian shores, Mussolini announced Italy's entry into

27

the war. Shortly afterwards, children leave the coastal summer colonie behind, with many being sent inland. More and more resembling military barracks, their days are marked by strict discipline, with a whistle to signal the hours and mark each day's activity, beginning with reveille, punctuated by military parades, and salutes before Mussolini's portrait, their new father and protector. Boys are toughened through military style marches, and girls who cry and ask for their mothers, are informed that they are daughters of Italy. Propaganda films from *Istituto Luce* show children sending greetings and kisses to their families via the radio, unaware that their words will never reach their parents back in Libya. With the fall of the regime in 1943, and the dissolution of Fascist organisations, a revived Opera Balilla of the Republic of Salò, became involved in the fate of these thousands of stray children, while a census in 1946, revealed that around 10,000 remained in various collection centres (Il Palloncino Rosso, 2023).

1944

Towards the end of the war, the proximity of coastal colonie to the Gothic Line fortifications constructed by the German army, extending from the Tyrrhenian to Adriatic coasts, from Massa-Carrara to Pesaro, resulted in them being used as barracks, military hospitals, and prisons, while others were demolished. Pivato (2023, p. 98), reports that in the summer of 1944, almost all the colonie along the Tuscan coast were demolished by the German army because they obstructed the view and the line of artillery fire. Demolitions included the Roberto Farinacci and Marina Italcementi, both examples of rationalist architecture, and the Principessa di

Piemonte. The most notable demolition was perhaps the colonia constructed for children of employees of the Ilva steel company, which comprised a six-story semicircular structure facing the sea. Perugini and Fiscaletti report that the colonia of Villa Marina XXVIII Ottobre at Pesaro, became a local headquarters of the Nazi occupying forces, as the final eastern bastion of the Gothic Line. Thomas Venturi (2020, p. 117), provides an account of battles around Milano Marittima with colonia Varese and Montecatini occupied by Nazi snipers. The buildings were later incorporated into the *Rimini Enklave,* a vast camp for prisoners of war, between 1945 and 1947.

1945

Colonie not destroyed during the war were patched up, stripped of symbols of the regime, and generally continued to operate as children's summer camps for the next twenty or thirty years, under the auspices of the Catholic Church which took over the management of former Fascist colonie, resuming their role as the guardians of young souls, a prerogative that came to a halt after Mussolini disbanded non-Fascist youth organisations, leaving the ONB as the only youth organisation (Orioli, 2007).

1960s and 70s

The postwar years saw a second wave of colonia construction, that outstripped earlier building initiatives in terms of quantity, if not for innovative architecture.

Stretches of the Adriatic coast, including the area around Cesenatico and Cattolica, were designated *città delle colonie,* due to the number of colonia buildings constructed adjacent to each other along the coastal strip. With a few exceptions, such as colonia SIP-ENEL at Riccione (Galati, 2007), and ENPAS at Cesenatico, post-Fascist colonie were modest unremarkable buildings, constrained by practical considerations of cost. The haste to build and complete them may have stifled debates concerning how colonie could be designed to best serve new generations of children. Their primary reason for existence had also changed since it was no longer necessary to produce citizen soldiers, and tuberculosis was treatable with newly discovered antibiotics. However, in postwar austerity, many families were unable to afford summer vacations and so the colonie had a continuing purpose.

The imperative for construction, and demand for colonia holidays declined during the 1970s, coincident with improvements in living standards and affordable family holidays (Orioli, 2007). Pivato confirms that the end of the colonia experience can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, and reflects Italy's economic boom that allowed Italian families to spend vacations with their children. The demise of the colonia also neutralised a dire threat made by parents to misbehaving children of 'behave or I'll send you to the colonia!' (Pivato, 2023 p. 10). Sofia Nannini reports on a recent research project that revisited the 1986 IBC survey of the Adriatic coast of Emilia-Romagna. The 1986 survey identified 252 colonie, with nearly half still in use as summer colonie. The new one found 22 colonie still serving their original purpose, with 67 abandoned, and 50 having been demolished (Nannini, 2023).

Foundations

Research overview

Italy's children's summer camps of the 1930s (*colonie d'infanzia / colonie estive*), and particularly the grand rationalist structures situated on seashores and mountains, could perhaps be seen as the Fascist regime's poster child for its mission to strengthen the Italian race, and to usher in a new generation of true Fascist men and women, soldiers and mothers, with Fascism priding itself as a forward-looking political force and cult of youth. The regime promoted the notion of making way for youth, and its youth policies included initiatives such as the colonie (Ben-Ghiat, 2001, pp. 13, 93-122), which were regularly fêted in the press and official newsreels, celebrating their construction in record time, inauguration ceremonies, and visits by Mussolini, members of his family, and high ranking Fascist officials. All played out against a backdrop of hundreds and thousands of apparently happy, healthy children; marching, exercising, bathing, dining in refectories, and sleeping in dormitories when not lined up to be weighed, measured, x-rayed and checked by medics. Balducci (2019, p. 110), cites official statistics compiled in 1936, that stated there were 3821 colonie, of which 55 were active all year, 601 were residential summer colonie, and 3165 were non-residential summer daytime establishments. Regarding the number of children, Jocteau (1990, p. 45), reproduces Fascist party statistics from 1938, which claim that 772,000 children attended a colonia in that year.

Having seen military service during WWII, as barracks, hospitals, and prisons, and after exposure in the line of fire, the surviving colonie emerged, seemingly untainted by their association with the Fascist regime. They were repaired, restored and put back to use. The following twenty years or more witnessed an explosive growth in new colonie, with the majority built along the Romagna coast. Their heyday was followed by a lingering decline, closure, and abandonment, brought about by the prosperity of the 1970s, which made family holidays affordable. Today's survivors have been renamed, revamped, and relaunched as young people's adventure holiday centres.

Academic interest in the phenomenon of Italy's colonie has also ebbed and flowed over the years. They featured in architectural journals throughout the Fascist regime, including a much cited couple of issues of the journal Costruzioni (Labò & Podestà, 1941a; 1941b). A 1985 edition of Domus could perhaps be regarded as signifying the reawakening of academic interest in the colonie. Between the magazine's glossy covers may be found a number of articles including:

• An article by architect Fulvio Irace, on the architecture of the colonie as a new utopia (Irace, 1985), and republished almost thirty years later (Irace, 2014)

• A plea from expert in architectural restorations Marco Dezzi Bardeschi, concerning the need to conserve and restore these icons of modernism (Bardeschi, 1985)

• An 'itinerary with ruins', taking in twenty-eight former Fascist colonie (Asaad et al., 1985).

Out of the itinerary, only colonia Varese (number 19), truly qualified as a ruin, while Lino Redaelli (number 21) had been demolished in 1974, and Pavese (number 23), was also demolished some time prior to the itinerary's publication.

An update of the itinerary is included alongside this thesis, as one of the image sequences produced during the research. What was a current itinerary is now more than thirty-five years old, while its concept of the present day and what constituted a ruin, appeared somewhat ambiguous or fuzzy. Observing this blurring of past and present, viewed from the future through the pages of a magazine, encouraged me to blend archival images, photographs, and speculative futures in the photobook, with loose regard for chronologies. The Domus itinerary and map in this edition of Domus also provided the impetus for Rosella Biscotti and Kevin van Braak's colonia journey and photography project (Biscotti & van Braak, 2005 pp. 53-80).

The next notable colonia publication was most likely a survey of the colonie of Emilia Romagna (IBC, 1986), to be followed by the UK Architectural Association's exhibition and book *Cities of Childhood: Italian Colonie of the 1930s* (de Martino & Wall, 1988). Further publications, spanning the 1990s, include: Jocteau (1990), Cutini and Pierini (1993), and Cao (1994). Momentum appears to have picked up noticeably in the early 2000s, and has continued to the present day, with a number of books and papers published during the past two or three years. The involvement of organisations such as Il Palloncino Rosso (2019), Spazi Indecisi (202a), and the Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes, ATRIUM, Cultural Route of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2023), appear to have been instrumental, creating a new interest in the past, present and futures of the colonie.

Recent research also appears to have diverged from the standard architectural and historical approach, to consider how the colonie functioned and were administered, their position within the Fascist welfare system, and the shifting balance between social assistance and political indoctrination. There is potential for further research in a similar vein, and Roberta Mira and Simona Salustri emphasise that, while studies by architects, urbanists, and landscape historians have investigated these highly symbolic spaces, Romagna authorities considered that there was a need for fresh research into the colonie of the 1930s, as representative of a period during which summer camps for children became spaces for shaping a new generation of Italians (Mira & Salustri, 2019, pp. 7-8). I was unaware of the history and the current status of research when I stumbled across the former colonia Roma in 2014.

Considering the apparent wealth of opportunities for photography-based projects, there are surprisingly few studies of colonie from the perspective and interpretative viewpoint of the photographer. Dan Dubowitz's *Fascismo Abbandonato* (2010), appears to be the earliest publication, situated somewhere in between an artist's photobook, and a textbook with essays and archival images. Dubowitz photographed eleven Northern Italian colonie for the book, which has, perhaps unfairly, been referred to as a glossy coffee-table example of the photographic image succumbing to Benjamin's aestheticisation of politics (DeSilvey and Edensor, 2012, p. 6). I am aware of three other books that record the present day state of Italy's colonie through photography, all published in the last few years (Mini, 2017; Tazzari, 2018; Gubellini, 2020), which presumably indicates that photographic practitioners are beginning to take an interest in the phenomena of the colonia.

Tazzari (2018), and Gubellini (2020), were published while I was conducting this PhD research. However, neither of them have encroached on the opportunities I identified in planning the research around the spaces and functions of the colonie in terms of past, present, and future, and their ambiguous relationship with the Fascist regime. Rather than capturing a moment in the existence and decline of colonie buildings, this research aimed to create understandings through photography, walking, site explorations, and interactions with literature, historical archival images, and visualisations of achieved and failed futures. Although hesitant to assign a specific label or genre to the practical outputs, *conceptual documentary* provides a useful one, which photographer Lewis Bush has promoted in considering that the merging of documentary and conceptual photography 'holds great promise, opening up new ways to reveal issues that may elude traditional representation and novel means to disseminate the results', although it should be employed advisedly (Bush, 2017).

Resources

The historical images within the practice-based elements of the research were acquired predominantly from monochrome picture postcards. I purchased several cards, but the majority were downloaded from online marketplaces, including eBay Italy (2022), delcampe (2022), and maremagnum (2022). The variable quality of the jpeg images can be attributed to several factors, including the original quality of the printed postcard, effects of ageing and wear and tear, how the card was photographed for resale, and image-compression and resizing performed by the

software of the online marketplace. Therefore, the images in the sequences and photobook could be regarded as manipulated copies of copies of copies. Other sources included books and architectural journals, regional online archives, and speculative images of future restorations on the websites of architectural practices. In considering effective ways to combine disparate images including diptychs, composites, collages, and photomontage within the photobook, the practice-based work explores what happens when images with different aesthetics are placed next to each other. How might photographs and images from Google Street View interact? What are the effects of juxtaposing architectural imaginings and visualisations with photographs of the colonie as they were, and as they are today? I came to appreciate that the diversity of imagery offered opportunities to create new meanings, beyond what might have been achieved through present day photography alone, and I was heartened to discover that photographer Thomas Ruff employed a similar approach in his m.d.p.n. (Mercato del Pesce di Napoli) project (Galleria Lia Rumma, 2003; Ruff, 2005), which uses traditional documentation, montage, and colouring of archival materials to reinvent reality, discussed in detail in the section of this thesis on photographing Fascism.

Fuzziness

Notions of fuzzy pasts, the unsettled present, and uncertain futures, have influenced the methodological approaches taken by this research, and I came across several mentions of fuzzy aspects of Fascism, with Umberto Eco's article on Ur Fascism, which introduces fuzzy totalitarianism as the prime example (Eco, 1995). Attempts

to categorise and pigeonhole the colonie inevitably led to considerations of whether they were more *this* than *that*, or more *that* than *this*, and what about the *other*? Many Fascist era colonie appear to have had multiple names, both during the years of the regime, and afterwards. This thesis is reasonably, but not entirely, consistent in their naming, and perhaps such multiple identities contribute something to their fuzziness. The chapter accompanying the colonia image sequences provides lists of names based on Arne Winkelmann's typology (2015).

What was not in any way fuzzy was the violence and intimidation that bought Fascism into power and maintained the regime. Michael Ebner (2011), describes acts of *everyday violence* while John Foot tells of *squadristi* attacks and repression, operating alongside policies designed to persuade and win over the population, such as public works programmes and welfare. The regime also invested in art, architecture, and sports events with similar intent (Foot, 2022b, p. 191).

The photography and use of images in this research is constructed around conflating and juxtaposing past, present, and realised and unrealised futures of the Fascist colonie. To this end, research methods include physical and virtual explorations of their spaces and environment, in tandem with photographic strategies of repeat photography, image manipulations, composite images, and AI-enhanced archival images. The merging of research with practice is intended to provoke new lines of questioning, and arouse the curiosity of the reader and viewer, concerning the inheritance, present day situations, and futures of former Fascist colonie.

Transport and colonisation

This research has generally avoided detailed examinations of individual buildings and architectural typologies, as this is where most research may be found. While planning and carrying out visits to a number of colonie, both on the coast and in the mountains, the essential role of transportation in their operation started to become evident. My own train journeys from Milan, Bologna and other northern cities, mirrored what must have been routes and modes of transport that carried children to and from the colonie. Novara is almost four hundred kilometres from Colonia Novarese; a journey that takes around four hours today by train. My visits to the mountain colonie of Rovegno, Renesso, and Montemaggio required careful planning and checking of routes and timetables, and I did not get back to Renesso or Montemaggio due to covid related restrictions. Neither did I manage to visit the Catholic Colonia Antonio Devoto. Arne Winkelmann suggested that far away from the next village in the forest of Monte Zatta, its location was perhaps even too remote for the Fascist regime to intervene in its running (Winkelmann, 2015).

Could the colonie be regarded as a whole system, connected through railway network which Fascism regarded as important, even if Mussolini didn't actually make the trains run on time. An efficient transport network may have enabled something greater than the mix of welfare and ideology commonly attributed to the colonie, and less obvious functions begin to suggest themselves as notions of empire, colonial outposts, city and countryside, awareness of the national territory, and its borders, and lands beyond the sea.

Geography and empire

Hundreds of thousands of children relocated to the residential colonie each summer, in a process that required uniformed parades and ceremonies. Might these journeys, apparently carried out with great precision, be regarded as dress rehearsals of military preparation and mobilisation, with their requirement of logistics, regular supplies, and lines of communication. Architectural resemblances to battleships, submarines, ocean liners, airplanes, machines and fortresses, then become part of the grand imperial scheme. David Atkinson (2013), supports such speculations in his paper on geographical imaginations and their seldom noted promotion within Fascist Italy. Atkinson states that 'in 1930s Italy, various interest groups associated with the colonial and expansionist projects of Fascism promoted the development of wider geographical imaginaries among Italians' (p. 561). He defines geographical imaginaries as the means by which individuals and communities are able to imaginatively conceptualise places beyond their experience, based on visual and textual representations. This appears relevant to the research, both in terms of the colonie embodying Fascism's colonising mission, and how knowledge of the colonie was disseminated to a wider audience, beyond a child's parents and family. Atkinson recognises that geographical imaginations are based on socially constructed understandings of places, and as such, are malleable, contingent, shifting and unquantifiable. Nonetheless, he succeeds in identifying Fascist efforts to persuade Italians to develop geographical imaginations concerning Italy's colonial territories and expansionist ambitions. Geography was assigned a more prominent role within the educational system to create an awareness

appropriate to Italy's new imperial status (p. 565). Students were taught about Italy and its empire, in order to produce Fascist citizens with geographical awareness and imaginations.

Recent recognition of the significance of internal colonisation by the Fascist regime, and the consequent need for decolonisation (Decolonizing Architecture Advanced Studies, 2023; Perugini & Fiscaletti, 2022; Samuels, 2015), supports the idea of the Fascist colonie as part of a complex mechanism, conceived to instil the regime's imperial and colonial mission and mindset within new generations of Fascist youth, destined to become soldiers, conquerors, and fecund mothers.

This is an idea that I hung on to while crisscrossing the country by train, between Genova, Milan, Bologna, Pisa, Pescara, Pesaro, and Venice, although I wondered whether the hypnotic rhythm of the train wheels was encouraging my imagination to run away with me. Fascist colonie have been described as machines for indoctrination and propaganda (Irace, 1985; Winkelmann, 2015). However, this research has come to understand them as significant components, or cogs, within a potentially more sinister machine dedicated to empire building and colonial expansion. Recent research, particularly Nicola Perugini and Tommaso Fiscaletti's *Fascist Sunbathing and the Decolonization of Architectural Memory*, (Perugini & Fiscaletti, 2022), supports such an understanding.

Speculative imaginings

Designers Giacomo Pala and Jörg Stanzel, describe architecture as a means to design alternative futures, as part of a project they called *speculative past,* in which:

> The present, history and the future are fuzzy notions, flattened in a tree-folded stack: they are paradoxical and syncretic. We must acknowledge such a complex multiplicity and deal with it. How? Rewriting our time. We need a Speculative Past: the reinvention of the past, its memories and its traditions in order to propose alternatives for the future...We propose architectural design as a way of reinventing reality through a constant speculation on what might have been: the realm of the possible equally resides in the future and in the past (Pala & Stanzel, 2019).

Their text inspired me to speculate on what was possible, through photography and creative practice, and to consider whether impasses and failed renovations might be fortuitous, as they provide space and opportunities to question, wonder and imagine as yet undreamed of futures for derelict and half renovated colonia buildings.

Such speculations are supported by Sofia Nannini's recognition that confronting the present state of abandoned colonie means overcoming a series of impasses, both political and economic. However, she considers that they can be met and conquered, with imaginations of new futures, through artistic installations, and collective rediscoveries, which can propose valid alternatives to real estate speculation and the consequent erasure of memory (Nannini, 2023).

Initial questions

Visits, photography, virtual exploration, and familiarisation with archival images and speculative visualisations of the colonie, prompted a flurry of questions including: How do colonie from the Fascist period differ from those built after the war? Are Fascist colonie irretrievably tainted by their associations with the regime? Can echoes from the past affect the present state and future prospects of these buildings? Why do I not sense a troubled past in and around these spaces? Have I fallen under their spell? Do buildings hold memories? Were the colonie more complex than mere machines for a new Fascist generation? Might they be regarded as part of a more far-reaching system? What are the difficulties associated with recognising them as heritage?

The following chapters develop the topics from this introduction, drawing upon literature and a number of models and concepts. The research proceeds to situate and interrogate the phenomena of the colonie, how Fascism used their spaces, legacies of the past, present day situations, and unexpressed issues which may emerge in the processes of restoration and repurposing. I refer to Foucault's concept of heterotopia as a framework and spatial model for the research, implications of difficult heritage in the context of the colonie as relics of the regime, and Fascism's use of aesthetics. Creative practice based research methods are founded on practices of walking and photography.

Colonia literature

The bibliography in de Martino and Wall's *Cities of Childhood* (de Martino & Wall, 1988, p. 88), provides an indication of the sparsity of colonia-related scholarship at the time. It comprises ten sources from the Fascist period, one from the 1950s, one from the 1960s, three from the 1970s, and nine from the 1980s. A few years later, Russell Garrett Taylor's Master's thesis (Taylor, 1994), appears to have been on the cusp of renewed interest in the colonie and architecture of Italy's Fascist past. He states that architecture of the colonie did not feature in Zevi's 1953 *Storia dell'Archittetura Moderna*, nor in Kidder-Smith's 1955 *Italy Builds,* and that a prevailing view of Italian modernist architecture as worthless was not challenged until 1968, with the publication of Doordan's *Building Modern Italy*. Taylor suggests that the spectre of Fascism may have played a part in the reluctance of architectural historians to consider any architecture of the period as worthy of study (Taylor, 1994, p. 2).

The majority of texts on Italy's colonie concern themselves with the Adriatic coast, since this is where they originated and where most were built during the years of the Fascist regime, and continuing into the 1970s (IBC, 1986). Valter Balducci's essay on multiple identities of the colonie (2005, pp. 8-19), begins with an assessment of their state and documentation, before providing an account of their

origins and history. Writing in 2005, Balducci considered that the subject of European summer camps was largely unexplored, with a few exceptions, for example: Jocteau (1990), IBC (1986), Cutini & Pierini (1993), and de Martino & Wall (1988). As might be expected from a more recent publication, Mira & Salustri (2019, p. 8), contains an extensive bibliography, which reflects the level of interest over the intervening years. Other recent additions to colonia literature include: Francesca Franchini's edited publication with a focus on construction techniques and materials of Fascist era colonie (2009), and Elena Mucelli's doctoral research (2009). Balducci (2013), concentrates on urban development along the Adriatic coast, centred on the town of Cesenatico, while Balducci and Bica published an important volume containing studies of European holiday camps, and supported by the CULTURE 2000 programme of the European Union (Balducci & Bica, 2007). Riccardo Cerasa contributes a detailed and generously illustrated book on Fascist era colonie at Calambrone on the Tuscan coast (Cerasa, 2012), while Paolo Camaiora provides a thoroughly researched account of former Fascist colonie on the Apuo-Versiliese coast, further north (Camaiora, 2011).

Winkelmann's bibliography of colonia literature (Winkelmann, 2015), as a gauge of interest in Fascist colonie over the years, suggests the colonie did appear to lie forgotten until the 1980s, to reemerge as a topic for research in the first years of the current century (Table 2). In his introductory essay to Luigi Tazzari's photobook, architect Massimo Bottini describes Fascist colonie as subject to deliberate forgetting or *damnatio memoriae.* Too symbolic to be cleansed of their ideological burden, they were left to rot for decades (Bottini, 2018, p. 4).

Years	Articles
1925-1940	78
1941-1950	7
1951-1960	2
1961-1970	1
1971-1980	2
1981-1990	15
1991-2000	9
2001-2010	34

Table 2.

Year	Author(s)	Type	Subject / area	Language(s)
1941	Labò & Podestà	Architectural studies	Architecture of the colonie	Italian
1971	Frabboni	Educational study	Pedagogy and the colonie	Italian
1985	Domus	Special issue	Fascist colonie	English and Italian
1986	IBC	Regional survey	Romagna coast	Italian
1988	de Martino & Wall	Colonie publication	Fascist colonie	English
1989	IBC	Special issue	Emilia-Romagna Fascist	Italian
1990	Jocteau	Regional study	FIAT colonie	Italian
1993	Cutini & Pierini	Regional survey	Toscana	Italian
1994	Cao	Monograph	Vaccaro colonia AGIP	Italian

2005	Balducci	Colonie publication	European colonie	Italian
2007	Balducci & Bicca	Colonie publication	European colonie	English
2009	Franchini	Colonie publication	Fascist colonie	Italian
2009	Mucelli	Colonie publication	1930s Fascist	Italian
2010	Dubowitz	Colonie publication	Fascist colonie	English
2011	Camaiora	Regional survey	Apua-Versiliese	Italian
2011	Balducci	Special issue	History	Italian English abstract
2012	Cerasa	Regional survey	Calambrone	Italian
2012	Cocco & Tanca	Monograph	Cagliari	Italian
2013	Cerasoli & Garavini	Regional survey	Cervia / Milano Marittima	Italian
2013	Balducci & Orioli	Regional history	Romagna coast	Italian
2013	Poli	Monograph	Faludi colonia Montecatini	English and Italian
2018	Stacher	Colonie publication	Alpine architecture	English
2019	Mira & Salustri	Regional study	Fascist /Romagna coast	Italian
2019	Ciranna, Lombardi & Montuori	Special issue	Abruzzo	English Italian
2023	Pivato	Colonie publication	Origins and Fascist colonie	Italian

Table 3.

Table 3 above, lists colonia-related books that I have acquired over the past few

years, and includes the majority of English and Italian language publications from the 1980s onwards. Older books on the colonie now appear to be difficult to find, and tend to be priced accordingly. I found Labò and Podestà's *Colonie Marine Montane Elioterapiche* advertised for £750 on AbeBooks (2020a), while de Martino and Wall's *Cities of Childhood* was listed at £136 (AbeBooks, 2020b). I have not come across a copy of the special issue of Domus for sale since I purchased my copy (Domus, 1985). I attempted to obtain *Le colonie marine della Toscana* by Valerio Cutini and Roberto Pierini (1993), but was unable to find one for sale. When I contacted Cutini, he informed me that he no longer possessed a printed copy either, but he kindly provided me with a partial scan.

Journal articles

There do not appear to be a great number of academic papers devoted to Italy's colonie, once separated from a mass of regional and national press articles concerning their history, current state, and the occasional restoration. Stephanie Pilat, in addition to being joint editor with Kay Bea Jones of *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture* (Jones & Pilat, 2020), has written several papers on Fascist colonie from the perspective of health and hygiene (Pilat, 2018), (Pilat & Sanza, 2020). Maria Elena Versari (2003), writes about the colonie as Fascist spectacle. Gigliola Gori's article (2004a), is a precursor to her book on Fascism and the female body (2004b). Federica Dalmonte's contribution published in the journal *Architettare* (2008), comprises an article on the past and present of 1930s colonia architecture. Marco Giorgio Bevilacqua (2015), explores the significance of the helix

within Vittorio Bonade Bottino's colonie constructed for FIAT. Simonetta Ciranna and Patrizia Montuori provide a general history, before concentrating on two colonie in Abruzzo – IX Maggio, and Stella Maris (Ciranna & Montuori, 2019). Amy Muschamp (2020), investigates Alpine colonia of Trentino as evidence of the Fascist regime's interest in assimilating this recently annexed border region. Diane Garvin (2023), provides a history of Italian colonie, along with an account of the national colonie exhibition held in Rome in 1937. The *Mostra delle Colonie Estive e dell'Assistenza all'Infanzia* (MCE)*,* is discussed in the section of this thesis on the colonia. Finally, Sofia Nannini (2023), provides an account of what she calls *The Beginning of the End* of the Fascist colonie.

Theses

With the exception of the 1994 Master's thesis by Russell Garrett Taylor, all the others I that came across during this research were the work of students from Italian universities. These predominantly architectural theses tend to follow a standard format, beginning with the context and history of the colonie, before progressing to proposals for repurposing and restoration of a specific building, or a stretch of coast. The introductory sections include a standard catalogue of dates, events, and citations, presumably sourced from the same pool of literature sources. While this thesis also contains a section dedicated to the history and development of the colonia, it continues along different paths to the research of architectural students.

Examples of graduate and postgraduate theses include:

- Michela Durante's proposed reconstruction of Colonia Varese at Milano Marittima (2000).

- Monica Gentile's doctoral proposal for restoring Colonia XXVIII Ottobre at Cattolica (2010).

- Francesco Sacchi's architectural assessment of Colonia Varese (2011).

- Laura Basini's proposed project for the restoration of Colonia Reggiana at Rimini Miramare (2012).

- Cristina Boniotti and Franceso Gut's Master's proposal for renovation of an area of colonie along the Adriatic coast (2013).

- Silvia Demetri, Luca Alfredo Panteghini, and Silvia Vezzoli's proposal for the restoration of Colonia Costanzo Ciano (Varese) at Milano Marittima (2015).

- Alessandro Marella and Nicolò Scavello's proposal for Colonia Decima Legio (Bolognese) at Rimini Miramare (2016).

- Giulia Maria Custode and Francesca Di Silvestre's proposal for the restoration of colonia Montecatini and Varese. The title refers to heterotopia, but it is not mentioned in the abstract and the thesis itself is locked (2016).

- Francesca Segantin's Doctoral proposal for the restoration of a stretch of the Ligurian coast (2017).

- Beatrice Rezzani's study of marine and mountain colonie (2018).

- Alberto Madeddu's proposal to restore the ex colonia Dux at Cagliari (2019).

- Chiara Manca's proposal for restoration of ex colonia Dux at Cagliari (2021).

- Francesca Sarpieri's study of Colonia AGIP at Cesenatico (2022).

I found these theses in university repositories, and am aware that there may be others that I did not come across. Some had restricted access, and I made use of what was available to inform myself of the format and scope of previous colonia-related graduate and postgraduate research.

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis is the first completed English-language doctoral research into the colonie, and the only study that combines literature based research with photographic practice. While the review of literature contributes to the knowledge and understanding of Fascist colonie, the intertwining of theory with practice may suggest opportunities for further practice based research into the colonie and related typologies.

Primary sources

Fascist Party sources from the period include guides for the administration of colonie, for use by *vigilatrici d'infanzia* (young women trained to supervise in matters of health, welfare, education, gymnastics, and training and management of the colonia system). These books address health and disease, exercise, nutrition, and management of the colonie. Roberta Mira comments that there were a number of versions over the years of the regime, in which priorities and emphasis shifted, in line with its ambitions for the *fascistisation* of the population, and the development of racial theories (Mira, 2019, pp. 37-38). My versions comprise the *Regolamento delle Colonie Climatiche* (PNF, 1939), *Corso per Vigilatrici di Colonie* (PNF, 1940), and *Ginnastica nelle Colonie Climatiche: Regolamento, Esercizi, Giochi* (PNF, 1942).

Present day research

The international conference *Verso nuove estati (Towards New Summers),* hosted by the University of Bologna (in_bo, 2022), provided an overview of current academic interest concerning the history and architecture of the summer camp in Europe and particularly Fascist Italy, while illustrations in the conference programme were of the Italian colonia AGIP, ENEL, Varese, and Bolognese. I was invited as a photographer and researcher on Fascist colonie and difficult heritage, and my presentation formed part of the session on holiday camps as a tool for political propaganda in totalitarian regimes. The other presentations were delivered by architects, historians, and pedagogical researchers, including Valter Balducci, Simona Salustri, and Arne Winkelmann.

Stefano Pivato's *Andare per Colonie Estive* (2023), was published alongside the documentary film *di che colonia sei?* (Which colonia are you from?), which I have not yet had the opportunity to see, as it is first being shown at various colonie over the summer of 2023 (Giostra film, 2023a). Fortunately for this research, a substantial press pack is available (Giostra film, 2023b). Pivato provides a history and individual studies of Fascist era colonie across the Italian peninsula, and also Sardinia and Sicily, including colonia Dux at Cagliari, and Maria Pia di Savoia at Sciacca. His book also contains a number of 'memories' - short accounts told by people who stayed in colonie up to the 1970s.

Translations

My knowledge of Italian vocabulary has improved over the course of this research, but still requires a dictionary. Italian texts form the vast majority of literature of the colonie and require more time and effort to read and understand. I printed and annotated academic papers, and annotated the margins of recently published, less valuable physical books. With older, and out of print texts, I copied and scanned sections. I originally used Google Translate (Google Translate, 2023), to convert articles into generally comprehensible English, providing something to work from alongside the original text. Looking for a better process, and aware that ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2023), could produce computer code, I tested its language translation and discovered it can produce well-constructed results, confirmed by PCMag test (Dreibelbis, 2023). A group of bilingual speakers evaluated Google Translate, Google Bard, ChatGPT, and Microsoft Bing. ChatGPT emerged as the clear favourite, while Google Translate was criticised for its literal word for word translation. A drawback to ChatGPT could be that the fluent results impart authority, while the output from Google Translate is clearly a rough approximation. I tested ChatGPT by translating samples of my writing into Italian and back to English, comparing the output with my original text. Apart from a couple of unusual, but not incorrect choices of words, ChatGPT preserved the sense and actually improved the structure of my original paragraphs. It also flags up cases where it recognises nuances beyond its capability to translate. 'Please note that the translation might not be perfect due to the complexity of the text and nuances in the original Italian. If you have any specific questions about the translated text, feel free to ask!' (OpenAI, 2023).

Heterotopia

Elena Mucelli considers whether the colonie could be considered as heterotopias (2009, pp. 99-109), a comparison this research initially resisted making for the perverse reason that it seemed too obvious. I questioned what could be gained from a box-ticking exercise with the foregone conclusion that the colonie could indeed be regarded as heterotopias. However, since this research concerns out-of-the ordinary spaces and interactions with the colonie, as walker, photographer, and creative practitioner, it seemed worth putting aside such reservations to investigate whether heterotopia might actually provide a useful model to investigate the strangeness, or *otherness,* of the spaces of colonie, their echoes of past existences, and largely unresolved futures. Experiences with Google Street View, and attempts to negotiate the environs of the colonie, also lend themselves to comparison with heterotopias, while computer-generated speculative visualisations of imagined futures could relate to notions of spatial heterotopias and temporal heterochronias.

However, in his introduction to a translation of Foucault's original 1966 radio broadcast on *heterotopias,* Anthony Vidler provides reasons to proceed with caution:

> As a signifier of spatial and institutional difference, the word 'heterotopia' has gained near universal currency in architectural discourse. Almost any contrast, conflict or disjunction is now happily referred to as heterotopic, while the term automatically is also assumed to have an equally ubiquitous 'critical' dimension in description or theory (Vidler, Foucault & Johnston, 2014, p. 18).

Foucault gave a second, edited and expanded version of his talk, to a group of architects the following year (Foucault, 1967), and this appears to be the one most widely quoted and cited version.

He begins with a condensed account of his understanding of concerns with time and space through history, and acknowledges Bachelard's contribution to matters of internal space, before announcing that he wishes to speak of external space and the sets of relations by which such spaces can be defined. Foucault is specifically interested in:

> Sites that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralise, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types (Foucault, 1967).

There are utopias, as sites having no real place, and utopian counter-sites, which are real places; these Foucault names heterotopias, by way of contrast to utopias. He suggests a sort of systematic system of description which might be called *heterotopology,* and outlines six principles that are characteristic of heterotopias.

Joshua Samuels provides a concise summary:

- All societies create heterotopias.

- Their function may change through time.

- They juxtapose several incompatible sites within a single real place.

- They break or disrupt traditional concepts of time.

- They may require certain acts, performances, or rituals, to gain entry.

- They exist in relation to all other sites and spaces.

  (Samuels, 2010, pp. 65-66).

Peter Johnson refers to *Foucault's sketchy, open-ended and ambiguous accounts of heterotopia,* which are tantalisingly brief, and fragmentary and elusive (Johnson, 2013, p. 790). A theme of fuzziness within this research reoccurs with Marlena Tronicke's reference to Foucault's concept of heterotopia as *notoriously fuzzy* (Tronicke, 2022, p. 11). Charles Burdett wonders whether one might argue that since so many spaces could claim heterotopic qualities, the concept ultimately becomes meaningless (Burdett, 2010, p. 91). Meanwhile, literature scholar Kevin Knight claims that: 'the concept was never intended to refer to real urban sites, but rather pertains exclusively to textual representations of these sites' (Knight, 2017, p. 141), and sets out on a mission to rescue and restore heterotopia to the realm of literature to which he claims it rightly belongs. The preface to *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 2002, pp. xvi-xxvi), which preceded Foucault's lecture on heterotopias, introduces it as a literary motif, and Knight claims that one could be forgiven for concluding that the lecture was nothing more than a practical joke by Foucault, at the expense of his audience (Knight, 2017, p. 144). I consider it more likely that Foucault developed the concept for his audience of architects, who would be more

concerned with physical space than its literary representations. Edward Soja (1996, p. 154), considers that there are risks involved in using the concept of heterotopia, which was rescued from a batch of lecture notes, and only approved by Foucault in 1984. He then proceeds to devote an entire chapter of his book to heterotopia and Foucault (pp. 145-164).

While I hesitated over whether heterotopia could be considered in relative isolation from the rest of Foucault's writing, architect Smaranda Spanu appears to have done so, with minimal reliance on Foucault's other work in his substantial volume on *Heterotopia and Heritage Preservation* (Spanu, 2020). The same could perhaps be said of *Heterotopia and the City* (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008). However, on balance, I agree with Burdett's suggestion that heterotopia carries more weight when situated within the wider context of Foucault's thought (Burdett, 2010, p. 91), which seems to offer a reasonable middle ground between isolation and immersion in the "quintessential embodiment of hyper intelligence and frustratingly difficult 'French thought'" (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 1). Clare O'Farrell mentions that Foucault often referred to his books as a kind of toolbox which people could rummage through for a tool to use however they wished (p. 51). In this spirit, I have read, though not necessarily marked, learnt, and inwardly digested, a number of Foucault's published works including: *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002a), *The Birth of the Clinic* (2003), *Discipline and Punish* (1991), *The Order of Things* (2002b), *Madness & Civilization* (1998), and the slim volume that is *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (2020). O'Farrell's *Michel Foucault* (O'Farrell, 2005), has acted as a trusty guide to the Foucauldian labyrinth.

Concerning the practical application of Foucault's methods, O'Farrell cautions that one cannot simply apply them, and that successful applications involve the use of analogy and comparison (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 53). Neither is it sufficient to sprinkle a selection of appropriate key words throughout one's text (p. 52). PhD student Srdjan Milosevic (2023), presented two conference papers on Fascist colonie as: total institutions after Irving Goffman (1968); complete/austere institutions; quasi-carceral archipelagos; disciplinary institutions; and sites of bio-politics and bio-power, with reference to pretty much the whole gamut of Foucault's treatises on space and power (Milosevic, 2015). However, his abstracts and PowerPoint presentations make no mention of heterotopias. I could not find any reference to his completed research, and there was no thesis by Milosevic in the school's repository (IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca, 2023). From the perspective of this research, I wonder whether Milosevic's research aims may have been too broad and ambitions to accomplish within the scope of a PhD.

Mucelli is the only author I have come across who makes a considered case for the colonia as a heterotopia (2005, pp. 57-58; 2009, pp. 99-109), and Roberta Mira (2019, pp. 20-21), states, with reference to Mucelli, that characteristics of the colonia, retained from their nineteenth century origins, continuing through Fascism, and into the 1950s and beyond, are suggestive of heterotopias. While the colonie represent localisable places, they stand apart from every other space, and provide an alternative reality to everyday life. Federica Dalmonte (2013, pp. 135-136), likens Clemente Busiri Vici's Colonia XXVIII Ottobre to a heterotopia, further reinforced by its resemblance to a flotilla of ships, and the abstract from a conference on children's colonie of the Fascist period, states that:

57

From a physical perspective, the vacation colony can be considered a heterotopia, a place that can be located but stands apart from all other places and holds strong symbolic value. Within this space, the community lives in an alternative reality to their usual daily life. Colonies can also be seen as total institutions, as the residents are kept separated from the rest of society, and their lives in the colony are strictly controlled and regulated (ForlìToday, 2018).

Stefano Pivato (2023, p. 60), remarks that the metaphor of the ship, is perhaps the most recurring theme in the construction of colonia during the Fascist period. The ship symbolises the beginning of a new machine era, while the vessel evokes journeys towards new frontiers. Porthole-style windows, semicircular stairwells, nautical railings and gangways, were perhaps intended to instil the sensation of being aboard a ship about to set sail, perhaps heading off to war.

Mira suggests that the colonie also possess somewhat diluted features of Erving Goffman's total institutions (Goffman, 1968). They do not have the coercive element encountered in the prison and asylum, or the same requirements of entry and adherence to rules which characterise the convent. However, they do present aspects of depersonalisation, assimilation, isolation from the rest of society, principles of internal organisation, submission to authority, discipline, and a rigid timetable. Mucelli's consideration of colonie as heterotopias stems from the atmosphere of foreignness and alterity which she considers pervades the spaces of the colonie. However, she acknowledges that heterotopia or otherness, should not be equated with vague sensations of timelessness that hover around the numerous abandoned remains of Italy's colonie. Instead, and as O'Farrell advised, Mucelli

approaches heterotopia as a tool to assist an analysis of the complex interwoven factors that shaped the realisation and functions of the colonia (Mucelli, 2009, pp. 99-109). Mucelli's work was a factor in convincing me that heterotopia offers an appropriate spacial model for this research into the colonie.

Foucault's first principle refers to the crisis heterotopia, which Mucelli equates with the choice of location for colonie and hospices before them, situated a suitable distance from populated areas and tourist resorts and beaches. Matters of decency dictated that middle-class vacationers should not have to see, or mingle with working-class children. Other factors included the risk of epidemic diseases being transmitted by colonie children to holiday-makers. Consequently, the occupants of a colonia found themselves within an isolated community, bound by rules and regulations, in an environment that was alien to the realities of everyday life. Local authorities were concerned that colonie on their coasts could have a detrimental effect on the development of prestigious holiday villas and hotels. I noticed numerous elegant Liberty-style villas on my walks around the Adriatic resorts of Cervia, Cesenatico, Rimini, and Riccione. These villas, surrounded by high and sturdy though ornate looking railings, were presumably occupied by the people whom the authorities wanted to avoid offending with the visible presence of colonia children. The Rotary Club of Cervia-Cesenatico have provided information boards that identify examples such as Villa Righini 1928, and Villa De Maria 1937.

Mucelli attributes the adaption, and evolution of the colonia, from hospice to its Fascist incarnation and beyond, to Foucault's second principle of heterotopia, which states that a heterotopia survives and changes according to the requirements

imposed by society at any particular time in its history. She regards Fascist welfare as bringing about a transformation that fused preventative health with an educational mission, as fundamental elements in the formation of new individuals. While many colonie are closed, abandoned, or have been converted to other purposes, my walks around the *Città delle Colonie di Ponente,* at Cesenatico, revealed that a thriving tourism industry continues to operate from a number of colonie buildings and grounds, offering activity-based vacations for young people and families. These include the eco-friendly Green Village, Casa per Ferie Soleé, and the Dodici Stelle Village. Colonia Sandro Mussolini (AGIP) at Cesenatico operates today as *L'Ostello sul Mare* (Ostello Cesenatico, 2023), while colonia Edoardo Agnelli (Fiat) at Marina di Massa is now *Verve Torre Marina* (2023). Changes in terminology have perhaps assisted in lessening connotations inherited from Fascism, of expansion, occupation, colonisation, and empire building.

Mucelli suggests that the colonia demonstrates Foucault's first principle that a heterotopia possesses the property of being able to juxtapose incompatible positions within a single physical space. This is the property which first came to mind when I considered the colonie as heterotopias, simultaneously fulfilling functions of hotel, clinic, and school, among others. Mucelli concludes, as did Foucault, with the ship, afloat in space, a closed in place without place, which ventures out to the colonies, in search of precious items, and she is reminded, as I was, of the pervading nautical theme of colonia XXVIII Ottobre at Cattolica. In contrast to its playful nautical theme, the central turret above the refectory ensures a conscious state of visibility, guaranteeing the functioning of power in the manner of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, referred to by Foucault in his study on the birth of the prison (Foucault,

1991, pp. 195-228). Pier Giorgio Massaretti (2007, pp. 229-234), conducts an analysis of Fascist colonie through Foucault's writing on military discipline and the panopticon, leading to a summary of the colonie as 'tragically heterotypic', which he elaborates in terms of their ability to simultaneously sustain prophylactic aims and propagandistic aims, the latter achieved through what Massaretti describes as persuasive playful learning (p. 232). The majority of essays contained in Balducci and Bica (2007), have presumably been translated into English for the publication, and grammar and sentence constructions are sometimes rather idiosyncratic as in 'tragically heterotypic' which nonetheless has a certain ring to it. Sofia Nannini (2023, p. 17), acknowledges that the spaces of the colonie have been defined as heterotopias, as alternative places, distant and distinct from everyday life, as sites founded on the dream of an alternative society. Their closure and abandonment has led to a dual loss with the degradation of their structure alongside the disappearance of the temporary communities that inhabited the spaces.

Joshua Samuels (2010, pp. 62-81), considers the suitability of heterotopia as a model for understanding the effects of land reform, building programs, and internal colonisation, carried out by the Fascist regime in rural Sicily, returning to the topic five years later, through the lens of difficult heritage (2015). Samuels' research focuses on a number of rural outposts or *borghi*, that followed the model of larger Fascist new towns (Littoria, Pontinia, Sabaudia, Aprilia, Pomezia) built on reclaimed malarial swampland of the Pontine Marshes. Samuels' text engages with how heterotopia has been used within archaeology, and what the concept assists and hinders. He cautions that Foucault's concept of heterotopia was incomplete, and had possibly been discarded, since it lay dormant for twenty years before

publication. Its open-ended nature has consequently spawned a wide variety of interpretations and applications, including a tendency to refer to heterotopia in passing, or literally as a *hetero topos,* or different space (p. 67). Since juxtapositions of multiple places and times characterise virtually any site or space, care should be exercised when invoking heterotopia as a description or explanation of a space. Samuels notes that although the *borghi* formed the most visible features of the Fascist reclamation programme, they were just one element within a much larger plan, which included roads and bridges, digging canals, and planting trees (p. 69). This agrees with the perception of the colonie as elements within a larger system, enabled for example by investment in the railway network. Samuels comments that Fascism was fascinated with ways in which the built environment could be used to condition and control its occupants, and suggests that to properly understand the *borghi* as heterotopia requires envisioning them as situated within a heterotopic landscape.

Taking Cattolica's XXVIII Ottobre as an exemplar of the colonia as a heterotopia, Scottish artist Eduardo Paolozzi's essay on summers in the *Wonderful World* of XXVIII Ottobre (Paolozzi,1988), provides a view from the inside through fragmentary recollections. He tells of journeys by train, boat and train, from Scotland to Italy, to arrive at a large square in front of the colonia, connected by a wooden bridge. He remembers the town of Rimini as being on the other side, where people danced the tango, wore swimming costumes, and dined in restaurants, *like in a Fellini film.* Although Rimini is ten miles further up the coast, his account suggests that a wooden bridge was all that separated them from the freedom of *La Dolce Vita.* Meanwhile, inside the colonia were mugs of coffee laced with castor oil,

Fascist military priests in charge of parades, while nuns served dry bread rolls in a refectory overlooked by a twice life-size statue of Mussolini as the helmsman. There was siesta time followed by an afternoon snack, or merenda, which Paolozzi refers to as *Miranda*. Everything was top quality, well designed, sparkling clean, and made for a happy experience, with Italian-subtitled Laurel and Hardy films in the evenings. Although Paolozzi's memories may be patchy, they suggest a life that could only have existed within the meticulously regulated confines of the colonia (Figure 2).
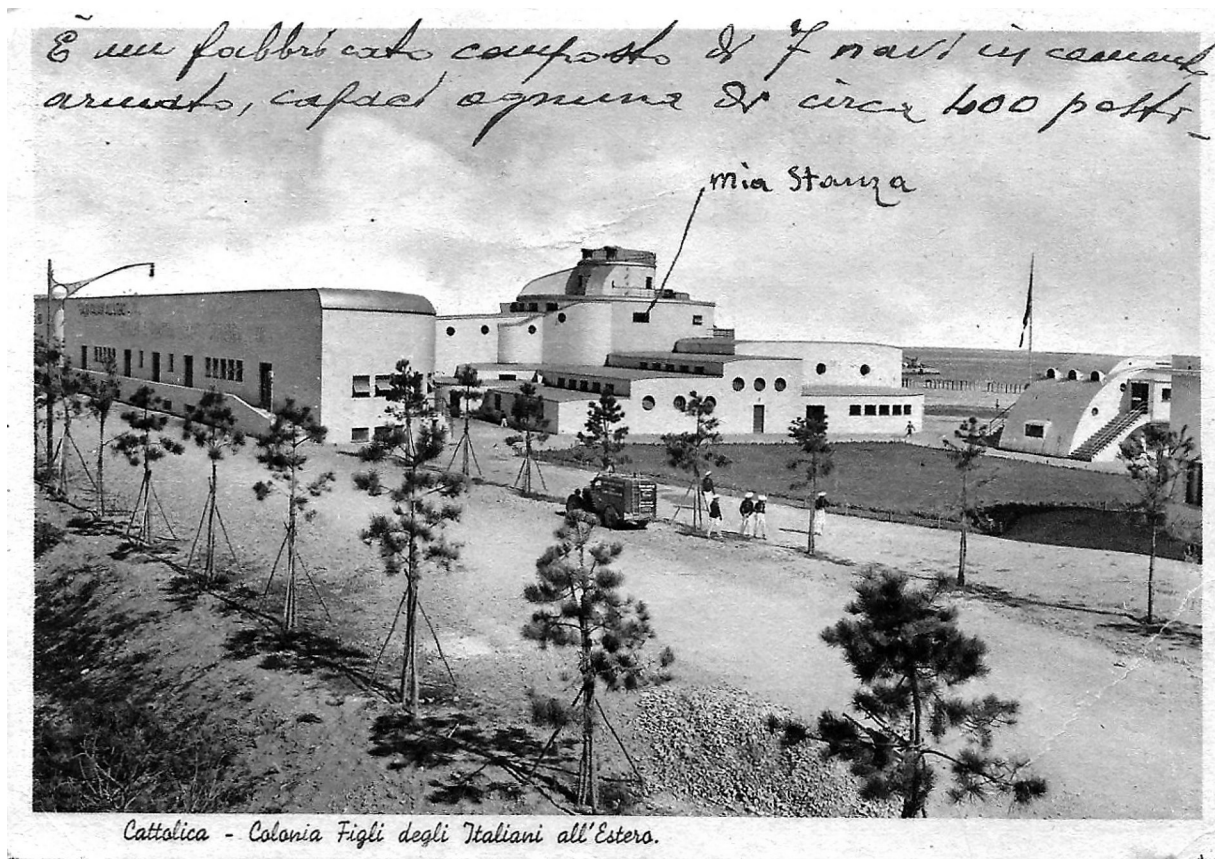

Figure 2

Samuels (2010, p. 81), concludes that although the concept of heterotopia may not be entirely satisfactory, it nonetheless suggests worthwhile questions and lines of inquiry for archeological (and other) research.

Balducci, in his essay *plasmare anime* or shaping souls (2019), makes a number of points that suggest the colonie as potential heterotopias. He states that these buildings represent a different world in which the colonie represent an unreal atmosphere in which a festive environment is maintained, between the beach, the court for games, and the building, with flags, symbols, and children standing in lines (p. 119). These are architectures that stand out in the landscape, often exceptional in size and form, isolated on the coast, separate from each other and from nearby urban centres. The colonie manifest as imaginary, unreal places, different from the experience of daily life (p. 118). Balducci refers to Armando Melis' ideal schema for the functioning of *colonie di vacanze*, which charts routes between their spaces, while keeping staff and inmates apart. However, since Melis published the plan in 1939, it is unlikely that the architects of Fascist era colonie referred to it.

Several features of Melis' schema could be regarded as attributes of a heterotopia: separation from the outside world in which the colonia manifests as a closed world with a single entrance. There is a ritual hygienic and spiritual process of reclamation involved in admission, entailing medical examination and replacement of everyday clothes with a uniform. There are separate designated paths for children and staff through the spaces, and separation and sequencing of activities. There are also aspects of the panopticon and the total institution, with spaces arranged and organised to permit surveillance at any time. Each child looks at, and is observed by their peers, while an unseen supervisor is able to see what is happening in any space at any moment (Balducci, 2019, pp. 126-127).

I considered whether the derelict, abandoned, ruins of colonie can still be considered as heterotopias after their original purposes have apparently run their course. However, the experience of site visits suggests that the abandoned spaces of former colonie are anything but static and inert. As the structures crumble and decay, forces of nature actively mould and reshape them. Other people also regularly visit these spaces, and almost without exception I have encountered an entry hole somewhere in the perimeter fence. In the absence of such an opening, there may be a loose panel, which at first glance appears securely fixed. Ways in are often revealed by a path trodden in the grass, leading from the fence towards the building. On an occasion when I was unable to find a way through the fence that surrounded colonia Novarese, a man in the adjacent field showed me the way in, having first established that I was a photographer. I met other visitors and curious explorers on a number of occasions, while other people appear to live and sleep in the buildings out of necessity, at least until moved on by the next police raid. More recently, there appear to be concerns with properly securing sites, including the use of automated perimeter monitors around Montecatini, which could indicate that authorities recognise their value, or else be part of a more serious attempt to keep homeless people out.

The processes at work in reinventing and repurposing the spaces of colonie appear compatible with Foucault's description of a heterotopia, which continues to adapt and maintain its space:

> A society may take an existing heterotopia, which has never vanished, and make it function in a very different way. Actually, each heterotopia has a

precise and well-defined function within society and the same heterotopia can, in accordance with the synchronicity of the culture in which it is located, have a different function (Foucault, 1997, p. 333).

Heterotopias, walking, photography

When I was walking, exploring, and making photographs, I found it useful to compress theoretical concepts, such as heterotopia, and difficult heritage, into strings of phrases that I could keep in my head. Applying this method to what would perhaps be an otherwise inexcusable treatment of Foucault's *Other Spaces*, produced the following:

> A network that connects points and weaves its skein, proximity between points or elements, series, trees, lattices. Demography, enough space for man in the world. Distribution between elements, spread out in space, spaces which are linked with others, unreal and realised utopias, places outside of all places. Heterotopias which continue to exist in a very different way, juxtaposed incompatible functions. Temporal discontinuities, fairs, empty spaces on the outskirts, vacation villages. Systems of opening and closing, separate but penetrable, rituals and purifications, concealed exclusion, perfect meticulously arranged real spaces, perfectly regulated colonies, the bell, meals at noon and five pm. The ship, a floating piece of space, reservoirs of imagination. (My 'distillation' of Foucault's *Other Spaces*).

I employed condensed text such as the above to be useful tools for guiding thinking and image making, without being overly prescriptive. I made a number of heterotopia-themed sequences of images while I was experimenting with archival images, and an example is included in the appendix to this thesis.

Difficult heritage

Heritage suggests something that can be inherited, while the Italian word *patrimonio* adds the implication of something passed through a family lineage. Both signify something of value, worthy of conservation, preservation, and inheritance by future generations. UNESCO defines *cultural heritage* as:

> Both a product and a process, which provides societies with a wealth of resources that are inherited from the past, created in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations (UNESCO, 2022).

However, the definition does not appear to accommodate unwelcome, unwanted, awkward, and difficult heritage. In contrast The *ATRIUM Cultural Route* (Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes in Europe's Urban Memory), has its basis in a common urban and architectural heritage in Europe, that may be termed dissonant or uncomfortable (Council of Europe, 2023).

Ten years before Sharon Macdonald's conceptualisation of *undesirable heritage*, John Tunbridge & Gregory Ashworth proposed that heritage is neither straightforward nor harmonious, and that all heritage was dissonant. Their study focused on the management of heritage as a commercially valuable commodity, and

on methods for generating and ensuring consonance within a heritage product (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996). I first wondered whether Fascist colonie could usefully be regarded as difficult heritage when I attended a weekend seminar organised by the American Academy in Rome (2019). Particularly relevant presentations included: Hannah Malone: *Questioning the Idea of Italy's Fascist Architecture as Difficult Heritage;* Rosalia Vittorini: *Architettura e fascismo: vita e destino delle opere per il regime;* and Flaminia Bartolini: *From Iconoclasm to Heritage: Mussolini's Legacy, Display and Politics in contemporary Italy.*

Sharon Macdonald's *undesirable heritage: fascist material culture and historical consciousness in Nuremberg* (2006), *difficult heritage: negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and beyond* (2009), *memorylands: heritage and identity in Europe today* (2013), and *is 'difficult heritage' still 'difficult'* (2015), have established her as an authority on heritage and its difficulties in twentieth-century Germany, and by extension to Europe in general. She describes difficult heritage as *unsettling, awkward, uncomfortable, troubling, problematic, shameful, controversial, disputed, embarrassing, dissonant, contested, complex, haunting, intrusive, and an unwished-for burden* (2009). A number of papers on the architectural heritage of Fascist Italy followed in her wake (Samuels, 2015; Malone, 2017; Carter & Martin, 2017; 2019b; Storchi, 2019; Carter, 2020), along with conferences, and a special issue of *Modern Italy* dedicated to the difficult heritage of Italian Fascism (Carter & Martin, 2019a).

While Macdonald's research into difficult heritage concentrates on research and debates concerning the Nuremberg rally grounds, she maintains that her model and research have wider relevance, which would appear to make them relevant to this

research into a portion of the architectural legacy of Italy's Fascist regime. Macdonald considers the physical decay and state of preservation of the rally grounds site, and debates regarding the construction of a documentation centre (Macdonald, 2009), and recounts that issues relating to architectural agency were central to decisions on how to manage the site (p. 16), related to a belief in the symbolic power of architecture, embodied in Nazi architect Albert Speer's oft-quoted reference of architecture representing words in stone. Those responsible for maintaining the site were concerned as to whether the Congress Hall and Zeppelin Building had been built to eventually decay into alluring ruins, which might again reveal Nazi values embedded within them.

Such fears should perhaps have been allayed by the fact that the structures were built with an emphasis on speed and economy in the face of shortages of raw materials. This was also an issue in Italy, where Mussolini's policy of material (and cultural) autarchy resulted in shortages of construction materials. Macdonald claims that a consequence of the decision to designate the site as worthy of protection, due to its architectural merit and as a witness of the past, was to turn the rally grounds into official heritage. I am not convinced that designating something worth preserving automatically confers heritage status. However, this assumption is central to Macdonald's argument, which depends on the site's heritage status and consequent difficulties, due to it being an ambivalent, problematic, and unsettling heritage (p. 23).

Debates continued through the 1970s and 80s on how to manage the site, and fluctuated between two potentially problematic alternatives of whether to allow

69

continued decay with the risk of producing dangerously alluring ruins, or to undertake restoration which might reawaken the agency originally invested in the site (p. 18). A tactic of trivialisation, or profanation was eventually agreed on, as a middle ground between uncontrolled decay and full restoration. Macdonald states that the intention was to challenge notions of heritage as something sacred and special, through countering the *heritageising of consciousness* (p. 19), whatever that may signify.

In addition to Macdonald's numerous adjectives relating to difficult heritage, other authors' contributions include words such as *negative, abject, ambivalent, and ambiguous* (Samuels, 2015), suggesting a variety of situations that may be regarded as possessing some degree of difficulty, and Joshua Samuels suggests that:

> Dissonant, negative, undesirable, difficult, and abject heritage refer to more or less the same thing, namely the challenge of what to do with the material remains of an historical period, site, or event that is today generally perceived as problematic for one reason or another (Samuels, 2015, p. 113).

Samuels suggested that dissonant, negative, and abject, may evoke unnecessarily jarring, unsettling, and evocative responses in a reader, and decided to use *difficult* due to a relative lack of dramatic connotation. Perhaps for this reason, *difficult* appears to have become the preferred description within the literature of heritage studies concerning legacies of totalitarianism and dictatorship.

From Nazi Germany to Fascist Italy

There were clearly significant differences between the regimes of Mussolini and Hitler, as pointed out by Hannah Arendt (2017), among others. Unsurprisingly, the ways in which Germany and Italy confronted and came to terms with the legacy and burden of their respective dictatorships also differed. Valerie Higgins states that in contrast to Germany, there was no public reckoning in Italy, neither was there a concentrated purge of Fascist buildings and symbols (Higgins, 2018, p. 292). Nick Carter and Simon Martin suggest that in fact, the ubiquitousness of Fascist sites, buildings, symbols, statues, mosaics and murals seems to have effectively rendered them invisible (Carter & Martin, 2017, p. 340; 2019b, p. 117). Malone states that: 'conspicuous, yet mostly ignored, Italy's Fascist heritage is hidden in plain sight' (Malone, 2017, p. 445), while Håkan Hökerberg cites Robert Ventresca's description of Italy's coming to terms with the Fascist past as comprising 'selective remembering and wilful forgetting' (Ventresca as cited in Hökerberg, 2018, p. 314), with a 'remarkable quantity of gaps and myths in the Italian collective memory of the ventennio', which focuses on the Nazi occupation while conveniently overlooking wrongs committed during twenty years of Mussolini's Fascism. Sofia Nannini (2023), considers that, while Fascism left a substantial architectural and monumental heritage that continues to characterise the public space of Italian cities, it was ignored for decades, out of necessity and embarrassment. However, scholars have recently begun to interpret this legacy as a difficult heritage; adopting and adapting Sharon Macdonald's analysis of the heritage of the Nazi regime, to create a suitable framework for studying the architectural legacy of Fascist Italy.

The difficult heritage of Fascism

Fundamental differences between attitudes to the legacies of the Italian and German dictatorships also manifest in a tendency to regard Mussolini as a more benign brand of dictator when compared with Hitler or Stalin. In fact, Hannah Arendt (2017), relegated Mussolini to the footnotes and margins of her book, in describing Italian Fascism as not totalitarian, but 'just an ordinary nationalist dictatorship which came into being after many decades of inefficient and muddled multiparty rule' (p. 335). However, Ruth Ben-Ghiat (2004), warns against the commonly held notion of Italian Fascism as representing a lesser evil, and the headline of her article, published in the *New Yorker,* asks: *Why are so many Fascist monuments still standing in Italy?* (Ben-Ghiat, 2017), in which she contrasted the situation of Italy's numerous Fascist relics with ways in which Germany has apparently acknowledged and dealt with the legacy of its Nazi past. The thrust of her argument was to highlight what she perceived as a lack of historicisation of Italian Fascist architecture, While the headline may, or may not, have been deliberately provocative, it succeeded in causing widespread upset. Ben-Ghiat was particularly merciless concerning the *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* in Rome's EUR district, a building she describes as 'a relic of abhorrent Fascist aggression'. I wondered whether debates concerning this undeniably iconic building could provide insights into difficulties relating to other less prominent architectural legacies of Fascism, including the colonie.

Ben-Ghiat's article provoked a swift and indignant salvo of responses from members of the public and academics, including historian and expert on Fascism Emilio Gentile, and university professor, historian, and architect Fulvio Irace. They appeared to have understood Ben-Ghiat to be in favour of the demolition of Fascist architecture, as implied by the headline of her article, and could not comprehend why anyone would suggest that Italy's reception and acknowledgement of Fascist art and architecture was problematic. It was something that Italians had long stopped concerning themselves with, so why would anyone think that buildings from the Fascist regime could somehow interfere with postwar democracy? Irace described Ben-Ghiat's proposals as puerile, simplifying, and critically fallacious (Irace, 2017). Emilio Gentile's satirical response thanked America for stepping in to rescue Italy from seventy years of sleepy, irresponsible indifference to the monumental spectral Fascist presence in their midst, and for alerting the population to the real threats to democracy which were not poverty, corruption, unemployment or immigration, as popularly supposed (Gentile, 2017).

Reactions to Ben-Ghiat's article may also assist in understanding how Italians, rather than anglophone academics, regard the remnants of the regime, which they live among on a daily basis. Does the subject require problematisation as difficult heritage, or have Italians dealt with the heritage of Fascism in their own way, and moved on? Could it be the non-Italian academic community that is stuck in the past? In the conclusion to the article, Ben-Ghiat appears to acknowledge that there may have been misunderstandings:

As Rosalia Vittorini, the head of Italy's chapter of the preservationist organisation Docomomo, once said when asked how Italians feel about living among relics of dictatorship: 'Why do you think they think anything at all about it?' (Ben-Ghiat, 2017).

So perhaps Italians have learnt to coexist peacefully and amicably with the remains of Mussolini's dictatorship. It was only after a number of visits to Rome that I found myself no longer surprised by the incongruity of Fascist layer of the city's historical palimpsest. Could some of the assumed difficulty of Italy's Fascist heritage be due to the understandable response of those unable to conceive of life lived among the ruins of the regime as normal and everyday?

In order to gain an insight into visitors' reactions to the *palazzo della civiltà italiana*, I turned to reviews in Google Maps. Although I do not claim they represent the experience of all visitors, there was a consistent pattern to the reviews (Google, 2022), with 3,513 reviewers giving an average rating of 4.5 out of 5. The reviews contained 68 mentions of Fascist, 39 of Mussolini, and 41 of Rationalism. One visitor, Antonio Granieri described it as architecturally perfect, a happy coexistence of beauty and intelligent use of space. The majority of one and two-star reviews appeared to be a reaction to the use of the building by Italian fashion house Fendi's erection of a tall security fence around the building. Fabio Bertolini writes that at the moment it is not possible to visit, as it is surrounded by a horrible fence that disfigures the beauty of the building. Such reviews might suggest that Fendi, who lease and occupy the building as their headquarters, may have caused greater offence than the building's Fascist history.

Håkan Hökerberg considers a number of approaches towards negotiating the physical legacy of Fascism, which include conservation, adaption and reuse, desacralisation, neglect, mutilation, demolition, and amnesia; a list that covers the diversity of outcomes observed in the colonie. He describes the sheer scale of the Fascist building project, mentioning that there were around eleven thousand *case del fascio* (local Fascist party centres). A pragmatic solution was to convert some into police stations, while others became local government offices. Neglect may be a deliberate approach, or arise from failure to suitably preserve and conserve built heritage. Mutilation can be observed in partially obliterated *fasces* symbols, where the axehead has been removed and the shaft left intact. I have seen the results of this approach throughout Italy, but particularly in Rome. In the context of this research, postcard images of colonia Gustavo Fara show the postwar treatment of the Fascist axe, which was situated above the main entrance. This can be seen in the colonia Fara image sequence. Hökerberg considers that buildings possess a reduced capacity to carry meaning when they have to satisfy specific requirements, as opposed to purely rhetorical monuments. The passage of time alters perceptions of politically motivated architecture, since original meanings fade, while new layers of significance are added. He concludes that former totalitarian states continue to face challenges in maintaining a balance between memory and forgetting, and between engagement and maintaining a critical distance (Hökerberg, 2018, pp. 311-336).

Hannah Malone provides an account of how Italy has 'dealt with the physical remains of the Fascist regime, as a window onto Italian attitudes to the past' (Malone, 2017, p. 445). She describes historical attitudes towards Italy's Fascist

buildings, and how they might mirror the nation's changing memories of the period. Malone describes the Fascist period as an *absent presence* in Italy, whose memory is divided, distorted, fragmented, and obscured. Her article picks up on a planned project on the legacies of Fascism, originally proposed by historian Christopher Duggan, which came to a halt with his death in 2015. The project conceived by Duggan, was to investigate memories of Fascism, through multiple vehicles including literature, art, film, photography and television, buildings and monuments (p. 446). Malone considers that the presence of physical traces contrasts with an absence of memories, and she identifies the architectural legacy of Fascism as a difficult heritage, since memories of the regime remain painful and divisive in today's democracy. She argues that there are parallels between the treatment of buildings and public memories; both of which have been subjected to selection, revision, and erasure. Rather than suggesting correct responses, her intention is to demonstrate that Italians responded in ways that suited the nation at the time. In the wake of twenty years of Fascism, a global war, a civil war, and military occupation, a concerted programme of *defascistisation* was not considered a top priority. In the interests of ensuring the smooth transition to democracy, the crimes and memory of Fascism were considered perhaps better forgotten.

Malone suggests that three options for dealing with Fascist architecture were to destroy, neglect, or reuse, as a simplification of Hökerberg's more numerous options, and she remarks that many buildings were simply neglected. In some cases this was deliberate, but economic constraints played a part in the neglect of buildings whose original purposes had ceased to exist. However, the commonest, most economically sensible, solution was to repurpose, reuse, and recycle much of

the infrastructure that was built under Fascism. Malone suggests that Fascist sites were modified and altered in the same *patchy and random way in which memories were selected and distorted* (p. 451). She considers that architects and historians ignored or denigrated Fascist architecture until the 1980s, when scholars began to suggest that perhaps architects should be judged on the quality of their work, rather than politics. As a result, the Fascist era has come to be recognised as a period of aesthetic innovation, characterised by its variety of styles, incorporating monumental neoclassicism alongside cutting-edge modernism (Malone, 2017, p. 457).

Notable architectural projects of the Fascist regime, including the Roman suburb of EUR with its *palazzo della civiltà italiana*, the *foro Mussolini* (now the foro italico) also in Rome, the monument to victory in Bolzano, and Giuseppe Terragni's *casa del fascio* in Como, have been the subjects of recent research, in which their problematic pasts have been analysed (Carter, 2020; Hökerberg, 2017; Storchi, 2007). In the case of Terragni's *casa del fascio,* extensive efforts were made over the years to demonstrate that it somehow transcended Fascism, despite its role as Como's Fascist headquarters and Terragni's commitment to the regime's ideology. David Rifkind considers these aspects of the building, describing it as:

> Emblematic of a movement that witnessed intense collaboration between architecture and the decorative arts, and which saw architects engage the urban context with the new language of international modernism ⋯ the Casa del Fascio inculcated the citizenry of Como with the political values of the Party and modelled a new mass identity, mobilised in service to an ever-present Duce (Rifkind, 2006, p. 168).

Roberta Mira cautions that while the *fascistisation* of youth, demonstrated all the typical contradictions of the regime, the presence of contradiction should not lull us into downplaying the totalitarian purpose of Fascism, which, beneath the fuzziness, and despite its apparent contradictions, was clearly defined, and vigorously pursued, regardless of the actual achievements of the regime (Mira, 2019, p. 40). Lucy Maulsby remarks that Fascism's involvement with architecture was ambiguous and changeable throughout the years of the regime (Maulsby, 2022). It was also diverse and profuse, extending beyond urban squares and infrastructure. Fascist interventions included: internal and external colonialism, in the form of new towns on reclaimed malarial marshland; new villages in Sicily's agricultural heartland; the city of Asmara, capital of Eritrea, considered as a Little Rome; and urban development in Tripoli and Addis Ababa.

The regime was responsible for reviving, remodelling, and recreating Roman and Medieval history. Buildings were demolished through acts of *sventramenti* or disembowelling, to make way for new thoroughfares (Lasansky, 2004). Paul Baxa (2010), and Aristotle Kallis (2014), studied Fascism's sculpting and remodelling of the city of Rome to forge a mythical link between the regime and imperial Roman history. Buildings deemed to be undesirable or incompatible with the myth of *romanità* were demolished through acts of *creative destruction,* while rococo and baroque embellishments were stripped away from church facades, to create a more fitting classical appearance. Lasansky documents a number of Tuscan towns, regarded as well-preserved medieval gems, but extensively remodelled by the Fascist regime. Traditions were created, revived, and modified. Siena's Palio, a bare-back horse race, still watched twice-yearly by thousands of visitors, was

revived and altered, from a straight race held on the outskirts of the city, to a spectacle and exhibition of virility and masculinity, staged in the central piazza. Dianne Ghirardo (1996), also documents examples of Fascism's appropriation and embellishment of Italy's past for its own ends, perhaps in a similar way to the regime's realisation of the value of the colonie to serve its military and expansionist objectives. She provides examples of alterations made to the city of Ferrara, in particular the reconstruction of a couple of classical statues, and the reintroduction of the Palio horse-race, which though they could be considered as 'two fairly modest undertakings', provide insights into Fascism's fusing of tradition with the modern. Public displays such as the new Palio, now relocated to the centre of the city, had significant propaganda value, and were publicised in the media, including newspapers, publications, and the picture postcard.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Fascist heritage of Siena's and Ferrara's horse races are not mentioned in tourist brochures and websites (Il Palio di Ferrara, 2023; Archivio del Palio di Siena, 2023), neither do guidebooks dwell on Fascism's remodelling of Arezzo, to make it more medieval, nor on alterations carried out in the hill town of San Gimignano, famed for its towers. While these, and other instances, could, or perhaps should, be included in the difficult heritage of Fascism, the perpetuation of lucrative and tourist-friendly images of unspoilt Tuscany may ensure that they remain untroubled by such prospects. A similar glossing-over is evident in publicity material associated with colonia restorations.

Research and practice

Methods

I began this research without over-concerning myself as to when colonie were built or where they were located. The aim was to start with an open enquiry that could be refined as necessary to offer a suitable framework and scope for the project. One option that presented itself was to investigate the hundreds of postwar colonie along stretches of the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts. However, they are generally architecturally unremarkable, with little to differentiate them from the surrounding hotels and apartment blocks that have contributed to the widespread concretisation of the coastline. Nonetheless, I spent a portion of the first research trips, in October 2018 and February 2019, exploring these stretches of the Adriatic coast. On autumnal mornings with fallen leaves underfoot, walking along roads lined with slowly but surely decaying postwar colonie, the atmosphere felt saturated with memories of summers long gone, and it was here that I imagined seeing and hearing ghosts and echoes of clamorous summer days. However, I concluded that these colonie, despite the wistful pleasure gained through immersing myself in their melancholic conditions, were not a suitable subject for the research (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Colonia gates, Cervia and Pinarella, 2018.

A second tempting idea was to revisit and update one of several, now dated, regional surveys, such as IBC (1986), Camaiora, (2011), and Cerasa (2012), to produce a current day photography-based catalogue. However, I dismissed the idea, as I considered that it might not provide sufficient scope for new knowledge, with being based on a single publication. I was also tempted to follow the itinerary suggested in the 1985 copy of Domus dedicated to Fascist colonie (Domus, 1985), but there did not appear to be any particular rationale behind the buildings included in the itinerary, Such ideas remain do however remain appealing for a future project.

A third option, and the one that came to form the basis of this research and creative practice, was to concentrate on colonie built during the Fascist regime, between 1922 and 1943. I was aware of existing studies of former Fascist colonie, but as the majority focus on architecture, I judged that there were opportunities to use my own background and skills towards a meaningful contribution to the knowledge of Fascist colonie. I was unsure exactly what my experience as geographer, geologist, geophysicist, computer programmer, acupuncturist, and bodyworker, alongside photographer and walker, would bring to the research, but it would surely be different from an architect or historian's perspective. As Pieter Uyttenhove remarks in the introduction to *Architecture and Society of the Holiday Camps* (2007, p. 7), summer camps are a point at which multiple approaches and disciplines come together.

Experiments and adaptation

I made a number of experiments during initial visits, including investigating what repeat photography might contribute as a strategy for comparing present day images with historical archive photographs. I also took infrared photographs of colonia buildings, to investigate how it could be used to reveal otherwise unnoticed details. I experimented with digital and film photography, and with panoramic formats. A year into the research, I was confident that the these photography based experiments were progressing and that strategies were worth pursuing. When further visits were indefinitely curtailed due to covid, I realised that I would have to investigate news ways to supplement the photographic work, and that some

82

experiments would have to remain uncompleted. I searched online for historical images of colonie, from which picture postcards advertised on eBay emerged as a promising resource. I watched, and captured stills from every *Istituto Luce* archive newsreel I could find that provided glimpses of colonie life during the 1920s and 30s. I explored the areas around the colonie through Google Earth and Google Street View, and compared the limitations of virtual travel with my experiences of physically walking around the sites. I took advantage of Street View's facility to step back in time, and I collected images relating to future developments. Instead of the visually harmonious set of photographs that I had envisaged, I was faced with the challenge of how to make sense of a diverse accumulation of heterogenous images. I identified a number of colonie for which I had images, including historical photography, my photographs, and future visualisations. I proceeded to work on creating a number of sets of images, reduced to eight as editing and sequencing progressed. The work with these sequences enabled and guided the process of creating a photobook as the practical outcome from the research.

The project therefore makes use of a number of research methods including literature searches, photography, walking, virtual travel, appropriation and repurposing of archival imagery. Research methods could be summarised as involving physical and virtual exploration and investigation of the spaces and times of the colonie. The methods can be divided into two categories of visiting and viewing. This imitates encounters with the colonie during the 1920s and 30s where young residents had a privileged insider view, while families and outsiders encountered the colonie through the mediation of press articles, photography and movie newsreels, as a combination of documentary imagery and propaganda.

Visiting

This project required a considerable amount of walking from the outset, something I initially regarded as a practical necessity in order to reach a destination for photography. However, I began to comprehend that walking was a key element within the research process. I was not easily able to separate walking from photographing the colonie, and the walk had become an integral part of the experience and investigation. I did not regard myself as a *flâneur,* as described by Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, since I was not a detached observer, and there was no crowd to lose myself in. Neither could I pretend to be exploring new territory, as any illusion of a virgin beach ahead of me was from being out early in the morning. My walks did not particularly follow the conventions of a psychogeographical *dérive* because I had a destination in mind, if not a predetermined route. However, I was actively engaged in looking, listening, sensing, and physically negotiating the spaces I walked through. Tim Ingold (2011), emphasises that we perceive things and environments with our body, not just eyes, ears and skin. He proposes that a grounded approach to perception may restore a sense of touch to its rightful place, and maintains that the surest way to achieve this is through paying attention to the ground beneath our feet. In real life, perception comes through walking and moving, and experiencing things from a shifting continuity of vantage points, and Ingold proposes that walking may be regarded as a

way of knowing (Ingold, 2011, pp. 45-47). Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's explanation of the original meaning of aesthetics could be applied to a bodily and multsensory experience of walking: 'As the realm of sensation through smell, hearing, taste, touch, and sight, aesthetics concerned our ability to experience and know the world through the body' (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, p. 11).

Authors who have contributed to my understanding of the potential of walking hail from a diverse range of disciplines and include: architect Francesco Careri (2002), historian and writer Rebecca Solnit (2006a, 2006b), cultural theorist and psychogeographer Tina Richardson (2011, 2015, 2017), professor of philosophy Frédéric Gros (2014); professor of experimental brain research Shane O'Mara (Omara, 2019; Fleming, 2019), and novelist and non-fiction writer Geoff Nicholson (2011). O'Mara makes a couple of claims that seem particularly relevant to experiences of walking to and from the colonie. He maintains that walking has been associated with improving creativity and sharpening thinking, and that characteristics associated with dreaming, the blurring of time, absorption and abstraction, and free association of memories and thoughts, might be at least partly created through the act of walking. Tim Edensor recognises that a major challenge of walking as creative practice, lies less in its potential for creating knowledge and awareness, and more in finding ways to verbalise sensations and feelings in a way that is meaningful to others (Ingold & Vergunst, 2008, pp. 123-141).

I discovered that walking through the spaces of a ruined building, such as colonia Varese called upon different senses to walks through more orderly spaces. The experience increased the awareness of my body in relation to the surrounding

space, perhaps a natural reaction to the need for caution in an unpredictable physical environment. Edensor focuses on the experience of walking through ruins (Edensor, 2005; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008), and is concerned with opportunities for encounters with *objects and materiality, sensations, sensual characteristics, experiences, ineffable impressions.* He recognises that decisions and path-making become arbitrary, and that *chance, intuition, and whim* come into play. Walking through ruins violates conventional boundaries between inside and outside, and past and present. It disrupts normal bodily postures and encourages different ways of moving and experiencing space. Within ruined spaces, the body is enlivened by sensory inputs including sounds, smells and tactile sensations. Walking through unpredictable spaces also promotes alternative ways of thinking. Edensor remarks on the dominance of vision and the marginalisation of other sensory experience, and how negotiating through ruins challenges this hierarchy of senses. While I wanted to fully experience and absorb the sensations of being in these spaces, I was also aware of the potent allure of the modern ruin, with seemingly endless opportunities for photography, and a potent distraction from the aims of the research. A downside to walking as a research method is that a slip or stumble can have a major impact, as I found out from sliding down a sand dune one day in 2019, losing a couple of days of walking as a consequence (Figure 4).
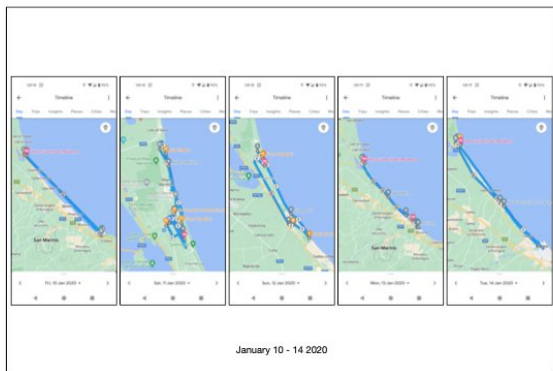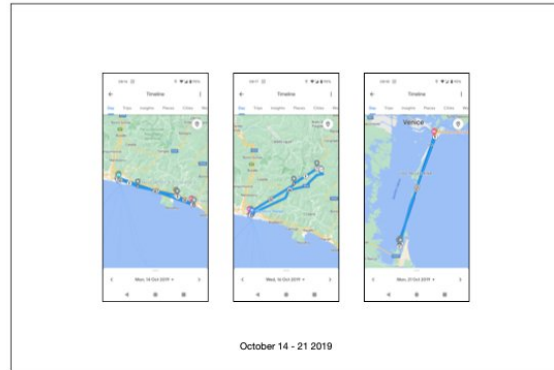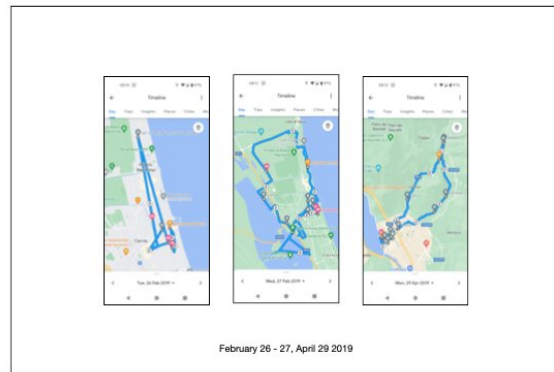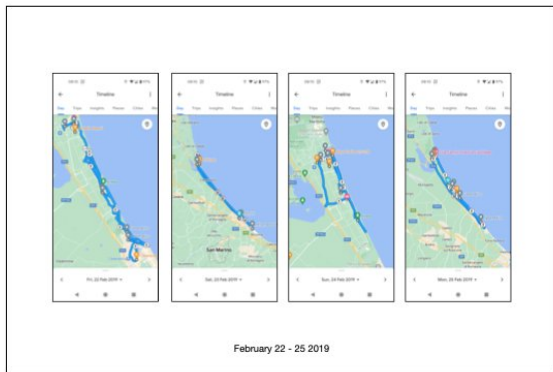
October 30 - November 03 2018

November 04 - 07 2018

February 22 - 25 2019

February 26 - 27, April 29 2019

May 22- 27 2019

October 14 - 21 2019
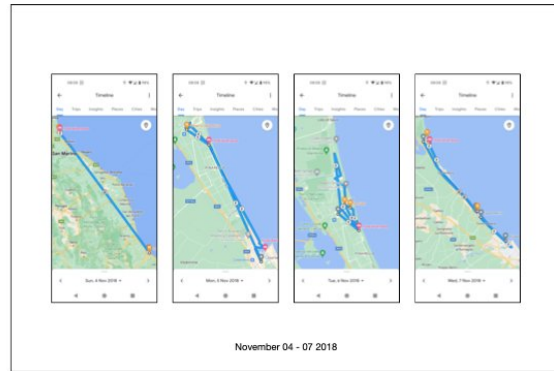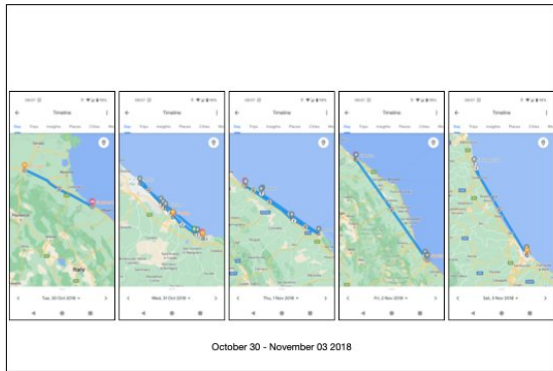
January 10 - 14 2020

February 21 - 26 2020

Figure 4

87

Psychogeography

The history of psychogeography, alongside contemporary practitioners such as Iain Sinclair, suggests it may be better suited to experiences of the city and urban environments, and less to the spaces walked through in this research. However, while my walking may not have conformed to Situationist psychogeography such as the *dérive*, Guy Debord allowed for a *rather pleasing vagueness* to the word, which has created opportunities for a medley of present day practices (Debord, 1958). Tina Richardson suggests that *pyschogeographies* may be a better term (Richardson, 2015). She describes creating a toolbox of walking-based methods around loose notions of psychogeography, to construct the methodology that she terms *schizocartography* (Richardson, 2017). The Tate glossary of art terms defines psychogeography as a study of effects of a geographical location on the emotions and behaviour of individuals (Tate, 2022b). I can therefore claim that walking and physical engagement with the colonie, could be regarded as psychogeography. Between the outside and the interior, there are sometimes tracery-like lines, leading through a wilderness of scrub and spiky thorny acacia, presumably maintained and reinforced through acts of walking, reminding me of a distorted and contorted version of Richard Long's perfectly straight *Line Made by Walking* (Burgon, 2012). I wondered whether repeated walking might somehow be able to suture and strengthen connections between past and present.

Photography

While the work of a fair number of photographers inspires my practice, there is only room in this thesis to mention a few whose work was particularly influential in my photography of the colonie, and in designing the photobook. Two photographers who deserve mentioning from the start are Luigi Ghirri, who died in 1992, and Guido Guidi, born in 1941, still making photographs, and acting as a mentor to younger generations of photographers. The work of both is firmly rooted in the landscape of Emilia Romagna, shared with many of the colonie, and also Mussolini's home town. These two extraordinary practitioners have had a major impact on my appreciation and use of photography, and how I perceive and record the world around me.

The starting point for photography of the colonie however was a style and approach, that I recognise as influenced by a number of the so called *New Topographics* photographers, in particular Stephen Shore, Robert Adams, and Lewis Baltz. The exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* came and went in October 1975, and my understanding of William Jenkins' vision for the exhibition comes from the essays in *reframing the new topographics* (Foster-Rice & Rohrbach, 2013). Jenkins considers that an overarching deadpan aesthetic masks the level of skill of the photographers and he considers Baltz's photographs

to be so straightforward that they appear author-less, while Adams' photographs appear to have been taken without effort (Foster-Rice & Rohrbach, 2013, p.xviii). The understated and underplayed photographic skills and the degree of craftsmanship in their print making are two factors that elevate the work of these photographers beyond mass reproduction. Baltz explains that his prints have to be well made and finely detailed in order to give the work authority (p. 81). My photographs of the colonie that do not rely on experimental methods could be described as aspiring to a similar deadpan aesthetic, as I do not intend to make a point, or to convey a specific message or idea through the photographs I make. I attempt to record what I see, although I know that the camera is never neutral to quote the words of John Tagg (1999, p. 246).

Repeat photography

In the context of this research, the term *repeat photography* encompasses what I call *pre-photography,* alongside *re-photography,* ant the genre of aftermath *photography,* which references existing historical or speculative images, that share a more or less common viewpoint with a present day photograph. I use re-photography to refer to photography that loosely imitates images from the past, while pre-photography refers to the use of images relating to speculative futures, both forming the basis for photographing a scene in the present day. Aftermath photography differs from repeat photography in that it is usually associated with photographing sites of (traumatic) events, where original photographs may not exist. Chloe Dewe Mathews' *Shot at Dawn* (Baker & Mavlian, 2014), is an example of

effective use of aftermath photography, in which Mathews photographed locations where British and French troops were executed for cowardice and desertion, between 1914 and 1918. The photographs were deliberately taken close to the time of day of the executions, and at approximately the same time of year, to replicate the original light and atmosphere of an absent photograph of the event. As such, it is less relevant to this research.

While the original methods used in Mark Klett's *Rephotographic Survey Project* (RSP) (Klett, 2020), were perhaps too rigorously defined for this research, Klett later relaxed some of the constraints and strictures which he had imposed on his original conception of repeat photography. He came to appreciate that a repeat photograph can be effective without precisely adhering to the aesthetics and viewpoint of an archive image (Klett, 2006, pp. 4-11). He describes the effect of combining two similar but different photos as forming a new whole. Klett also claims that the act of pairing neutralises any intrinsic evocative power that old photographs may possess through virtue of their age. Pairs of repeat photographic images are designed to be read together, from one to the other and back again, prompting the viewer to compare detail with detail. However, Navjotika Kumar (2014), questions what the process of repeat photography actually achieves, and what effect it has on the viewer's understanding of a relationship set up between two views separated by a period of time.

Klett acknowledges that while paired photographs may initiate debate by means of their similarities and differences, they can only describe, and he refers to them as forming bookends to an untold in-between time. Having realised the system's

limitations, the RSP team investigated methods by which conversations about time and change could be expanded and enriched. They decided to allow a plurality and separateness of viewpoints, that valued both the original photograph and the repeat photographer's response to a scene. This move away from accuracy had the secondary effect of thwarting a viewer's ability to make straight comparisons between details in two adjacent images. Klett (2006, pp. 4-11), concludes that working within an expanded landscape is more interesting and productive than being constrained by the particular slice of space described by an original photograph. His goal for *Third View* was to make interesting photographs in the manner of contemporary views. Klett concluded that the re-photographic technique has the potential to generate pairs of images that call on a viewer to position themselves relative to the past, present, and an unknowable future. This matches my intention of situating the viewer within the spaces between images that reference the past, present, and futures of the colonie*,* and offers a clear photographic strategy and methodology for working with images of the colonie.

Contributors to *Before-and-After Photography* (Bear & Albers, 2017), advance the concept of repeat photography beyond the landscape, to investigate a diverse range of topics that encompass medical photography, the built environment, natural disasters, and social reforms, not all of which are relevant to this research. Kate Palmer Albers and Jordan Bear proposed the term *before-and-after photography,* which they regard as related to, but distinct from, *then and now*, and *re-photography*. They consider *before-and-after* to be ubiquitous, with examples found in almost any field of photography, since it 'inscribes and interrogates the conventions of cause and effect, development and degeneration, and referent and

representation' (p. 2). Regarding what in particular distinguishes *before-and-after photography* from its close relatives, the authors propose that it acts as the pivot for a third, generally unseen, event. Such photographic pairs work through challenging the viewer's imagination as to what may have happened in the space and time between a pair of photographs. Bear and Albers claim that *before-and-after* pairs are able to stand in for events that escaped photographic representation (p. 3). In common with Klett, the authors invoke a metaphor of bookends, as containers for an event that is articulated while remaining unseen. The power of a before-and-after pair relies on the viewer's understanding, and on the presumption that photography is capable of pointing beyond the time and space contained within the frame. They exclude *re-photography* as practised by Klett from their publication, on the somewhat pedantic grounds that his work operates on the *then-and-now,* rather than the *before-and-after,* and is dependant on the passage of time, rather than the reverberations of a specific event (p. 7). Their justification for the exemption does is not entirely logical, since projects such as *After the ruins, 1906 and 2006: rephotographing the San Francisco earthquake and fire* (Klett, 2006), are constructed around a clear rupture between the before and the after.

James Elkins (pp. 193-197), picks up on the suggestion that before-and-after photography is distinguished by the existence of a third pivotal moment. Elkins refers to Roland Barthes, in suggesting that expressions such as *before-and-after* are perhaps redundant, since photographs always direct a viewer's attention to other moments in time, and unrepresented periods before, between, and after. The power of pairs and series of images lies in the explicitness of the invitation to fill in the gaps. He concludes that re-photography, before-and-after photography, and

variations on the theme should be regarded as borderline cases, rather than as a specific genre or type of photographic practice. These texts have assisted in appreciating that repeat photography may have the potential to provoke dialogue and questions, regarding what may have transpired in the period of time separating a pair of photographs of a scene, and is relevant to this research into the times of the colonie.

Apart from occasional structural collapses and demolitions, changes to colonie buildings and sites have generally been shaped by more gradual processes. Taking courage from Klett's later projects, I did not overly concern myself with attempting to reproduce viewpoints, lens characteristics and daylight conditions. Instead I explored whether I could capitalise on photographic difference as a means of revealing hidden and less obvious features of the colonie. Ultimately, travel restrictions limited these investigations to just a few locations where I was able to work with photographs based on old postcard images. I attempted to adapt these investigations through making use of Google Street View, described in the visiting section of the research methods.

Infrared photography

I was attracted by the possibility of being able to photograph otherwise invisible aspects of the colonie, and by the anticipation of not knowing what might be revealed. Near-range digital infrared photography appeared to offer a practical and affordable approach, having put aside fantasies of drone photography and 3D LiDAR

scanning. Although published back in 2008, I found Geert Verhoeven's overview of adapted digital cameras for *straightforward and low-cost archaeological near-infrared photography* (Verhoeven, 2008), relevant and informative. In a more recent paper, Rykker Evers and Peter Masters (Evers & Masters, 2018), describe using digital infrared drone photography to detect clandestine burials. However, this research is interested in whether infrared photography might reveal buried and obscured architectural structures, and would rather not come across a shallow grave. Evers and Masters comment that infrared photography has also proved useful in revealing historical crop markings that are practically unnoticeable with normal aerial photography.

I used a Sony NEX-6 and a Sigma DP2 Merrill camera, both coincidentally dating from 2012. The hot mirrors that normally restrict the amount of infrared radiation reaching a digital camera sensor, had been removed from both. It was replaced on the Sony with a 590nm bronze-tinted filter, while no filter was fitted to the Sigma requiring the addition of an external filter. Infrared photography may be used to highlight the growth of vegetation, which reflects light in the infrared spectrum causing it to glow in photographs, while inorganic material, such as stone and concrete, appears dark, with the technique being most effective in bright sunlight. Although not able to take these experiments beyond early stages, infrared photography of the colonie may literally be able to show them in a new light. My images were effective in highlighting the incursion of vegetation within and around the spaces of abandoned colonie, although I found neither buried structures nor clandestine graves.

I purchased the Sony second-hand and, while adequate for experiments, there were a number of marks on the sensor that necessitated post processing corrections. The Sigma camera had a tendency to produce a 'hot spot' in the centre of the frame, which I was able to compensate for with a better quality infrared filter, paying close attention to the aperture, and observing the position of the sun. Since the colours in infrared images are inherently artificial, I employed a common convention of reversing the red and blue colour channels in images made with the Sony camera. Photographs from the Sigma camera with a 720nm filter, captured very little visible light and were converted to monochrome from the original shades of red and purple.

I also experimented with digitally reproducing the appearance of Kodak's discontinued *Aerochrome*, false-colour infrared film, originally designed and intended for aerial surveys of vegetation. The first photographer to realise it could be used for more conceptual documentary photography appears to be Richard Mosse, who somewhat ambiguously describes his work as documentary in spirit but more concerned with consciousness than conscience.

Concerning the choice of *Aerochrome* film for his *Infra:* project, Mosse says:

> I was motivated to use this particular film when Kodak announced that they were going to discontinue the stock in 2009. I realised it was my last opportunity to work with this unusual medium. I decided to bring it to Congo for a number of reasons, one of which was the fact that it seemed inappropriate and made me feel slightly uncomfortable. That's always a good place to go as an artist (I Still Shoot Film, 2012).

Writer, Jessica Loudis comments that: 'What does not initially meet the eye in Richard Mosse's vivid photographs of cotton-candy hillsides, vamping child soldiers, and rose-hued rebels is the violence of their setting: the war-torn Kivu region of eastern Congo' (Loudis, 2012), and she considers that the unreality of the images befits the subject matter of violence and conflict in an otherwise beautiful landscape. In place of Kodak's much sought after, discontinued, expensive, short shelf-life, heat and x-ray sensitive film, I experimented with Kolari Vision's *IR Chrome* filter (Kolari Vision, 2022a; 2022b), on the Sigma full spectrum camera. The manufacturer claims that the filter is the result of extensive experimentation, and can achieve 'the look of Kodak *Aerochrome* IR film, straight out of camera to recreate the classic, beloved look of *Aerochrome* with a full-spectrum camera' (Kolari Vision, 2022a).

Artist Sanne De Wilde, employed infrared photography, alongside black-and-white photographs, and photo-paintings in her photobook *The Island of the Colorblind* (De Wilde, 2017), in which she attempts to portray life with achromatopsia, a hereditary total colour blindness, among the population of the Pacific atoll of Pingelap, who can only imagine and dream of a coloured world in a phenomenon first described by Oliver Sacks (Kehrer Verlag, 2022). I could not ascertain whether De Wilde used a Kolari Vision filter, but her work is included on their website (Nadolski, 2020). While her book is sumptuous, and a thing of beauty, its relevance to this research is how De Wilde works with and transforms colour, which appears relevant to the use of AI-colouring in creating believably coloured deceptions from monochrome originals. Initial experiments with the filter generated intriguing images, and I expect the technique could produce interesting results used in and around the colonie.

I made a series of photographs using Rollei Infrared film without an infrared filter since the manufacturer states that the film can be used with daylight photography as well as near-infrared. My images support their claim that the film is 'characterised by its high resolving power with finest grain as well as high edge sharpness' (Rollei, 2021). The next step, which I was unable to proceed with due to travel restrictions, would have been to use the film with a 720nm filter. (Figures 5 & 6), are examples of experiments with digital infrared photography. The first three images were made with the Sigma and a 720nm filter, converted to black and white. The following seven images were made with the Sony camera, with red and green channels transposed. The final two images were made with at the end of the research with the Sigma camera and a Kolari Vision chrome filter.

Mater Dei - Ca'Roman

1

Mater Dei - Ca'Roman

2

Mater Dei - Ca'Roman

3

Ferrovieri - Bellaria

4

Novarese - Rimini Miramare

5

Novarese - Rimini Miramare

6

Figure 5

Reggiana - Rimini Miramare

7

Reggiana - Rimini Miramare

8

Le Navi - Cattolica

9

Le Navi - Cattolica

10

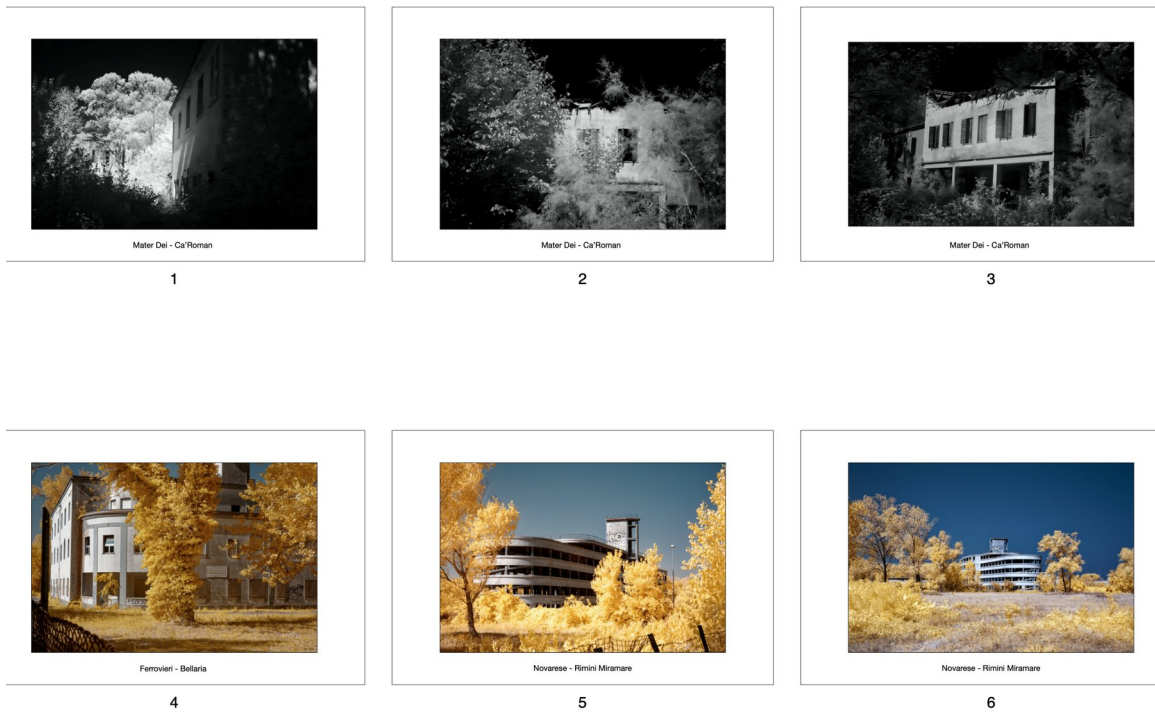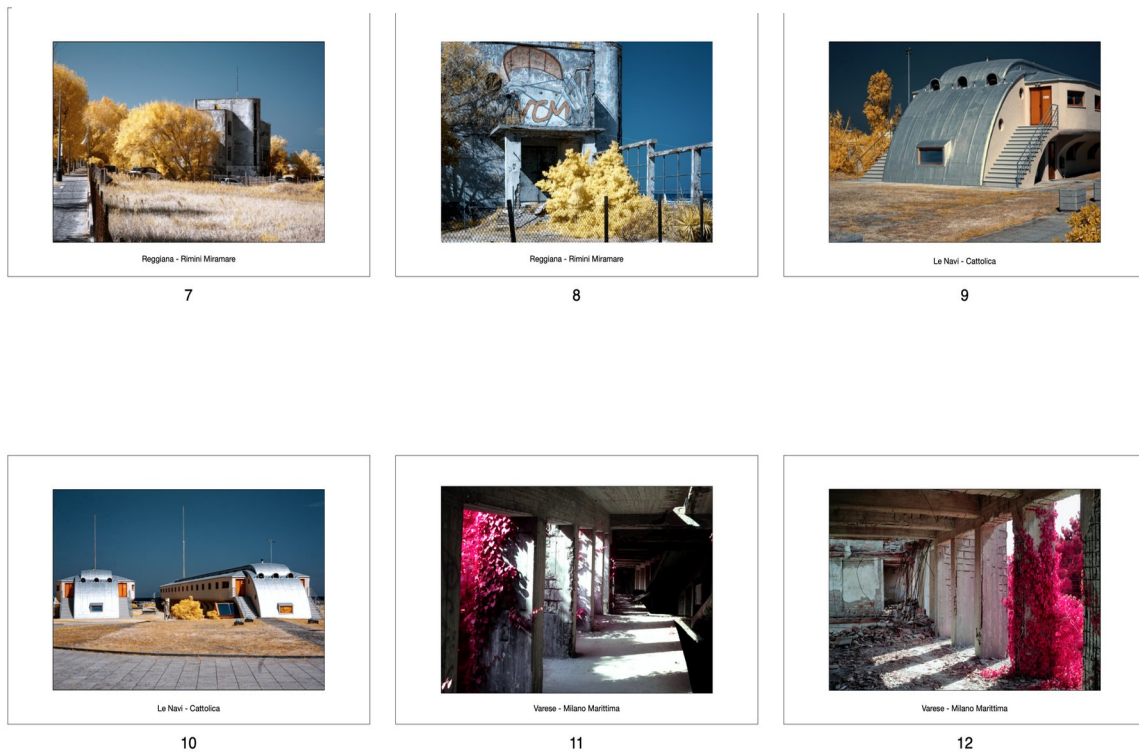Varese - Milano Marittima

11

Varese - Milano Marittima

12

Figure 6

99

Panoramic photography

There were other reasons for making panoramic photographs of colonia buildings besides using up a lot of 120 film at four or six exposures per roll. Some coastal colonie, for example, AGIP, Montecatini, Varese, and Olivetti, suit and almost seem to demand a panoramic approach. My aim was to show them as objects within a landscape, as points or nodes within a wider system. Panoramic photographs tend to isolate objects which effectively shrink within the image frame, making them appear less significant, while the wide and narrow image format is also suggestive of a section cut out from a standard framing. A horizontal panorama requires the viewer to scan left to right, right to left, and back again. It discourages the eyes from settling on one spot to take in the whole image with a glance, while a vertical panorama offers an alternative and sometimes unsettling perspective. I purchased a Fuji G617 Professional, 6 by 17 medium format camera (EMULSIVE, 2021), inspired by Magnum photographer Josef Koudelka, who embraced the potential of the panorama to make visually captivating images. Koudelka explained how he began using a panoramic camera:

> I love landscape. But I was never happy photographing the landscape with a standard camera. In 1986 I was asked to participate in a government project in France. They invited me to the office and I saw a panoramic camera lying on the desk. I said, 'Can I borrow this camera for one week?' ⋯ I realised that with this camera I could do something I'd never done before. The panoramic camera helped me go to another stage in my career, in my work (Anonymous, 2015).

I found it challenging making good and effective use of the whole width offered by the very wide format of the Fuji, while maintaining a sense of depth within the relatively short vertical aspect of the image frame. I scanned negative and slide film with a flatbed scanner, and by photographing them on a light table. The second option produced a suitable resolution for my purpose, although the university's Hassselblad Flextight scanner would likely have produced better scans. At colonia Rovegno, I found horizontal views of the forest and vertical panoramas to be effective in capturing something of the strangeness and isolation of the building and its environs. I composed a number of horizontal panoramas that showed the clocktower poking through the tree line, while vertical panoramas reproduced something of the sensation of vertigo I experienced when looking up from close to the building. This panoramic format was also ideal for the long rectangular block of colonia Montecatini. At Le Navi, now the Aquarium of Cattolica, the panoramic image emphasised the machine-like character of the dormitory blocks. I made panoramic photographs at colonia Novarese, in an attempt to present it as a detail within an extended landscape. At colonia Varese, I used panoramic photography to capture the way the building appears to hover above the beach. Panoramic six by seventeen centimetre Fuji Velvia and Provia colour transparencies also constitute unique and attractive physical objects in their own right.

The Linhof Technorama 612PC (B&H Foto & Electronics Corp., 2016), was a more practical and versatile compromise, requiring less film per exposure and taking up less space in my bag and luggage, while the camera also has a built in vertical shift for perspective compensation in architectural photography. I purchased both panoramic cameras with the assurance of my local camera dealers that they would

give me a good trade in price if I returned them. I used the Linhof on my final field trip in February 2020, when I visited Cremona to photograph the recently restored sun-therapy colonia building that had been colonia Roberto Farinacci, where I found the camera was perfect for capturing the sleek lines and symmetry of the building. I also visited Pesaro where the former post and telegraph services colonia has lain empty for years, and was entirely clad with protective sheeting over a scaffolding framework. Black and white analogue photographs taken with the Linhof seemed to capture the other-worldly feel of the visible but invisible structure more successfully than digital colour photographs I made. My final medium format panoramic purchase was a Noblex PRO 6/150 150u, with a rotating Tessar lens (Kamerastore, 2022). Covid travel restrictions meant that I did not get the opportunity to use it for photographing the colonie, but I still have the camera. I made darkroom prints from some panoramic negatives, and discovered that six by seventeen cm negatives were too wide for the enlarger, so I was only able to print partial sections. I include a selection of panoramic photographs (Figures 7 & 8).

Stereoscopic photography

I considered stereoscopic photography, after coming across Brian May's London Stereoscopic Company (London Stereoscopic Company, 2022), and having found a website advertising stereographic photos from Hitler's 1938 visit to Italy (USMBOOKS, 2023). In the event I was not able to proceed further, and while it may not have added much to the research, it could perhaps have provided another way of challenging the viewer's perception.

Rovegno	Rovegno	Montecatini
1	2	3
Le Navi - Cattolica	Le Navi - Cattolica	Varese - Milano Marittima
4	5	6
Varese - Milano Marittima	Novarese and Bolognese - Rimini Miramare	Novarese and Bolognese - Rimini Miramare
7	8	9

Figure 7

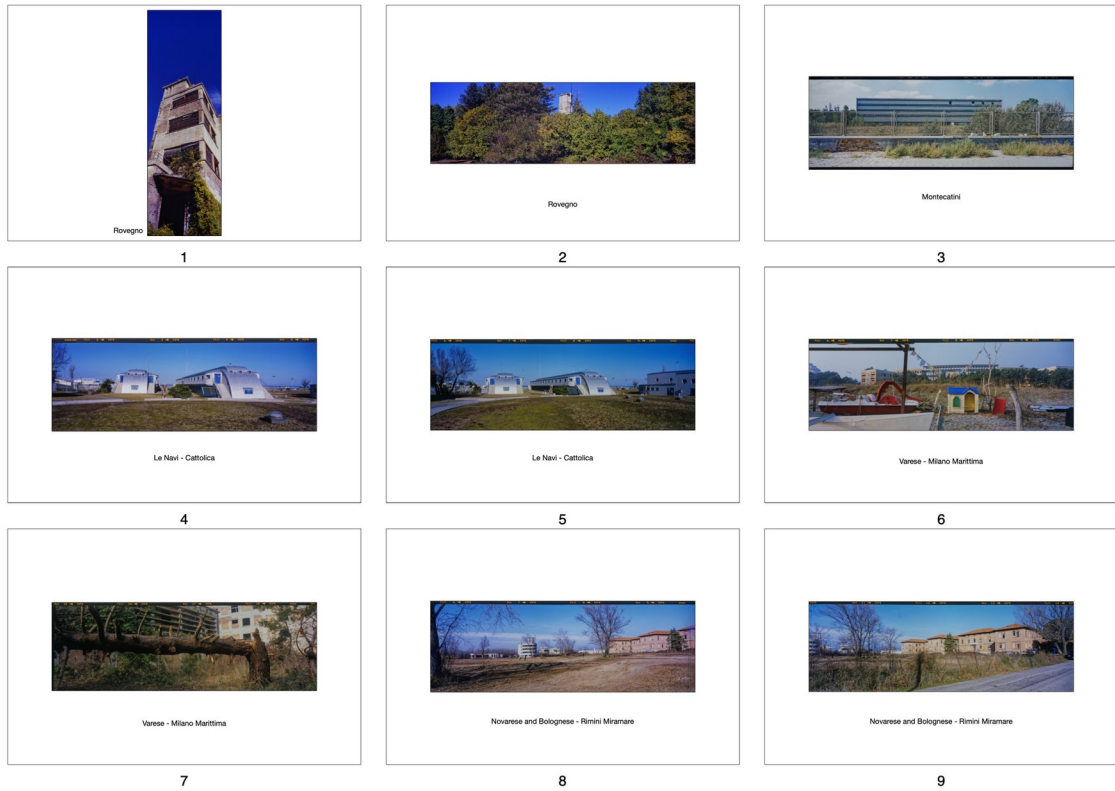|		
Padane - Cremona	Padane - Cremona	Padane - Cremona
10	11	12
Villa Marina - Pesaro	Villa Marina - Pesaro	Villa Marina - Pesaro
13	14	15
Villa Marina - Pesaro	Agip - Cesenatico	Agip - Cesenatico
16	17	18

Figure 8

Revealing the unseen

The idea of Fascism's physical legacy being invisible through being hidden in plain sight, has been commented on by a number of authors, including Ruth Ben-Ghiat (2017), Hannah Malone (2017), and Valerie Higgins (2018). I explored the idea by photographing in foggy weather and situations in which colonia buildings were covered or otherwise obscured. I wondered whether by some contradictory act of alchemy, photographing what was hidden might produce a revelation. I used the Linhof camera to make photographs of colonia AGIP on a foggy morning starting in near invisibility, and continuing until the fog began to disperse. I also spent some time around colonia Ferrovieri at Bellaria on a similarly foggy day with a digital camera. As has been mentioned, I made photographs of the former colonia at Pesaro, which was hidden from view but also made obvious through being entirely covered in protective sheeting. Marco Volpe (2019, pp. 83), describes a number of creative initiatives to raise public awareness of colonia Stella Maris at Montesilvano. One particular intervention in 2000, with reference to the work of artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude, involved completely draping the building in bright white cloth. Volpe comments on the paradox involved in revealing the uniqueness and beauty of the building through hiding it (Figures 9 & 10).

Pesaro - July 2017

1

Pesaro - May 2018

2

Pesaro - February 2020

3

Pesaro - February 2020

4

Pesaro - February 2020

5

Pesaro - February 2020

6

Figure 9

Agip Cesenatico - February 2020

7

Agip Cesenatico - February 2020

8

Ferrovieri Bellaria - February 2020

9

Ferrovieri Bellaria - February 2020

10

Ferrovieri Bellaria - February 2020

11

Ferrovieri Bellaria - February 2020

12

Figure 10

Photography conclusions

The diverse strategies that brought to photographing the colonie were driven by a desire to explore less conventional approaches to visual representations of the architecture and spaces. Unconventional, repeat, infrared, and panoramic photography may all be regarded as representing attempts to investigate aspects of the 'otherness' and 'fuzziness' that walking and explorations led me to associate with colonia structures and spaces. To this end, I also destabilised what might otherwise be considered 'standard' digital photography, by mounting vintage Leica and Minolta lenses onto my Sony A7 digital camera body.

Whether these photographic strategies, combined with archival and speculative imagery, are able to reveal concealed aspects of the colonie is largely dependant on how the viewer interprets the work. However, I consider that they effectively open up the topic of the colonie to questioning how their pasts and speculative futures meet and are intertwined with the present. The approaches taken towards photography, and the incorporation of diverse imagery, ensure that the photobook created out of this research distinguishes itself from the documentary approaches taken by other colonia photobook authors, as discussed in the section dedicated to photography and the colonia.

Viewing

Google Earth

When unable to continue visiting Italy for this research, I began to explore the territory around the colonie through Google Earth, starting with colonia Varese. The first thing I noticed was that Google Earth's satellite imagery was dated March 2020, three weeks after my final visit, and prior to a structural collapse in August. On returning to the Google Earth images in November 2022, the satellite imagery had been updated and clearly showed the collapse of one wing of the building. I also used Google Earth to retrace a '100 colonie' walk that I have made on several occasions. The route of around fourteen kilometres follows the coastline between colonia AGIP at Cesenatico and colonia Varese and Montecatini at Milano Marittima. I converted images of my virtual walk into a collage-mosaic through assembling numerous screen images. This provided me with a framework for superimposing images and text related to the journey. The aim was to reproduce the essence of walking, with its rhythms, horizons, vanishing points, perspectives, and progression through space.

This walk takes in the sites of more than a hundred colonia, some demolished, but mostly abandoned, and a few repurposed. While many were built in the 1960s and are unencumbered with a Fascist past, they could perhaps still be regarded as an inheritance of the Fascist regime. A number of postwar colonie form familiar landmarks, including *Colonia Ave Maria Vercellese* (1960), *Leone XIII Brescia* (1952), and *ENPAS / INPDAP* (1962). Religious organisations owned and sponsored these colonie during the 1950s and 1960s, hence the occurrence of the Virgin Mary, angels, saints and popes in their names (Madre di Dio, Santa Maria, Paolo VI, Leone XIII, San Pietro, San Francesco, San Paolo), which superseded the Fascist tendency to name them after members of the Mussolini family: colonia Sandro Mussolini, Rosa Maltoni Mussolini, Alessandro Mussolini. On the ground, I found colonia Leone XIII Brescia disturbing and unsettling. The date of 1952 over the entrance implies it postdates the Fascist regime but, in my imagination it resembles a Victorian prison or workhouse. There is something about it that discouraged me from venturing far inside. In contrast, and a little further on, is colonia *ENPAS / INPDAP* (1962), with a contemporary design of three pavilions acting to diminish any sense of control or regimentation. While the tiled imagery of this virtual walk with its annotations produced a visually pleasing result, I am not sure that it contributed appreciably towards understanding the past, present, and future of Fascist colonie along this stretch of the coast (Figure 11). A map is not the territory and an abstraction can never be the thing itself (Batty, 2019).

Figure 11

Google Street View

In contrast to Google Earth, which would aspire to cover the globe, Google Street View largely relies on the presence of navigable 'streets'. Coverage is absent around mountain colonie, frequently incomplete around coastal ones, and it would appear that Google's cameras have yet to venture onto Italy's beaches. Street View permits members of the public to upload 360 degree images, and I came across images of hotel bedrooms, restaurants, interiors, and balconies. While there is something compelling in the sheer ordinariness of these views, I cannot find a good reason for including them in this research. Stilled images from Google Street View remind me of Walter Benjamin's description of Atget's photographs, as crime scenes with an absence of aura (Benjamin, 2009, p. 192). Perhaps this is why Google Street View lends itself to projects such as Mishka Henner's *No Man's Land* (Henner, 2011-2013), and Doug Rickard's *A New American Picture* (Rickard, 2010; Warren, 2012), which use Street View to play on the aesthetics of crime scene photography.

What the software does and does not permit, combined with the two-dimensional limits of the computer screen, reveal that what is possible and permitted is carefully controlled and constrained. After a while, Street View world came to resemble Groundhog Day, so that whenever I return to a scene, I see the same people and vehicles in the same places, doing the same things as when I was last there. It is only me who has changed during the intervening time. There will be no chance encounters with photographers and urban explorers, or with people who want to express an opinion on the state of dereliction and disrepair of a building, or even

someone just to tell me it is a shame. Virtual explorations began with a sense of novelty and possibility, only to end in disillusionment, and the realisation that promises of freedom of movement, viewpoint, and perspective are illusory, perhaps like Street View itself. The same could apply to the illusory nature of Fascism's self representation, and the experience reminded me of Walter Benjamin's assertion:

> Fascism attempts to organise the newly arisen proletarian masses while leaving intact the production and property relations which they strive to abolish. It sees its salvation in granting expression to the masses but on no account granting them rights (Benjamin, 2010).

In describing his project *The Nine Eyes of Google Street View*, Jon Rafman's statement contains similar sentiments:

> The world captured by Google appears to be more truthful and more transparent because of the weight accorded to external reality, the perception of a neutral, unbiased recording, and even the vastness of the project··· this way of photographing creates a cultural text like any other, a structured and structuring space whose codes and meaning the artist and the curator of the images can assist in constructing or deciphering (Rafman, 2009).

Street View's *history* function compensated for some of the disappointment, and enabled an investigation of how colonie have changed, or not changed over the years, dating back to 2008. Street View historical images in the photobook introduce each colonia and may be considered forms of repeat photography, with a similar point of view at different times, consistent with Mark Klett's methods. Rather than displaying the images as a linear sequence or in grid form, I created digital composites as described in the photobook sections of this thesis (Figures 12 & 13).
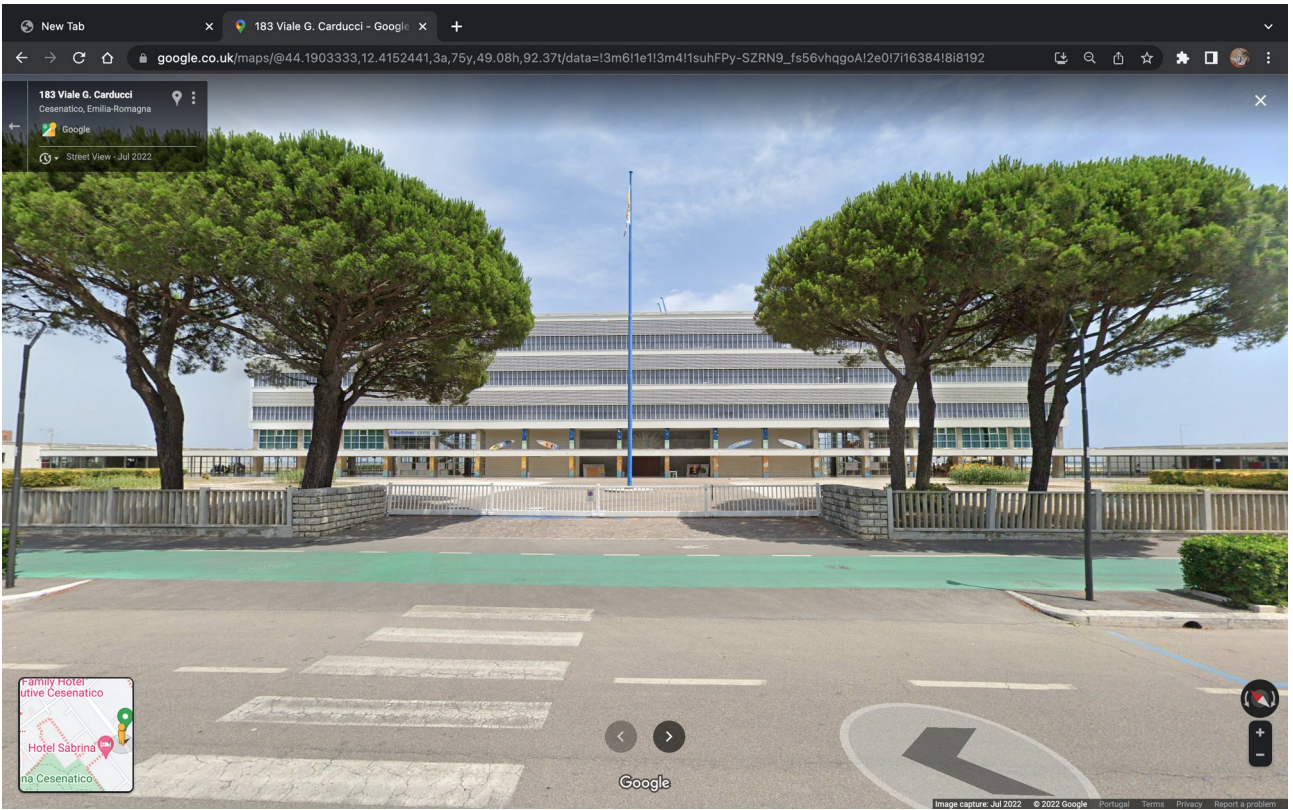
Figure 12. Colonia AGIP 2022

Figure 13. Colonia Bolognese 2022

112

Archives

I acquired several original documents and publications from the 1930s onwards, relating to the architecture and operation of colonie including: *Regolamento delle Colonie Climatiche* (PNF, 1939), *Corso per Vigilatrici di Colonie* (PNF, 1940), *Ginnastica nelle Colonie Climatiche: Regolamento, Esercizi, Giochi* (PNF, 1942), and two special issues of the architectural journal *Costruzioni* (Labò, M. & Podestà, 1941a, 1941b). I refer to text and imagery from these sources in the thesis, and practice-based work, including the photobook.

Appropriation

Appropriation in contemporary art has a tendency to spark controversy and debate around originality and ownership, beginning with the work of Marcel Duchamp, and proceeding through practitioners such as Barbara Kruger, Sherrie Levine, and Richard Prince (Rowe, 2011). Within this research into the colonie, I consider that I may justifiably sidestep questions around what comprises original work, and make no claim of originality for the postcards and archival images which feature in the sequences and photobook. The Fascist regime attempted to legitimise itself through selective appropriation of the heritage of the Roman Empire, as summarised by Genevieve Gessert who asserts 'the Italian Fascist period presents one of the most notorious cases of large-scale classical appropriation in the service of political propaganda' (Gessert, 2022). The Tate defines appropriation as 'the practice of artists using pre-existing objects or images in their art with little transformation of

the original' (Tate, 2022a), which is an accurate summary of the use of postcard and newsreel imagery in the photobook, although the use of AI-based colouring could be regarded as a major transformation. Repurposing images associated with the Fascist era could be regarded as an appropriate creative response to Fascism's own acts of historical appropriation. Geoff Wall, discussing Dan Graham's *Homes for America,* describes inducing a 'mini-crisis' in the reader or viewer by means of the inversions generated with appropriation and repurposing:

> The provocations and interventions characteristic of 1960s Situationism, in which an unexpected or confrontational gesture interrupts the established rhythm of relationships in a specific context, and induces a form of contestation, paradox or crisis, this approach thereby exposes the forms of authority and domination in the situation, which are normally imperceptible or veiled (Evans, 2009, p. 43).

I searched online for postcard images, and also worked through a hundred or so colonia-related newsreels in the *Istituto Luce* archive (Archivio Luce, 2023), on the lookout for moments of dissent and apparent resistance, that might have escaped the eye of the censor. A number of newsreel stills are included in the photobook. I also regard architects' and researchers' proposals for the renovation and reuse of colonia buildings as archive sources. Although they typically depict future utopias, many now relate to past aspirations that have gone for ever.

Colonia matters

Power in numbers

The *Mostra delle Colonie Estive e dell'Assistenza all'Infanzia,* Exhibition of Summer Camps and Childcare (MCE) at Rome's Circo Massimo, seems an appropriate place to begin an exploration of the Fascist regime's representation of the colonie. The exhibition was inaugurated by Mussolini on June 20, 1937, to the accompaniment of 1,500 doves. 80,000 members of the Fascist women's association also attended according to Diana Garvin (2023, p. 170), who were then free to visit what she describes as 'the Fascist regime's most carefully conceived representation of the colonie' which aimed to demonstrate to the world what the regime had achieved for Italian youth. Elena Mucelli (2007, p. 153), claims that there were 60,000 women assembled in Piazza Venezia, and does not mention the doves, but either way, it would have been an impressive crowd of women who gathered to hear Mussolini's speech on the importance of their role as obedient Fascist mothers.

While special trains carried over half a million visitors to the exhibition from all over Italy, the exhibition brought together a number of priorities, including reassuring prospective mothers, increasing the birth rate, connecting people through the rail network, and improving children's health through innovative architecture. The exhibition was designed to be experienced dynamically, much like the colonie

themselves, leading the *Il Corriere della Sera* newspaper to pronounce the exhibition as possessing clear, simple, and light architecture, as the very image of summer and childhood in the colonie (Garvin, 2023, pp. 171-174) (Figure 14).

Figure 14

Alex Wall (1988, pp. 62-65), provides a scale plan of the site, and a room-by-room guide to the exhibition. He notes that its stated purpose was to present the works of Fascism to the working people. However, a more overtly political theme was that of the power of numbers, taken from Mussolini's declaration that demography determines the position of a nation. It was not sufficient to merely impress the visitor, but they had to be persuaded by the demographic argument, clearly outlined

in the Fascist booklet *Il Cittadino Soldato* (The Citizen Soldier):

> 'Numbers are power' said Il Duce. Consistent with this concise statement, the Regime claims the integral protection of the race in its existence, essence, and health. Demographic policy is the first chapter of this program, the first act of this action. Anything that goes against this fundamental need for life and development is severely repressed and condemned; ideas, customs, and laws are imbued with this indispensable necessity, which is a sacred principle for Fascism (PNF, 1936).

While the exhibition acted as a showcase of the Fascist programme for maternity and childcare, the visitor's itinerary culminated in the pavilion of young martyrs, with every aspect of the regime's concern for youth fixated on the formation of strong, citizen-soldiers, prepared to sacrifice themselves for the Fascist Revolution.

The MCE exhibition was the first such event to be located in the recently excavated area of Circo Massimo. Its pavilions were laid out to allow an unimpeded view of the Palatine hill; the mythical location of the cave in which Romulus and Remus were raised, and the nucleus of Imperial Rome. In case the visitor missed the symbolism of the site, the rear wall of the ONB pavilion was left open, so that sporting activities of groups of young Balilla would be seen in front of the Palatine. While colonie projects were typically assigned to relatively unknown architects, responsibility for the MCE was entrusted to the young but experienced team, responsible for the highly successful 1932 *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista.* Rather than relying on photographs, photomontage, and captions for impact, the pavilions contained full scale models, replete with infants, mothers, and children. A visitor's itinerary charted the path of a child born into the Fascist State, through infancy,

childhood (the colonia), education, health, emerging as a young Fascist, fully engaged in sport and gymnastics (de Martino and Wall, 1988, p. 64). The pavilion of summer colonie featured a working diurnal colonia, with a swimming pool and gymnastics area, and a continuous performance of activities provided by groups of children. A map showed the locations of 3,821 colonie in operation the previous summer, hosting a total of 700,000 children; a venture claimed to be without parallel anywhere else in the world. A separate pavilion was dedicated to children of Fascists abroad, 20,000 of whom were brought to Italy every summer to stay in dedicated colonie, to acquaint them with their true homeland (de Martino and Wall, 1988, pp. 64-65).

Elena Mucelli's article *Rhetoric of the Image* (Mucelli, 2007, pp. 150-154), republished in Italian as part of her PhD research (2009), looks to the architecture, use of imagery, and activities within the MCE, to provide insights into the role played by these elements within the spaces of the colonie themselves. She comments that despite the exhibition's ever present theme of power in numbers, individual children were the protagonists of the imagery used to promote the exhibition, featured in a special issue of postage stamps and in posters. While the Fascist regime may have shunned an international event on colonie that year (Stacher, 2018, p. 118), they hosted sixteen national scientific congress and two international ones during the three months of the exhibition (Mucelli, 2007, p. 152). The congresses covered a range of issues concerning child health, social assistance, birth rates and demographic policies.

One speaker suggested that visual images affect the emotional side of children, and

118

are preferred to verbal messages, as they address the heart rather than the mind. He emphasised that images should be used to promote propaganda, moral hygiene, and political imperatives as matters of the heart, to become a part of each individual life, and the collective conscience. Another speaker considered the times in the life of the child, including spiritual time, physical time, material time, and a time of the soul. There was also the time of the colonia, in which everything was scheduled, organised and controlled, with every element following regulations, timetables and schedules. Images played their part in saturating the time of the child, leaving no idle time for boredom to creep in (Mucelli, 2007, p. 154).

Aristotle Kallis devotes a chapter of this book on Mussolini's 'Third Rome' to exhibitions, including the MCE (Kallis, 2014, pp. 198-225), and regards the spatiotemporal disjuncture between perfectly orchestrated and exhibited representations of an imagined present-future, against the backdrop of ancient Rome as sure indication of a heterotopia (p. 200). He refers to Baudrillard, and describes the space of the exhibition as hyperreal, and a simulacrum of Fascist reality, so disguising the poverty of the reality that it purports to represent (p. 221).

How many Fascist colonie?

While it may be an academic question, it seems useful to have an idea of the scale of the Fascist colonia system, although quoted figures vary between sources, presumably due to differences in what were included and omitted.

Source	Year	Colonie	Children
de Martino & Wall, 1988	1943	3800	
Jocteau, 1990	1938	4357	772,000
Pau-Lessi, 1990	1936	3821	690,656
Gori, 2004	1938	4357	772,000
Boschi, 2011	1936	3128	569,000
Ciuffetti, 2012	1938	4357 half residential	772,000
Boniotti & Gut, 2013	1936	3128	568,681
Winkelmann, 2015	1943	350 residential and permanent day	
Mira, 2016	1938	4357	772,000
Mira, 2016	1942	5805	940,615
Stacher, 2018	1938	4906	772,000
ArcHistoR, 2019	1937	492 residential	
Mira & Salustri, 2019	1936	3821	738,000
Balducci, 2019	1936	3821 55 all year 601 summer 3165 daytime	
Istituto Storico della Resistenza, 2020	1942	5805	940,615
Demetri, 2020	1938	4800	
Muschamp, 2021	1939		806,964
Pivota, 2023	1938		772,000
Pivota, 2023	1942	5805	940,615

Table 4.

Daytime colonie included temporary, semi-permanent, and permanent structures,

with the minimum necessary facilities: canopy or roof, refectory, kitchen, plus an open space for physical exercise and sunbathing (Balducci, 2019, p. 112). Alba Tinarelli's experience of attending a daytime colonia in the small town of Mugnano to the south of Perugia (Tinarelli , 2010), and sufficiently isolated to have its own dialect, provides a contrast to the residential mountain and coastal colonie. A translation is include in the appendix, in which she describes how:

> About 3-4 km from the town, on the edge of a forest, a colony has emerged to accommodate the children. It borders on a well-trodden but unpaved road, the fields of a farmer, and, of course, the forest where outdoor toilets have been adapted⋯ On one side of the dirt road, at the forest's edge, are fields and the house of a farmer who has agreed to grant permission to use a part of his land for "sunbathing" and the stops of the carts for supplies and other necessities required for the children's stay in the colonia. A large shed without walls has been built with the roof supported by concrete columns, and with wooden compartments in the upper part⋯ The compartments hold white and pink squares for the girls and sky-blue and white squares for the boys, and are used to store their cups, napkins, glasses, and utensils brought from home⋯ A month passes quickly, and the last two days are dedicated to the preparation and decoration of the farm carts, lent by local farmers and pulled by oxen, which will bring the children back to town on the final day (Tinarelli, 2010, pp. 103-112).

This research, along with that of most other scholars, concentrates on the surviving architectural heritage of the colonie. However, that accounts for only a fraction of the whole system, and ignores numerous small and temporary structures that must have been spread across the country. In this respect, physical remains must also stand in for those that left no evidence behind, and the totality of colonia memories. Balducci's statistics (2019, p. 110), were obtained from an extensive report of the

regime's assistance projects up to 1936, published by Mario Casalini shortly after the 1937 exhibition of summer colonie. While he recognises a clear celebratory intent coincident with the transfer of control from ONB to GIL, Balducci regards Casalini's overview as comprehensive and reasonably reliable. Winkelmann's catalogue of 350 colonie buildings of the Fascist era also appears reliable, although he omits pre-Fascist and adapted structures, such as colonia Murri with its four linked pavilions, built in 1911 (Spazi Indecisi, 2023b). Some discrepancies between the figures may also be due to sources copying and miscopying from each other. Boschi (2011), and Bonito and Gut (2013), state that there were 3128 colonie in 1936, while Pau-Lessi (1990), and Mira and Salustri (2019), state that there were 3821. Jocteau (1990, p. 45), reproduces an original Fascist era infographic which presumably displays official figures, presumably released on an annual basis. The impressive-looking year on year increase has clear propaganda value, and Paul Corner observes that: 'local officials, apparently permanently obsessed with statistics, never tired of listing the fact that they had assisted so many thousand people in the course of the year with the expenditure of so many thousand lire' (Corner, 2002, p. 341). Vehement opponent of the regime Gaetano Salvemini, writing from the United States in 1936, was particularly scathing of what he regarded as endless bloated and exaggerated statistics published by the regime for its propaganda purposes (Salvemini, 1936, p. 350) (Figure 15).
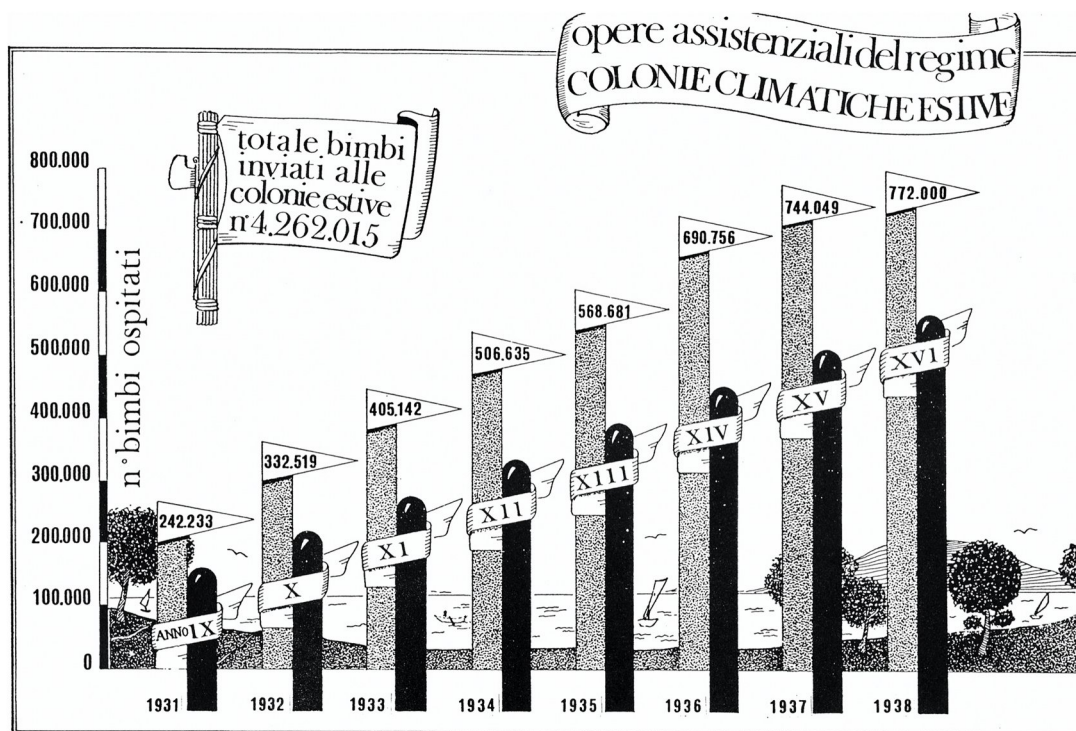
Children sent to summer colonie between 1931 and 1938

Figure 15 (Jocteau, 1990)

Rules and regulations

While each hospice/colonia presumably created its own rules and regulations, the following examples indicate how two colonie operated in the years before the Fascist regime, and highlight that these were not places of leisure. I have translated and slightly abbreviated them, and they may be found in their original form in Jocteau (1990).

FOR THE children in the Ospizio Marino Piemontese, 1879

ART. 1.   All the children hospitalised at the Ospizio Marino Piemontese must show absolute respect and obedience to the Director, and they shall comply with orders given by employees of the establishment on his behalf.

ART. 2.   The young ones must stay together like brothers, treat each other with kindness, assist one another, avoid fights, and never hurt each other.

ART. 3.   Any form of gambling is strictly prohibited within the Ospizio. Playing cards, dice, or any other game involving money or goods is rigorously forbidden.

ART. 4.   Smoking is absolutely prohibited. Fruit, bread, pastries, or any other food items or objects cannot be purchased without the permission of the Director.

ART. 5.   It is forbidden to keep money, and if anyone has money, they must hand it over to the Director, who will make a note for its later return.

ART. 6.   On Sundays, a time will be set during which all the children who can write must write a letter to send news to their relatives.

ART. 7.   It is prohibited to leave the Establishment or the beach to go to the city or elsewhere. Boys must always stay together in teams of ten or twelve under the

direction of their squad leader chosen by the Director.

ART. 8.   The squad leaders who have fulfilled their entrusted task well will be issued a certificate of merit with a note of praise.

ART. 9.   During meal times, everyone must remain at their assigned place and are not to take away bread, meat, wine, or any other food.

ART. 10.   During rest hours, both day and night, everyone must stay quiet in their own bed, and once the signal for silence is given, everyone must be silent.

ART. 11.   Anyone who breaks or damages household items, offends their fellow companions, and those who fail to observe the prescribed rules will be punished.

ART. 12.   The punishment may be:
• Private reprimand;
• Public reprimand;
• Isolation from companions;
• A written note of censure is sent to the respective committees;
• Expulsion from the Ospizio.

Approved during the meeting on May 24,1879 (Jocteau, 1990, p. 21).

Alpine Colonia FRA DOLCINO, BIELLA, 1910

After the approval of the Statute, the following rules are read and proposed:

1. The Management reserves the right, whenever deemed necessary, after acceptance into the colonia, to shave the hair of girls who are found to have parasites, or to send them back to their families.

2. During the climatic treatment, it is not permitted, under any circumstances, to be absent from the colonia, even temporarily, with anyone, including parents.

125

However, parents will be allowed to visit the children on holidays and during hours fixed by the Management, without taking them outside the premises of the colonia, and only once during their stay for treatment.

3. If families need to withdraw their children before the end of the treatment, parents must make a written request to the office, which will issue, if necessary, the appropriate arrangements for the child's return or delivery to the parents or their authorised representative. However, it is understood that the expenses for the return, in this case, must be entirely borne by the requesting family and paid in advance.

4. It is strictly prohibited to leave ornaments such as rings, earrings, chains, money, etc., with the girls and boys. The Management assumes no responsibility for any possible losses.

5. The Management may, at any time, return an entrusted child to their family due to illness, bedwetting, for disciplinary reasons, or any cause that makes it necessary, without allowing any objections or claims.

6. Finally, parents or their representatives must provide their child, at the time of departure, with stamped postcards bearing their home address (Jocteau, 1990, p. 36).

From a position of what might be considered reasonable and acceptable in 2023, the rules seem authoritarian and remind me of a Victorian workhouse or poorhouse, but perhaps this is how welfare institutions operated in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Either way, I agree with Comerio (2018), that they appear to provide a foundation for regulations later issued by the Fascist Party. These early rules also contain aspects of heterotopias, in what is permitted and forbidden, entry and initiation procedures, separation, exclusivity, and restricted access.

Comparisons

Luca Comerio (2018), provides a comparison between the development and evolution of French *colonies de vacances* and Italian *colonie vacanze,* as a means of identifying differences and similarities in experiences and pedagogical, political and institutional aspects, although he says that the research is still in its early stages. Comerio selected these two countries from other possible examples (Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands···), because he considered that they possess a sufficient number of similarities for comparisons to be meaningful, rather than random (Comerio, 2018, p. 269). However, while Lee-Downs provides a detailed history of French holiday camps (2002), there has been no comparative historical and pedagogical survey of the Italian situation. The closest is probably Franco Frabboni's *tempo libero infantile e colonie di vacanza,* children's leisure time and holiday camps (1971), described as the application of a psycho-pedagogical model, to children's free time and education in residential summer camps. While systems of familial placements developed alongside dedicated buildings in France in the late 1800s, it was considered that accommodating children with families would not work in Italy, where rich landowners refused to welcome city children. Poor villagers on the other hand would provide children with even less comfortable lives than the ones left behind in the city (Comerio, 2018, p. 279). In the aftermath of WWI, French colonie experienced a shift from providing prophylactic and medical care, towards social and educational goals. In Italy, holiday camps continued to focus on health and wellbeing and the homogenisation of individuality, and Comerio argues that the Italian colonia system

was already prepared for its later transformation into an instrument of Fascist propaganda. While the influence of scouting was initially evident in both France and Italy, the Fascist regime regarded the scout movement as competition to its objective of incorporating all youth activity within the ONB, and scouting activities were abolished by the end of the 1920s. The regime also began to replace the charitable basis of colonie with a centralised system of management and control.

While France did not follow the Fascist model, architects were intrigued by Italian colonia architecture, as evidenced by articles in journals, such as *l'architecture aujourd'hui,* and the desire to construct larger buildings to accommodate greater numbers of children. Signs of military influence also appeared in French summer camps, with flag-raising ceremonies, uniforms and parades (p. 284). Comerio cautions that further research is needed on the Italian side before investigations into the threads connecting summer camps of the two countries can be taken further.

Laboratories for a new generation

Maria Elena Versari (2003), begins with a quote from a speech by Mussolini (Renzo de Felice, 1996, as cited in Versari, 2003, p. 76), in which he considered the appeal of laboratory-made warriors, inventors, judges, captains of industry, and explorers. Although Mussolini's statement may have contained an element of wishful thinking, the desire to create and shape a generation of new men and women was a central tenet of Fascist ideology. A prevailing theme during the 1930s was reclamation (*bonifica*), which embraced reclamation of marshland and previously uninhabitable areas, the construction of new towns, and the physical and spiritual reclamation of the race. Versari cites another speech by Mussolini at a medical congress in which he propounded his belief in the interdependence of spiritual and physical reclamation (Renzo de Felice, 1996, as cited in Versari, 2003, p. 78). In a reference to the scourge of tuberculosis and presumably the colonie, Mussolini declared that the elements of nature must be allowed to shape the human body through exposure to air and sun, enabling Italians to go forward without narrow chests or contracted lungs.

While the colonia system could be regarded as a laboratory for the new generation, Versari also identifies aspects of the colonie that would seem to conflict with Fascist ideals. While living in colonie, gender differences were reduced; both boys and girls

followed the same daily routine, taking part in similar exercises, and dressed in a similar informal manner, except for on official occasions. Versari comments on the understandable inclination to regard the colonie as sites of Fascist spectacle, but she proposes that life in the colonie was actually an auto-referential ritual (p. 82), in which the spectators were also the protagonists. A further incongruity was that personnel responsible for running the colonie were female, including the director who was expected to be an *exceptionally caring and maternal woman* (p. 83). Fascist Party guidelines and regulations for use by *vigilatrici d'infanzia* (young women trained to supervise in matters of health, welfare, education, gymnastics, and training and management of the colonia system) have been referred to by a number of authors: (Mucelli, 2009, pp. 22-43; Mira & Salustri, 2019 pp. 159-163; Jocteau, 1990, p. 61). However, there appears to be little research into what insights official guidelines might offer into the day to day running of the colonie. I have incorporated a selection of articles from the 1939 edition of colonia regulations in the photobook, to prompt questioning as to what the colonie were about (PNF, 1939). Along with Balducci and Bica (2007), Fulvio Irace (1985), considers that colonie are generally under-represented in research of architectural typologies of the Fascist period, with greater attention paid to *case del fascio* (regional Fascist headquarters), *palazzi littori* (central Fascist headquarters), post offices, railway stations, etc.

Gigliola Gori (2004b), traces the development of colonie through Fascism's attitudes to women, in matters of health, physical education and sport. She describes a major campaign for the *sportivizzazione* of the population, driven by eugenic and military ambitions for the physical and moral improvement of the Italian race. The regime

worked to forge *l'italiano nuovo,* the new Italian, through a series of initiatives to control children's free time and leisure, in which after-school activities and the colonia system played a significant part. The regime recognised the potential value of children's colonie and acted to incrementally absorb and control them, as a means for strengthening the race through health and the formation of a physically and morally strong and healthy generation. She describes *colonie* buildings of the 1930s as mammoth monuments to Fascist rhetoric, admirably suited to controlling the young (p. 157). In common with Versari (20013), Gori mentions the *vigilatrice* as a young woman of proven moral character, trained to supervise and act as role models for the children in their care, with each being responsible for around thirty children. Their training comprised lessons in physiology, food science, medicine and prevention, first aid, climate treatments, Fascist history and culture, and regulations of the colonie.

Laura Orlandini (2019, p. 176), concludes a study of Fascism and education in the colonie, by acknowledging the essential role of the *vigilatrici* who were subjected to continual pressure, having to act as combined paternal and maternal figures, while being responsible for enforcing discipline, yet respecting the children as individuals. They bore the brunt of the regime's rhetoric, while dealing with the material challenges of educating children during their early years. In the absence of clear guidelines, they had to improvise and somehow implement contradictory educational requirements. They were caught between an assistance-oriented role that relied on a woman's spirit of sacrifice, and a pedagogical vision that was tightly bound to political objectives. Behind the regime's boasts of hundreds of colonie on Italy's coasts, these young women were entrusted with a colossal workload, and

expected to produce results. Orlandini considers that they were the true architects of the colonia, teaching their young charges to work together, take care of themselves, wash their hands before lunch, and not to bully weaker colleagues. While girls and boys were typically hosted in *colonie* dedicated to one sex or the other, or else accommodated at different times, Gori agree with Versari that girls and boys were subject to similar schedules and exercise regimes. However, differences in attitude, may be illustrated by reference to the names of children's teams or squads. In the case of colonia Bolognese, which was unusual in hosting boy and girls, simultaneously, albeit with strict segregation, boys could be eaglets, cockerels, chickens, and crickets, while girls were swallows, dragonflies, butterflies, and fireflies (Gori, 2004b, p. 163). Laura Orlandi (2019, p. 175), comments that in boys' camps, spontaneous games typically revolved around punching, kicking, throwing, wrestling, and racing, while in girls' camps, games with dolls, running, playing ball, and jumping, predominated.

Children were issued with standard clothing for their stay; a novelty for many from poor families, for whom a change of clothing or shoes was an unheard of luxury. In line with the imperative of *bonifica,* improvement and reclamation of the race through strengthening the body was a central theme of the colonia programme, with physical education regarded as the medicine of the race (Gori, 2004b, p. 164), with particular attention paid to children with problems of structural alignment, for whom special exercises were prescribed. Ideally all children would return home looking more beautiful, better fed, and physically toned than when they set out, much to the delight of grateful parents. Gori concludes that the programme did have some value in the prevention of disease, in its attention to health, nutrition,

and matters of hygiene. Time outdoors in the sun and fresh air undoubtably contributed to the physical and moral wellbeing of working class city children. As the1930s progressed, the emphasis on militarisation at the expense of play transformed the colonie, once dedicated to health and joyous outdoor exercise, into spaces of indoctrination and obedience.

Totalitarian pedagogy

Roberto Mira & Simone Salustri's edited volume *colonie per l'infanzia nel ventennio fascista: un progetto di pedagogia del regime* (2019), covers a range of topics that interconnect and intersect through the theme of the colonia. Mira and Salustri comment that those who remember the colonie of the Fascist era, typically do so with nostalgia and benevolence, unaffected by political ideology. The accounts they give of life in the colonie of the 1930s describe an ephemeral universe, in which Fascism's aims of moulding and shaping youth were superimposed, with varying success, onto the original therapeutic and recreational structure of the hospice. They conclude that the colonie were poised between social care and politics, suspended between welfare and ideology. Mira considers the colonie in terms of Fascism's mission to produce citizen soldiers, modern Roman legionnaires, and expressions of the Italian race and civilisation. This was to be achieved through a process of what she terms totalitarian pedagogy, with the loss of the individual in favour of the collective totalitarian community. She claims that Fascism created a true cult and religion, complete with rites, shrines to martyrs, a wealth of signs and symbols, a calendar commemorating dates in the Fascist Revolution, and mass

133

events with choreographed activities, music and banners. The Fascist cult reached out to youth, through education, recreation and assistance programmes under the overarching myth of *giovenezza* (youth), and offered a remedy for a nation that was purportedly elderly and decadent (Mira, 2019, p. 27). Youthfulness was considered a moral quality demonstrated through passion for action, dedication to the Fascist Revolution, and preparedness to sacrifice oneself for its aims.

Mira describes Fascism's objective of increasing the health and strength of the Italian race, who would become a nation of conquerors and leaders, ultimately reviving the glories of the Roman Empire (Mira, 2019, pp. 32-40). She concludes by questioning how effective the colonie really were in the f*ascistisation* of youth. Beneath the glossy exteriors, their operation was continually hampered by organisational and functional contradictions and uncertainties, conflicts between stakeholders, and continual shortages of funds. Salustri describes processes of appropriation and transformation carried out by the regime, towards establishing what she calls a model of totalitarian pedagogy, while at the same time remaining committed to a programme of assistance for sickly and needy children. She considers that through the combination of both elements of welfare and ideology, the regime carried out a battle for the health of the race (*sanità della razza*), under the guise of a *maternal caress* of the nation. Programmes that ostensibly offered welfare and assistance possessed a darker side committed to fulfilling Fascism's totalitarian goals.

Valter Balducci (2019, pp. 107-129), arguably the foremost expert on children's camps and author of a number of publications on the subject, considers how the

architecture of the Fascist colonia was harnessed in shaping the spirit of children who stayed there. He refers to architecture as a silent education (*un'educazione silenziosa*) (pp. 118-129), echoing a theme in Elena Mucelli's book on the colonie (Mucelli, 2009). Balducci considers that the regime was aware of the potential of architecture for transmitting ideology through various devices, including narratives, systems of control, and modes of play within the spaces of the colonie. He considers that colonia architecture produced a world in which a child was obliged to obey, and identifies two aspects of architecture as a silent educator; firstly as a means for the transmission of an image of power and modernity; and secondly by regulating and controlling activities through the organisation of space. He considers that space is never neutral and always performs a regulatory function (p. 124). The colonie were designed to encourage continuous movement throughout the day, and were constructed to dimensions that made no concession to the diminutive stature of the child.

In contrast, Gobbi Belcredi, in a press account from the 1930s, reports that children splash happily in the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic seas, or breathe in the mountain air. Immediately among friends, immediately acclimatised, as if they had always lived in the beautiful building that houses them. It is as if they have arisen from the fiery sand, from the blue sea, from emerald meadows and shady woods, by spontaneous generation. Majestic mountain settings seem even more dear for the resounding songs of children who perhaps know the land of their fathers for the first time, admire its beauty, and feel a deep love for it (Belcredi, 1935).

From colonia to barracks

Giancarlo Cerasoli (2019, pp. 131-148), traces changes under Fascism, from hospices to effective barracks, focused on the Fascist New Man. He argues that the regime began to rationalise and improve the efficiency of the colonia system, with a secondary intent of creating places for propaganda, eugenics, and military preparation, and that they were ideal structures for instilling youth with the regime's commitment to protection of the race. The Fascist programme of consolidation and expansion began around 1926 under the newly formed ONB, responsible for colonia management and operation. Regulations specified the function and type of institution, between summer (prophylactic) and permanent (curative) colonie. Sickly, underweight, poorly developed children, those with syphilis, tuberculosis or alcoholism in the family, recovering from injuries, suffering from anaemia, and convalescent children, were given priority for stays in summer colonie. (p. 135). With the passage of time, the regime continued to tighten its control of the colonie, through the implementation of regular inspections, with permits required in order to operate a colonia. Cerasoli describes the final phase in the regime's development of the colonia as pre-military preparation of youth, which came to an end in 1943 with the fall of the regime (pp. 144-148). He concludes with a critique of the welfare side of the colonia programme, judged against other measures of childhood health.

Cerasoli suggests that, despite the trumpeting and flag-waving that accompanied Fascist campaigns for maternity and the health of the race, the reality was that Italy failed to catch up with the rest of Europe in reducing infant mortality. The absence

of any substantial reduction in infant pathologies, between children who did and did not stay in colonie, could be interpreted as an indicator of the system's failure in fulfilling its prophylactic aims. However, the success or otherwise of Fascism's ideological ambitions for the colonie is more difficult to gauge (p. 148).

Fascist 'benevolence'

Victoria de Grazia (1992, pp. 110-111), comments that the benevolent attitude of the regime towards children was a perplexing aspect of its welfare policies, and 'horrific in its contradictoriness'. Fascism professed a love of children, promoting Mussolini as a father figure who cared for Italian children. It emphasised the duty of the state to ensure their well-being, sending hundreds of thousands of children to summer camps each year. At the same time however, its measures were openly eugenicist, and undertaken in the interest of the race, with little concern for the individual or family. Children belonged to the nation, as future soldiers prepared to sacrifice their lives to the Fascist cause. She observes that summer colonia stays could be regarded as a tactic to accustom parents to the notion of giving up their children, albeit with promises of health and welfare benefits. de Grazia's statement that the colonia constituted a 'full-scale mobilisation··· a uniquely effective way to prise children away from their mothers-to fetch them out of slums, to check, inoculate, and, if necessary, quarantine them' (pp. 111), supports the notion proposed in this research, that the annual colonia operation was a rehearsal for war and occupation. She concludes that summer amusement or relief for mothers were never part of the scheme.

137

Use, disuse, reuse

The following paragraphs adopt the logic of Håkan Hökerberg's potential fates of the architectural legacy of Fascism, which include conservation, adaption and reuse, desacralisation, neglect, mutilation, demolition, and amnesia (Hökerberg, 2018, pp. 314-331).

Continuation

A few colonia buildings, including Fiat at Marina di Massa, and AGIP at Cesenatico, continue to provide holiday accommodation for families and children. Other colonie were put up for sale through an auction system were the reserve price falls with every unsuccessful round. Colonia Bolognese for example was sold in 2022, forty-five years after it finally closed its doors as a colonia in 1977. Several attempts at reuse were made in the intervening years to no avail. It was sold to a real estate company who did nothing with the property, then resold and entrusted to a caretaker who adapted it as an animal shelter, and was sold again in 2002 to an entrepreneur who planned to convert it into accommodation. After some stabilisation and renovation work, the project was abandoned and the complex was taken over by another company, to be declared bankrupt after a slump in the

tourism and real estate market. While waiting for a sale to be completed, the voluntary social innovation association *Il Palloncino Rosso,* was granted a two-year agreement with the bankruptcy trustee to reuse part of the complex for cultural initiatives, and stimulate urban regeneration in this marginal area that is home to other notable abandoned colonie, including Amos Maramotti / Reggiana, Dalmine, and Novarese (Il Palloncino Rosso, 2019). Following several failed auctions, the successful bid of 2.625 million euros was far short of the eighteen million euros valuation made in 2019. The site was sold in 2022 to a private investor, apparently interested in transforming the complex into a luxury hotel (Gradara, 2022; Nannini, 2023).

Abandonment and failure

From the 1970s, the decline of children's colonie, and the scale of the heritage inherited from the Fascist regime contributed to the abandonment that affected many former colonie across the peninsula, and in many cases, the modernity of the construction technology accelerated the degradation of structures usually made from reinforced concrete, sometimes using experimental materials, with additional layers added during the post-war decades. Ravenna-based author, Gianluca Mancini describes the seaside summer camps as great old ruined buildings, still existing, and scaring him every time that he sees them (Mancini, 2009, p. 2). He describes colonia Varese as a gigantic triplane that has just landed on the beach (2009, p. 23), and as a kind of prehistoric ruin, a sort of vertical Stonehenge (2009, p. 90).

Abandoned spaces invite appropriation, and encourage 'alternative, sensual and imaginative engagements with the past' (Edensor, 2005, 2008 as cited in DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013), and alternative uses emerge. They may be used by homeless people or creatively transformed by squatters through appropriation and recycling found materials, landscaping, and vegetable growing. The latter activities were all evident in José's occupation and adaption of colonia Varese, which is discussed in connection with the colonia image sequences and photobook.

DeSilvey and Edensor identify a category of use that they call a counter-site, in which projects have been cut short by regime change or economic crisis and are consequently left uncompleted (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2012). Situations in which work has ground to a halt partway through restoration include: Rinaldo Piaggio, Novarese, and Stella Maris. Others, such as colonia Dalmine at Rimini Miramare, have been restored and repurposed only to fail, leading to closure and abandonment, with the end result perhaps more degraded than beforehand. Photographer Danilo Bazzani's description of the conversion of colonia Dalmine into hotel and conference centre *Le Conchiglie* echoes my experience of the particularly dejected looking structure and desolate landscape around it. Transformed into a conference hotel, after interventions carried out in the eighties, which only partially preserved the original exterior appearance, it is now an immense abandoned ruin. The isolation building was demolished to be replaced by a now closed nightclub, while an attempt to reuse the surrounding park has failed and the Skate Park is an ugly uninviting wasteland (Bazzani, 2022).

Luxury hotels

Speculative interests, that divorce colonia buildings from the local community by turning them into elite destinations, perhaps disregard the original purpose of buildings that are part of the difficult heritage of the Fascist regime, and Sofia Nannini confirms a number of points that I made at the *Towards New Summers* conference (in_bo, 2022), concerning the rescue, restoration, and rebranding of former colonia Gustavo Fara into the luxury hotel, spa, and restaurant Torre Fara.

Their website announced a new dimension of luxury on the Ligurian Riviera, and presented the restored colonia as historically important architecture that reflects the futurist and expressionist culture of the period:

> Majestically erected and facing the Mediterranean, Colonia Fara, historical building of the 1930s, certified as culturally interesting by the National Supervision office, was built according to the project of Engineer Nardi Greco and opened in 1935 as a summer home for children. The architectural style of Colonia Fara reflects the culture of Futurism (Adalberto Livera) and of Expressionism (Mendelsohn) of the time. It is a 49 meter tall building composed of a wide two-storey basement, on which a 10-storey tower stands …
>
> The building, with its curvilinear shapes and base with symmetrical side wings, refers to the architecture of the airplane, a secular mythology of futurist dynamism⋯In the rounded shape of the soaring tower can be found and allusive reference to the deck of the ships, to the visionary futurism of port lighthouses, air terminals and mechanical skyscrapers of Futurist metropolises, immortalised in projects and in *aeropittura* (Torre Fara, 2019).

As I commented at the conference and as Nannini remarks, there was not a single

word about the historical context of the building, nor about the period when it housed refugees, let alone the origin of the name Gustavo Fara, an Italian general involved in Eritrea and Libya in the early 1900s. The restoration appears to have addressed only the aesthetic dimensions of the architecture, without providing information or raising awareness about the complex and layered stories that shaped this building over a span of more than eighty years.

Some of those involved in the restoration work appear to be similarly reticent concerning the history of the building. The project description provided by the architects for the project states:

> The complex, named after General Gustavo Fara, was a project of engineer Camillo Nardi Greco (1887-1968) in collaboration with the architect Lorenzo Castello. The construction lasted a short period of about four months: new reports of the time state that the work was completed as early as September of 1935. The building was inaugurated on October 28th of 1935 and has been in use since 1936 (Pinna Viardo architetti, 2022).

On revisiting the Torre Fara website this year, I discovered that the earlier history had been replaced and the new content mentioned the colonia's Fascist origins:

> Erected majestically on the beach in the Preli neighbourhood, Torre Fara was initially conceived and desired by the National Fascist Party to house a summer colony for children. Built between 1934 and 1936 it was inaugurated in 1938 and named after General Gustavo Fara. After its inauguration, Torre Fara hosted children from all parts of Italy for two years, fulfilling its original purpose. This was the heyday of the facility, which also featured an outdoor cinema and other state-of-the-art facilities. As early as 1940, however, with Italy's entry into the war, there was a long series of changes of use for the

structure: first it was a war hospital, then it was occupied by German troops, then it passed into the hands of Allied troops, until it was used as a refuge for exiles from Istria, for whom the waterfront adjacent to the Tower is now named (Grand Hotel Torre Fara, 2023).

It is not inconceivable that my presentation had an effect, as Sofia Nannini represented the University of Bologna in promoting the conference. Were the Torre Fara management aware of criticism of their publicity? (Figure 16).
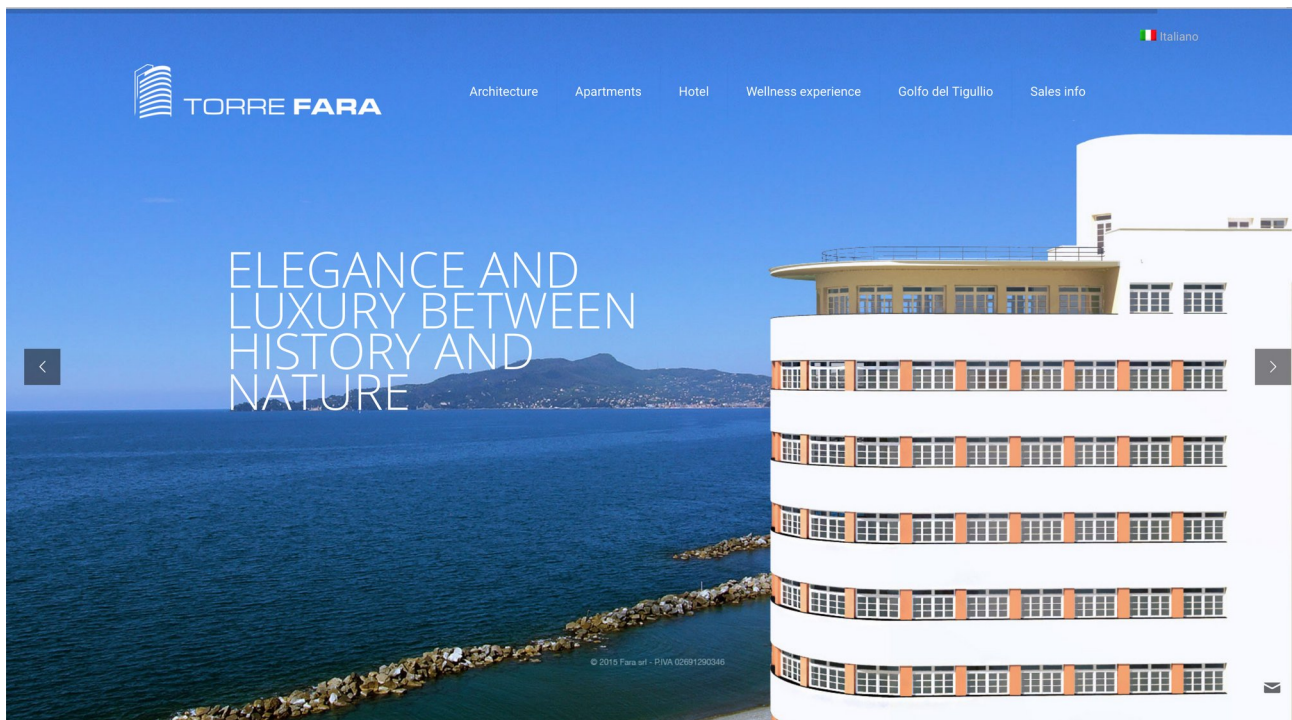

Figure 16

Stefano Pivato (2023, p. 83), describes the creation of a luxury tourist destination around Calambrone, involving the transformation of six notable Fascist colonie into luxury tourist residences. He states that high-end apartments, five-star resorts, and exclusive clubs have replaced the original social purpose of Calambrone. Massage

143

rooms, swimming pools, restaurants, and nightclubs have taken the place of the dormitories, dining halls, and kitchens of these colonie of the 1930s, while preserving the unique linear architecture and style of the complex. Buildings originally named in honour of prominent Fascists and Italian royalty, are now the Toscana Resort Calambrone, Principe di Piemonte Resort, Regina Elena Resort, and Vittorio Emanuele Resort, far removed from their original mission of providing child welfare during the Fascist era.

Demolitions

A number of colonie have been demolished, but they are perhaps surprisingly few and some demolitions were arguably illegal, or not entirely legal. An article in the 1989 IBC magazine describes the demolition of colonia Trento at Igea Marina between 1987 and 1988, in clear violation of the regional plan, following the demolitions of colonia Sacra Famiglia and Pavese, as part of a strategy of liquidation of the heritage of marine colonies of the region (Fabbri et al., 1989, p. 39). Colonia Dante at Cervia was almost entirely demolished to make way for a hotel and conference centre, which retains the name of Dante, but little else. One building was retained as a token memory worthy of protection (Fabbri et al., 1989, p. 37). The magazine also lists restoration initiatives that never came to fruition. Project *Icaro* was going to transform the ruins of colonia Varese into a cultural centre. Project *Carraro* would transform the building and land comprising colonia Murri at Rimini. Other projects included the recovery and restoration of colonia Ferrarese and the Grand Hotel Kursaal at Cattolica.

144

Some demolished colonie sites still await redevelopment, tens of years on from the demolition and clearance of the structures. The town council ordered the demolition of colonia *UNES/ENEL* at Senigallia in 2009 despite local protests. When I visited in 2018, the site was a fenced-off unused area of wasteland, with patches of concrete providing the only clue that there had been a building there. Between 2004 and its demolition, the previously abandoned building was occupied by a group of artists, under the banner of *Mezza Canaja,* who used it as a self-managed common space, and decorated the exterior with murals. Perhaps such unorthodox repurposing strengthened the council's resolve to have it physically erased. A positive reuse of a Fascist building by an anti-Fascist group, may or may not be linked to clashes between Fascist and anti-Fascist sympathies. *Global Project*, describing itself as a post-capitalist collective, commemorated the tenth anniversary of *Mezza Canaja* in 2014, holding a press conference on the derelict site. A banner proclaimed: 'Your rubble. Our struggles. Affirmation that the sale of public artistic, cultural and architectural heritage with the excuse of settling municipal budgets through urbanisation has produced only rubble' (Global Project, 2014). Debates continued concerning use for the site, more than twelve years on from its demolition. A new plan was announced in 2022 for a multi-storey luxury apartment complex *Residenza da Vinci*, which looks like it may be going ahead (Centro Pagina, 2022).

A further issue with the destruction and erasure of colonia *UNES/ENEL* is that it was used as a transit camp for Jews; rounded up and detained prior to being transferred to Nazi concentration camps. However, there is no plaque or signage to commemorate the site as a place of memory, and now the building is gone too.

Centro Primo Levi records that:

> In Italy today, the geography of memory remains elusive. In 2009, in Senigallia, (Ancona), despite mass protests—the building that housed one of the RSI's camps was demolished to allow for the construction of the umpteenth tourist structure (Centro Primo Levi, 2015).

The memory of Italy's extensive network of internment camps and its involvement in the Shoah appear to have been largely eradicated from the landscape, with the notable exception of the Fossoli camp which is open to visitors with the aim of preserving the memory of the ex-concentration camp through study and cultural events (Visit Modena, 2023). The relevance to this research is that military barracks, schools, former prisoner of war camps, summer camps, hotels, theatres, country villas, and retirement homes, were pressed into service as holding facilities for those the regime considered undesirable.

The situations of a number of specific colonie are discussed in detail in the sections of this thesis that relate to sequences of colonia images, and to the photobook.

Colonie as difficult heritage

Diane Garvin cautions that scholars of interwar Europe have a tendency to approach architecture according to its style, as if it were possible to divorce a building from the circumstances of its production. However, the majority of architects in 1930s Italy were in agreement with Fascist politics, while competing with one another to design hospitals, prisons, schools, and summer camps (Garvin, 2023). The claims made by Patrick Duerden and Arne Winkelmann that the Fascist colonie are inexorably tainted as metaphors for the legacy of a regime that glorified war and violence, and the subjugation of its population (Duerden, 2010, p. 6), (Winkelmann, 2010, p. 118), would seem good reason to consider Fascist colonie as a difficult, or at least a contentious, heritage. Penny Lewis (2010, p. 3), regards elements of the colonie as so evocative of the ideology of the regime, that the architecture cannot easily be separated from the politics. Unfortunately, she does not elaborate on her response, which was presumably to Dubowitz's photographs rather than the physical buildings, since she appears not to have visited them.

Duerden's conclusions contain a mixture of reactions to the architecture of the colonie, and he describes their dereliction and abandonment as a metaphor for Italy's memories of the regime, 'complex, difficult and painful to contemplate, but which is too important to be forgotten' (2010, pp. 5-7).

Winkelmann appears to have no doubts as to the attendant difficulties of the Fascist *colonie* which 'glorify war and violence, and were used in an effort to subject an entire generation to pledging allegiance to the Fascist regime' (Winkelmann, 2010, pp. 115-119). He associates them with the German notion of the *Volkskörper* representing the nation and supremacy of the collective over the individual, and considers Fascist youth organisations as having a clear paramilitary dimension, with the primary objective of ideological indoctrination. He also associates the Fascist colonia with the concept of *Lebensraum,* or living space, enacted through Fascism's colonisation of previously uninhabited, and largely uninhabitable stretches of land, along the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts, to cater for a rapidly expanding network of colonie (Winkelmann, 2010, p. 115).

The term *Lebensraum* was proposed as a concept by geographer Friedrich Ratzel in the 1890s, who defined it as 'the geographical surface area required to support a living species at its current population size and mode of existence' (Smith, 1980, p. 53). Ratzel emphasised the importance of migration, as a consequence of an ongoing need to provide adequate *Lebensraum*, and colonisation as the means by which a species explores and occupies new space. Unsurprisingly, the concept was attractive to the Nazis, and as summarised by the Holocaust Encyclopedia 'The concept of *Lebensraum,* or "living space"—served as a critical component in the Nazi worldview that drove both its military conquests and racial policy' (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2023). Regarding Fascism, *Spazio Vitale* may be a more appropriate and less emotive term. Nicola Bassoni associates Mussolini's appropriation of *Lebensraum* with his declaration that the Mediterranean was to be a living space for Italians (Bassoni, 2022). Winkelmann's expressed opinion that the

colonie glorify war and violence appears softened by his observation that colonia architects' attentions were focused on structural and spatial qualities, while the ideological implications of colonia design were rarely discussed (pp. 115-119).

The text, presumably by Dan Dubowitz, recounting the histories of colonia Varese and Colonie Montecatini, perhaps falls prey to romanticising their history, abandonment and ruination. He describes huge *Piranesian ramps* of colonia Varese, today overgrown with fig trees, when they once hosted synchronised displays of marching *balilla.* There are indeed fig trees growing out of the ruins, but the intersecting ramps were primarily functional to facilitate the movement of children inside the building. The system of ramps seen today, and featured on the cover of Dubowitz's photobook *Fascismo Abbandonato* (2010), were rebuilt after the war. They never formed a stage for ranks of marching young Fascists although the idea is a beguiling one. The author mentions orchids and wild flowers in bloom on the flat roofs, but I was not fortunate enough to see them on any of several visits. While the image of orchids blooming on concrete roofs may involve some poetic licence, the IBC survey does highlight the area of sand dunes in front of colonia Varese as home to three rare species of orchid (Rondini, 1986, pp. 54-55).

A heterogenous heritage

Sofia Nannini (2023), questions whether the children's colonie of the Fascist regime today constitute a difficult heritage in ruins. Almost always abandoned, and strategically located in scenic positions, they were created with the intention of

establishing permanent settlements in the landscape. She considers that the social impact of the regime's welfare policy was far from negligible, with almost 6,000 colonies eventually hosting over 900,000 children. A reason why the colonie are a challenge to study and fully comprehend is that they represent a diverse and fragmented heritage, with a variety of sponsors, differing locations, and an evolving and changing purpose that followed the course of the regime's policies between the 1920s and the early 1940s. On the one hand, there were colonie promoted by the *fasci di combattimento through* official entities such as the *Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB),* and *Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia (ONMI).* On the other hand, major industries promoted their own colonie for children of their employees. It was only with the establishment of the GIL in 1937, that youth assistance and children's colonie came fully under the regime's control. The results of this instability and diversity manifest as architectural heterogeneity, which Nannini considers can be seen in the well-known colonie, and also in many smaller constructions. Because they were reused in the post-war years, colonie built under Fascism rarely display explicit symbols of the regime, such as inscriptions or fasces. However, their forms frequently allude to military imagery, with Cattolica's XXVIII Ottobre a notable example.

Decolonisation

Nannini concludes that the legacy of these monumental Fascist structures presents a dual problem today. The buildings with their imposing dimensions, are costly to maintain throughout the year, especially if they are only used over the summer

season. There is also an understanding that these structures may evoke political and military imagery, and adversely affect children exposed through their ongoing use as colonie. Such awareness led Tommaso Fiscaletti and Nicola Perugini, to propose that Fascist colonie require a process of decolonisation (Perugini & Fiscaletti, 2022). Nannini describes *bagni di sole fascisti* as an ongoing installation that is intended to act on the former colonia Villa Marina XXVIII Ottobre in Pesaro. The project aims to *decolonise the colony*, and begin a process of liberation from its Fascist racial ambitions, through displaying images on the scaffolding that covers the building, and by raising awareness of the building's history.

Perugini and Fiscaletti report that the Italian Ministry for Cultural Preservation and Tourism designated Marina XXVIII Ottobre as a national heritage site, describing the building as a cultural interest worthy of preservation. They comment that what is absent in the report is a critical understanding of how the myriad summer colonie on Italy's shores played a major role in the Fascist regime's policies of colonial and imperial expansion. They consider that the architecture of the building cannot be separated from the broader political architecture it embodied, and construct a connection, between internal colonisation with the construction of colonie on Italian soil, and the regime's colonial racial domination in Northern and Eastern Africa. In their research, they discovered an archival document that described the colonie as concerned with preserving the physical and moral health of Italian children, and as a fundamental tool in maintaining the strength of the race.

They conclude that Fascism's reclamation of the race in the colonie went hand in hand with the expansion of its empire in Africa, and ask how might the legacy of

151

Fascist Italy's internal colonies be effectively decolonised?

> A major question for present-day Italians is what it means to decolonize our internal colonies, in light of their deep connection to Italy's fascist expansionism overseas···The fascist summer youth colonies must be rediscovered as key sites of the production of Italy's racial identity, playing an important role in fuelling Italy's colonial aggressions against the nonwhite world. Though some Italians might think that they are living in a post-fascist Italy, internal colonies must still be liberated and decolonized. The scope of our research is to help trigger this process, inviting readers and viewers to understand and participate in anti-racist struggles of the present (Perugini & Fiscaletti, 2022).

Nannini agrees that colonie did not just affect the youth who stayed in them, but had a wider impact, and it is necessary to acknowledge their role in processes of internal colonialism carried out by the regime (Nannini, 2023).

Architects, Fascism, colonie

An interview with architect and academic Paolo Portoghesi, conducted by Luca Arcangeli (Arcangeli, 2020, pp. 67-72), provides insights into Fascist architecture and culture, recounted through Portoghesi's professional involvement and experience over a span of six decades. Portoghesi begins by describing postwar debates in which all were in agreement that everything about Fascism was negative, while some architects recommended the erasure of anything and everything connected with the regime. There were also formerly active Fascists, pretending not to have been associated with the regime. However, attempts were made to rehabilitate the work of Giuseppe Terragni, as Italy's foremost rationalist architect, admired by Le Corbusier, and a committed Fascist. Portoghesi maintains that there is no neat division between good and evil, but the two are closely intertwined, so that good still exists in the midst of evil.

Perhaps surprisingly, He cites Pier Paolo Pasolini as someone who contributed to the rehabilitation of Fascist architecture, and who believed that the Italian people never fully committed to Fascism in their hearts, so there were was the possibility of culture untainted by the regime. In his essays *The Concentration Camps, and The Shantytowns of Rome* (Pasolini, 2019, pp. 171-182), Pasolini condemns the development of Rome's *borgate;* peripheral housing where people forced out from

153

the city mingled with those drawn in from the countryside. He regards them as products of Fascism, after the regime demolished swathes of the inner city in its mission to recover monuments of imperial Rome, and laments that they resemble barracks and prisons. Pasolini is equally critical of the Christian Democrats who, he maintains, continued from where Fascism left off, since the status of the poor remained unchanged within an "authoritarian, paternalistic, and profoundly inhuman relationship based on 'religious mystification'" (p. 175).

Portoghesi, however was presumably referring to a 1974 RAI TV interview *Pasolini e la forma della città,* conducted by Paolo Brunatto, in which Pasolini explains how he came to change his mind over whether the architecture of Fascism was intrinsically tainted. Rather than paraphrasing the interview, I include a couple of paragraphs from the transcript, since his words possess a lyrical quality even when translated into English. Pasolini appears to suggest that some of the architecture and town planning of the Fascist years was inspired by older traditions, and should not be regarded as a Fascist invention. To what extent could his conclusions be applied to other 'Fascist' architecture such as the colonie?

> Here we are in front of the structure, the shape, the profile of another city immersed in a kind of grey lagoon light, although there is a stunning Mediterranean backdrop all around. This is Sabaudia. How we intellectuals laughed at the architecture of the regime, at cities like Sabaudia. However, now, observing this city, we experience a completely unexpected sensation. Its architecture is not unreal or ridiculous. The passing years have given this lictorian style of architecture a somewhat metaphysical and realistic character. Metaphysical in a European sense of the word, as in the metaphysical paintings of De Chirico, and realistic because, even from a

distance, one can feel that these cities are designed with human scale in mind. You can sense that within them there are families living in an orderly manner, human individuals, complete living beings.

How do we explain such a miraculous fact? A ridiculous Fascist City that suddenly seems so enchanting to us? Sabaudia was created by the regime, but it is not intrinsically Fascist, except for some external characteristics. So, I think this: Fascism, the Fascist regime, was nothing more than a group of criminals in power. And this group of criminals in power actually couldn't do anything to even remotely affect Italy's reality. Therefore, Sabaudia, although ordered by the regime according to certain rationalistic, aesthetic, and academic criteria, does not find its roots in the regime that commissioned it, but in the reality that Fascism tyrannically dominated but could not destroy. So, it is a provincial, rustic, paleo-industrial Italy that produced Sabaudia, not Fascism (Pasolini, 1974).

Portoghesi also defends Mussolini's new towns, such as Sabaudia. He acknowledges that they were founded by a dictator, and constructed around a flawed rural ideology, but considers that they included and involved the agricultural populace in the life of the civic community.

He remembers a period of reevaluation that followed the understandable rejection of everything associated with Fascism. This allowed for the rehabilitation of architects such as Marcello Piacentini, who critics had dismissed as ideologically contaminated from the moment he joined the Fascist party. Portoghesi believes that Piacentini exploited Fascism as the only means available for him for produce culturally sound work, and not the other way round. He also defends the garden city of Garbatella, constructed during the years of the Fascist regime, as a forward

thinking project in its use of public space and focus on the central piazza with its church. I have stayed in Garbatella on several occasions and agree with Portoghesi that it appears to represent an example of inspired town planning, and is a desirable residential neighbourhood. By way of contrast, I have also travelled to the ends of Rome's metro system, visiting areas featured in Pasolini's writing and films (Rhodes, 2007). Suburbs such as Testaccio, Tuscalano, Tiburtino, and Prenestino feel worlds apart from the garden city of Garbatella.

When asked for his opinion on Ruth Ben-Ghiat's controversial article *Why Are So Many Fascist Monuments Still Standing?* (Ben-Ghiat, 2017), Portoghesi refers to an initial impetus in the immediate postwar years for erasing the past, with a substantial proportion of millions of Fascist emblems removed. However, he cautions that Rome has an unfortunate history of erasing symbols and coats of arms which did not suit whoever was in power at the time. He considers that such acts may be futile, since the dangers of Fascism are not to be found on walls, but exist within us. He suggests that Italians grew tired of erasure, and came to realise that it served no purpose. Portoghesi refers to Mussolini's forum in Rome, as an ideal space set amongst greenery, and most likely Mussolini's personal idea, and concludes that even the worst man is still a man, capable of good ideas (Arcangeli, 2020, p. 72).

Colonie built during the 1930s were intended as showpieces of Fascist achievement, although still driven by a fear of contagious disease. Particularly in the mid to late 1930s, innovative designs coupled with rapid construction cycles were promoted as evidence of the vitality and virility of Fascism. However, as colonie were almost

always located away from urban locations, few people apart from staff and young residents had an opportunity to see them, and parental visits were strictly discouraged (PNF, 1939). Besides children's accounts of their stays, the regime used architectural journals, regional and national press, postcards, and state newsreels, to publicise these modern wonders of Fascist benevolence and social welfare. Pivota (2023, p. 25), remarks that the colonie captured the imagination of those who did not see the physical buildings, as well as the children who stayed in them, and for many Italians, they are still regarded as good things that Fascism achieved, alongside the trains arriving on time.

Fascist colonie exhibit a variety of responses to complex functional requirements, with commissions typically awarded to young architects, who appreciated the opportunity to experiment with innovative materials and construction techniques. Solutions included mono-bloc structures, towers, helical spirals, multiple pavilions, and village-like arrangements (Labò, 1941). Residential summer colonie had to provide boarding, facilities for medical supervision, access to fresh air, sun and sea, nutrition, exercise, pre-military preparation, education and indoctrination. While the buildings were designed by male architects, the children's time in the colonie was entrusted to *vigilatrici:* young women graduates of training colleges set up for the purpose. An exception was XXVIII Ottobre, reserved for the sons of Italians abroad, which appears to have been run by male staff. Otherwise, children were assigned to a category judged to best suit their needs (Gori, 2004a). The categorisation of resources and carefully assessed assignment of children to colonie, would seem to indicate that physical health and wellbeing remained a priority throughout the Fascist years. There were also permanent, all year round colonie, which cared for

children suffering from chronic illnesses, including trachoma, tuberculosis and rickets, and were unlikely to develop into strong healthy soldiers of the Fascist Revolution. After 1937, colonie were expected to comply with regulations set by the Fascist Party, which specified their two-fold mission of producing healthy young bodies, while educating children in the ways of Fascism. A precise daily timetable allocated times for gymnastics, outside exercise, medical checks, raising and lowering the flag, prayers, and lessons in Fascist ideology (PNF, 1939).

Russell Garrett Taylor's thesis (Taylor, 1994), is a study of two distinctive colonie, one on the coast and one in the mountains, both built for children of Fiat factory workers, and constructed around an internal helical ramp which formed a single continuous dormitory. Taylor compares them to the helical design of the Fiat Lingotto production line, and his research is a reminder that factors beyond Fascist aesthetics and totalitarian aims may have influenced colonia design. The Fiat colonie could be regarded as an introduction to the factory production line, for boys who would follow their fathers into the factory. They could also be considered as production lines for manufacturing strong and healthy future workers for Fiat. While the Fascist regime shut down Catholic youth organisations, which they regarded as competitors, major industrial concerns, including Fiat, Montecatini, AGIP, Redaelli, Snia Viscosa and Lancia, retained some degree of interest in ensuring the health and wellbeing of the children of their workers. The Fiat colonia at Marina di Massa is included in the portfolio and photobook.

The motif of the helix occurs in a number of Italian buildings of the 1930s. Marco Bevilacqua (Bevilacqua, 2015), investigates its use in the Fiat colonie, as an

expression of Futurist dynamism 'strengthened by the verticality of the tower, by the pursuit of beauty in bold structures, by the relationship that these create between earth and sky' (p. 504). He argues that Futurism adopted the helix due to 'its ability to introduce a sense of movement and direction, and to suggest an intimate vitality of matter. The helix refers to the turbine, the turbine to the engine, the engine to the new means of transport, such as the plane' (Bevilacqua, 2015, p. 488). Bevilacqua also maintains that some Fascist architecture was designed with an awareness of how it would appear from the air, as a particularly Futurist aesthetic, and that the *Torre Balilla* at Marina di Massa resembles an airplane when seen in plan.

Three conversations, published in de Martino and Wall (1988, pp. 72-76), comprises interviews with architects involved in the design of colonie during the years of the Fascist regime. Lodovico Belgioioso (Colonia Elioterapica, Legnano), Giulio Pediconi (Colonia Femminile, Tirrenia), and Agnoldomenica Pica (Colonia Montecatini competition), are questioned in a similar way to the previously described interview with Portoghesi. While their accounts must inevitably be flavoured to some extent by individual opinions, recollections and the passage of time, I appreciate the first-hand nature of the stories, which come across differently to theoretical studies of the colonie and difficult heritage. Their accounts also appear to challenge assumptions and opinions that have regarded the colonie as nothing more or other than tools of Fascist propaganda.

Ludovico Belgioioso (1988, pp. 72-73), refers to the period between 1930 and 1938 as a relatively trouble-free time for Italian architects, unaffected by events such as

the invasion of Ethiopia. The Fascist government left architects to get on with what they most cared about, and both modernist and traditional practitioners were free to work in their own style. A competition for a colonia at Legnano came out of a social desires to improve childcare facilities, particularly in the developed northern area of the country. He considers that the situation for architects changed around 1938, partly as a result of the alliance between Italy and Germany, and due to Mussolini's imperial ambitions. Comparing the colonie with more rhetorical architecture of the period, Belgioioso reflects that there were no ideological restrictions imposed on colonia design, and architectural materials and techniques were never specified in Fascist committee briefs. When questioned about slogans associated with Fascist colonie, referring to the strength of the nation's youth and defence of the race. Belgioioso suggests that defence of the race is a somewhat ambiguous phrase, which could refer to defence against diseases such as tuberculosis, as well as to Fascist racial theory.

Giulio Pediconi (1988, pp. 73-75), confirms that colonie for the children of Italians abroad were especially important. The one at Tirrrenia was for daughters of Italian emigrants to enjoy the sun and sea, while XXVIII Ottobre at Cattolica was for boys. Pediconi and his team were allocated an isolated coastal site for the Tirrenia colonia, and were free to determine what they built. He describes life in a colonia as like a holiday camp with a military emphasis, open air gymnastics, swimming, and siestas. Pediconi remarks that everything changed in 1938, with architects being told what to build and how. Regarding whether designing and building a colonia implied endorsement of the regime, he considers that the architect's work was a straightforward response to a requirement, free from rhetoric and political motives.

160

Agnoldomenica Pica (1988, pp. 75-76), refers to a proposal for a colonia in 1936, for the children of employees of the Società. Montecatini. In the event, no winner was chosen, with the project later awarded to Eugenio Faludi, who had not participated in the competition. The only stipulation in the brief was that it should be a single building, due to limited ground space. Pica's design included a helical ramp, which he explains was a purely functional solution and not intended to be rhetorical. Questioned about the significance of the fifty-metre high ramp incorporated into Faludi's building, which has been cited as an example of Fascist power and control, Pica replies that it was an architectural rather than political feature of the building. He affirms that, in contrast to what has frequently been claimed, the Fascist regime did not impose restrictions or create obstacles for architects. He and his colleagues were interested in creating architecture, and 'whether a commission was from the Pope, a Turk or Mussolini, it did not matter' (p. 75).

Continuing the theme of colonia architects of the Fascist era, Mario Labò's articles on colonie, first published in 1941 (Labò & Podestà, 1941a; 1941b), and translated into English for *Cities of Childhood* (de Martino & Wall, 1988, pp. 78-82), probably constitute the most influential, and cited texts on Fascist colonie. It strikes me that these texts from the Fascist regime could easily be read as architectural treatises without recourse to political ideology. Fascist youth groups are mentioned in passing, and the only mention of Mussolini is in the context of the Foro Mussolini in Rome. Labò appears concerned with how architects interpreted and responded to complex functional requirements of the colonie, and the extent to which their solutions complied with or strayed from his rationalist architectural ideal. He

considers the idea of the colonia, whether coastal, mountain, or non-residential, as one of the most challenging themes offered to an architect, and describes the colonia as a formidable problem, but one that modern architecture is most capable of solving. The seaside colonia establishes a formal relationship between a built volume and the horizontal terrain of the beach, which extends into the sea and to infinity. While the position of the sun and reflected heat are priorities in the designs of seaside colonie, the direction and strength of prevailing winds are critical considerations for alpine colonie.

Labò critiques the work of a number of architects and does not hold back on criticism of 'architectural contaminations', monumentalism and compromise. He describes Busiri-Vici's Colonia XXIII Ottobre as 'literature' rather than architecture, where nautical references have been overdone, resulting in a novelty with cramped dormitories that resemble a ship's steerage. Labò recommends simplicity over picturesque rhetoric, and approves of Giuseppe Vaccaro's Colonia AGIP at Cesenatico, as a regular and fluent suspended slab, with continuous equally-spaced windows. The ground floor flows into covered porticoes which connect the main building with two complementary transverse blocks. This is perhaps rationalist architecture at its finest and purest, and the building continues to be used for vacation accommodation today, more than eighty years after its construction.

Colonia AGIP was neither abandoned nor disused and did not find a place in Dubowitz's abandoned Fascist colonie. It does feature in *Cities of Childhood* (de Martino & Wall, 1988, pp. 36-37). Architect and photographer Gio Ponti, writing for Stile in 1943, describes 'its grandiose lines, decisive energetic authority and

absolute unity ⋯ beauty achieved without aesthetic delicacies, or complications of a cerebral kind, a direct beauty' (Ponti, as cited in Martino & Wall, 1988, p. 36). Anti-Fascist, Raffaello Giolli, in a 1938 issue of Casabella, describes the building as:

> Freed of weight, cumbersome mass, even the walls have become crystal, and the sun and air have won ⋯ the ground under the building is vacant not only for the view, but for the breath of sea and mountains ⋯ it is important that the children know that the architect has given freedom to the power of nature and the joys of free breathing (Giolli, as cited in Martino & Wall, 1988, p. 36).

Giolli was dismissed as a teacher for refusing to swear loyalty to the Fascist regime, put under house arrest, jailed for working with the resistance, and ultimately transferred to a transit camp, where he met fellow Rationalist architect Giuseppe Pagano, also interned for anti-Fascist activities. Giolli and Pagano were transferred to Mauthausen, where both died in 1945 (Mauthausen Memorial, 2022). It would therefore appear safe to presume that Giolli's appraisal of Colonia AGIP was not motivated by Fascist ideology, but due to his belief that it provided a perfect environment for the wellbeing and health of children. de Martino and Wall describe the building as a sign in the landscape, hiding contradictory qualities of scale, with generous covered porticoes, woodland, an orchard, sports facilities, and a private stretch of beach, while building provides flexible levels of heat, light, and ventilation. Sofia Nannini (Nannini, 2020, pp. 277-289), describes Vaccaro as a largely forgotten architect, whose work has only recently attracted the attention of researchers. Nannini contrasts Vaccaro's architectural projects with the 'rhetorical monumentality of many Fascist architectural works' (p. 277), and concludes that Vaccaro stands out for having produced sober examples of Italian modernity, and

because his major works continue to host activities similar to their original purposes. Vaccaro acknowledged the role of the colonia as a tool in the educational programme of the Fascist regime, but claimed that rhetorical flourishes and lavish displays had been banned from the colonia building. His innovative use of construction techniques allowed the building to be adapted to modern standards and requirements with minimal alterations.

Photographer Gabriele Basilico, was attracted to Colonia Agip and photographed it on at least two occasions, in 1993 and 2000, producing a number of fine images (p. 285). Umberto Cao's monograph (1994), also contains photographs taken by Vaccaro himself. The scale and proportions, and timeless sense of the building, alongside the faultless work of a famous architectural photographer, may be a reason why I found this building difficult to photograph. I have approached it from the beach, and from the road, and visited it at different times of day and year, in bright sunshine and shrouded in fog. I have photographed it as a complete building, straight on, from an oblique angle, and in sections, with digital and film cameras. Neither my photographs nor those of Basilico and Vaccaro indicate that this may be a building with a problematic past.

Stephanie Pilat and Paolo Sanza (2020), describe colonia AGIP as possessed with a sense of unbounded space:

> Furthered by the design of the central structure on the site, a five-story block, which houses the dormitories. It is in the dormitory block that Vaccaro expresses the most ingenuity in blurring the line between inside and outside. The building seems to be floating in the air, an appearance further reinforced

by a design strategy that nearly emptied the first two floors of programmes needing to be sealed off from the natural environment. The sky is then met both above the structure and at its periphery, giving those approaching the building a surreal experience in which the building belongs both to the earth and to the sky (Pilat & Sanza, 2020, p. 116).

Pier Giorgio Massaretti describes the building as 'continuing to shine to this day, against the horizon of the sea, seen from a still uncontaminated countryside: more or less as Vaccaro had envisaged almost seventy years ago' (Massaretti as cited in Balducci, 2005, p. 89).

Perhaps Vaccaro should be taken at his word, and this does indeed represent an ideologically unproblematic Fascist colonia against which others could be compared and contrasted (Figure 17).

Figure 17 Colonia AGIP, Gabriele Basilico

Colonia memories

> For many children colonia was a traumatic experience from the start…
> Many of them had never left home, had never travelled, had never been
> separated from their family, in many cases had never seen the sea.
> It started with a train journey, a great adventure, a kind of life experience
> difficult to forget (Il Palloncino Rosso, 2019).

I came across surprisingly few written accounts of children's colonia experiences,
both during the Fascist years and up to the 1970s, considering the millions who
spent their summers *in colonia* over those years. It is more than eighty years now
since the heyday of the grand Fascist colonie, therefore those who stayed during the
1930s must be approaching their nineties. However, a significant number of
defascistised colonia establishments hosted children for more than thirty years
beyond the end of WWII, which allows for further recollections from those who
stayed in these originally Fascist creations. Such accounts may perhaps be able to
shed light on whether the buildings remained tainted after Fascist symbols, portraits
of Mussolini, and extracts from his speeches had been scrubbed from their walls.
Winkelmann apparently has no doubts about, when he says that the buildings
glorify war and violence (Winkelmann, 2010, p. 118), so did these buildings
continue to exert a malign influence on thirty summers' worth of young occupants?
The social and community value of colonia recollections and stories has perhaps

only been appreciated in the last few years. Between 2018 and 2019, *Il Palloncino Rosso* appealed for first hand accounts from anyone who had stayed in colonia Bolognese before it closed its doors for good in 1977. The result was *Storie di Colonia – Racconti d'estate alla Bolognese 1932 – 1977.* The project's objective was to gather written, oral, photographic, filmic, and documented testimonies, recounting stories concerning summers when the colonia was in use, with the aim of creating an archive of memories (Il Palloncino Rosso, 2019). The pamphlet accompanying *Storie di Colonia,* comprises recollections from four people who stayed in colonia Bolognese between the 1950s and the 70s,. Translations may be found in the appendix to this thesis.

Amedeo Manieri (*escape from the colonia),* describes being sent with his sister to colonia Bolognese against his will, for six summers between 1953 and 1958. In what could be a scene from a prisoner of war movie, he states that the only permitted direct contact was for a few minutes on Sundays, always divided by the metal fence. He says that in those few moments, he could pass two fingers through the mesh of the fence to hold two fingers of his parents. Every day was the same, unless it rained; days filled with memories of home, and seeming to get longer and longer. Sundays with the opportunity to see parents, were filled with both happiness and despair. He and his sister would only see each other from a distance, when their supervised walks happened to coincide, due to the strictly enforced segregation of boys and girls. It was forbidden to collect seashells or any other little treasures from the beach. He would occasionally hide something away, only for it to disappear and not be seen again.

Amedeo describes planning an audacious escape from the colonia, tired of impositions and restrictions, and having to ask permission for everything, even to use the bathroom. He and a few friends discovered that in one corner of the fence were large rocks that would facilitate scaling it, and they began to hide and build up a supply of biscuits for the escape. On the main road near colonia Novarese, there was a path that led to the railway tracks, from which they could make their way back to Bologna. As it happened the colonia stay came to its allotted end before they could put the plan into action (Manieri, 2019).

Claudia Tabaron (*Sweet memories*), attended colonia Bolognese with her sister, between 1967 and 1971. She too describes family visits, when on a Sunday morning she might see her parents' Fiat 1100 parked outside They would come once or at most twice, but it was a joy to feel the presence of her family, even though there was a fence between them. She concludes that she felt privileged to go to the camp, which meant play, sun, friends, sea. She is aware it wasn't like that for every child, but her own memories are sweet and enduring. Like quince jam. (Tabaroni, 2019)

Angelica Trotta (*Beautiful colonia hello*), attended colonia Bolognese over six summers between 1960 and 1966. Something that left a strong impression was the morning flag-raising ceremony which, from her description, was not vastly different from that initiated by the Fascist regime. As they entered the courtyard, the Navy Anthem played, to allow time for the teams to position themselves around the flagpole. Each team formed a line, marching on the spot before entering the courtyard. Once assembled and standing to attention, the flag-raising ceremony was accompanied by *Fratelli d'Italia,* which she recalls was sung with enthusiasm.

Angelica had heard Mussolini on the radio and found similarities between Il Duce and the colonia director, as rulers who could do exactly as they pleased, only she was a nun, so couldn't be as bad as Mussolini. She concludes by saying that the facilities, with their spacious dimensions and long corridors, were conducive to all sorts of horror stories, and on reading the Harry Potter stories, she imagined Hogwarts as the Miramare colonia (Trotta, 2019).

For Raffaella Amadori (*My summer camp*), it wasn't a vacation, but to control asthma that could take her breath away. At the sea she felt good, and could breathe, run, sleep, and eat well. The memory of the camp never left her, and one day, she passed by on the way back from somewhere, and stopped to look but saw nothing but desolation. She moved a barrier to gain access and describes how:

> In the advancing evening silence, an infinite sadness descends upon my heart: "Camp, what have they done to you?" I enter the dining hall, go up to the dormitories, then take the grand staircase that leads to the administration office, walk through deserted corridors. And suddenly, there they are: I hear the running steps of children, the voices singing, the whispers in the night, the march of the navy, the smell of bread in the morning, the whistle that makes you run between the waves··· Then that silence again, that destruction, that pain. And I cry, alone, at the entrance of the dormitory, looking at the sea through those windows, which seem like tragic empty orbits. Poor camp of mine, leaning on the shore of the sea, like a dying whale, alone, in the silence of the evening. I got back in the car. My husband looks at me amazed: "Why are you crying?" "For my camp." He shakes his head, doesn't understand: he went to camp too and never liked it... but he didn't go to my camp! (Amadori, 2019).

Raffaella concludes by describing her excitement when, one day, an image of the

camp appeared on her phone, with an announcement that *il Palloncino Rosso* were talking about it on Facebook. She began to discover others who also remembered the camp, awakening a sense of hope for its future (Amadori, 2019).

Giostra Film's documentary *di che colonia sei?* (2023), and Stefano Pivato's book *Andare per Colonie Estive* (2023), also include stories of holidays in Fascist era colonie. *Giostra Film* records Sandro Vanelli's memories of colonia life in the 1950s, when the most important thing was that he had three meals a day, while at home, he ate once a day, and if things were good, maybe once and a half. He comments on the camp director as a lady who reminded him of a German general. His parents never visited, sparing him the agony of the weekly scene of friends clinging to the fence, like a prison visiting room. There was an endless row of beds, all the same, and one of his group made a mark on the wall in order to remember which was his in a row of 30 to 40 (Giostra Film, 2023b).

Personal memories of the Bolognese colonia

My memories of the space of colonia Bolognese, are of seemingly never-ending straight corridors, with impressive, wide and tall, doorways on either side, each with a pair of well constructed, wooden panelled and glazed doors, either wide open, or propped to one side, no longer attached by their hinges. The rooms appear excessively large, wide and long, with high ceilings. On ascending by an ornate staircase to other storeys, the pattern is repeated so that it becomes unclear what floor I am on. I find it hard to imagine that these spaces were designed for children,

who must surely have felt and looked diminished in stature, by the scale of the rooms (Figure 18).

Colonia Bolognese
Tim Brown
2018

Figure 18

From accounts of stays in the spaces of former Fascist colonie, my impression is that there was little to differentiate them from the Fascist era. Discipline appears to have been harsh and militaristic, and the restrictive Sunday through-the-fence parental visits are difficult to reconcile with notions of a post Fascist democracy. While it would be difficult to to say whether this was this a legacy of the buildings themselves, or due to other influences, Valter Balducci considers that colonia architecture acts as a narrative device. It provides a demonstration of the world to which the child is expected to conform, in which the values of the regime are reflected, and forms a stage for rhetorical ceremonies. He sees their architectural forms as pedagogical machines, whose shape expresses an ideology founded on strength and discipline (Balducci , 2019, p. 119). There would seem to be clear echoes of heterotopias and total institutions within these tales of colonia experiences.

Libyan children

The extended enforced stays of children of Libyan settlers, stranded in colonie after Italy declared war, has been described earlier in this thesis in the context of colonia history, while a couple individual recollections follow in this section on memories.

As the daughter of Sicilian immigrants in Libya, Rosetta Di Silvestre visited Italy along with her siblings, when Benito Mussolini called Italian-Libyan children over to Italy, ostensibly for a vacation to get to know the motherland. The declaration of war, marked the beginning of Rosetta's ordeal, along with many other children

whose supposed vacation turned into a prolonged separation from their families. Rosetta, now 87 years old, returned from her home in Switzerland to visit the places in Italy where she spent her childhood. While walking through the corridors of the former colonia XXVIII Ottobre, which today functions as the Cattolica Aquarium, she recalled the years she was there:

> We no longer had our parents. In the enormous dormitories, we were forced to sleep with our heads turned towards a portrait of Mussolini, representing our new father. The discipline was extremely strict. We had to descend the stairs wearing clogs without making any noise, we couldn't talk in the refectory, and we had to raise our hand to get a cup of water···. We were like little soldiers, I was always sad, never smiled, and didn't play with the other kids; I was very lonely. There were children crying, wanting their mothers, and they comforted us by saying that we would soon receive a visit from our parents, which never happened (Giostra Film, 2023b).

At the end of the war, her mother traveled to Italy to find her children, and it was several years before she was able to reunite the family and return to Sicily with them.

Grazia Arnese, another girl who left Libya for Italy, recalls the Duce promised the families of settlers that their children, thanks to the Fascist party, would have the honour of seeing the native soil of Italy; to return home after three months, strong and courageous. Grazia remembers that after the reception at Marina di Ravenna, she was transferred to several colonie, including Camillo Balbo in Cattolica, the colonia in Rovegno, the Dux in Lizzano in Belvedere, and a boarding school in Carpenedolo. She recalls that some children were hosted in up to fifteen different

173

colonie during the wartime period. Discipline was particularly strict, and children were required to sleep on one side, facing Mussolini's portrait on the wall. He watched over them, and they shouldn't turn their back on him. Grazia was one of the fortunate few to be reunited with her family after the war when her mother found her along with her other brother, in a refugee camp in the Italian city of Grosseto (Il Palloncino Rosso, 2023).

As mentioned in the section of this thesis on colonia history, I discovered a couple of newsreels in the *Istituto Luce* archive that feature the children of Libyan settlers, presumably filling a gap when the producers were not able to show native Italians at the seaside. Instead, they portray these stranded children, as if they are having the times of their lives. *Il Palloncino Rosso* also provides an account of children from Libya, Albania, and other countries, coming to stay in Italian colonie in 1939 and 1940, and how the media of the time promoted the impression that everything was going well in the colonie, in which children had no time to get bored because their days were fully organised with activities, including swimming, games, sports, rest, study, and various amusements, all designed to make the hours fly by (Il Palloncino Rosso, 2023). The following texts have been taken from the script accompanying the two LUCE newsreels that I discovered.

September 1940

Bambine e ragazze italiane figlie di coloni libici ospiti di una colonia marina a Rimini. Saggio ginnico

- Girls and young girls, daughters of Libyan settlers, march on the beach of the colony (all wearing white leotards).
- The girls and young girls, accompanied by colony instructors, line up on the beach near the shore.
- Older girls in the front row hold poles with banners.
- A little further back, in front of the group of girls, instructors and supervisors perform the fascist salute before the start of the gymnastic performance.
- Images of the young guests of the colony and the instructors lined up on the beach of the Rimini colony.
- The girls perform rhythmic gymnastics exercises with hoops and other equipment.
- Choreographies of the young daughters of Libyan settlers, guests of the seaside colony (the girls are arranged to form two concentric circles and they rise and fall alternately, creating harmonious figures).
(Archivio LUCE, 2023e) (Figures 19 & 20).

Figure 19

Figure 20

176

November 1940

La colonia marina Fara di Chiavari ospita i figli dei coloni libici

- Inscription on marble

- Children get up from bed, kneel in prayer, get dressed

- Children in the showers

- Haircut

- Medical visits

- Children leave the building, in uniform, pass by Mussolini's bust

- Children during the flag-raising

- Children play on the beach

- Cooks in the kitchen, children eat

- Women read in a room, children sew

(Archivio LUCE, 2023f) (Figures 21 & 22).
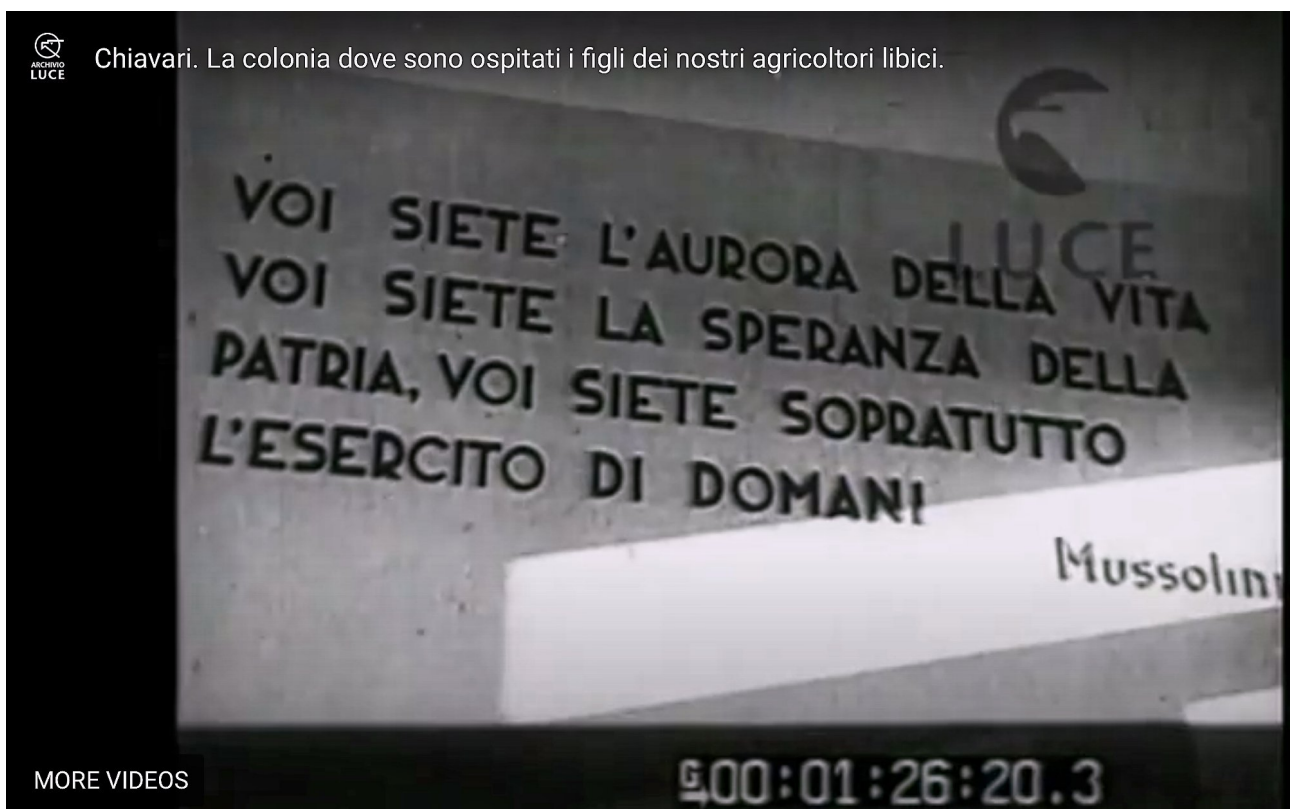
Figure 21

Figure 22

Long-term effects

Pivota considers positive memories of colonia life to be overshadowed by stories of those with less pleasant memories, explaining the threat by parents to send unruly children to the colonia if they didn't behave. The warning evokes a scenario of strict discipline, tightly scheduled routines, and poor food, sufficient to fill a child's imagination and encourage them to reconsider their behaviour. He claims that some former colonia guests suffered lasting psychological damage as a consequence of their stays. Separation from family, communal living, strict discipline, and the daily

routine of the colonia caused emotional wounds that linger today. Colonia life apparently exacerbated and increased psychosomatic disorders, such as anxiety, appetite disorders, sleep problems, breathing difficulties, and bladder issues,. (Pivota, 2023). Social media, and particularly Facebook, has made it easier for former colonia residents to connect and share stories of the effects of their times in colonie. Nannini (2023), agrees that communities of former colonia guests may be found in Facebook groups set up to collect and share memories and photographs from the past.

Fascism, architecture, aesthetics

Architecture

Concerning the nature of relationship between architects, their work, and the Fascist regime, Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, writing on Italian architects and politics (1980), confirms that a close relationship existed between architects and the regime. Ghirardo recognises rationalist architects' enthusiasm for Fascism, a subject that earlier research had tended to ignore, or avoid, most likely from a desire to protect and distance talented architects and their work, from the taint of Fascism. Ghirardo claims that rationalists, moderates, and traditionalists alike, worked to fulfil the requirements of the regime, the only disagreements being over what architectural style and form best represented Fascist aesthetics.

A recently launched project, *I Luoghi della Memoria dell'Italia Fascista* (Luoghi del fascismo, 2022), is intended to ultimately produce a comprehensive catalogue of Fascist architecture, monument, plaques, etc.:

> Italy has for the first time mapped out more than 1,400 monuments, street signs, and plaques honouring the country's former fascist regime. The "places of fascism" website aims to document symbols of Benito Mussolini's dictatorship across the country... The institute aims to expand the list of fascist monuments with public submissions, which will then be verified by historical experts (euronews, 2023).

180

Kay Bea Jones and Stephanie Pilat also acknowledge the spread and extent of Fascist architecture:

> From hospitals, government ministries, and post offices to stadia, housing, summer camps, and party headquarters, the physical legacy of the regime maintains a presence in almost every Italian city and postcolonial territory today (Jones & Pilat, 2020, p. 1).

As Fascism's built legacy clearly comprises thousands of sites, Jones and Pilat consider that there is no single appropriate approach to their study, but that case by case consideration is required, while scholars have debated whether these works of architecture merit study due to their remarkable design, irrespective of the ideas they symbolised, and whether physical form and political intention can be separated.

The thirty contributors to *The Routledge Companion to Italian Fascist Architecture*, presumably do consider that Fascist architecture is a phenomena worthy of definition and investigation (Jones & Pilat, 2020). Rather than attempting to summarise more than 500 pages of text that form the bulk of the book, the following paragraphs comprise a summary of texts that assisted in positioning the colonie within the field of Fascist architecture, and in their relationship to difficult heritage, as a companion to Italian Fascist colonie.

The themes running through the Routledge Companion include acceptance, adaptation, reuse, and abandonment, and their effects on the meaning of sites. The texts ask the same questions that this research has negotiated through literature and

practice-based research into the colonie. Francesco Cianfarani recognises that forms of social association, resulting from Fascism's emphasis on sports and leisure activities, required novel architectural typologies, including stadia and summer camps (Cianfarani, 2020, p. 11).

As has been mentioned, diverse architectural styles were permitted and actively encouraged under the regime, and while architects may have belonged to a particular school such as the *academici*, *novecento*, or *razionalista*, they were united in an ambition to create a modern and national language for Italian architecture. Cianfarani regards the *casa del fascio* as a necessary starting point for any study of Fascist architectural typologies (p. 31). Unlike the colonia, the *casa del fascio* was a Fascist invention and typology, and traditional town halls were superseded by these centres of Fascist Party administration, whose distinctive architecture emerged over the course of the 1920s. By the 1930s a *casa del fascio* would typically contain a small theatre or cinema to facilitate the showing of propaganda films and newsreels, as well as educational spaces for holding classes. Their urban locations, relatively straightforward transfer of ownership after Fascism, and ongoing usage, sets them apart from the colonie with peripheral locations, generally complex matters of ownership, and situations of abandonment.

Cianfarani includes the colonia, along with the *casa del fascio* and *casa del balilla*, as the most representative architectural typologies of the regime. They were directly sponsored and at least partly funded, by Fascist organisations, while acting as showcases for experimental styles envisaged by a generation of young architects. He considers Fascism's interest and investment in the colonie was primarily a response

182

to life in the modern city, with a focus on the health and wellbeing of urban youth, while promoting a rural lifestyle as a wholesome alternative to the city. Scrupulous attention was paid to cleanliness and sanitation, ventilation and fresh air. Outdoor space, gymnastics and exercise, medical checks, and good nutrition were paramount. While the colonia system was appropriated and subverted to serve the interests of Fascist ideology, a fear of tuberculosis and contagious disease remained. He suggests that the complex mix of requirements, together with their unique situations in the landscape, resulted in some of the most iconic architecture of the Fascist regime (Cianfarani, 2020, pp. 41-43).

Cianfarani refers to similarities between colonia dormitories and military barracks, a point developed by Arne Winkelmann in his essay on *the colonie as political instrument* (2015), in which he suggests there were similarities between colonia accommodation and Roman military units. He states that a dormitory was designed to hold between 11 and 33 children, where 30 was equivalent to a *manipolo*, while 300 children comprised a *cohort*, and 900 a *legion*. Winkelmann considers that numerical references represent a symbolic and iconic aspect of the colonie, but does not explain how numbers might contribute to the indoctrination of the children who formed these units. The arithmetic does not always appear to work either. For example, in the case of Colonia XXVIII Ottobre, cited in support of his theory, a plan of the dormitories indicates that each originally contained four rows of bunks with two rows of twenty-six, and two of twenty-eight, making a total of 216 beds per dormitory (Labò & Podestà, 1941a; de Martino & Wall, 1988). Article 13 of Fascist Party regulations for colonie is general rather than prescriptive, and specifies that dormitories should comprise spacious rooms, that are well ventilated and

illuminated, with a sufficient volume of air, and having a capacity of no more than 20-30 beds (PNF, 1939). XXVIII Ottobre was unusual in the large capacity of its dormitories, which Labò disapproved of comparing them to a ship's steerage (Figure 23).
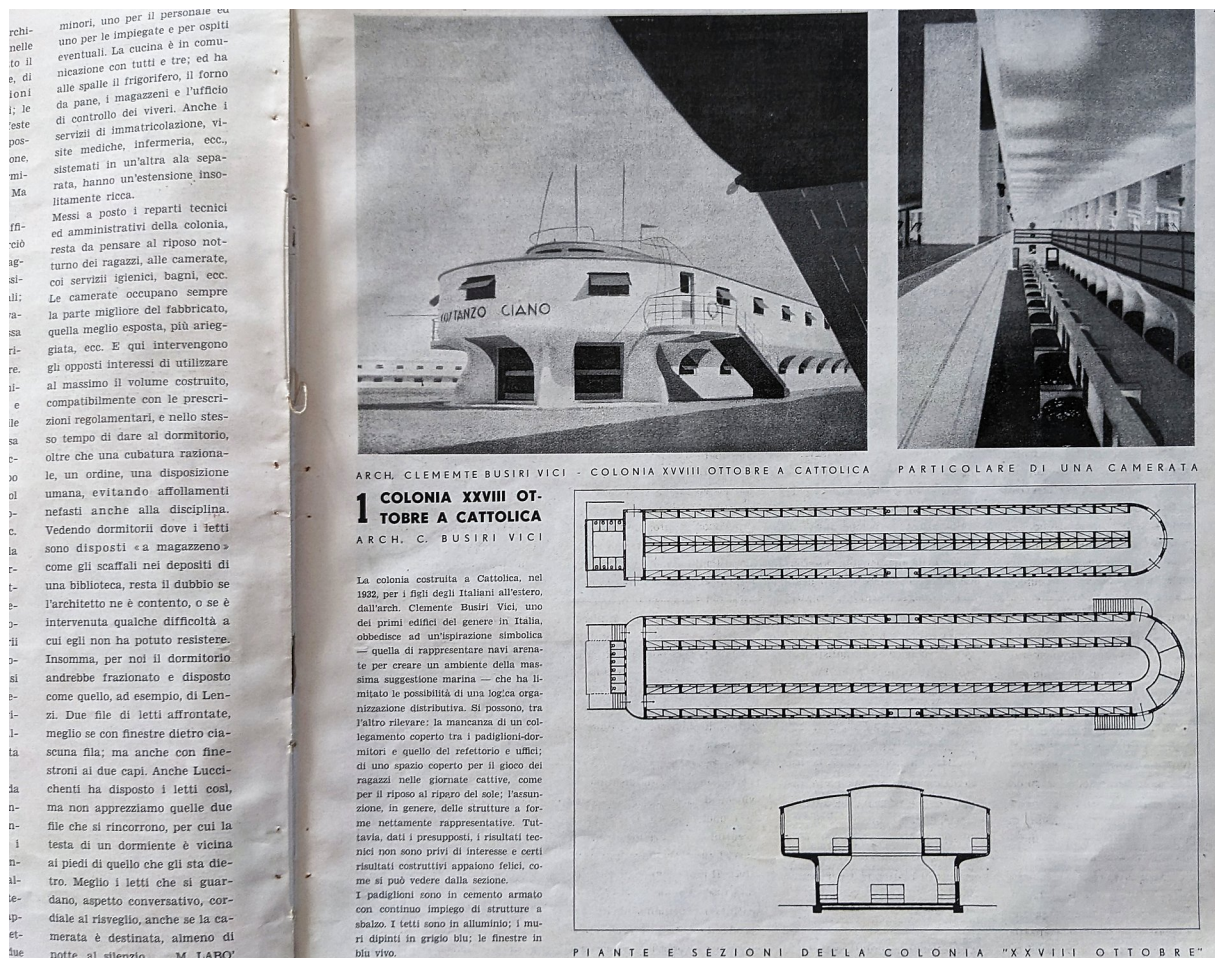
Figure 23 colonia XXVIII Ottobre dormitory plan (Labò & Podestà, 1941)

Cianafarani remarks that, among the building typologies of the Fascist regime, the colonia is the one most likely to be found abandoned and in a state of decay, although a few have been rescued and converted into other accommodation (2020, p. 43). Mario Ferrari (Ferrari, 2020, p. 304), contends that whether a building has continued in use depends on how well its typology is suited to its purpose, and he

184

regards closure and abandonment as a consequence of the regimes's tendency to prioritise the embodiment of ideology over function.

Fabrizio Civalleri and Orsola Spada discuss the afterlife of a *casa della madre e del bambino*, mother and children's home, commissioned by ONMI, the national organisation for maternity and childhood. The *casa della madre* provided facilities for the health and welfare of children not yet old enough to go to the colonie. In common with the colonie, plentiful daylight and fresh air were considered important for the prevention of disease, particularly tuberculosis. Civalleri and Spada refer to the significance of Italy's cultural heritage code, which grants automatic protection on any public building constructed more than seventy years ago, where the designer is no longer alive (Civalleri & Spada, 2019, p. 343). In theory, this protects most, if not all, of the architectural legacy of Fascism, including the colonie. In consequence, buildings with limited architectural merit, have gained the status of containers of historical meaning and memory. Interestingly, controversy and debates tend to emerge when long abandoned buildings are reactivated through notification, planning and implementation of restoration work. The authors consider that reuse and preservation are preferable to demolition and abandonment, which deprive the living of opportunities to reclaim and reinvent the spaces of Fascism.

Paolo Sanza (2020), discusses the architecture of the *casa del balilla* (cdb), later renamed as the *casa della gioventù italiana del littorio* (casa del GIL). He discusses their typology and the successful restoration of a building in the city of Bolzano. Unlike the colonia, which came with a tradition and history, Sanza describes the *cdb* as an unprecedented typology. They differ architecturally from the colonia in

that they were built to precise guidelines, with the aim of ensuring perfect functionality and a consistent ultra-modern character. The *cdb* was an official and organised response to Fascism's fixation with youth, physical fitness, sport, and the cult of the body. It typically provided modern sports amenities, including swimming pools, specialist gymnasia, theatre, library, and educational and administrative facilities. In common with the colonia, the *cdb* was dedicated to Fascist youth, although it also served an older age group. The Lack of dormitories and residential facilities, ensured that *cab* could be built as sleek, modern, streamlined, and largely unadorned structures (Capomolla, Mulazzani & Vittorini, 2008).

Colonie and *case del balilla* came under the auspices of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB), an autonomous government body, formed to complement traditional school-based education with physical, spiritual, cultural, vocational, technical, and religious aspects. Its primary purpose was communicated through its motto of *credere, obbedire, combattere,* believe, obey, fight, incorporated into buildings, and inscribed on their surfaces. ONB members promised to serve Mussolini and the Fascist Revolution with their blood, and their oath of allegiance was reproduced on membership cards, as a constant reminder. While there appears to be less literature devoted to the *casa del balilla* than the colonia, there are a number of guides, generously illustrated with architectural plans and photographs (Mulazzani, 2005; Santuccio, 2005; Capomolla, Mulazzani & Vittorini, 2008). Marco Mulazzani has also contributed to literature of the Fascist colonie (Mulazzani, 2019).

Aesthetics

Professor of architectural history, D. Medina Lasansky suggests that Fascism may be best defined through its contradictions:

> Fascism is best defined by its diversities, contradictions, and ambiguities ⋯ any discussion of Italian Fascist style must be nuanced and complex. While this is not what we might expect of an authoritarian regime, it is made apparent again and again in a variety of situations (Lasansky, 2004, p. 15).

Umberto Eco, in his essay on *Ur Fascism,* or Eternal Fascism, states that:

> Fascism was a fuzzy totalitarianism, a collage of different philosophical and political ideas, a beehive of contradictions. Can one conceive of a truly totalitarian movement that was able to combine monarchy with revolution, the Royal Army with Mussolini's personal militia, the grant of privileges to the Church with state education extolling violence, absolute state control with a free market? (Eco, 1995).

Eco summarises a number of what he regards as key differences, between Fascism and Nazism. On the one hand, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* represents a complete political manifesto, with theories of race and racism, art, and architecture. Italian Fascism on the other hand, boasted a nebulous philosophical foundation, which Mussolini considered made it a system of action, able to adapt as circumstance dictated

(Ledeen, 1969, pp. 138-139). Ruth Ben-Ghiat describes Mussolini's presentation of Fascism 'as a sort of modernistic bricolage which underwent continual re-assemblage and revision' (1996, p. 297). It was not until 1932, ten years after Mussolini came to power, that Fascism's philosopher, Giovanni Gentile created the official doctrine of Fascism, which was officially attributed to Mussolini (Mussolini, 1932). While Nazi Germany set out to construct the single gargantuan resort of Prora, on the Baltic isle of Rügen, which would have been the largest holiday camp in the world stretching for almost three miles (Hatherley, 2017), Fascist italy constructed a diffuse network of thousands of discrete diurnal and residential summer camps.

Where the Nazis had Albert Speer, Fascism encouraged architectural schools to compete and collaborate, and promoted ideologically conflicting art awards. The *Premio Cremona* organised by the fanatical and uncultivated Fascist, Roberto Farinacci, rewarded only propagandistic art, while the *Premio Bergamo* was sponsored by the 'cultivated and relatively tolerant' Giuseppe Bottai (Eco, 1995). Eco describes Fascism's national poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, as a dandy who would have faced a firing squad in Nazi Germany. The Futurist cult of speed, violence, and love of risk, was readily absorbed by the same Fascism that associated itself with the glories of the Roman Empire, and also promoted a return to rural lifestyles and agricultural traditions. These contradictions were not a result of tolerance, but rather signs of what Eco describes as a 'rigid political and ideological discombobulation, a structured confusion. While there was only one Nazism, the fascist game can be played in many forms, and the name of the game does not change'. Despite its inherent fuzziness, Eco supplies a list of indications, and while

one may appear to contradict another, he considered that any one may be sufficient to create an opportunity for Ur-Fascism to take hold (Eco, 1995).

Eco may have slightly overgeneralised with his assertion that:

> There was only a single Nazi architecture and a single Nazi art. If the Nazi architect was Albert Speer, there was no more room for Mies van der Rohe ⋯ In Italy there were certainly fascist architects but close to their pseudo-Coliseums were many new buildings inspired by the modern rationalism of Gropius (Eco, 1995).

Perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to Hitler's taste in art and architecture rather than Nazi art and architecture, a differentiation that Morton Levitt describes in his review of Frederick Spotts' *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (Levitt, 2003). Levitt states that Hitler regarded himself as an expert in matters of painting, music, and especially architecture, to all of which 'he devoted inordinate resources of time, energy, and money, even when affairs of state would seem to indicate that he should neglect aesthetics for the moment and concentrate on power' (p. 175). Rather than Speer as the Nazi architect, Spotts's research suggests that Hitler exercised almost complete control over projects, sketching out ideas for his architects to work from, spending hours refining their designs, and further hours tinkering with scale models (p. 178). However, these are perhaps matters of detail, and Eco identified a certain tolerance as a defining characteristic of Fascism's relationship with art and architecture, while terms such as *Fascist aesthetics*, or *the aesthetics of Fascism*, might mistakenly infer that there was a single Fascist form of art and architecture.

189

Fascist culture

Recent scholarship has challenged what had been a widely held consensus, that the Fascist regime produced no culture worthy of the name, and any culture from the period was therefore not Fascist. Penelope Curtis (Curtis & Campiglio, 2003, pp. 11-30), in the preface to a major exhibition, asserts that the sculpture of the period is of remarkable quality, and worthy of study 'for itself, in all its ambiguity'. Giuliana Pieri (2013, p. 161), emphasises 'Mussolini's personal interest in the visual arts, and the centrality of the arts in the ideology of the regime'. Critics have tended to avoid conflating the fine arts with Fascism, which she suggests may stem from a reluctance to acknowledge the role of art within the regime, and from a desire to maintain some degree of separation between uncorrupted art and propaganda art. Martina Caruso (2016, p. 6), comments that the continuity of Italy's photographic culture also tends to be underestimated by scholars, and suggests this may be a consequence of a traditionally left-wing academia's reluctance to reconcile Fascism with culture. For whatever reason, a distinct 'before and after' Fascism scenario came into being. Ruth Ben-Ghiat (2001, p. 20), considers that, while the regime relied on force and intimidation of the general population, its officials recognised that such approaches would be counterproductive with the intellectual classes, to whom they offered creative autonomy, sponsorship and grants, in order to foster the illusion that they were free to operate within the magnanimous pluralist system of Fascism. Ben-Ghiat's unstinting condemnation of Fascist culture look back from the 1938 Racial Laws, and Mussolini's alliance with Nazi Germany. She maintains that antisemitism was always a hidden presence from the very start of the regime, and

long before it came out into the open to reveal the true nature of Fascism. Unsurprisingly Ben-Ghiat concludes that Fascist culture possessed very few redeeming features. Claudia Baldoli (2003, pp. 138-139), also considers that the Fascist regime was founded on a principle of defending the Italian race, and that the colonie played a vital role, quoting from an article in the London Fascio's newspaper *L'Italia Nostra,* published in 1938:

> How can we define this wonderful performance which renews itself every year, of thousands and thousands of young Italians, Italians by name and by blood, who come to our summer camps to the sea and to the mountains from all over the world, in order to draw more deeply the consciousness of their origins from the native soil? How can we define it if not the expression of the defence of the race? (Baldoli, 2003, p, 139).

Ester Coen's review of Fascist minister Giuseppe Bottai's defence of cultural freedom (1995, pp. 178-180), in tandem with Bottai's presumed response to Italy's Racial Laws, may serve to bridge the gap between Eco's portrait of a cultured and relatively tolerant Fascist of the first hour, and Ben-Ghiat's dismissal of Fascist culture. Coen introduces Bottai as possessing an unwavering belief in the ideals of Fascism, while defending the rights and freedom of culture, and the dignity of the individual, as founder of the cultural journal *Critica Fascista.* He notes that intellectuals were allowed relative freedom and actively encouraged until the mid-1930s, in the spirit of Mussolini's instructions to create a new but as yet unspecified art of Fascism. Bottai founded two art reviews, *Le Arti*, and *Primato*, the latter being open to contributors who had not joined the Fascist party, and he established the *Premio Bergamo* art prize. Coen remarks that on the one hand, Bottai demonstrated enlightened and liberal attitudes, but on the other hand he supported Mussolini's

Racial Laws. He concludes that Bottai, at least partly redeemed himself by adding his signature to the decree of 25 July 1943 that brought about the end of the Fascist regime (p 180).

Bottai's *L'arte moderna*, originally published in *Critica Fascista* in 1938 (Bottai, 1995, p. 181), combines a defence of the intervention of politics in modern art, with defence of the race. He regards it as a reasonable response to a perceived threat to Fascist culture, and consonant with the 'Fascist way of doing things'. Having served as minister for Education, Bottai's involvement in the education of youth is reflected in his assertion that: 'any defence of the race must start where young minds are formed' which presumably refers to both school and colonia. He proposes that modern art should be assessed in the light of racist values, but is against making a clean sweep (as happened in Nazi Germany). Instead, he proposes distinguishing between the bad and the good. For example, not all modern architecture can be condemned as *Jewish* and Fascist new towns such as Sabaudia and Guidonia are free from Jewish influence. Bottai suggests that a suitable approach would be to carry out a survey of Italian art, to identify sources of contamination and which artists had been affected by Jewish influences. He considers that the intelligence and good taste of the Italian population has not been compromised by the likes of dadaism and surrealism, while warning against a tendency, which he terms the *Paris disease*, of Italian artists to gravitate towards Paris. It would however be wrong to jump to the conclusion that all modern Italian art has been contaminated by French association, and is therefore Jewish, and not Italian. He concludes that what is at stake is the principle of defending the race, and the future of Italian civilisation. A relatively tolerant Fascist or dyed-in-the-wool anti-semitic?

192

Fascist spectacle

Relationships between Fascism and aesthetics would seem to offer plentiful opportunities for study, but I found surprisingly little recent research into the regime's appropriation and manipulation of art and culture. *Fascism and Theatre* (Berghaus, 1996), addresses the aesthetics and politics of performance in totalitarian regimes. *Fascist Modernities* (Ben-Ghiat, 2001), is primarily concerned with literature and the film, while *Making The Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Berezin, 1997), investigates Fascism as ritual. *Donatello among the Blackshirts* (Lazzaro & Crum, 2005), covers various topics, linked by a common thread of Fascism's manipulation of history, culture, and the arts, to manufacture a particular visual culture, suited to the identity it wanted to project of a dynamic and modern political system, yet rooted in the history of the Renaissance and Imperial Rome.

A seminal work on Fascist aesthetics, or Fascism's use of aesthetics, is Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's widely reviewed and much cited *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (1997), the title of which suggests a revealing and enlightening fusion of Fascism, Benjamin, and Debord. In the event and rather disappointingly, Guy Debord gets hardly a mention, allocated just half a page of the copious seventy pages of *Notes* at the end of the book (p. 202), leaving it unclear what Falasca-Zamponi means by spectacle. The only specific mention in the main text comprises less than two lines: 'Mussolini's fascism presented a spectacular form of politics that meant to supersede and replace all other forms of

spectacle' (p. 146). Mabel Berezin also mentions the concept of spectacle in a similar manner, as if it were self-evident with no explanation required, in her reference to the intertwining of spectacle with politics, and the conclusion that: 'spectacle replaced aesthetics as a defining form within popular fascist cultural practice' (Berezin, 1997, p. 41). *Fascist Spectacle* received a fair number of reviews, some in conjunction with Berezin's book, published the same year: (Caprotti, 2003; Cassels, 1999; De Grand, 1998; Elazar, 1999; Gorski, 1999; Luzzatto, 1999; Roberts, 1998; Whittam, 2001). In common with several reviewers, I had hoped to find a meticulously reasoned account of how Fascism used aesthetics to produce power and build consensus, but the book does not quite deliver what it promises.

Caprotti (2003), comments that: 'more reference to Debord would have been useful; instead, his theory is only mentioned in a footnote'. He understands the book's purpose as an investigation of Fascist aesthetics and its contradictions and problematic relationships, through using Fascism's cultural products to shine a light on itself (2003, p. 1). Gorski (1999), considers that Falasca-Zamponi intends to emphasise ways in which representation can produce power, but her arguments are not fully worked through, and the reader is left wondering whether it was Mussolini who made the myth, or the myth that made Mussolini. He is unclear as to why she takes issue with Gentile's theory of sacralised politics, since the symbols and described could equally be considered from a religious perspective. Ultimately Gorski is not sure there is any advantage in regarding Fascism as and aesthetic rather than a religion. De Grand (1998), considers that the book raises concerns, particularly because the author appears to conflate Fascism with Mussolini, and tends to concentrate on style over substance. Luzzatto (1998), is not convinced by

194

Falasca-Zamponi's argument that Fascism as a secular religion is an inadequate explanation of the nature of Mussolini's style of government, his moral ambiguity, and of Fascism's attraction to dichotomies, such as spirit and body, reason and emotion, public and private, masculine and feminine. Roberts (1998), comments on Falasca-Zamponi's problematic tendency to reduce Fascism to Mussolini and his relationship with the masses, and consequently she neglects the complex processes through which Fascism assumed the shape it ultimately attained. The reviews may however indicate the slippery, shifting, contradictory, impossible to pin down, nature of Italian Fascism, beyond apparent weaknesses in Falasca-Zamponi's reasoning and arguments

The first two chapters of *Fascist Spectacle* (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997), are dedicated to studies of Mussolini, as politician and artist, his treatment of the 'masses', Mussolini the myth, and the deification of Mussolini (pp. 15-88). The following chapter *The Politics of Symbols* (pp. 89-118), perhaps overemphasises the importance of the minutiae and accoutrements of Fascist style and behaviour. These products of Party Secretary Achille Starace's obsession with detail, may distract from more sinister motives behind Fascism's use and manipulation of aesthetics (pp. 100-118), Falasca-Zamponi provides meticulous details relating to when the black shirt could and should, and should not, be worn; the abolition of the handshake in favour of the Fascist salute, regarded as more hygienic, aesthetic, and efficient; the campaign to replace the formal *lei* with *voi;* and mandating the *passo romano,* high stepping march, which was emphatically not German, but Roman. Her conclusion is that 'Symbols and myths became fascism's means of self-definition, its main forms of representation, and in this fashion they helped shape fascism's identity' (p. 118).

Federico Caprotti's *Italian Fascism between Ideology and Spectacle* (2005), takes Falasca-Zamponi's work as a foundation, on which he constructs an interpretation of Fascist aesthetic politics as a society of spectacle, based on the ideas of Guy Debord. In the process, he addresses a number of noted deficiencies in *Fascist Spectacle,* while emphasising its strong points. Caprotti considers Fascism's obsession with myth and symbolism as evidence of the regime's attempts to represent itself while concealing its unstable ideological core, since Fascist ideology was poorly defined, or fuzzy? He interprets spectacle according to Debord's model, coupled with Walter Benjamin's aesthetic politics. Caprotti comments that, while Benjamin's ideas might be criticised for being incomplete, they remain extremely useful due to their historical and geographical specificity, and provide a unique snapshot of a particular political system at a specific time. They possess a particular sense of urgency, also seen in the writing of Antonio Gramsci (Caprotti, 2005, p. 124). He considers the concept of spectacle as appropriate, because it can display a transformed version of the reality that it references. Spectacular displays including newsreels and parades can be divorced from everyday life, whilst grounded in that same life.

Spectacle becomes a useful tool, as it embodies the tensions within Fascism that were disguised through aesthetics. Fascism became its representation, distanced from everyday life. Caprotti recognises that Falasca-Zamponi uses Walter Benjamin's study of the aesthetic character of Fascism, in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Benjaminbi, 2010), in which he argues that in the modern era, the technological reproduction of art caused a loss of aura, because the reproducibility of art enabled the viewer to engage and interact with the work,

196

where previously they had been a spectator. Benjamin believed that art, through its reproduction, could become a focus of social struggle. However In the case of Fascism, technology was employed to maintain a distance between the audience and the products of Fascist aesthetic politics. Fascism's contradictions were obscured and the population's attention was distracted, through overwhelming visual and sensory displays, in which spectacle became the reality of Fascist aesthetic politics. Benjamin considered that aesthetic politics must end in war, since only war can control the masses, and prevent them from turning against the established order.

Fascism used metaphors of war in its internal and external struggles, where internal wars included initiatives such as the battle of wheat, the battle for births, and reclamation of the Pontine Marshes. Militarism was regarded as necessary for shaping the Fascist New Man, and youth organisations aimed to mould and shape the Fascist spirit from an early age, presumably partly through the colonia. Caprotti concludes that the instability of Fascism was the *raison d'être* for Fascist spectacle, promoting an apparent unity and cohesiveness that did not exist (p. 133-134).

The Fascist regime supported and sponsored diverse areas of culture, including painting, sculpture, theatre, the novel, and architecture (Ades et al., 1995; Berghaus, 1996; Billiani & Pennacchietti, 2019; Ben-Ghiat, 2001; Curtis & Campiglio, 2003; Lazzaro & Crum, 2005). Architecture and the Novel (Billiani & Pennacchietti, 2019), explores Fascism's creation of an *arte di stato*, or State art, through architecture and the novel, and intersections between the two, although this research is more concerned with architecture than the novel. The authors

197

comment that, unlike most other totalitarian regimes, Fascism never imposed one official style at the expense of others. In fact, the regime prided itself in supporting 'good' art. Fascist intellectuals, and Mussolini himself, considered that art subordinated by politics as in Germany at the time, would become mere propaganda (p. 16). How does this correlate with the perception of Fascism's aestheticisation of politics, based on Walter Benjamin's Work of Art essay?

Fascist art had first and foremost to be of a high quality and aesthetic value. The regime's interventions were directed towards controlling opportunities for the production and enjoyment of art, through a system of awards and organised exhibitions. Giuseppe Bottai, founder of the periodical *Critica Fascista*, regularly emphasised that the State neither dictates nor accepts any specific aesthetic, but acts to encourage serious and productive work (p. 18). Mussolini stated that Fascist art did not need to depict Fascist subjects, but should embody Fascist values. He claimed that great art was Fascist art and could be both modern and traditionalist. Fascist art could not be defined in terms of style or subject, or by a particular aesthetic, and the regime's ambivalent attitude towards notions of tradition and modernity produced contradictions. As a result, schools of art and architecture competed for hegemony, and the right to claim to be the regime's official style. Billiani and Pennacchietti recognise a reassessment of the relationship between Fascism and culture, leading to a new critical vocabulary embracing the concept of aesthetic pluralism (2019, p. 8), and an appreciation of cultural production that was more than propaganda, and a number of authors have advanced the study of Fascist architecture through technical and political assessments, based around problematising without judgement.

In architecture, where the chief rivalry was between proponents of traditionalism and rationalism (p. 24), Billiani and Pennacchietti quote Mussolini's declaration made in 1932, that architecture is the greatest of arts because it encompasses everything (p. 64). Architecture was the embodiment of the Fascist Revolution, since it created collective spaces, while theorising the way in which they should be occupied. The authors remark that the heyday of rationalist architecture was in the early 1930s, with major contributions from Giuseppe Terragni, and Giuseppe Pagano. However, after 1935 rationalist architects found themselves sidelined in favour of Marcello Piacentini and his monumental neoclassical interpretation of State architecture, which is what people today tend to associate with Fascist architecture.

After 1936, in the wake of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, international censure, growing isolation, and a decline of consensus at home, official architecture shifted further in the direction of propaganda (Billiani & Pennacchietti, 2019, p. 85). Architects of the colonie appear to have escaped this sea change, which perhaps affected Rome and projects such as the remodelling of the centre of Brescia, more than the periphery. Some of the most notable rationalist colonia designs date from the mid to late 1930s: Principi di Piemonte (Lido di Alberoni), 1936; Montecatini and Varese (Milano Marittima), 1938; Agip (Cesenatico), 1938; Dalmine (Rimini Miramare), 1936; Stella Maris (Montesilvano), 1938; Gustavo Fara (Chiavari), 1935; IX Maggio, (Marinella di Sarzana), 1938; XXVIII Ottobre (Marina di Massa), 1936.

Documentaries and propaganda

Leni Riefenstahl's once seen, never forgotten, opening sequence of *Triumph of the Will,* showing Hitler's plane flying over Nuremberg, before descending through fortuitous gaps in the clouds, to land at the Nazi rally grounds in the midst of an oceanic hysterical adoring massed ranks of faithful followers, is difficult to comprehend as a true to life documentary. Yet, according to Susan Sontag, in her merciless takedown of Riefenstahl (Sontag, 1980, p. 71-105), that is what it purports to be. Sontag claims that the rally was conceived from the start as the set for a film spectacle, with an unlimited allocation of funding and resources, and full official cooperation. Riefenstahl, however denied that any of her films were propaganda, and claimed that *Triumph of the Will* was a genuine recording of history as it happened. Sontag comments that the documentary image was not just the record of reality but the reason for the construction of reality.

David Hinton (1975), questions some commonly made assumptions concerning the making of the film, particularly what resources were given to Riefenstahl for its production, how much cooperation she received from the Nazi Party, and the extent to which the rally was staged to produce the film. His comparison of the rally programme with the chronology of the film reveals that *Triumph of the Will* does not follow anything close to a literal chronology of the event. Instead, the film is constructed around a deliberate sense of rhythm, through its editing, following a much more elaborately conceived plan than a straight sequence of events. While *Triumph of the Will* may represent the apotheosis of totalitarian documentary

cinema, Sontag acknowledges that it is also a superb film, and suggests that the viewer filters out its noxious ideology in order to appreciate what aesthetic merit remains. Fascism's great cinematic opportunity was Hitler's visit to Rome in May 1938, and Paul Baxa (2010, p. 135), describes the city's transformation into a huge stage to greet Germany's dictator, while the regime 'spared nothing to decorate the Eternal City, filling the streets of Rome with thousands of swastikas and fasces', so transforming Rome into a Fascist spectacle and ceremony. Ruth Ben-Ghiat's describes the propaganda for Hitler's visit (2001, p. 141), as involving 120 filmmakers, artists and photographers, employed to produce tens of thousands of postcards and photographs, and dozens of newsreels.

Returning to the subject of colonie, the inauguration of Cattolica's Colonia XXVIII Ottobre, was an event that perhaps came close to portraying the arrival of the leader as an awe-inspiring event, with Mussolini arriving by motorboat. Stefano Pivato, describes the occasion:

> On June 28, 1934, the first section of the colonia is inaugurated. The crowd's gaze is directed towards the sea, from which Benito Mussolini arrives by motorboat from nearby Riccione, to solemnly celebrate the opening of the building. The scenographic effect is remarkable: Il Duce, dressed entirely in while disembarks from a sleek white boat onto the colonia pier. On the beach, the crowd greets him, extending their arms in the Roman salute (Pivato, 2023, p. 65).

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately for posterity, the *Instituto Luce* archive footage appears extremely grainy, and the first glimpse of Mussolini is when he steps ashore (Archivio LUCE, 2023a).

201

From studying children portrayed in newsreels, even orderly ranks or gymnastics do not seem to completely eliminate moments of spontaneity, and regimented displays seem to hover on the verge of dissolving into gaggles of unruly children. LUCE film makers were presumably instructed to portray multiple aspects of the colonie: departures and arrivals, coast and mountains and outdoor life, exercise, architecture, exterior and interior, health and fun, medical care, religious services, singing, playing, marching, eating, sleeping, Roman salutes, flag raising and lowering, uniforms and swimwear, education, military discipline, and official visits, all compressed into the few minutes allowed by the newsreel format. The results demonstrate a certain fuzziness that I suspect comes from a clash of contradictions. Regarding the target audiences for colonia related propaganda, promoting rationalist architecture, inaugurations and visits, Fascist *benevolence*, health and welfare, I suggest that newsreels were for the benefit of parents and a working class audience, who were delivered military precision along with the regime's concern for the wellbeing of its children. Professionals and intellectuals were targeted through architectural journals, which celebrated modern design and structures, without a child in sight.

Changes of emphasis may shed light on changes in the colonie, spanning a period from the regime's propaganda to postwar years. Searching the LUCE archive for '*colonia marina, montana, elioterapica, estiva, fascista*', returned results from the late 1920s, to the early 1960s (Archivio LUCE, 2023). The majority of newsreels include a synopsis and a few examples follow, spanning a period between 1929 and 1956. They may indicate how levels of rhetoric and militarism shifted, from a medium key (1929), to full on (1938), to deliberately casual (1956).

August 1929

La colonia marina per i figli dei dipendenti del Ministero dei Lavori Pubblici a Ostia

- Children in white caps make the Roman salute before boarding the train.

- Close-ups of girls waving their hands from the train window.

- A camera car along the sea road in the subjective view of a motorist.

- The entrance to the beach reserved for the colonia of the ministry of public works. The girls enter with their governesses.

- The raising of the flag on the beach with children and their governesses.

- Close-ups of girls with caps looking out of a curtain.

- Detail of a ringing bell.

- The escort on the seashore waves a bell.

- The children run to the sea

- Children wave their feet in the water

(Archivio LUCE, 2023b).

August 1938

La nuova colonia montana della Sezione di Bologna dell'Opera Nazionale Combattenti a Pianaccio di Lizzano in Belvedere

- Exterior of the building with typical local mountain architecture.

- The facade with motto clearly visible: CREDERE OBBEDIRE COMBATTERE

- The tricolour is hoisted on the facade.

- Exterior of the colonia of the Bologna Section of the Opera Nazionale Combattenti.

- Blessing the new colonia, officiated by a priest and inhabitants of the town.

- An internal room furnished with portrait photographs on the walls.

- The children of the new colonia greet authorities, waving handkerchiefs.

- The president of the National Fascist Institute of Social Security with officials.

- Children waving handkerchiefs greet officials, from a terrace of the colonia

- Young guests decorate flowerbeds with a design in white stones depicting a fasces.

- Outdoor gymnastics on the terraces of the colonia.

(Archivio LUCE, 2023c).

August 1956

Marina di Massa: colonia estiva per i figli dei dipendenti della Fiat.

- Bathing establishments of Marina di Massa.

- Children sitting in pine forest.

- A woman distributes food to children.

- The children go round and round among the trees of the pine forest.

- A woman gives a signal with her whistle.

- Children run on the beach towards the sea.

- Women in the cafeteria kitchen.

- Children sitting at tables in the canteen.

- Children slide down the helical staircase of a cylindrical construction.

- A train stops at the station.

- Children get off the train and leave the station guided by their chaperones.

(Archivio LUCE, 2023d).

George Mosse's *Fascist Aesthetics and Society: Some Considerations* (1996), which formed the introduction to a special journal issue on *The Aesthetics of Fascism,* would seem to provide a suitable conclusion to this exploration of Fascism, aesthetics, culture, and the colonie. Mosse asserts that 'Fascist scholarship has become increasingly aware of the role which aesthetics played in the movement's appeal, and that exploring the link between aesthetics, politics and society could open up new dimensions in our understanding of fascism' (1996, p. 245). He considers that to understand the self representation and appeal of Fascism requires envisaging it from the inside, on its own terms, and agrees with Gentile that the aesthetics of Fascism should be regarded as part of its presentation as a civic religion, with liturgy and symbols. Mosse considers that a strength of Fascism and European dictatorships, was the realisation of a visual age. While Fascist aesthetics were neither new nor experimental, Fascist politics created a party that encompassed all aspects of life. Fascist aesthetics reflected Fascism itself, upholding tradition, while offering a revolutionary dynamic and the promise of a new future.

Photographing Fascism and its legacy

Subversion

This section examines Italian photography during the Fascist period, and ways in which Mussolini, architecture, events and occasions were portrayed through photography. Scholarship on photography during the Fascist regime, appears to be mostly recent, suggesting that it may have been a neglected area of study for some time. Notable texts include: (Hill & Minghelli, 2014; Caruso, 2016; Viganò, 2018; Pelizzari, 2019; Andreani & Pazzaglia, 2019; Ben-Ghiat, 2020). Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi's *Fascist Spectacle* (1997), comprises a study of the aesthetics of Fascism and power, with disappointingly little on the regime's use of photography. Academic studies on Futurist photography and techniques, including photodynamism, photomontage, and photocollage, also appear to be sparse — a fact remarked on by Sarah Carey (2010).

Maria Antonella Pelizzari (2019), considers that scholars of the Fascist regime have mostly focused on photography of the period as an official propaganda tool,

employed in shaping consensus and *fascistisation* of the population. She provides a detailed account of subtle anti-Fascist subversions, which may be found in printed media of the 1930s. Pelizzari's study of photography within popular printed media of the period, including periodicals such as *il seccolo illustrato* and *l'illustrazione*, reveals a mingling of fact and fantasy within the pages of the illustrated press, mostly successful in evading the eye of the censor. The cover page of an edition of *il seccolo illustrato*, from 1930, included three official photographs of Mussolini performing a salute in front of a crowd of people. The pictures are accompanied by the words *fatti e fantasie* (facts and fantasies) so that official meanings of the photographs are:

> Undermined by three short stories that are neither descriptive nor commemorative but drift into a strange literary dimension, evoking sleepy and remote villages, eerie ghosts, and the surrounding menace of brigands. The textual narrative twists the manifest meaning of the visuals, and the reader is treated to a bizarre mélange of reality and fairytales, of fact and fantasy (Pelizzari, 2019, p. 563).

The magazine *Piccola*, with an intended readership of fashion-conscious young women, provided a mixture of consumerism, sex appeal, and romance, interspersed with incongruous snippets relating to Fascist themes and messages. A front page spread from a 1933 issue, contained an article about a film actor, accompanied by a strip of images depicting fashionable city street scenes. The bottom right corner of the page contains an official announcement from Mussolini, praising a simple sober country life, as opposed to the unwholesome distractions of the city (Pelizzari, 2019, p. 571). Cesare Zavatttini's work with publisher Valentino Bompiani, enabled him to explore the effects of juxtaposing incongruent images and text, questioning the

apparent realism of the photograph, and suggesting alternative readings through the use of captions. A striking example features a photograph of a field of white tulips, arranged in neat rows, and receding into the distance. The image is captioned *le piccole italiane* (the little Italian girls), as the name of a Fascist girls' youth group. When the image is read alongside the caption, the image of rows of tulips is transformed into a geometric arrangement of hundreds of piccole italiane, with uniforms of black skirts and white blouses. The image plays on memories of ranks of young rhythmic gymnasts performing in Rome's Foro Mussolini, which was a frequent subject of *Istituto LUCE* newsreels (Pelizzari, 2019, p. 576).

The *Stadio dei Marmi* within Rome's *Foro Mussolini* was, and still is, surrounded by sixty sculptures of idealised male athletes, each carved from a block of pure white Carrara marble and four metres tall. These representations of male virility, strength, and athleticism were presumably intended to encapsulate attributes of the Fascist New Man. Designer and illustrator Erberto Carboni, used a photograph of one of the statues based on the myth of Hercules, for a photomontage in which he effectively reversed the male gaze, transforming Hercules into an object of playful ogling by four modern girls reclining in a pool. Viewed from behind, his lion-skin resembles a beach towel. Carboni thus challenged the Fascist model of women as faithful and obedient wives and mothers, while remaining within the realm of what was permitted by the censor, as a minor subversion, transgression, and act of defiance (Pelizzari, 2019, pp. 578-580). Pelizzari concludes that besides functioning as tools of the Fascist regime, official photographs and narratives were subverted and turned to create works of fiction and satire, as subtle gestures against the strictures of the regime. While it is possible to gauge their effects, they may have provided some

amusement and a glimmer of hope for the reader. Ben-Ghiat argues that evidence of the rejection of Fascism could be seen within the cultural sphere in the years prior to the regime's demise in 1943, and states that: 'The years 1941 and 1942 were particularly fertile ones for the appearance of realist films, criticism, photography, and literature that are often considered precursors of postwar neorealism but deserve attention in their own right' (Ben-Ghiat, 2001, pp. 407-415). She concludes with a reminder that in order to appreciate neorealism's humble poetics of the everyday, we must remember the grand militaristic narratives of the regime that preceded it, in order to understand how Italians began to discover and explore a new gaze, focused on humble objects and the everyday.

Images of Fascism

Ben-Ghiat's essay *Five Faces of Fascism,* discusses anonymous faces captured by photographs and newsreels, which feature Mussolini and the masses of the crowd (Ben-Ghiat, 2020, pp. 94-110). While I found the five short cases interesting, the introductory section is especially relevant to my research, and image-based practice. Ben-Ghiat starts by describing popular images of Fascism, in the form of uniformed men on the move, children performing synchronised gymnastics in arenas, scenes of everyday violence, and the omnipresent figure of the leader. The portrait of the leader and panning shots of an anonymous crowd form the two polarities of our imagined imagery of Fascism. She argues that we need to consider other ways of visualising Fascism to avoid reproducing the restrictions it imposed on its subjects. Her solution in this essay is to focus on faces in the crowd, evident though only

glimpsed in the backgrounds of so many Fascist photographs and newsreels. Ben-Ghiat acknowledges that we cannot draw conclusions about the thoughts and lives of unknown people, who have been generally neglected by studies of the regime's image production and visual propaganda, and who deserve our attention. In fact they act as reminders of what leaders most feared, in the humanity of the individual and everyday life that continued regardless of strictures imposed by totalitarian regimes. Ben-Ghiat's article is as an invitation to look afresh at what is present, but goes unseen and unremarked on. She suggests that we may gain new insights through scrutinising the faces of people inadvertently captured by the propaganda apparatus (Ben-Ghiat, 2020, p. 95). The regime's newsreels concentrated on the crowd as an aggregate mass, and if the camera came to rest on an individual face, there was a reason: to show faces flushed with joy, or overcome with emotion, happy, healthy faces, fully absorbed in the moment.

Ben-Ghiat describes her method as mining, involving extracting images of faces from various sources, including archives of the Istituto LUCE. She aims to seek out glimpses of the everyday, small moments within the momentous occasions, faces that look at the camera and might speak if we knew how to listen. She questions why historians tend to privilege textual sources over images, and why archivists appear reluctant to consider images as other than supplemental to the primacy of the written record. Downplaying or ignoring image archives ignores opportunities for gaining knowledge that only images can impart, suggesting lines of enquiry through visual traces and themes that are absent from written and oral records. Ben-Ghiat is reminded that images have their own particular ways of narrating the past, and may tell stories that do not necessarily coincide with, or map onto,

accepted written histories. Her research and opinions act as confirmation of the potential for revealing new knowledge of the Fascist colonie through archival and other image-based research.

L'Italia Fascista in Cammino

This 1932 softcover photo text, published by Istituto LUCE (Istituto Nazionale LUCE, 1932), could be considered as an exemplar of the Fascist regime's use of images and text as propaganda. It was presumably published in large numbers since copies are still readily available through online booksellers. The book was published to celebrate the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the 'Fascist Revolution', and to promote the alleged successes and achievements of Fascism. Giorgio Grillo describes it, in his volume on the Italian Photobook between 1931 and 1941, as comprising 516 rotogravure printed black and white photographs, including numerous photomontages (Grillo, 2020, pp. 50-52). The book contains a short introductory text by Mussolini, with French, English and German translations of the Italian text, and Martina Caruso describes it as one of the most referenced photobooks of the era (Caruso, 2016, pp. 18-19).

In the book's introduction, Mussolini makes the modest claim that, not one volume but dozens of volumes and thousands of photographs, would be necessary and still hardly sufficient to show the achievements of Fascism to the world. He describes the supreme object of the Fascist Revolution as the change in the temperament, character, and intellectual outlook of the Italian people (Istituto Nazionale LUCE,

1932, p. xiv). The book comprises a number of sections: *the new order, defence of the race, preparation for life, for the people, defence of the nation*, and *public works*. Photographs of children in colonie feature within the defence of the race chapter. After viewing this section, protection or welfare might be more appropriate than defence which carries military, racist and anti-semitic connotations not evident in the photographs. Beneath a photomontage of hundreds of cheerful, smiling, flag-waving young girls in white uniforms, the ever-important statistics are presented as proof of the success of the colonia programme. The text maintains that 314,638 children were sent to summer colonie in the tenth year (of the Fascist Revolution). There were 1312 colonie in total, of which 261 were on the coast, 237 in the mountains, 635 provided daytime sun therapy cures, and 179 were located by riversides (p. 49).

All the photographs and photomontages within *L'Italia Fascista in Cammino* are credited to Istituto LUCE – the official organisation responsible for photographing national events and occasions. The institute's photographers remained anonymous, and apparently included a substantial number of amateurs without professional photographic credentials (Caruso, 2016, p. 18). The publication comes across as a jumble of disparate images including photomontages, that appear to exhibit differing levels of competence, from skilfully composed and assembled, to amateurish cut-and-paste jobs. While the overall effect may fall short of its declared objective of showing the achievements of Fascism to the world, the blemishes and shortcomings make it informative in ways that were not intended. This research stays with the section on youth, although the whole book compelling in its scrapbook-like amateurishness and brief captions, translated with variable degrees of accuracy

from the Italian. The first photographs, in *the defence of the race*, portray *happy and serene motherhood*, through photographs showing babies being breast-fed, with their presumed mothers dressed in matching smocks and caps. A further photograph shows a group of four women in similar uniforms, each presenting their left breast to a feeding baby. Even within this intimate scene, there is a sense of imposed order and control.

The image that introduces *summer camps* comprises a composite image, in which the top third shows an indistinct crowd, and the bottom two-thirds shows more distinguishable figures of a number of girls, dressed in white uniforms and caps, presumably isolated and enlarged from the first photograph. This device is used, elsewhere in the book, whenever the aim is to portray a group of figures as part of a larger massed crowd. *Leaving for the sea* comprises two images. The first shows a woman, apparently kissing a child, who is leaning out from a railway carriage window. It could be a photomontage as the woman, with another child in her arms, and the child in the carriage, do not appear to belong together. There is a distinct edge around the woman's face and hand. The other photograph focuses on a single boy, facing straight into the camera, and with several less distinct faces in the background. His expression appears earnest and concerned, rather than joyful and excited at the prospect of leaving for the coast (p. 50).

River colonies comprises three informal snaps of children playing. In two of the photographs, they appear to be corralled within a wooden picket fence. There is nothing in the photographs to suggest a riverside setting, and they could equally be in an urban park (Istituto Nazionale LUCE, 1932, p. 51). *Each one their favourite*

game is a composite of four photographs. Two are of girls playing, one with some kind of hoop and sticks, while the other appears to be skipping. A boy appears to be bowling or throwing a ball, while two other boys are clearly engaged in a wrestling match (p. 54). *Songs of happy youth* employs the same one-third, two-thirds composite used elsewhere. Here the top photograph shows a group of children, presumably on a beach, spelling out VIVA IL DUCE with their bodies. The bottom image, at first glance, appears to show a group of boys, laughing or perhaps singing as suggested by the caption. On closer inspection, the image may be a photomontage, with a wedge of standing boys added to form a backdrop (p. 57). *Balilla and Young Italians* comprises a montage of three or four photographs of children in their uniforms. The boys appear to be singing, while the girls are standing to attention (p. 70). It is not always obvious which are straight photographs, and which are composites, further confused by the interchangeability of uniform and dress. While the image of the boys could be a single photograph, the boy in front is in sharper focus than the others and is the only one who appears to be squinting into the sun. His sleeves are also the only ones rolled up, and his cap is perched at such an angle that it almost defies gravity. When looked at in detail, the book perhaps acts as a demonstration that nothing relating to Fascism should be taken at face value (p. 70) (Figures 24 & 25).
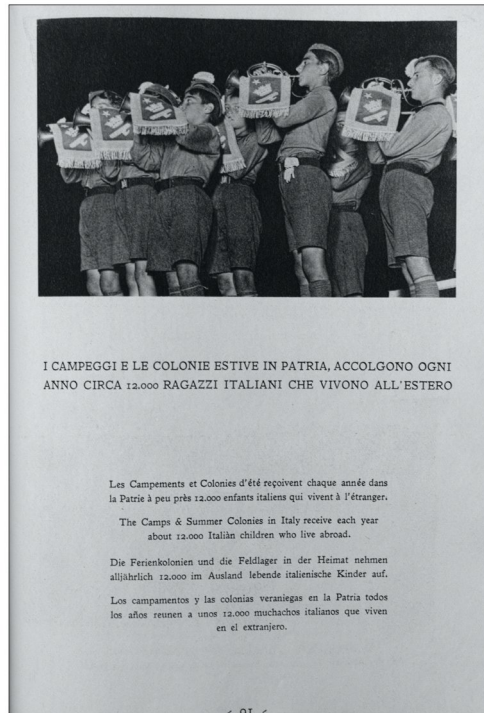
Figure 24
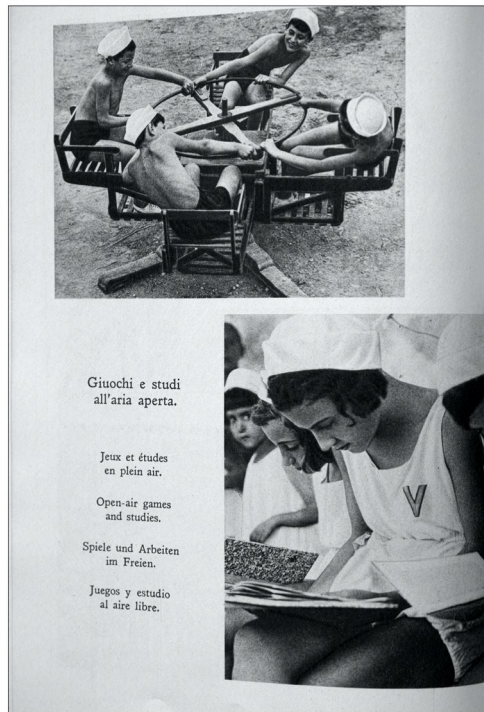
Figure 25

Photographing Fascist architecture

The exhibition *Photographic Recall: Italian Rationalist Architecture in Contemporary German Art,* curated by Miriam Paeslack and organised by *UB Art Galleries,* at the University at Buffalo (Paeslack, 2019; UB Art Galleries, 2019), was constructed around present day artistic responses to Italian Fascist architecture. The participating artists were: Caterina Borelli, Johanna Diehl, Günther Förg, Eiko Grimberg, Thomas Ruff, Hans-Christian Schink, and Heidi Specker; all from Germany with the exception of Italian artist Caterina Borelli, who was included as a point of reference and counterpoint to the outside gaze of the other artists. Paeslack states that:

> Artists who grew up to identify and decode Nazi architecture as a major propagandistic tool of totalitarianism find themselves today intrigued, bewildered, and challenged as they encounter the often intact remnants of Rationalist architecture in Italy (Paeslack, 2019).

She describes their various approaches towards working through the contradictions, aesthetic appeal and seductive powers exerted by Fascist architecture, as fresh instances of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung,* or working through, and coming to terms with the past in the context of the Nazi regime (Macdonald, 2009). However, Paeslack suggests that, with time the term became a cynical lip service and a means

of closing the past. In this context, she presents an aim of the exhibition as a reconsideration of ways of working through the past, by using the architecture of Italian Fascism as a kind of catalyst.

The catalogue contains a wealth of terms related to visual aesthetics and the emotional impact of coming face to face with the architectural remains of Fascism, and resonates with my responses to encounters with colonie. I condensed the text into the following paragraph, aiming to capture something of the essence of Fascist architecture and its seductive power. I used this and similar lists in my explorations and photography of the colonie:

> stark, slick surfaces impress or even overwhelm; ambiguous responses toward monumentality; aesthetics of totalitarianism and democracy; critical engagement with built forms of Fascist propaganda; emotions of attraction and repulsion; sublime architecture; spaces that dazzle and awe; seductive power; the interrelation between architecture, history; the evolution of ideology in built form; the aura of power that emanates from Fascist architecture; architecture's surface and spatial qualities as carriers of meaning; potential beauty and danger of the image; breaking the power of the past to fascinate; ambivalence and ambiguity; the tipping point between critical observation and complicity with the regime; the aesthetics of totalitarianism and how they manifest in contemporary discourse.
> My 'distillation' of Paeslack (2019).

Caterina Borelli's work is perhaps the least relevant to this research, and consists of a short video in which she explores conflicting feelings of repulsion and attraction towards an outsized sculpture in Rome's Stadio dei Marmi.

Paeslack comments that Günther Förg's black-and-white photographs often look

217

slightly upwards, composed and framed to disorientate the viewer. While none of Förg's photographs are reproduced in the catalogue, I came across several of his photographs of Fascist colonie. *Children's Holiday Camp, Calambrone,* 1986 (Förg, 1986b), shows one edge of the building and one of the pair of cylindrical towers, composed slightly off-vertical. *The '28 October' Children's Holiday Camp, Marina di Massa,* 1986 (Förg, 1986a), shows a slice of the long, low mass of the building, and again is slightly off-true. *Colonia Marina di Chiavari,* 1995 (Förg, 1995), looks up at the height of the building, so that verticals converge almost to a point. The locations of the removed Fascist axe and text can be seen as scars running down the building. The Tate describes the context of his photographs of the colonie:

> These buildings, standard examples of Modernist architecture, are also typical of Fascist structures of the period. By depicting them in a deserted and dilapidated state, in gloomy or wet weather, Förg highlights the totalitarian, Fascistic impulse which marred the utopian dream of much Modernist architecture (Tate, 2011).

Eike Grimberg photographed Fascist architecture across Italy in a project that explores relationships between architecture, history, and ideology. His images are unobtrusive, and reflect working methods which rely on the straightforward relationship between object and image. He displayed a mixture of monochrome and colour prints in the exhibition, and I recognise similarities between his compositions and some of mine, that share what Paeslack considers to be a simplicity that is 'still complex enough to hold the image while not immediately revealing what the actual matter is' (Paeslack, 2019).

Johanna Diehl's exhibited photographs comprise part of a larger investigation into

'the aura of power that emanates from fascist architecture'. Her photographs include finely detailed colour prints of archetypical Fascist interiors such as the *Casa Madre dei Mutilati* in Rome or of the *Casa della Liberta* in Bergamo, and Diehl

> deliberately maintains their aesthetic appeal while passing the task of critical response back to the viewer. Instead of expressing indignation and emphasising the imposing nature of these structures, she aims at disrupting and breaking her objects seductive potency through their photographic reframing (Paeslack, 2019).

Hans-Christian Schink used a large format camera, to create 'acts of master-craftsmanship in light' and his methods of working are described as contextual, patient, and painstaking, involving exploration of the terrain on foot, by bicycle, and through Google Earth. His black and white prints of the EUR suburb of Rome are striking in portraying the site in the manner of an architectural model.

Heidi Specker explores buildings and interiors, surfaces and objects through a process she calls working with the image, involving viewing, photographing, framing, and pairing. *Termini, Marmor* appears to show a polished marble surface, but on inspection, the viewer may realise that one half of the photograph shows genuine marble, while the other shows a surface painted to resemble marble (Paeslack, 2019).

The most interesting, for its creative scope and relevance to this research, is Thomas Ruff's m.d.p.n. (Mercato del Pesce di Napoli) (Galleria Lia Rumma, 2003; Ruff, 2005), which Paeslack describes as employing a range of image forms including: straight documentation, montage, historical survey materials rendered

219

contemporary through colouring, and reinventing reality, both recollective and imaginative. The *Mercato del Pesce di Napoli* or *Mercato Ittico* is an example of Rationalist architecture completed in 1935, and designed by newly qualified architect Luigi Cosenza as a gift for the city. By the time of Ruff's photographs in 2003, it had undergone various structural changes and fallen into disuse. The m.d.p.n. book includes a couple of essays, one by Giovanni Leoni, Professor of History of Architecture at the University of Bologna, and the other by Fabrizio Tramontano, Architect and Adjunct Professor at the Politecnico in Bari.

Leoni discusses the intimate relationship between architect and photographer, in which the photographer is asked to make a photographic image that is as close as possible to the architect's visualisation of the building (Leoni, 2005). He compares the Bechers' photographic strategy with this project by one of their students, describing the Bechers' mission as the search for a pure existence of architecture; a search that is paradoxical since pure existence cannot be represented. Ruff goes beyond the examination that characterises the Bechers' work, to create a synthesis, blending his photographs of the building with archive images, and manipulating everything on the computer. Therefore, it is not the unattainable naked existence of the subject that reveals a truth, but the complexity of different representations, and a multiplicity of images including those deemed objective, such as archival images, and explicitly subjective ones, because the pictures as a whole construct a biography, that is not restricted to an original image, or fixated on its current state of decay. Leoni states that Ruff's photographs do not state a fact, but they question the building, its materiality, and its life. They question the building's creator, and follow the traces of those who used the building, and transformed it. Finally, Ruff's

pictures inquire into possible future uses for the building (Leoni, 2005).

Fabrizio Tramontano discusses previous projects by Thomas Ruff that influenced his approaches to m.d.p.n. using different techniques he had developed in his career as a photographer, including: 'straight' photographs, interior scenes, night-vision, stereoscopic photographs, and computer manipulations. In addition, he employed computer colourisation of archival black and white materials, in the days before AI and DeOldify. He added colour to archival images of the fish market to make them appear contemporary as a 'credible reinvention of reality'. Ruff also coloured archival images when there was no time to photograph a building, and in situations where the surroundings had changed too much to replicate the original view (Tramontano, 2005). The notion of a credible reinvention of reality resonates perfectly with my reasons for including AI coloured archival images in my sequences and in the photobook.

The photographs in the book are indexed, for example *m.d.p.n. 01, 2002,* and there is no information provided other than the type of print and print edition: *stampa cromogenica a colori chromogenic color print cm 186x270 (grande/large) cm 130x186 (media/medium) edition of 5 p. 26, etc.* I was encouraged by the range of techniques that Ruff has incorporated into in the book, as I used a variety of approaches towards making the images for this research photobook.
m.d.p.n. 01 (Ruff, 2005, p. 34), appears to be an archival image although it has been lightly tinted. *m.d.p.n. 02* (p. 38), is clearly a recent view showing the degraded exterior, and is presented in desaturated colour. *m.d.p.n. 32*, 2002 (pp. 40-41), is a superimposition of two views of the interior, one taken from each end.

m.d.p.n. 14, 2002 (p. 45), is a formal straight-on composition showing a weighing scale between two pairs of steel doors while *m.d.p.n. 15-22*, 2002 (pp. 44, 46-47), comprise a rearrangement of the same items, and taken from a variety of view points. *m.d.p.n. 33*, 2002 (pp. 42-43), shows a deliberately glitched and blurry alteration of an archival exterior view. Despite or perhaps because of their obvious visual differences, the alterations, desaturation and colourisation, similarities and differences, complement and build on each other to give the viewer a holistic impression of the past, present, and possible futures of the building.

Concerning the overall effect of the *Photographic Recall* exhibition, Paeslack concludes:

> Seen in close vicinity of each other and alongside the stultifying bombast found in propaganda film clips, this exhibition ultimately returns us to timeless questions about the power of images. How have Fascist regimes made use of this power, both through spatial design and representational imagery, and how might the uncovering of their strategies foster a greater understanding of the potential, beauty and danger of the image today? (Paeslack, 2019).

The varied artists' approaches towards the material remains of Fascism suggest that there can be multiple appropriate responses, each addressing different aspects of the difficulty and complexity of the subject area.

Photographing Fascist colonie

Considering the potential scope of the subject, there have been few studies of colonie, based on the perspectives and interpretations of photographers. Dan Dubowitz's Fascismo Abbandonato (2010), appears to be the earliest example, situated somewhere between an artist's photobook and a textbook with essays and archival images. Dubowitz has photographed eleven Northern Italian colonie for the book which has, perhaps unfairly, been referred to as a glossy coffee-table example of the photographic image succumbing to Benjamin's aestheticisation of politics (DeSilvey and Edensor, 2012, p. 6). I am aware of three other photobooks that investigate and record the present day state of Italy's colonie, all of them published in the last five or six years.

Lorenzo Mini's book *Colonie* (2017), is the result of a life spent among the numerous, predominantly disused, colonie on the Adriatic coast around his home in Cesenatico. The 1986 survey identified eighty-three buildings that occupied almost 500,000 square metres of land, and originally provided almost 11,000 beds (IBC, 1986, pp. 71-72). Mini recalls that having these structures in front of his eyes every day, and having witnessed their transformation from active and inhabited to abandoned spaces, they fascinated and intrigued him. In 2009 he made the first of many photographic explorations of a colonia that had been abandoned for some years. He describes his reaction as a mixture of fear and amazement at seeing a

world that he had imagined, but which had remained unknown to him. The kitchens, the refectories with tables and chairs, dormitories with all the beds in a row, clinic rooms, laundries, and the inevitable chapel (2017, p. 36). Mini's book includes interior and exterior colour views of abandoned, and partially restored colonie buildings dating from the 1930s through to the 60s. While the majority of photographs feature his local area, others were made in Lido di Venezia, mountainous areas inland from Genova, and the coast to the north of Pescara.

FaGubellini's *un'estate fa* (2020), is a self-published photobook, available through blurb, the online and on-demand publisher. Living in Emilia Romagna, in common with Mini and Tazzari, his photographs were apparently made with a wide-angle lens, and are reproduced as high-contrast monochrome images with dramatic cloudscapes. He documents fifteen former Fascist colonie along the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts, as well as the mountain colonia of Rovegno and the day colonia at Cremona.

Luigi Tazzari's photobook *Addio Colonia* (2018), covers some of the same ground as Mini's *Colonie.* Tazzari lives in Ravenna, 35 km north of Mini's Cesenatico, and his photographs were made along the stretch of coast between Marina di Ravenna and Cattolica, with its 246 colonie catalogued by the *Colonie a Mare* survey (IBC, 1986). Tazzari's book contains photographs with similar architectural conventions to Mini, but he also more casual, spontaneous, responses to interior details and furnishings. Both Mini and Tazzari include text by Massimo Bottini, and a few extracts from the essay in Tazzari's book are particularly evocative of my own experience:

Inside: tables, chairs, beds, beds, beds, sinks, more sinks, and then walls with peeling paint, written and rewritten, nightstands. Outside: buildings in balance, curved lines that write letters and draw planes or ships, straight lines that rise into towers. ⋯ Suspended in a temporal dimension that is no longer the past, but still is, an eternally present time that fails to transform into the future. Initially attacked by the disease of *damnatio memoriae*, too symbolic to be easily emptied of their ideological burden. ⋯ Their original function, to welcome children from less privileged families in the cities, to take them to the sea to breathe well, to warm up in the sun, to avoid tuberculosis, scrofula, or rickets, has been lost. ⋯ For the most part, the colonie lie empty (Bottini, 2018, pp. 6-7).

Only when I saw his photobook, did I realise that I appeared to have been following in Luigi Tazzari's footsteps, or perhaps he was following in mine. Several of my photographs are remarkably similar to Tazzari's, which prompted me to wonder what causes photographers to be drawn to the same apparently trivial scenes. I would expect it in awe-inspiring cities such as Venice and Rome, but the same thing seems to happen in superficially unappealing and unattractive locations. While I was pleased that we appeared to share a similar experience and response to the colonie, I was concerned that I might have inadvertently replicated existing work, but no photographs that resemble Tazzari's feature in this research and photobook. Travel restrictions and the need for alternative approaches ensured that the somewhat unorthodox arrangement of images in the photobook was unlikely to resemble other existing work. The photobook that accompanied this research offers alternative views to the classic documentary photography, which Lorenzo Mini excels at. My images replace his clarity of vision and detail and perspective, with a sense of unease, uncertainty, and fuzziness (Figures 26 & 27).

Luigi Tazzari
2018

Colonia O.P.A.F.S. / Roma
Tim Brown
2018

Figure 26

Luigi Tazzari
2018

Colonia O.P.A.F.S. / Roma
Tim Brown
2018

Figure 27

Although not strictly a photobook of the colonie, photographer Silvia Camporesi's *Atlas Italiae* (2015), is a photographic record of lost and forgotten places of Italy, which began as a survey of abandoned villages, and evolved to include specific buildings including a number of colonie. Giulia Bianchi's enigmatically titled *Colonia Marina FARA: Cinquanta Modi per abbandonare il tuo amore* (Fifty ways to lose your lover) (2016), is a study of her relationship with Colonia Fara, starting from childhood when the ground floor of the building was her school and the tower was strictly forbidden. The book encompasses the building's past, present and future, finishing on a positive note with news of an impending renovation. Her photographs capture scenes of decay and abandonment, crumbling structures, vandalism, and vestiges of previous use.

Dubowitz, Mini, Tazzari, Gubellini, and Camporesi, capture the colonie at particular moments, on the whole leaving the buildings' pasts and possible futures to the viewer's imagination. Where restorations have been planned or been partly carried out, their futures are not included or referred to. Dubowitz's book contains a gallery of vintage postcard images (2010, pp. 120-135), and is peppered with snippets from Fascist propaganda, but gives the impression of a piece of work made in a single few weeks, and a short moment in the eighty year history of the buildings. These photographic projects appear to be the results of a desire to capture what is in front of the photographer at the precise moment of the encounter. I detect the eye of an architect in Dubowitz's compositions, with careful attention to framing and maintaining vertical perspective, and similar qualities in Mini's photographs may be due to his partnership with Massimo Bottini, architect and longtime champion of the colonie (Bottini , 2014).

The photographs by Dubowitz, Mini, Tazzari, and Gubellini, concentrate on the best known examples of colonia architecture, while this research originally intended to cover a more diverse range in its exploration and photography. However, due to practical restrictions, it ended up including many of the same buildings. As can be seen from the table below, Lorenzo Mini has produced a substantially more comprehensive photographic study than Dubowitz, Tazzari, or Gubellini.

	Dan Dubowitz	Lorenzo Mini	Luigi Tazzari	Fabio Gubellini	Tim Brown
Gustavo Fara	X	X		X	X
Rosa Maltoni Mussolini, Calambrone	X			X	X
Rovegno	X	X		X	X
Roberto Farinacci	X	X		X	X
Montecatini	X	X	X	X	X
Novarese	X	X	X		X
Amos Maramotti / Reggiana	X	X		X	X
Costanzo Ciano / Varese	X	X	X	X	X
XXVIII Ottobre	X	X	X	X	X
Principi di Piemonte, Alberoni	X	X		X	X
O.P.A.F.S. - Roma		X	X		X
Decima Legio / Bolognese		X	X		X
AGIP / Sandro Mussolini			X	X	X
Stella Maris		X		X	X
Italo Balbo / Olivetti		X			X

Marinella di Sarzana					
Torre Bailla / Fiat				X	X
Postetelegrafonici / Villa Marina Pesaro		X			X
Ettore Motta					X
Firenze, Calambrone					X
Maria Pia di Savoia / UNES ENEL					X
Dalmine		X			X
XXVIII Ottobre / Torino Marina di Massa				X	*
Rosa Maltoni Mussolini Giulianova		X			*
Principe di Piemonte Porto San Giorgio		X			
Montemaggio		X			*
Fascio Primogenito		X			
Renesso		X			*
Antonio Devoto		X			

* Colonie visited, but omitted from the photobook.

Table 5. Fascist colonie in photobooks by Dubowitz, Tazzari, Mini, and myself.

Other colonia photographers

I met Gianni Porcellini by chance in the grounds of Colonia Bologna, where he was engaged in examining and photographing the flora, rather than the building which he was already very familiar with. If I had not met him, I doubt that I would have come across his website *Arte Fascista* (Porcellini, 2022), in which he makes the grand statement that: 'during Fascism the Italians, led by the Head of Government Benito Mussolini, managed to achieve the second Italian Renaissance'. However, he emphasises that his is not a 'Fascist' website, but that his aim is to showcase achievements in art, architecture, and engineering during the regime, which made Italian towns *more beautiful and modern*. A section of the website titled *pagine delle vergogna*, pages of shame, contains details and Porcellini's photographs of forgotten, humiliated and violated architecture, including a number of colonie.

I came across architectural photographer Mark Sanderson's research project in an issue of *Cabinet Magazine* dedicated to the subject of ruins (Sanderson, 2005). The article states that Sanderson was engaged in research on Italian holiday resorts for children during the Fascist era. I have not come across any sign of the completed work, but Mark Sanderson gave a colonia related presentation on *Derelict Utopias* at the conference *Big Ruins: The Aesthetics and Politics of Supersized Decay* (The University of Manchester, 2014). His photographs in *Cabinet Magazine,* along with the ones I found in The UCA research repository (University for the Creative Arts, 2014), combine careful composition with pleasing use of light and shade.

While the *Cabinet Magazine* article is quite concise, Sanderson's description of how colonia Novarese was designed to function is a particularly visual one:

> Some of the buildings display futurist themes of dynamism either through their streamlined form or through actual dynamic elements that would be activated by the movement of children through them: the Novarese colony had two semi-spiral ramps at each end which acted like turbines as they 'flushed" children from the dormitory floors and 'siphoned' them up again at the day's end (Sanderson, 2005).

Artists Rosella Biscotti and Kevin van Braak (Biscotti & van Braak, 2007), used photography, film, and analysis and physical reconstructions of architectural details for their *Cities of Continuous Lines* project, which aimed to explore and consider whether architecture can have an intrinsic meaning, or whether its meanings are fluid, through posing questions such as 'Can a door be Fascist?' I have probably spent far too long musing on this question without reaching a conclusion. Is a building more than the sum of its parts? If you remove a fitting from a Fascist-inspired building, does it remain tainted from its former association?

Practice, manipulation, sequences

Colourisation

In investigating whether colouring photographs might reveal or enhance intrinsic difficulties that would otherwise remain unnoticed or hidden within images, AI-coloured images appeared to offer a means of creating credible-but-false versions of monochrome archival photographs.

Italy's Fascist heritage hides in plain sight due to its sheer ubiquity and everydayness, as summarised by Hannah Malone who describes the widespread survival of a physical legacy which 'contrasts with the hazy memories of Fascism that exist within the Italian collective consciousness. Conspicuous, yet mostly ignored, Italy's Fascist heritage is hidden in plain sight' (Malone, 2017, p. 445). The objective of using colouring was to challenge visual representations of the colonie through convincing forgeries. Bearing in mind the inherent distortions within Fascism, further falsification by means of colourisation of monochrome images could perhaps be regarded as consistent with the ethos and ideology that underpinned the production of official photographs during the years of the regime. While it may appear counterintuitive to use subterfuge in order to reveal something hidden, I had experienced how near invisibility could alter my perception of colonia buildings when I visited on foggy days. Their fuzzy indistinctness transformed them

into hazy shapes, as though the form of the buildings had partly dissolved and I could see through them into the spaces they occupied. I took a number of photographs in the fog, that capture something of what I experienced, but nuances were lost, between the experience of being present, surrounded by a palpable atmosphere, and the two dimensions of a fuzzy photographic image. As I was not able to depend on foggy days during my visits, these photographs remain separate from the colonia sequences and photobook.

A strategy of colouring which I considered but rejected, was to desaturate colour photographs in order to more closely match monochrome archival images and postcards, making it less clear which were present day and which from the past. While colouring is an underdetermined process, subject to unknowable original colours, desaturation transforms coloured images into a tonal greyscale with a loss of information. I concluded that such 'lowest common denominator' images could potentially further hide and obscure what was already hidden and unseen, rather than revealing and exposing what might be hiding in the shadows.

Alexandra Stara (2013), discusses the work of two photographic artists Steffi Klenz and Thomas Weinberger who 'share an interest in making strange' as 'a device for bringing to visibility the processes that shape our environment' (p. 353). In the context of this research, Stara's analysis of Klenz's photography appears particularly relevant, which she describes as based around the tenuousness and ambiguity of place. Stara describes both artists as being engaged in making the familiar subtly strange. Klenz's play with scale, for instance, leaves the viewer with a 'disquieting sense of conceit but unable to see behind it, oscillating between disbelief and

234

possibility' (p. 354). Stara considers that strangeness can emerge from the everyday and banal, through subtle subversion and distortion of the familiar, creating something which is ambiguous and elusive. Yaron Meron (2019), traces traditions of making the familiar strange to Russian formalism, and notions of de-familiarisation, describing familiar things as though they were happening for the first time (p. 4). Meron states that photographic manipulation starts before the shutter is released, and continues throughout processes of framing, capture, production and consumption, while Stara argues that the very nature of photography makes the familiar strange. In his context, the Generative Adversarial Network (GAN) architecture at the heart of DeOldify and image colourisers, appears relevant to this research and work with images, since their rationale is to make strange through creating convincing fakes in the guise of believable coloured photographs.

I tested colouring software with downloaded jpeg files of postcards, and screen grabs from Istituto LUCE newsreels which are fuzzy and ill-defined, having a playback resolution of 720 by 480 pixels. These are surely examples of what Hito Steyerl would classify as the poor image:

> 'Liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming' (Steyerl, 2009).

Accustomed to working with digital RAW camera images, I was disappointed with the low resolution of the *Istituto LUCE* archive. However, it contains an extensive number of Fascist era newsreels, and few people appear to have used their footage of colonie for research purposes. An exception is Elena Mucelli (2009), who appears

to have been captivated by similar moments to the ones that caught my eye in browsing through the hundred or so newsreels and documentaries returned from searching the film archive for 'colonia fascista' (Archivio LUCE, 2022a).

DeOldify colourisation is based on OpenSource software although, unfortunately for this research, the most effective implementation is embedded within the MyHeritage genealogy platform (MyHeritage, 2022), and requires a subscription in order to access AI image colouring. The results of MyHeritage's colourisation were something of a revelation, capable of generating visually stunning and convincing colourisation, even from poor quality YouTube screen-grabs. There are clearly shortcomings, as there will be with anything that attempts to resolve what is essentially unknowable.

I intended to be selective with colourisation, using it as a novelty device that might prompt a viewer to hesitate before realising the nature of the deceit. That may have been true a few years back, but AI based image manipulation has grown rapidly to become a hot topic, as evidenced by a flurry of AI-based text to image offerings, such as DALL-E, MidJourney, DreamStudio, and NightCafe Studio. I found myself regarding what I knew to be AI-coloured postcard images as if they were originals, forgetting what the original versions looked like. I decided to apply DeOldify AI colouring to all monochrome archival images, as an intervention that both confuses and corrupts the historicity of the original image, while bringing previously unseen details to the fore. The decision required handing over control to a 'fuzzy' computational process, but could be regarded as the culmination of Futurist technological machine-based fantasies. In a variation of before-and-after and repeat

photography, I used AI colouring to produce sets and sequences of coloured photographs that appear less obviously of their time. The viewer is challenged to wonder what came before or after what in a pair or sequence. Images of speculative futures may be from years ago, while present day images are more recent than those portraying unrealised futures. In this context, colouring can be considered as a method for emphasising the ambiguous nature of what these images purport to represent. DeOldify contains a facility for restoring faded colours, which I used on a number of architectural CGI renderings, as they tend to favour an undersaturated colour palette, presumably a consequence of aesthetic choices made by architectural designers and artists.

Opinions on colourisation

Tom Goskar (2021), cautions against the illusion of accuracy that AI-based colouring can generate, while expressing surprise at his own emotional response on viewing an old family photograph, coloured through MyHeritage and DeOldify. Katherine Bussard claims that: 'The ability to capture a scene in colour has been desired since the earliest recorded photographs' (Bussard & Hostetler, 2013, p. 2). The Cornell Library quotes an 1859 reference on coloured photographs, which states that the artist says they are not paintings while the photographer considers that they are not photographs. However, photographic colouring, while recognised by neither, is embraced eagerly by both (Cornell University, 2011). Roland Barthes confessed he was not very fond of colour photographs, feeling that whatever the actual process, colour is a later coating 'applied to the original truth of the black-and-white

photograph', and describes colour as an artifice, and a cosmetic akin to that employed to painting corpses (Barthes, 2010, p. 81). Susan Sontag refers to 'photographs, which fiddle with the scale of the world, themselves get reduced, blown up, copped, retouched, doctored, tricked out' (Sontag, 1979, p. 4).

Vilém Flusser considers that black-and-white photographs possess a peculiar beauty, which is why many photographers prefer them, and suggests that colour photographs possess a higher level of abstraction than black-and-white (Flusser, 2000, pp. 43-44). Concerning photographic manipulations, Barry Goldstein reminds his readers that from the very beginning, photographers have not stopped debating the ethics of manipulation and perceptions of the integrity and honesty of images (Goldstein, 2007), while back in 1989, Yuriko Saito concluded 'neither proponents nor opponents of colorization can argue for their respective stance by reference to the artist's intention or to purely aesthetic considerations' (Saito, 1989).

Walter Benjamin's choice of a quotation by Paul Valery, in the introduction to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,* is also pertinent for an age of Artificial Intelligence: 'We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art' (Valery as cited in Benjamin & Arendt, 2007, p. 217).

Practical considerations

The interest in converting monochrome images to colour for this research was sparked by a couple of articles in the international art magazine *Apollo*, which discussed viewers' expectations associated with black-and-white photographs. In *Does the Past Look Better in Black and White?* (Prodger, 2021), Phillip Prodger, former head of photographs at the National Portrait Gallery, comments that colourisation, powered by AI software, has become a popular activity. He states that software is currently able to discern skin, earth, water, and sky, and will continue to improve its accuracy, although it is impossible to deduce the precise colours that gave rise to a black and white photograph. He notes that the history of colourisation goes back almost as far as photography itself, relying on the skills and imagination of unacknowledged and predominantly female hand-colourists. Christina Riggs (Riggs, 2022), discusses a photograph of a packed railway station in Kharkiv, eastern Ukraine, which caused confusion due to a digitally desaturated version in circulation on social media. The implication for documentary photography would appear to be that black and white signifies the past, while images from the present day are expected to be published in colour. My decision to colour the archival images in the photobook challenges this expectation.

There have been debates as to whether colourisation increases or decreases a viewer's perceived distance of the present from the past, and around the ethics and desirability of the practice. Ivana Zeger et al. (2021), define colourisation as a process of converting greyscale images into visually acceptable coloured ones with

the main goal of convincing the viewer of the authenticity of the transformation. The authors consider that colourisation of black-and-white images alters the perspective of a viewer, narrowing the gap between past and present, while also making an image more believable. They acknowledge that the aim is to 'deceive the viewer, to make him believe in the authenticity of the colorized image, and not to reconstruct the colour accurately'. Liz Watkins (2021), appears more concerned than the previous authors regarding controversies around colouring monochrome archival images and films, which she considers to be a contentious issue. She asks what is at stake, particularly in the practice of colouring of First World War film footage.

Colouring colonia images

In the case of photographs made during the years of Italy's Fascist regime, I employed AI colouring as an intervention, with the intention of provoking questions and raising doubts as to the authority and reliability of photographs of the colonie. The results can be seen in the sequences of images and photobook that comprise the portfolio of creative practice. (Figures 28 & 29) show 'before and after' examples of AI colouring of monochrome postcard images of Colonia Fiat, XXVIII Ottobre, Varese, and Novarese.

Colonia Fiat, Marina di Massa
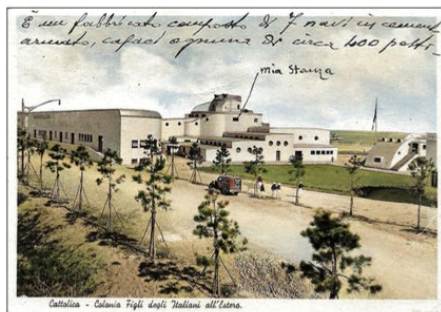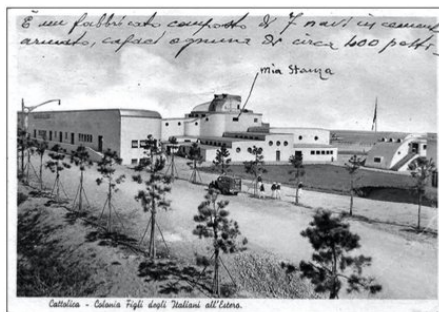
Colonia XXVIII Ottobre, Cattolica

Figure 28

241

Colonia Varese, Milano Marittima

Colonia Novarese, Rimini Miramare

Figure 29

242

Photomontage

David Evans (2019), in a special issue of *History of Photography*, provides an introduction to the historiography, terms, techniques, and ambiguities which have come to distinguish the practice of photomontage, with particular reference to Martha Rosler and John Stezaker. Concerning the present-day potential of photomontage to shock, Evans refers to the claim by Theodor Adorno that familiarity has effectively neutralised its shock value. However, he suggests there is renewed interest in methods of cutting and pasting, collage, photocollage, and photomontage, and recognises a continuation of photomontage practice in the construction of contemporary combined photographic images (Evans, 2019, p. 162). In the same issue of *History of Photography*, Sabine Kriebel and Andrés Zervigón ask *Is Photomontage Over?* Is the medium still capable of provoking agitation and shock, or has it run its course? They define the practice of photomontage as: 'A medium of material and photographic recombination that trades on the frisson of incongruity — an aesthetics of disagreement that can range from subtle cognitive unease to outright violent conflict' (Kriebel & Zervigón, 2019, p. 120).

Charlie White (2009), in an article originally published in Artforum, traces the growth of what he calls the collage impulse, through the twentieth century, and into the internet age. Having reached a pinnacle in the 1970s with Martha Rosler's

photomontages, constructed around comfortable American domesticity and war photojournalism, the practice seemingly entered a period of decline through the final decades of the twentieth century. White identifies a resurgence in collage and proposes that the convergence of desire and available technology offer new ways of 'undoing linearity by way of regulating, dearchiving, re-cataloguing, recording, sharing, stealing, destroying, combining, and redistributing' (White, 2009, p. 124-125). Katarzyna Weichert (2020), discusses the history of photomontage in Germany, where it was used to reveal multiple, potentially contradictory meanings within combined images, whilst in Russia, its primary aim was to strengthen and reinforce state propaganda. Weichert regards photomontage as an instrument for thinking, that engages the imagination and encourages the creation of novel mental connections, through its reading and viewing. The Russian avant-garde concept of making strange opened up novel ways of initiating thinking, through processes of interruption, juxtaposition and montage. Graham Clarke, discussing the work of John Heartfield, Hannah Hoch, Raoul Hausmann, Herbert Bayer, Richard Hamilton, and Peter Kennard, cautions that while its strength resides in the immediacy of the work, the necessarily limited context is also its weakness (Clarke, 1997, pp. 198-205). Collages and montages may be put to work through processes of bringing together elements which possess no obvious connection or message, and Clarke mentions Gingo Hanawa, whose ambivalent complex constructions require the viewer to seek out meaning within what initially appears to be a composition of baffling relationships and juxtapositions.

Architecture and photomontage

Fabio Colonnese (2018), investigates the use of collage and photomontage in the practice of several Italian architects of the 1930s. Piero Bottoni in particular, used photomontage as a means of introducing Fascist aesthetics, and of maintaining a distance from the ideology of the regime. Human figures function as an optical reference for spatial proportion and as an illustration of how the architecture should ideally be put to use. Italian architects of the period favoured photographic figures, as a means of incorporating additional values and meanings. Some collaborated with photographers while others, such as Giuseppe Pagano and Gio Ponti, became photographers themselves. Architects included collages in submissions for major, Fascist-sponsored, competitions. Giuseppe Terragni added photographic inserts of crowds praising Mussolini onto pictures of his architectural model for the proposed Palazzo del Littorio. Others added pictures of airplanes, cut out from photographs taken during the inauguration ceremony of the new Fascist town of Sabaudia. Photographic figures crowd most of Bottoni's designs of the mid 1930s, in some of which they appear like models, posed and looking into the camera. His competition entry for Milan's Piazza del Duomo included four figures in the foreground, one of them of Bottani himself, which effectively succeed in drawing the viewer's attention away from the design elevation. In a gesture toward the Fascist regime's expectations, Bottoni included photographic figures of a line of marching soldiers as part of the submission for a building for the armed forces. His critical attitude towards Fascism later turned into bitter disappointment, which can be seen in the later scratching-out of the figures of soldiers from his drawing.

Understatement, captions, irony

This section explores visual understatement, captioning, design and layout with reference to a couple of photobooks, one by Paul Graham and one by David Farrell. That both projects were made in Northern Ireland provides a loose connection between the two.

Paul Graham's *Troubled Land* (MACK, 2022), recently republished after thirty-five years, was described by Sean O'Hagan as a work of detached engagement. While Graham's approach is understated, Northern Ireland's contested politics are always visible but hiding in plain sight: 'You have to look closely to work out what is going on and where… essentially, they are conflict photographs masquerading as landscape photographs' (O'Hagan, 2022). Mack summarises *Troubled Land* as dealing with the small but insistent signs of division, hiding within seductive views of bucolic landscapes. There are clues present in every picture, but the viewer has to search for them: a union jack high up in a tree in an otherwise unspoilt idyllic landscape, a republican parade passing by in the distance, the word PROVOS stencilled on a stretch of garage doors with red and green cars in the foreground, reminiscent of the colours of the Irish tricolour. Graham employs a traditional photobook format that hearkens back to Robert Frank, with a photograph to the right of each spread and a caption on the left. Graham's captions comprise single

lines of text, detailing the location and date, sometimes with a short title such as 'graffiti', 'paint on road', and 'republican parade' (MACK, 2022).

David Farrell's *Innocent Landscapes* (Farrell, 2001), takes the viewer on a tour of six sites of the disappeared; the alleged burial places, south of the border, of eight people murdered by the IRA. Sixty-eight days of intensive digging by search teams revealed the double graves of Brian McKinney and John McClory, but those of the remaining six victims were not found. Alfred Hickling describes the photographs as:

> Too factual to be thought of as art, yet too aesthetically polished to count as simple documentary evidence… Farrell's lush, highly saturated images give the landscape a digitally enhanced sheen: the surface of streams looks like satin; the sky is whipped up with a touch of unruly Constable drama. They would be postcard-perfect picnic spots if we were not aware of their status as crime locations (Hickling, 2003).

The book is organised according to location, and the victims believed to have been buried at each spot. As I turn the pages, I encounter images and sequences seemingly designed to jar and unsettle the viewer. There are eerie nighttime landscapes, presumably illuminated by car headlights, that pick out details within the beam, leaving impenetrable shadows beyond and to the sides. Other photographs show gouged and scarred earth with uprooted trees, representing the aftermath of fruitless searches. Bleak moorland landscapes with marker flags and forlorn strings of police tape remind me of fruitless searches of Saddleworth Moor for the victims of Ian Brady and Myra Hindley. One photograph shows a sign painted on the road, with an arrow and the single word 'Bodies'. In this book I appreciated that introductory text and a degree of signposting are necessary for the

viewer/reader to be able to make sense of the images, and of the book as a whole. I realised that structure and signposting would also be required in the photobook from this research, to assist the viewer's comprehension of a subject and context that may not be clear from the images alone.

Visual Irony

Before reading Graham Clarke's description of Henri Cartier-Bresson's photograph *Madrid, Spain* as 'awash with a visual irony characteristic of his style' (Clarke, 1997, p. 207), I had not considered Cartier-Bresson's photographs as ironic. These paragraphs investigate visual irony and how it may present through a photograph. The aim was to decide whether it might be a useful for this research to employ a degree of irony in photographs and images of the colonie. Contrary to my instinct which said probably not, was the consideration that Fascist architecture may not deserve any particular respect in how I choose to represent its legacy. However, in the afterword to his photobook *veramente,* photographer Guido Guidi is quoted as saying that 'There are things that I do not like in this world, I could be ironic, but I am very careful not to be' (2014), and Agnès Sire, director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson considers Guidi's expressions of reality stand the test of time, without irony (Sire, 2014).

Linguistics lecturer and photographer Biljana Scott (2004), provides some pointers as to how irony may be incorporated and experienced within photographs, and the differences between textual and wordless visual irony. Scott is not convinced that

Cartier-Bresson's *Madrid, Spain* is awash with visual irony, although she recognises Cartier-Bresson as a master of situational irony. Scott begins by asking whether a picture can be ironic, as irony requires being able to imply the opposite to something said. How might an image convey a different meaning to what it purports to show? The most obvious form of photographic irony involves textual content, in the form of advertising billboards for example, where a message conflicts with its context and surroundings. She refers to photographs by Margaret Bourke-White and Dorothea Lange for the Farm Security Administration, which beyond contrast and ambiguity, involve a seeming obliviousness on the part of the people portrayed, to a clash of realities within the frame of the picture.

Scott's analysis of photographic irony uses *echoic mention theory*, developed by linguists Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, in which the key distinction between use and mention is that use refers to the dominant representation, while mention is embedded in subversive alternative readings. Scott claims that the theory provides a framework for understanding visual irony, as incongruous juxtapositions that challenge preconceptions of how things ought to be, and what we expect. Where textual content may encourage the reader to adopt an ironic tone, a photograph without text can only rely on incongruity to flag ironic intent, and the detection of incongruities relies on a viewer's implicit knowledge of the context of the photographed situation. Since photographing ironic situations requires an element of serendipity, in which the photographer has to be in the right place at the right time, photographers tend to fall back on captions, collage, and photomontage in order to manufacture a desired ironic effect.

Scott distinguishes between condemnatory irony, and celebratory irony, and this is perhaps the crux of the matter for me. I am comfortable with subtle ironic humour that is not made at anyone or anything's expense, which is where Henri Cartier-Bresson excels. The essential difference between these forms of irony is that condemnatory is critical, while celebratory is philosophical and tends to be understated. A risk with understatement is that the ironic intent of the image maker may be lost on the viewer. The ironic picture has to allude to a perceived world view while simultaneously demolishing it (p. 52). Constructed images, including collages and montages, allow a photographer to impose an ironic sensibility through juxtaposition and suggestion. Scott suggests that presenting work in series with accompanying text, can steer the viewer towards sharing the moment of irony that was observed, captured, and constructed. In the photobook from this research, architectural visualisations are employed with gentle ironic intention, as visualisations of perfect utopian futures that never came to fruition. They allude to past hopes and aspirations, and present day disappointments and failures. My deliberately restrained use of irony in the image sequences and photobook were influenced by Guido Guidi's stance on irony. I omitted images featuring graffiti, for instance, as attempts to make a point through incorporating incongruous text in photographs.

Making the photobook

Sets, series, sequences, photo-essays, typologies, projects, albums, archives, folders, feeds – photography is almost unimaginable outside of one kind of grouping or another (Campany, 2020, p. 10).

The following section examines selecting and sequencing images in the context of the photobook. A casual Google search for image sequencing is likely to return a heady mix of advice — begin in the middle, at the beginning, at the end; along with numerous advertisements for workshops and classes, podcasts and YouTube videos. I have selected David Bate, Gerry Badger, and David Campany, as writers on photography, who have also written about the photobook. I refer to Jörg Colberg, founder and editor of the *Conscientious Photo Magazine*, and author of a manual for producing photobooks (2017). Finally, I include Blake Stimson's writing on Robert Frank's The Americans and the work of Berndt and Hilla Becher (Stimson, 2006). The Bechers' work was concerned with rigorously adhered-to photographic typologies, in which the effects of sequences, groups and arrangements were pivotal to their viewing and appreciation. There are perhaps some similarities between their grand industrial structures, whose original purposes had come to an end, and the physically isolated buildings of the colonie.

Campany (2018), provides a comprehensive history of ideas and theories of editing and sequencing images, starting by emphasising that editing is integral and unavoidable for anyone involved with working with anything beyond single images:

> For some photographers, editing is the heart of the matter, the place where the real work is done, and a source of great pleasure. For others it is secondary, or a problem, and may even lead to anguish. But unless the photographs are absolutely singular, with no intended relation to any others, sooner or later there will be editing. If the photographer does not do it, someone else will have to. And there is certainly no such thing as a photobook without editing (Campany, 2018).

He traces the importance of image-based editing to the growth and profusion of the illustrated press in the 1920s, which perhaps coincidentally, marks the beginning of Fascism and the regime's interest in images as tools of propaganda. He regards this period as the birth of a style of photography book which was more than a collection or catalogue of pictures. These new 'photobooks' explored the possibilities of montage to shock and provoke, to make the viewer stop and think, to jolt them out of passive consumption of images, although photography did not have an equivalent to Sergei Eisenstein's theory of montage for the moving image. I suggest that sensations of confusion and visual overload were exploited by the Fascist regime in its media saturation of the public space of the piazza. Propaganda, in the form of illustrated posters and banners, was pasted up on any and every available surface. This was technological mass reproduction in action, with portraits of Mussolini displayed as large blocks of repeated images, resembling a sheet of postage stamps, or perhaps an Andy Warhol-esque repetition and replication of a single image, endlessly reproduced.

Jörg Colberg describes the tasks of editing and sequencing as:

> Imagine you are given a box with dozens, hundreds, or possibly thousands of puzzle pieces, knowing, or at least hoping, that they can be made to fit into a picture. Now also imagine that before you put it together, you don't quite know what the picture will actually look like. You might have a good idea, but a lot of details are vague. Then imagine you don't know how many of the puzzle pieces you will need to finish the task (Colberg, 2017, p. 29).

Gerry Badger (2012, p. 3), describes sequencing as an iterative process of editing and refining with the ultimate aim of arriving at a best possible ordering. While sequencing may not generate the entire narrative or meaning, it lies at the heart of it. Badger considers sequencing to be an intuitive and creative process, in a similar manner to the making of photographs themselves. A sequence has the potential to change the sense of a story, and also to reveal hidden nuances and details, and it should possess an ebb and flow. While leading towards some resolution, a sequence does not have to provide definitive answers. Badger suggests that including less ambiguous images at the start, can be a dependable way to set the scene for what follows. Similarly a few clear images can bring the work to a fitting conclusion. He mentions the use of the accordion fold, or leporello, which seems an appropriate way to view my image sequences, as an unbroken ribbon, with a sense of revealing and unfolding, until it ultimately displays the whole of the journey. Badger cautions against employing multiple styles and vague themes, which may leave the viewer with no more than a basic understanding of the work, unless they are able and prepared to tease out the nuances and subtle relationships that might reveal the sense and meaning within the sequence.

David Bate (2020, pp. 213-229), favours the word syntax as a term and way of thinking about movement and passage between images. He considers that the cumulative effect of viewing one image after another has rarely been considered as a way of looking. Most discussions on photography concentrate on single images or bodies of work, even though arrangement and sequence are central to any exhibition or photobook. He considers that words such as seriality, sequence, essay, and narrative, tend to be referred to casually, as if their meanings were self-evident. Bate asks how does a sequence operate as a means of generating meanings, beyond the senseless chaos of random choice? Bate suggests the term photowork, with reference to a photographic project that comprises implicitly or explicitly ordered components, where the intention is to produce meaning. While syntax enables meaning to be established through the order of words in linguistics, there is no equivalent inherent ordering within an image which is taken in all at once, and does not unfold and reveal itself in the manner of a sentence. The information it imparts is simultaneous, guided only by visual arrangement, light, and tone. The process of viewing images and captions in a sequence has been compared to a silent movie, with a crucial difference. In a film, the timing, pace and sequence are controlled and determined by the filmmaker, leaving the viewer with no control over its ordering and pace. Unlike Eisenstein's theories of filmic montage, the photographer has only images and the relationships between them as raw material to work with (Bate, 2020, p. 219).

Bate maintains that nonetheless photoworks do possess a structure. While the book form draws on textual conventions of arranging words on a page, a viewer may choose to open a photobook in the middle, flick through it at random, or view from

finish to start, though aware that the work was designed and intended to be read as a book of text would be. He regards Robert Frank's *The Americans* as a classic reference, signifying a break with earlier journalistic conventions of continuity. Frank's use of innovative hybrid forms created a new form of photowork in the form of the critical essay. He argues that the syntactical structure of this book has been poorly understood, and that it depends on the viewer slowing down to stop and think, and to see life as it is, rather than experienced in passing. The camera stops to look, while the viewer travels between scenes, subconsciously carrying some detail from one photograph forward to the next. There is no story as such, no beginning, middle, or end, but fragments and wreckage from different stories. That they don't add up to a single unified story is a key part of its critical voice, which addressed the fragmentary nature of the country. While it has been described as subjective, as a diary, or even as a stream of consciousness, there is a logic within it, rooted in the disruptive mechanisms of montage (Bate, 2020, pp. 223-225).

Colberg (2017), is primarily concerned with the physical photobook and its planning, design, construction, and publishing. However, I consider that the chapter on sequencing is relevant to any work with images, with or without the intention of producing a publishable or published book. Where Bate refers to syntax, Colberg refers to the narrative of a photobook. Narrative concerns both the story and the process or technique — the what and how? Concerning the use of text with photographs and photobooks, He considers that it is a contentious and confusing issue for many photographers. Colberg maintains that, while photographs can be expressive in numerous ways, there are limits to what they are capable of communicating. He advises taking a pragmatic approach to text and captions,

capitalising on what photographs do well, and supplementing them with words or other media in situations where photographs alone are not sufficient to convey the intended meaning (p. 53), although what constitutes appropriate guidance can entail a fine balancing act. Excessive signposting may stifle the imagination, while pared-back text may leave the viewer baffled, and unclear on what the work is supposed to be about.

In a typology, where form and content are deliberately made similar, a viewer will seek out small differences, but what happens when two obviously different photographs are displayed side by side? Colberg considers that there is inevitability a dialogue between the two, even though it may be dissonant. He refers to Eisenstein's theories of montage as a fundamental difference between film and still photography. While a photobook allows a kind of analysis that is not possible with film, both have a beginning and an ending, and the primary task of sequencing is to lead the viewer from start to finish in a way that makes sense. The beginning of a photobook should provide an entry point, often in the form of a small number of images to reassure the viewer that what follows is going to make sense and it is worthwhile continuing. Each image exists alongside, not only the previous and following images, but also every other one in the book (p. 96). Colberg urges anyone interested in sequences to study Walker Evans' *American Photographs* and Robert Frank's *The Americans*, as classics in photographic editing and sequencing (p. 100). Regarding *The Americans*, Stimson (2006, pp. 106-135), contrasts Robert Frank's intuitive response to the spaces he photographed, with the Farm Security Administration (FSA), whose photographers worked to clearly defined predetermined directives. Frank's project constituted a road journey without a

destination, and made no pretence of neutrality. Within the series, the sense of rhythm is more important than any individual picture (p. 117). It is the relationship between picture and space, presence and absence, that makes *The Americans* such a forceful publication. The photographs do not attempt to capture the decisive moment of Cartier-Bresson, but string together one photograph with another, and another, forging a continuous chain (p. 118). Stimson considers that the success of the book as a photographic essay owes as much to the editing as to the photography itself.

Practice outcomes

Colonia sequences

I created a number of sequences to assist with considering how to make best use of a substantial but diverse collection of images of the colonie, in order to highlight their pasts, present situations and uncertainties, and envisaged futures. The sequences prepared the ground for the photobook, which features twenty-one former Fascist colonie, visited and photographed during the course of the research. The concept of a book comprising images of twenty-one colonie was inspired by the twenty-eight colonie to visit article published in Domus (Asaad et al.,1985). Twelve sets of images were reduced to eight as work progressed on editing and sequencing. The four excluded sequences are included in the appendix to this thesis. The photobook brings everything together as the culmination of this practice-research.

The colonie

Colonia Varese, Milano Marittima

Colonia Novarese, Rimini Miramare

Colonia XXVIII Ottobre, Cattolica

Colonia Stella Maris, Montesilvano

Colonia Fara, Chiavari

Colonia Fiat, Marina di Massa

Colonia Rovegno, Rovegno

Twenty-eight colonie to visit

The above sequences are available as pdf files to accompany this thesis, as is the photobook. While the sequences are digital files, I envisage printed versions would resemble sets of picture postcards which made as perforated concertina-like sets, which, when opened out, reveal the whole set as a long strip. As an alternative, I considered producing them as sets of loose cards, which could be arranged and rearranged in any order, as a way of playing with the contradictions between sequences of images and the ambiguous and fuzzy nature of the Fascist colonie.

Arne Winkelmann's typology (2015), supplied the major part of the information that included in the introductory profile for each colonia. Where I have labelled the current state of the buildings as '2022', this refers to findings from visits and from recent literature. Pivato (2023, p. 151), also regards Winkelmann's website as the most comprehensive listing of Fascist era colonie.

259

Colonia Costanzo Ciano / Varese

Other names   Costanzo Ciano del Comune di Varese

Built for   City of Varese

Architect   Mario Loreti

Year   1937 to 1939

Capacity   800

State (2015)   Abandoned

State (2022)   Abandoned and in advanced stage of collapse

                        No realistic plans or expectation of restoration

Text sources (Balducci, 2005, pp. 124-127; de Martino & Wall, 1988, pp. 56-59; Domus, 1985, pp. 10-11; Dubowitz, 2010, pp. 88-99; Istituto per i beni culturali della Regione Emilia Romagna (IBC), 1986, pp. 242-245; Foschi, 1989, pp. 35-36, 47; Il Blog di Cervia e Milano Marittima, 2022; Pivato, 2023; Giostra Film, 2023).

This is perhaps one of the most iconic and enigmatic colonie, owing to its design, impressive dimensions, and short active life as a children's colonia, which seems to have spanned a single summer season. During WWII, it was used as a military hospital, barracks, and prison. The central structure of intersecting ramps, designed to facilitate movement between dormitories and other areas of the building, was demolished, or perhaps collapsed for other reasons at the end of the war. Subsequent work to construct a replacement system of ramps in the 1960s was abandoned uncompleted. The concrete ramps are clearly visible from the beach and

form a skeletal outline against the sky. They are undoubtably the ruined building's defining feature, although they do not follow the design of the original ones. The building and its ramps have been used as a backdrop for a couple of films. Archive photographs provide glimpses of curved ramps with ornate banisters and floor to ceiling windows. The contrast between what the photographs show, and what remains, is so great that I find it almost impossible to reconcile the two.

The building has been abandoned for at least seventy years and suffered two major collapses, in 2015 and 2020. It occupies a 60,000 square metre plot, and the landward aspect is now hidden from view by a dense stand of maritime pine trees. Designed to accommodate 800 children, today it is occupied by one person. José, seemingly as enigmatic as the building he inhabits, has made his home in the central courtyard area, and over the years has adapted the surrounding structure to his requirements. On the several occasions that I visited the building, there were sounds of construction and reconstruction work in progress, and I would catch sight of José at work in some area of his domain. A little further down the coast is Milano Marittima's exclusive Papeete Beach, favoured by Italy's former deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini.

The single summer of Colonia Varese

The sequence opens with a real estate advertisement for Colonia Varese, 'built in the 1930s and situated in Milano Marittima, well-known seaside resort of the Romagna shore. The structure, surrounded by a splendid pine grove is located in

proximity of the shore, well-suited to become an accommodation-tourist structure'. The sequence closes with a screen capture from the 1983 horror movie Zeder, and shows the closing credits against the backdrop of Colonia Varese. The second image shows the building when complete, and presumably in use as a colonia. I downloaded and coloured the image of a monochrome postcard sourced from the Cervia and Milano Marittima blog. The intervening images comprise a mixture of archive photographs, my photographs, and imaginative and ambitious plans for reuse, interspersed with details of José's home, and stills from YouTube videos. The sequence does not follow any clear chronology since its aim is to take the viewer on a kind of rollercoaster journey through the unpredictable and uncertain spaces and times of the site. How significant is one summer under Fascism in the context of the eighty-four years of its existence? (Figure 30).

Figure 30

263
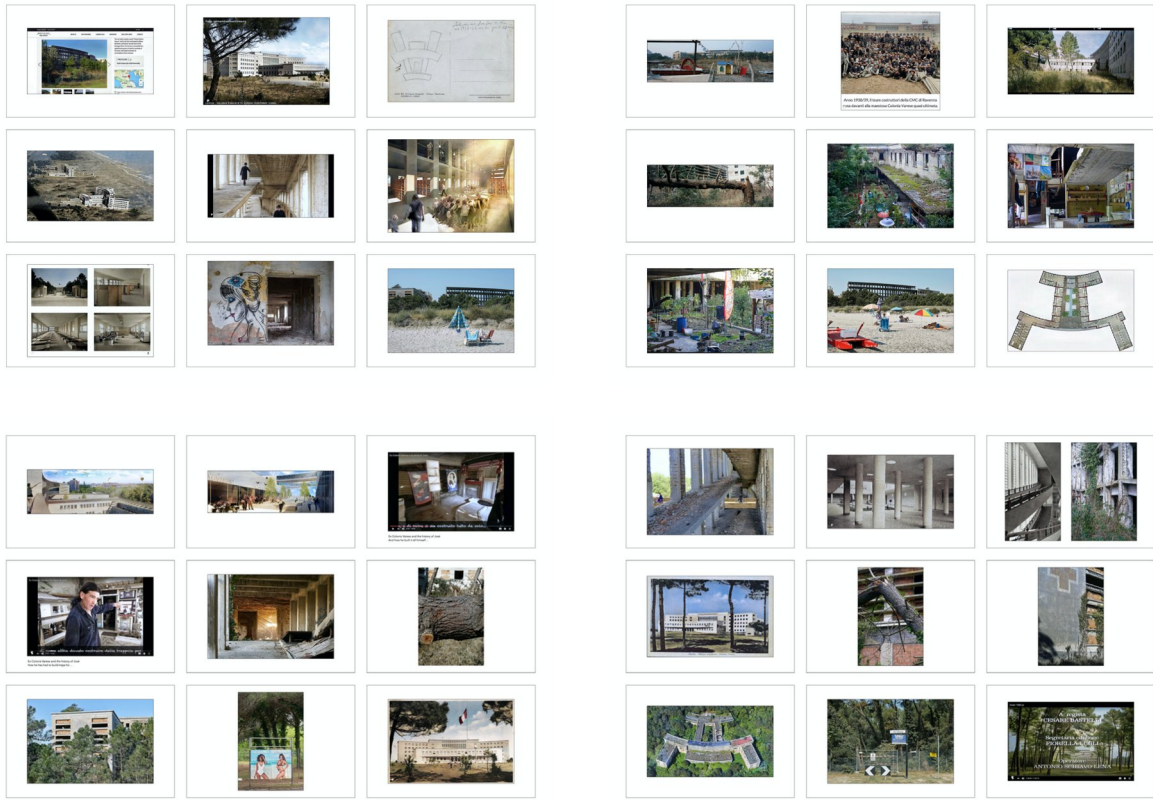
Colonia Novarese

Other names	Colonia marina della Federazione Fascista di Novara
Built for	Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimenti di Novara
Architect	Giuseppe Peverelli
Year	1934
Capacity	900 to 1500
State (2015)	'Refurbished'
State (2022)	Incomplete refurbishment due to bankruptcy of consortium. In a state of limbo, part stripped down and part restored. Several redevelopment plans have been shelved.

Text sources (Fabbri, 2007, pp. 219-228; Dubowitz, 2010, pp. 68-79; Labò & Podestà, 1941a, p. 11; IBC, 1986, pp. 137-139; Il Palloncino Rosso, 2022).

Colonia Novarese is another building with something of a chequered past. Claudio Fabbri (Fabbri, 2007), provides a history of its ups and downs until around 2004, while articles from the regional press relate an ongoing saga of stop-start renovations. Mario Labò (Labò & Podestà, 1941a), considered its design represented a contamination of forms, being particularly compromised by the vertical element that interrupts the horizontal line of the front elevation. This may be why he allocated it less space in the colonia marina issue of *costruzioni*, with its focus on those that showcased his Rationalist ideals. However, Labò did praise the colonia for its modern facilities and attention to detail:

From the modern well equipped medical facility, to the steaming showers, from the large cloakroom and ironing rooms, to the laundry; particular attention is paid to the room used for disinfection, performed in three ways: via water, steam sterilisation by autoclave, and formalin chamber. The kitchen has been subdivided into five open departments monitored simultaneously from a central corridor. The right side of the ground floor contains a large gymnasium with a small theatre, where children gather during the hours of rest and when the weather is bad (Labò & Podestà, 1941a).

The building has been likened to a transatlantic liner, and in WWII it was shelled by allied forces, who are rumoured to have mistaken it for an enemy ship on account of its naval profile and coastal location. The building was repaired and partially reopened as a colonia, before finally closing its doors in 1976.

The continuing saga of Colonia Novarese

The sequence was inspired by the stop-start nature of restorations. While it took just eighteen weeks to build, reconstruction has dragged on for the best part of that many years. The opening image shows a postcard labelled Miramare. The photograph appears to have been taken from the middle of the coast road, looking south towards Riccione and Cattolica. Around a third of the image comprises road and pavement, while a further chunk shows a typical seaside hotel frontage. The sky occupies a further third of the photograph, leaving just a small wedge for the sea, promenade, and bathing huts and the beach cannot be seen. The closing image

is also from a postcard, and shows the coastal resort of Rimini Miramare. The postcard has a bright red background overlaid on which are two circular photographs of the beach. One is an aerial perspective along the length of the beach which highlights an expanse of golden sand. The other is a view from the sea toward the land and features a Campari advert, presumably as an indicator of sophistication. The top left corner of the card contains a small image of what may be a Douglas DC8 passenger jet, in Alitalia livery. The airplane and general design suggests the 1960s. The sequence plays on contrasts between bursts of activity and long periods of stasis. It includes AI-coloured stills from newsreel coverage of Mussolini's visit on the occasion of the inauguration in 1934, renovation plans, progress and stagnation, wartime damage, the refectory and kitchen, aerial photography, a one night Jägermeister event held in 2018, and infrared photographs which separate building and landscape, as well as echoing the colours of the Jägermeister night scape. (Figure 31).
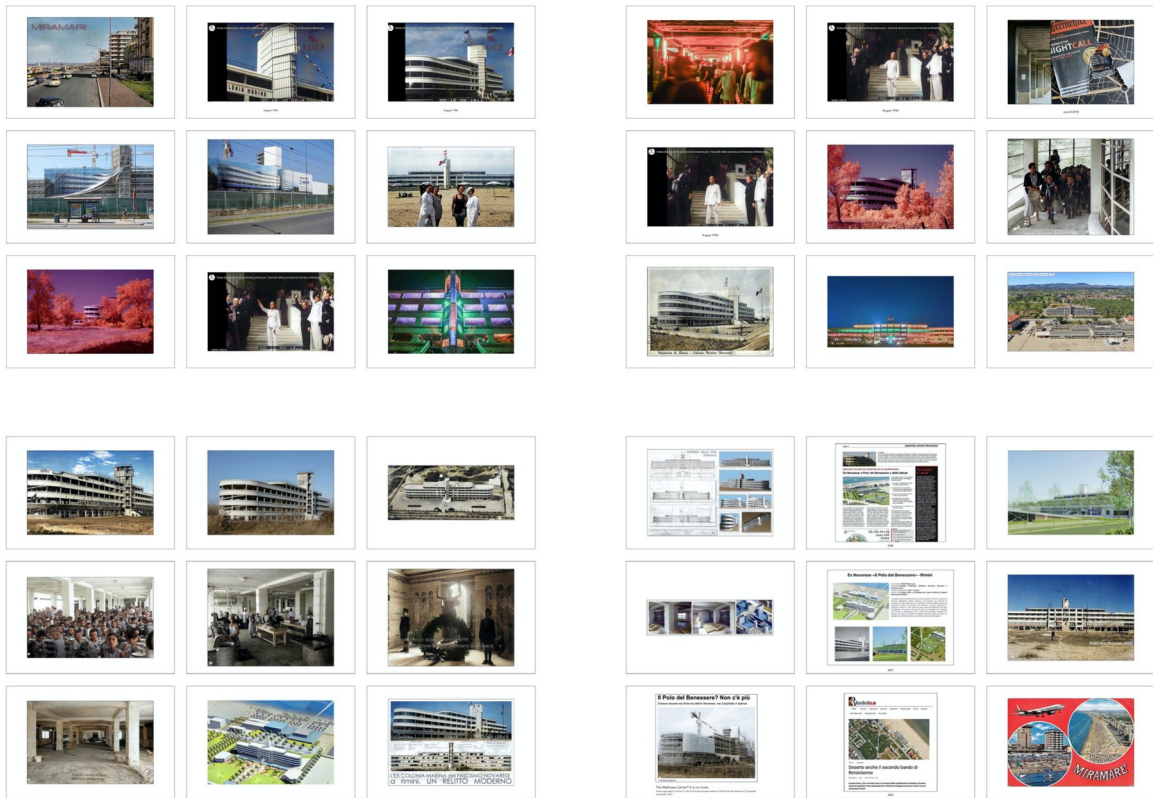
Figure 31

Colonia XXVIII Ottobre

Other names	Le Navi
Built for	Direzione Generale degli Italiani all'Estero
Architect	Clemente Busiri Vici
Year	1934
Capacity	1100
State (2015)	Two dormitories demolished, the remainder refurbished
State (2022)	Acquario di Cattolica (Cattolica Aquarium)

Text sources (Acquario di Cattolica, 2022; de Martino & Wall, 1988, pp. 17-19; Dubowitz, 2010, pp. 100-110; Domus, 1985, pp. 4-7; IBC, 1986, pp. 88-91; Foschi, 1989, pp. 45-47; Labò & Podestà, 1941a, p. 7).

Built in the same year as Novarese and also inaugurated by Mussolini, Colonia XXVIII Ottobre stands apart by virtue of its novel design, which has been described as talking architecture or *architecture parlante*. I have described the colonia elsewhere in the thesis in terms of its privileged status as a summer camp for the sons of Italians overseas. Between 1935 and 1943, it operated as a self-sufficient structure with its own farm for fresh produce. It was used as a military hospital toward the end of the war, before reverting to a colonia. In the 1960s, property developers proposed to divide the entire complex into construction lots, and while not fully carried through, several colonia buildings, including two of the original four dormitories, were demolished to make way for apartments and hotels. In the

1970s, operation and ownership was transferred to the regional authority. A start was made in the 1980s on restoration for a holiday centre for young people from the whole of Europe, in line with its original purpose of welcoming children from abroad. In 1997, the municipality obtained the complex to create a marine theme park, which was opened to the public in 2000. Ongoing preservation and restoration work continues, while respecting the original nature of the buildings devised and designed by Clemente Busiri Vici (Acquario di Cattolica, 2022). Unfortunately, the aquarium was not open on any of several visits I made, and so I was unable to experience the promised thrills and delights.

A marine theme at Colonia XXVIII Ottobre

I found this sequence challenging, as I could not initially identify a common thread to connect the images I had collected. The original and present day use appeared very different, until I realised that a marine theme is prominent in both. XXXVIII Ottobre was more than a summer camp by the sea. Every aspect of its layout and decorative detail speaks of connections with the sea and overseas. Mussolini arrived in a motor launch for the inauguration ceremony, while a statue of Mussolini as a helmsman steering the Italian nation formed the focal point of the refectory. From archival photographs, the colonia appears to have accommodated older boys than did other colonie, and this is evident in images of boys being trained to use rifles, in military style marches, and mass dives into the sea. Male supervisors, featured in photographs and newsreels, were not the norm elsewhere either. The occupation of colonia *vigilatrice* was for women who had attended an official training course.

The opening image is from a picture postcard and features a bright collage of five angled photographs of Cattolica with painted elements added. I selected this image for its resemblance to the following one, also from a picture postcard, which comprises a montage of nine annotated photographs of aspects of the colonia: Refectory, Guardhouse, Ship C, Dormitory, Detail, Sports field, Flagship, Ships at Sea, plus a panorama of the whole complex. I include several images that show elements of the inauguration ceremony, along with other newsreel footage, my photographs, annotated AI coloured postcards, Google Earth views, an aerial guide to the aquarium, images from aquarium publicity, and headed stationery. While the colonia only accommodated boys, an Istituto LUCE newsreel shows a group of girls exercising, while boys are being shown how to handle a rifle. Presumably the girls came from a different colonia establishment. A nautical theme permeates the sequence, while the penultimate image features a Fascist propaganda leaflet for mountain and seaside colonie. The closing image is of a promotional poster for Cattolica, which includes the logos of ENIT, Ente Nazionale Italiano per il Turismo, and *Ferrovie dello Stato* (Italian National Railways). The poster, featuring a painting by Giulio Ferrari, dates from the early years of the Fascist regime and is described by a present day gallery: 'A small red umbrella cast aside, a woman sits on a beach watching children playing at the edge of the water. A deep blue sky hangs overhead and colourful docked sail boats create swirling patterns reflected in the sea' (Chisholm Larsson Gallery, 2022). (Figure 32).
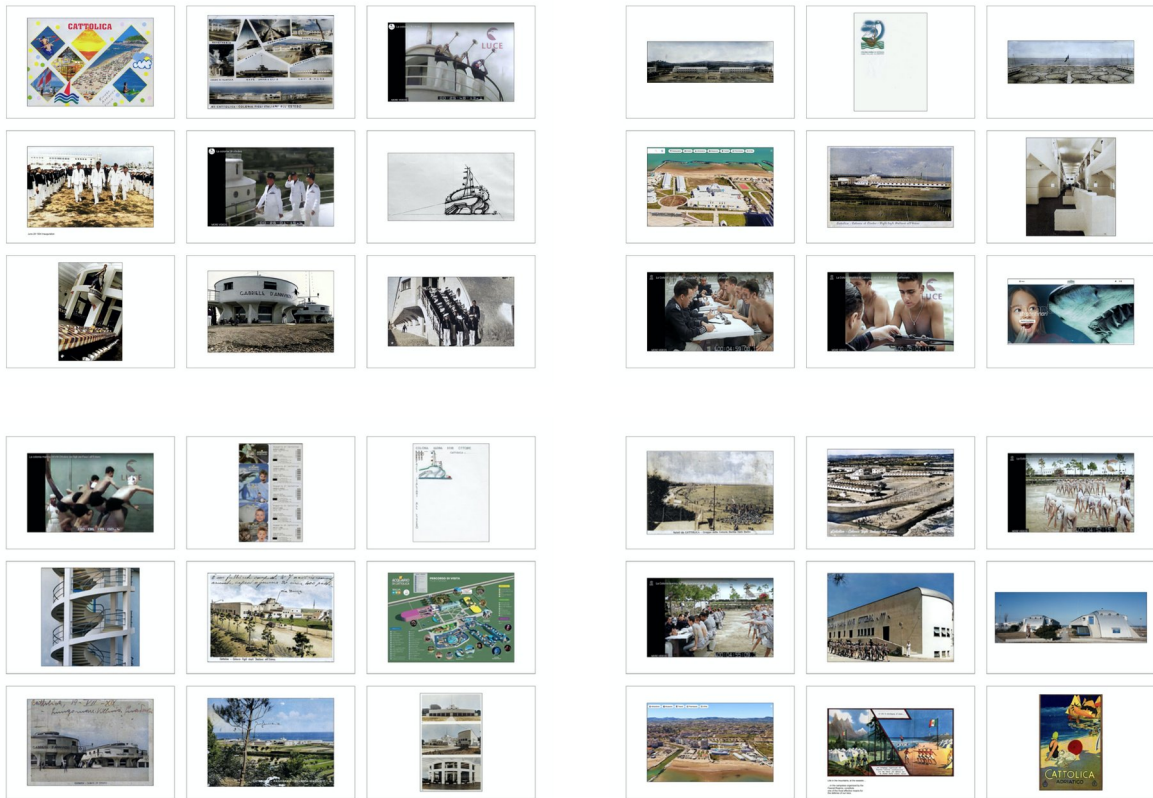
Figure 32

Colonia Stella Maris

Other names	Colonia Marina di Pescara, Colonia Marina di Rieti, Costanzo Ciano, Stella Matutina
Built for	Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimento di Rieti
Architect	Francesco Leoni and engineer Carlo Liguori
Year	1937 to 1941
Capacity	
State (2015)	'2008 refurbished'
State (2022)	Refurbishment incomplete and change of plans

Text sources (Prog,res web magazine, 2000; Studio Michetti, 2008, 2015; Abruzzo Independent, 2014; DOCOMOMO 2015; Volpe, 2019, pp. 79-88).

DOCOMOMO describes the cultural and aesthetic value of Stella Maris:
Shaped by technical evocation of that age, reproduces the appearance of 'a plane ready to fly to gain new destinations and conquests'. The powerful machinery and expressionistic awesomeness of Thirties are evident, the functional and typological design of the building is solved with an intense relation with a symbolic meaning (DOCOMOMO, 2015).

I was puzzled on my first visit to Stella Maris in 2016. Restoration work had clearly reached an advanced stage, with new glazing installed, while internal and external surfaces appeared to have been recently painted. There was even an ornamental

weather vane featuring little airplanes, erected in front of the building. However, there was no sign of ongoing construction, no scaffolding, machinery, or workers, as if everything had ceased one day with the building left in a state of limbo. Presumably there had once been security fences, but the site was open and accessible to anyone, with brightly coloured graffiti starting to appear and spread across white surfaces, inside and out. The story of how and why a unique and outstanding building such as Stella Maris could end up this way turns out to be a familiar tale of hopes raised only to be dashed. Numerous articles in local and regional press testify to problems and mishaps in restoring and finding a new purpose for this architectural airplane on the seashore.

Abruzzo Independent reported that the former summer camp for children is today a waste receptacle and a refuge for the desperate. The airplane that wanted to take flight over the Adriatic, but remained inexorably on the ground, has become a victim of the immobility of the local administrations, while suffering disfigurement at the hands of thieves, vandals, drug addicts, and homeless people, who came to find a place to spend the night (2014). Its ongoing deterioration due to the unavailability of financial resources for redevelopment and the handover of ownership from one body to another. The colonia began activity in 1941, before being curtailed by the war, during which the building acted as a headquarters for the German army. It was also used as a civil hospital when the nearby city of Pescara was bombed in 1943. After the war, as property of the Italian Republic, the building resumed its original function as colonia Stella Maris. It became property of the Abruzzo regional authority, entrusted to a religious order that converted it into a retirement home before abandonment. Renovation work began in 2004, only to be halted in 2008,

due to there not being a convincing future use for the building. In 2014, Stella Maris was granted a million euro loan, later revoked, only to be reinstated at the request of *Forza Italia*. Stella Maris remains the eternal object of desire that never manages to rise from its ashes, without use or finances capable of restoring it to its previous splendour (Il Pescara, 2015). Six and a half years after my first visit, the building appears destined to become a centre for supercomputing, climate research, 'big data', and a research incubator, all under the auspices of the *Università d'Annunzio* in Pescara (geosnews, 2022). A happy ending may be in sight, but history has demonstrated that nothing concerning this iconic building is certain. Marco Volpe mentions three incomplete interventions, the first dating from the 1980s. A second renovation, the results of which I saw in 2016, demolished earlier additions to the building, reopened the ground floor space, and added internal structural supports. A third attempt commenced in 2019, which Volpe describes as controversial and unsatisfactory, with the aim of creating a dormitory for students of the Pescara hotel management school. Press articles indicate that this project too was abandoned soon after it began (Volpe, 2019, p. 86).

Stella Maris, an airplane on the shore

The sequence plays on the atmosphere of uncertainty and the absence of a purpose for this partially resurrected building. My photographs show the building as it was between 2016 and 2018, while press articles tell of tragedies in and around the building during its years of abandonment. Faded advertising hoardings and architect's visualisations provide tantalising glimpses of what might have been but

never transpired. The first two images are the only images I could find showing the building as it was. I coloured the second one and left the first as a monochrome image. I added the final image as a screen-grab from a recent press release, the headline of which translates as Montesilvano, from colonia to centre for supercomputing: the future of Stella Maris (geosnews, 2022). The other images include a series of Google Street View images, displayed in chronological order, showing six versions of the front aspect of the building, recorded between 2008 and 2017. This chronology forms a framework for the intermediate images which comprise press releases detailing progress, lack of progress, and tragedies, a number of my photographs, renovation plans, and a cartoon from a Montesilvano guide for children. The cartoon shows two children on the beach. One child, clutching what is presumably an architect's plan, has just finished a finely detailed Stella Maris sandcastle (Figure 33).
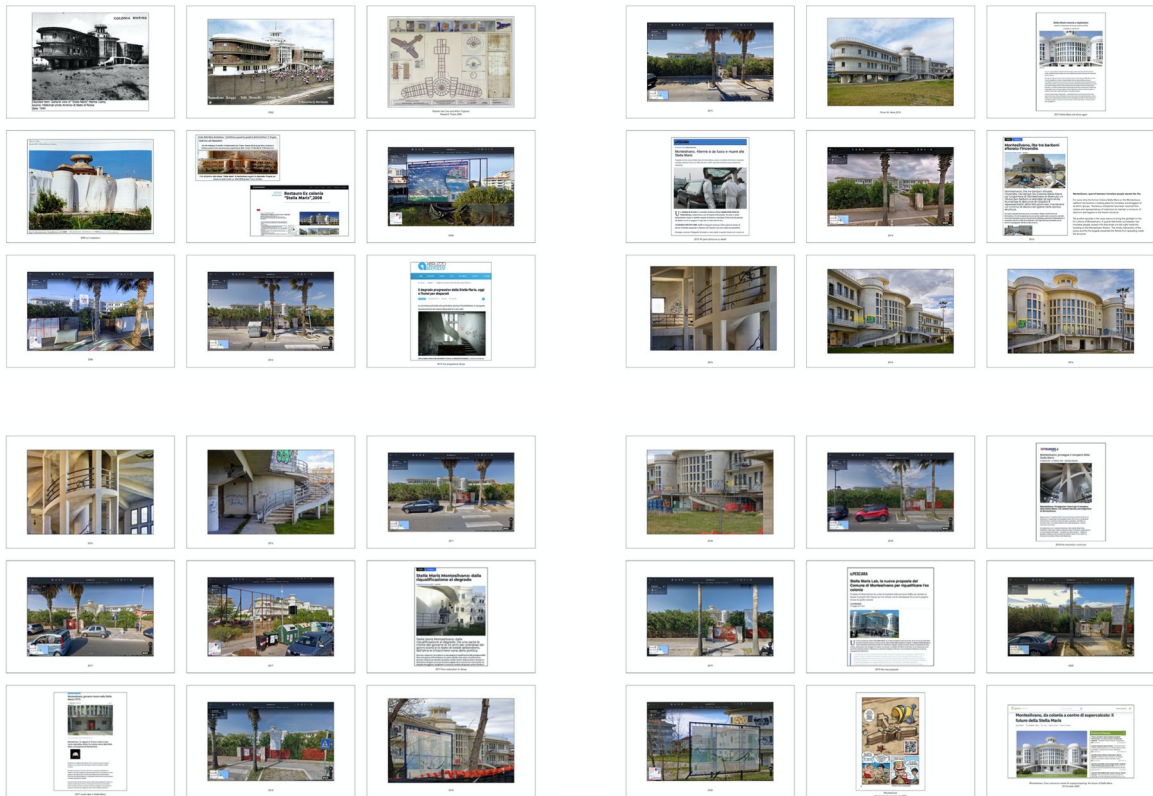
Figure 33

Colonia Gustavo Fara

Other names	Colonia PNF Genova di Chiavari; Colonia marina Gustavo Fara
Built for	Federazione dei Fasci di Combattimenti di Genova
Architect	Camillo Nardi Greco
Year	1935
Capacity	400
State (2015)	Abandoned
State (2022)	Renovated as Torre Fara, comprising luxury hotel, spa, bar, restaurant, and apartments (2021).

Text sources (Bianchi, 2016; Domus, 1985, p. 12; Dubowitz, 2010, pp. 10-15; de Martino & Wall 1988, pp. 26-27; Labò & Podestà, 1941a, p. 16).

I have followed the fortunes of the former colonia Gustavo Fara since my first visit in 2015, shortly after renovation work had commenced. I was impressed and surprised that, after so many years as a rotting concrete hulk on the seashore, the building could be rescued from the effects of prolonged exposure to a corrosive marine atmosphere. Giulia Bianchi's publication (2015), contains personal recollections from when the lower part of the building was a primary school, accompanied by a history of the colonia and her photographs. She published it as a spiral-bound A3 book under the enigmatic title *Cinquanta Modi per abbandonare il tuo amore*, Fifty Ways to lose your lover. While the base of the building was used as a school, the nine floors of the tower, comprising former dormitories with a chapel

at the very top, were blocked off. Bianchi recalls wondering:

> What was in the tower? No one knew. It was forbidden to go beyond the third floor; the stairs had been blocked off. Not even the teachers knew, just like they didn't know if Napoleon had been good or bad. The teachers didn't know. Many of us dreamed of going up but it was impossible (Bianchi, 2016).

The following history is derived predominantly from Bianchi's book. The colonia was inaugurated in 1936, dedicated to General Gustavo Fara, commissioned by the National Fascist Party of Genoa, and inaugurated by Mussolini. The resemblance to an airplane is present, though more figurative than Stella Maris. Architect Camillo Nardi Greco aligned the tower along a north-south axis, which ensured there was always a shady side, creating a thermal imbalance and natural system of ventilation. In common with a number of colonie, it saw various uses during and following WWII. The German army used it as a military hospital, then the Allies occupied it as a barracks. Between the late 1940s to the mid 1950s, it became a shelter for refugees from Tito's regime. In the 1960s it was reborn as an international hotel. The building was transferred from the regional government to the local authority of Chiavari, and in the 1980s was partially converted into a primary school, prior to being declared unfit for use. Its windows were barred and doors sealed and the colonia was abandoned, occasionally occupied only by those who would otherwise have been homeless. Bianchi concludes her book with details of its sale to a group of local businessmen for 6.75 million euros, following 34 years of discussions concerning its future. The original plan was for eighteen luxury apartments, a hotel with spa and wellness centre, underground parking and a private park with direct access to the beach, to be completed during the summer of 2018 (Bianchi, 2016).

It was still a construction site when I visited Chiavari in October 2019, with the estimated completion date put back to the end of the year. The building's location appears to be on the unfashionable side of town, looking out onto a grey pebbly beach, while the main coastal railway line pens it in on the landward side. I consulted the Torre Fara website while planning my visit, but found it difficult to determine whether the images displayed were photographs or CGI visualisations. As it turned out, they were realistically rendered imaginings.

When I visited again in 2020, the building appeared to be almost finished, and had been transformed into a stunning and unmissable landmark. Is it fair on the local community that Torre Fara seems to offers nothing beside the luxury hotel restaurant spa experience of Torre Fara Lounge and Bistrot and Grand Hotel Fara? Why was a major sculptural feature erected that closely resembles the original Fascist emblem, visible in archival photographs? A couple of original frescoes by Demetrio Ghiringhelli, featured guns and tanks, along with an African village, with sand and huts and palm trees, which presumably refers to the Fascist regime's conquering of Ethiopia. They have been carefully restored without any accompanying explanation, or credit to the original artist. It seems that they are what they are. Searching for cracks in the perfect facade of its text and imagery, I examined Grand Hotel Fara's posts on Instagram, finally finding a promotional photograph featuring a sloppily made bed that would have shamed any of the original young occupants of Colonia Fara.

From Gustavo Fara, to Faro, to Torre Fara

The sequence contains a number of picture postcards, with monochrome coloured. I was intrigued by how frequently the building appears on the edge, almost, but not quite out of the frame, as if the photographer could not decide whether to include or omit it when composing the view. The opening image is a photomontage postcard with the message *Saluti da Chiavari*. The composite image contains a woman in a bikini, apparently standing on a rock, apparently dangling an apparently freshly caught fish on the end of a short line. The background image shows a group of yachts on a calm sea, with three superimposed photographs. Colonia Fara features in two of them, as a part of the incanto, enchantment, of the Gulf of Tigullio, and as the *grattacielo*, skyscraper, on the Ponente beach. Colonia Fara is just hidden from view in the second image. The following twelve images show it hovering around the bottom right corner, sometimes showing just the edge or top of the building. The images emphasise the peripheral nature of its location, and perhaps also its function. Did a children's summer camp, so close to a popular seaside resort, constitute an asset or an embarrassment? A further series of seven images mixes postcards and my photographs. Here, the building has taken up a more dominant position, but remains in the wings, rather than taking centre stage. Towards the end of the series, it moves towards the centre of the frame in '*Colonia Generale Fara*'; '*Colonia Marina G.Fara*'; '*Colonia Marina "Gen. Gustavo Fara"*' – as if the publishers could not decide what to call it. The blade of the Fascist axe over the entrance has been scratched away on the first image, presumably to make the postcard acceptable. However, it can be seen clearly in the other two images (Figure 34).
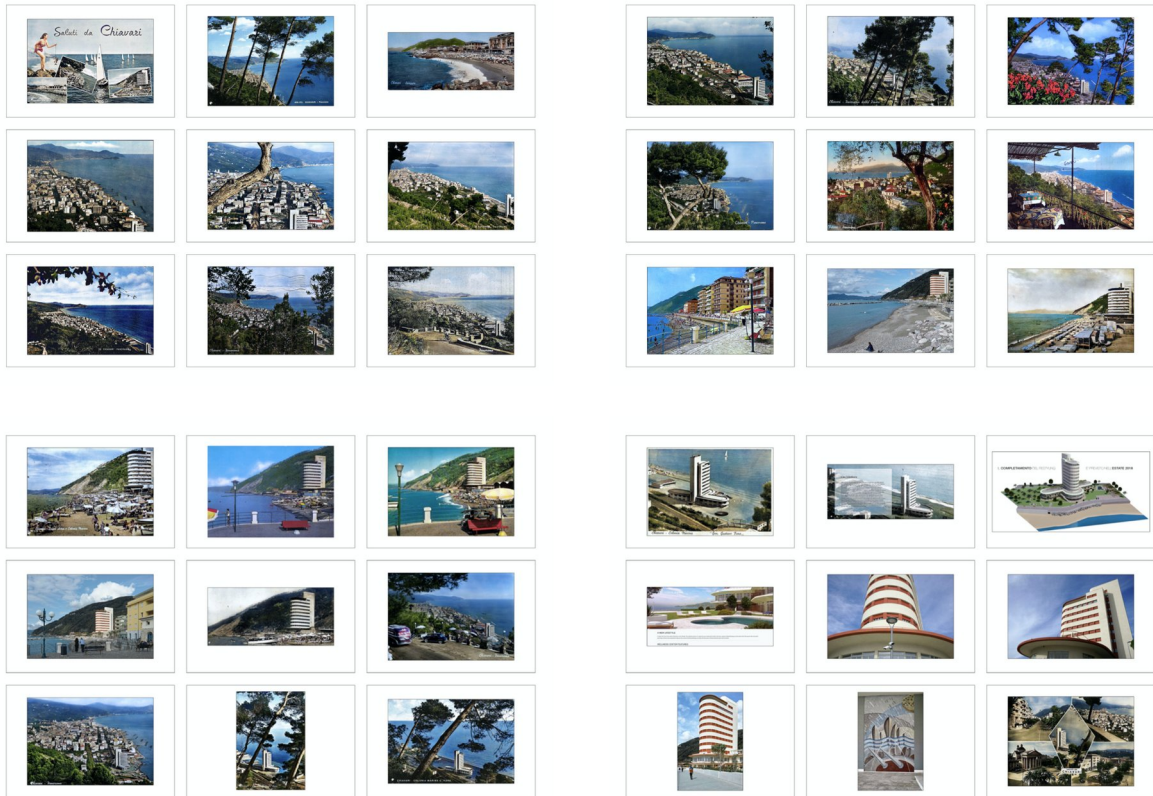
Figure 34

Colonia Fiat

Other names	Torre Balilla, Colonia Edoardo Agnelli Fiat
Built for	Turin
Architect	Vittorio Bonadè Bottino
Year	1933
Capacity	750
State (2015)	hotel
State (2022)	Verve Torre Marina Residenza Torre (560 beds) / Residenza Ali (85 beds)

Text sources (Bairati, 1990; Bevilacqua, 2015; Camaiora, 2011, pp. 33-55; de Martino & Wall, 1988, p. 20; Domus, 1985, p. 13; Jocteau, 1990; Labò & Podestà, 1941a, pp. 8-9; Taylor, 1981).

Built in ninety days, and still in use ninety years later, Colonia Fiat may be one of the most photographed, judging by how frequently it makes an appearance on picture postcards. Its unmissable white cylinder stands out as the only vertical structure on this stretch of coast, intersecting horizontal elements of sea and land unchallenged by surrounding buildings. The exterior hides a secret, which might be ascertained through a study of the rows of windows but is likely to be missed. The interior of the building contains thirteen and a half coils of a single helical ramp, winding around the interior space. Therefore, the rows of windows are not horizontal. The interior is in the form of a single 420 metre long dormitory, wrapped

into coils, and overlooking the sea. This helical ramp was originally divided into 25 dormitories of 30 beds, plus 30 beds for staff. The beds were constructed with different length legs, to compensate for the incline of the floor. Camaiora remarks that colonie of the period were expected to simultaneously fulfil functional and symbolic requirements. In Colonia Fiat, the tower with its continual spiral becomes a machine, screwing upwards toward the sky. Viewed from the air, with service wings extending to each side, the profile resembles an airplane where the tower takes on the form of engine and propellor. Bevilacqua recognises a recurring motif of the helix within Fascism, and states that in order to appreciate its significance we need to understand how these buildings were both a product of Fascist propaganda, and a representation of Italian Rationalism (Camaiora, 2011, p. 488-489).

I include a number of stills from an Istituto LUCE newsreel from August 1936, which shows Colonia Fiat in full swing. The text that accompanies the newsreel describes the content as:

> View of the Balilla Tower at the FIAT marine colony on the beach at Marina di Massa; the dormitory; a religious function; some children; the children go inside the Balilla Tower; new view of the Balilla Tower; panoramic shot from above during gymnastics; children engaged in gymnastic exercises; children run into the water; time for lunch; games and entertainment; arrival of the parents who came to visit their children; raising of the flag; the moving moment of the meeting between parents and children (Archivio LUCE, 2022b).

Mention of organised parental visits supports my impression that Colonia Fiat was less insular, more informal, and possibly less 'Fascist' than specifications laid out

within official colonie regulations might suggest. The building appears to have hosted both boys and girls, presumably alternately, since it was effectively a single open dormitory. Rosalia Vittorini and Rinaldo Capomolla attribute the diversity of architectural style and scale of colonia buildings to the variety of financial contributors, including charities, provincial wings of the Fascist Party, regional organisations, and major industries such as Fiat, and I presume that their management and regulations showed similar variety. However, the Fascist Party assumed control over the colonia system in 1937, through the newly formed *Gioventù italiana del Littorio* (GIL), and assumed responsibility for supervision and control of colonie and related institutions, regardless of who had founded, funded, or previously managed them (Vittorini & Capomolla, 2016, p. 2).

The helix of Colonia Fiat

The sequence begins with an AI-coloured archive photograph, showing a group of girls on their way to Colonia Fiat. They are dressed alike in white skirt, blouse, and cap, plus a long-sleeved black jumper. A badge with the Fiat logo can just be made out on the jumper. They appear more smartly and expensively dressed than children from other colonie in prescribed clothing. This too suggests that Fiat provided more than the bare minimum for the children of their workers. A girl at the front holds a placard labelled Colonia Fiat Squadra 1, while placards denoting squadre (teams) 2, 3, 4, and others, can be seen further back in the procession. A headcount suggests that each group contains at least 25 girls; presumably each representing a dormitory unit of 30 beds. Each group would be accompanied by a female *vigilatrice*

throughout their stay, but it is not easy to make out whether they are here or waiting in the colonia for their young charges. The second and third images show a group of boys, posed for a portrait in the first, and dashing towards the beach in the second. The next three images are from postcards, and show Colonia Fiat from further along the beach, and from the sea. Sailing boats make regular appearances in these views, suggesting the colonia occupied a more acceptable position within the local community than some. The third view shows the colonia tower against a hilly and mountainous background. The mountains, which include the famous Carrara marble quarries, are approximately 15 km inland. I am undecided as to whether this is a photomontage, a trick of the light, or taken with a telephoto lens, compressing the space between coast and mountains. Another fifteen images feature postcard designs, employing a variety of collage effects, as if a single photograph on a picture postcard was no longer considered appealing. Colonia Fiat appears in circular, square, sail-shaped, and jigsaw-piece cutouts, by day and by night. It is accompanied by happy people walking, sailing, lounging on the beach or fishing, with women in swimwear, posing for the camera. The colonia appears to be part of the fun of the seaside, nothing to be ashamed of, and no reason to hide. Other images include one of my photographs, a Google Earth aerial view that I included to illustrate the similarity between the building's plan and the outline of an airplane. I also included a Google Street View photograph, taken in March 2021, at the furthest extent of its traverse towards the building. I frequently came up against dead ends when attempting to use Street View as a substitute for physical visits. I was able to navigate within sight of my destination, only to reach a point where the Street View car had clearly stopped and turned around. The final coloured image shows four smiling suntanned boys in swimwear, standing in front of Colonia Fiat (Figure 35).

285
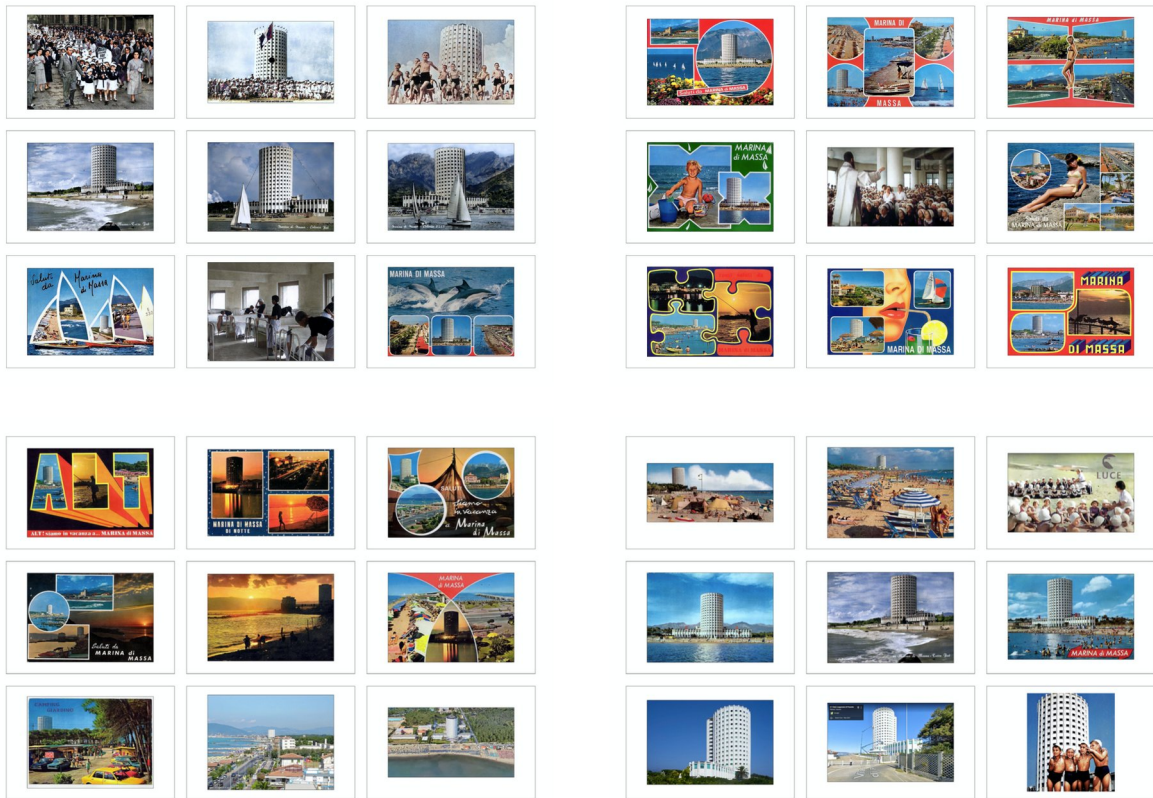
Figure 35

Colonia Rovegno

Other names	Colonia Montana Gioventù Italiana
Built for	Partito Nazionale Fascista di Genova
Architect	Camillo Nardi Greco
Year	1934
Capacity	450
State (2015)	Abandoned
State (2022)	Abandoned and decaying with no apparent plans for restoration

Text sources (Labò & Podestà, 1941b, pp. 6-7; Dubowitz, 2010, pp. 44-49; Domus, 1985, p. 26; de Martino & Wall, 1988, pp. 26-27; Camaiora, 2011, pp. 187-193; ALTAVALTREBBIA, 2018; Associazione Culturale Lorien, 2022).

Colonia Rovegno could be regarded as having a difficult heritage, distinct from any associated with its original use. It has been called the colonia of horrors, due to what may or may not have been done there by Italian partisans, who used it as a prison for Nazis and Fascist sympathisers. Regardless of what may true and what may have been fabricated, it has become a place of commemoration and memory for far-right groups.

I visited Colonia Rovegno on two occasions, each trip requiring careful scrutinising of timetables, to reassure myself that I would be able to get bus back to Genova at the end of the day. The journey entailed an early start with two hours of travel each

way, including changing buses. The former colonia is a further hour's walk from the small town of Rovegno which possesses a church, main street, bar, and general store. Six hours of travelling limited how long I could spend in the building, and each time I would have liked to have been able to stay for longer. How long would the same journey have taken for busloads of children in the 1930s? Most postcards of Colonie Rovegno are insistent on its altitude of 1000 metres, and I have noticed the same with other mountain colonie, as if an altitude of 1000 metres was regarded as endowed with particular therapeutic value. Whether therapeutic or not, the air felt and tasted clean and fresh as I walked along a forest road from the town. All was perfectly silent except for the occasional sound of a sweet chestnut dropping to the ground. When first glimpsed from the road, the building appears to be completely hemmed in by trees, with its square tower just poking above the tree-line. On my visit in 2019, I was disconcerted to see that one of the tower's two clock faces displayed the correct time of 11.15. A less disconcerting and more prosaic reason is that the stopped clock continues to show the correct time twice a day. A plaque next to the main entrance translates as:

> From this colonia which became their prison, 129 soldiers and civilians of the Italian Socialist Republic and 31 German soldiers did not return. Many others rest for ever in these woods without a cross. Pray for them and for those who waited for them when hope was gone.

A line of text, incised into the plaster beneath the memorial, reads: *Il Fascismo rimane un crimine*, Fascism remains a crime. The plaque was removed on several occasions, presumably by people who disagreed with the sentiments. However, each removal provided a fresh opportunity for a ceremonial replacement.

The various times of Colonia Rovegno

The sequence of images begins with a picture postcard, with four photographs of Rovegno, the Alta Trebbia Valley, and Colonia Rovegno (altitude 1000 m). The second image, shows the back of a postcard sent in 1953, so after Fascism. It has been stamped with a standard admonishment, that parental visits are not permitted. The message, from Giovanna to her parents says that she has arrived and is very happy. The majority of postcards I came across show a straight, or slightly oblique, view of the building, with the clock tower on the left. I arranged the sequence of images around the time displayed on this front-facing clock. The clock presumably stopped at 16:22 for several years, as this time is displayed on a number of different postcard views, in which the rest of the building appears to be in differing states of repair. While fourteen postcards assert that the colonia is at 1000 metres above sea level, one states 900 metres, and another one 666 metres. I added text to indicate what activities might have been happening in the colonia, according to the time of day shown by the clock. The daily timetable comes from the PNF guide for colonie staff, referred to elsewhere in the thesis. Other images include my photographs, and a number of photographs from the *Lorien* website, showing memorial ceremonies for reinstating the plaque adjacent to the building's entrance. The final image is an echo of the first, and shows the back of a postcard sent in 1955. This time the stamped warning states: For prophylactic reasons, you are forbidden to visit the children and staff of the Colonia. The message simply says Many hugs, your daughter Rinata (Figure 36).

Figure 36

290
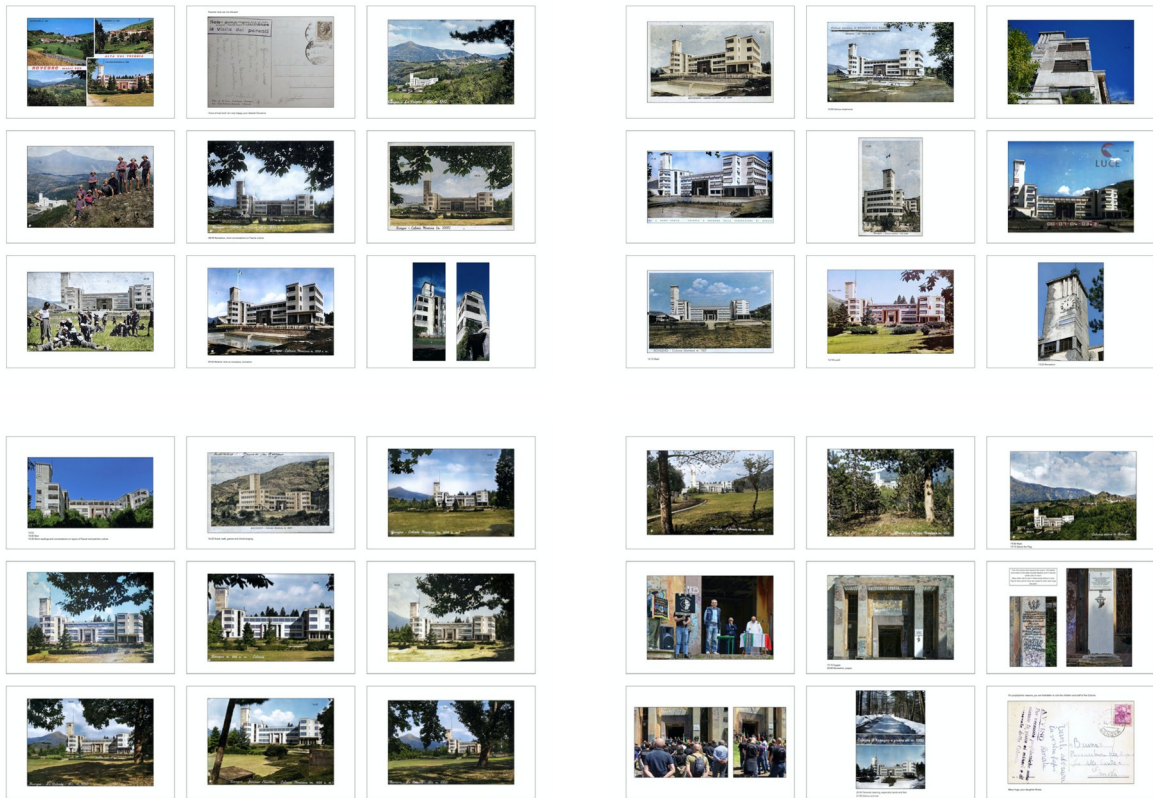
Twenty-eight colonie

Text sources: Assad et al, 1985, pp. 28-29; Domus, 2019.

> In March 1985, Domus 659 dedicated a long study to the Italian summer holiday camps of the 1930s. The cover of the issue showed a nice detail of the holiday camp 'Le Navi' in Cattolica, designed by Michele Busiri Vici (1932, originally known as Colonia Marina '28 Ottobre') overlapping the main image:

> A wonderful portrait of Grace Jones, more geometric than ever, in a controlled explosion of tapered lines and tulle. The unexpected juxtaposition between the fashion icon and the architecture icon suggests some reflection on the formal values of this heritage (Domus, 2019).

A double-page spread in the special 1985 colonia edition promised *an itinerary with ruins* with twenty-eight colonie to visit, and my sequence follows the order of the itinerary, after an image showing the cover of Domus issue 659. The images may appear incongruous, but there is something about the sweeping curves and stairs of the dormitory building that connects it to the portrait.

The second image is a display of the twenty-eight colonie to visit double-page spread. The design and choice of typeface and use of colour seems to speak of a longing for the past that never was. The use of black with red details reminds me of Fascist photo-texts such as those promoting the colonie for children of Italians abroad, one of which was black and blue, and the other black and red. The biplane in the bottom left corner of the map could perhaps be regarded as a reference to the

heroic flights of Fascist aviator Italo Balbo. The following thirty-four images of the sequence follow the itinerary, including cut-outs from the article, archive images, and my photographs. This is a straightforward sequence in that the ordering is dictated by the itinerary. My decisions concerned which images to include, rather than their sequencing (Figure 37).
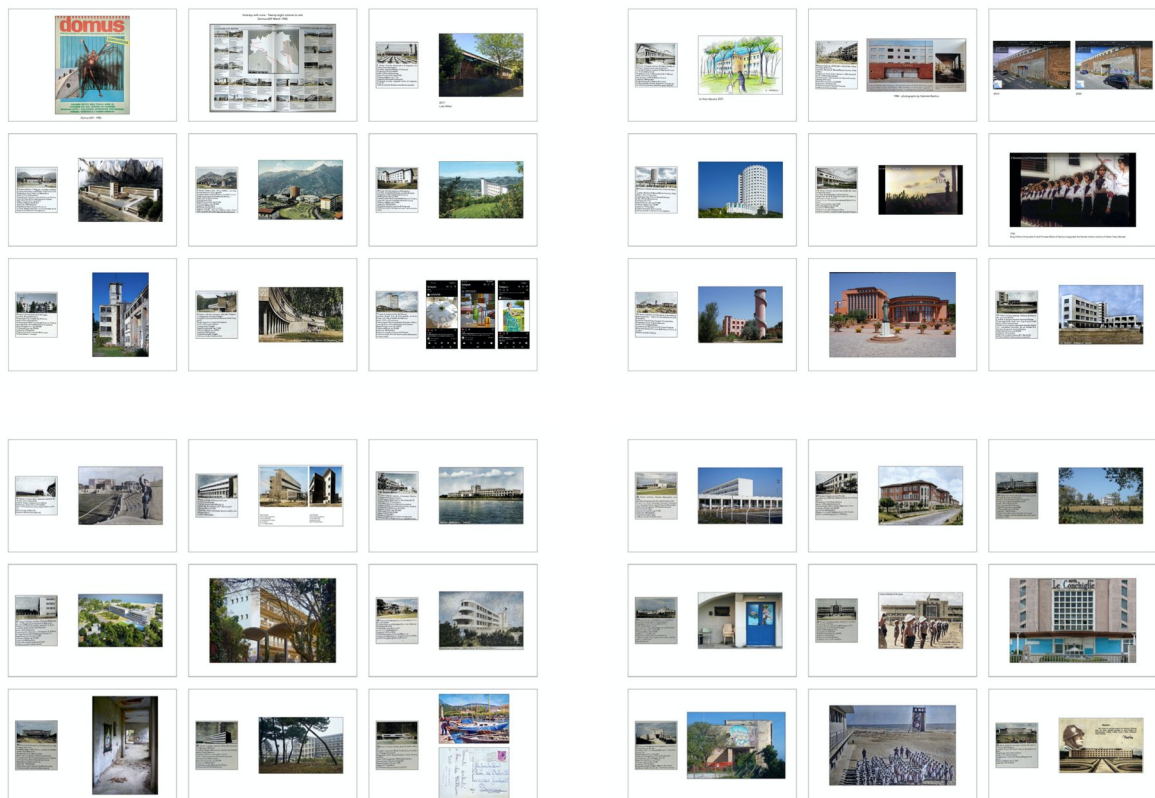
Figure 37

The photobook

Storie sfocate / fuzzy histories

The *sfocate* or *fuzzy* of the title, refers to Umberto Eco's description of Fascism as a fuzzy totalitarianism (Eco, 1995), while AI-powered image colourisation could be considered as employing fuzzy logic. Notions of past, present, and future have also been described as fuzzy (Future Architecture Platform, 2019), while Roger Griffin described his attempts to define the nature of Fascism, as possessing highly fuzzy boundaries (Griffin, 2003).

The photobook represents the culmination of the practice-research, and the concept was inspired by the twenty-eight colonie to visit article published in Domus (Asaad et al., 1985). I began to investigate other sources of imagery when it became clear that I would no longer be able to make trips to Italy, and the photobook is a reflection of my practice-research as photographer, psychogeographer, bricoleur, chiffonier, and monteur. As a result, the photobook contains appropriated, repurposed, impoverished images, copies of copies of copies. Images are used as instruments, both in the sense of performing work, and of music. They are put to work, with and against each other, to generate harmonies and dissonances that might reveal and expose ambiguities, inconsistencies and fuzziness within the

regime's ideology, played out through the architecture and spaces of the colonie.

Amalgamated and mixed imagery represents the past, present day, and future visualisations, prompting the viewer to question how and when the images relate to the histories of colonie. Combinations and juxtapositions are intended to generate ambiguity, while artificially coloured archival images, most of which do not immediately appear manipulated, add to the sense of uncertainty. Each Google Street View composite contributes to the doubt and ambiguity through fuzzy, almost seen, details that resist resolving into sharp focus. The balance shifts, without settling, between Winkelmann's glorification of war and violence (Winkelmann, 2015), and the colonia's role in health and assistance (Gori, 2004a; Versari, 2003).

The index of the photobook lists the twenty-one colonie included in the publication, each colour-coded according to whether it is in use, in limbo, precarious, ruined, or has been demolished. The book comprises 158 numbered pages plus reference section and covers, and includes a map showing the location of each colonia.

Colonie included in the photobook

Novarese	Stella Maris
Agip/Sandro Mussolini	Gustavo Fara
Villa Marina	Montecatini/Monopoli di Stato
Costanzo Ciano / Varese	Maria Pia di Savoia / UNES ENEL
Dalmine	Roma / O.P.A.F.S. / Ferrovieri
Firenze	Rosa Maltoni Mussolini

Roberto Farinacci / Padana

Principi di Piemonte / Padova

Fiat Edoardo Agnelli / Torre Balilla

Ettore Motta / Gruppo Edison

XXVIII Ottobre / Le Navi

IX Maggio/Olivetti

Rovegno

Amos Maramotti/ Reggiana

Bolognese/Decima Legio

Colonie visited, but excluded

Renesso and Montemaggio, Savignone

Alessandro Mussolini, Ballabio

Principi di Piemonte, Santa Severa

Luigi Pierazzi, Follonica

Ferrovieri Dante, Cervia

XXVIII Ottobre, Marina di Massa

Mater Dei at Ca'Roman, Lido di Venezia

Rosa Maltoni Mussolini, Giulianova

Umberto I di Savoia, Senigallia

Ferrarese, Cattolica

O.P.A.F.S. Ferrovieri, Rimini Miramare

Most of the colonie of Calambrone

Photobook structure and rationale

The book begins with Colonia Novarese, since the images convey a sense of setting out and the start of an adventure. The coloured image on page 7, shows groups of girls, presumably accompanied by *vigilatrici*, on a train leaving Verona, bound for the colonia at Rimini Miramare. The image on page 8 is a screenshot from a Luce newsreel, on the occasion of the official inauguration by Mussolini, although the colonia had opened its doors to the first intake of guests earlier that summer. The first picture on page 9, shows a young chaperoned group ascending the helical ramp that connects the floors within the building. The second image shows a present day group of teenagers, who have made it to the roof of the building, as protagonists taking part in a workshop, *from history to the imaginary of marine colonie,* organised by *Il Palloncino Rosso*. My photograph, on page 10, shows the system of helical ramps with the building and conning tower structure on top. Whoever PHC may be, their initials are visible at an appreciable distance.

The following fourteen colonie, numbers two fifteen, are presented through a tour of their histories, characteristics, states of preservation, use and disuse. The sixteenth is Colonia Rovegno, presented as a contested site of remembrance whose difficulties reach beyond its use as a children's summer camp in the 1930s. Italian partisans took advantage of its remote wooded location, using it as a base and prison in their fight against the Nazis and Mussolini's remaining loyal soldiers towards the end of WWII. As the text on page 107 of the book explains, Colonia Rovegno has been called the colonia of horrors, an epithet which the *Wu Ming Foundation* refers to as

un'altra bufala storica neofascista, another neofascist historical hoax (2019). In contrast, the *Associazione Culturale Lorien* (2020), emphasise the valuable contributions to social care and welfare provided through Fascism's colonie, and suggest that the partisan resistance and communists were as ruthless and brutal as the Nazis in their operation of the colonia as a prison. They claim that up to 600 missing people were tortured and murdered by the resistance in and around colonia Rovegno, hence the commemoration service shown on page 108 of the photobook. Colonia 17 to 20 feature images of towers, future plans, an ominous monument, and the elegant red brickwork of Colonia Bolognese. The twenty-first, final colonia in the book is XXVIII Ottobre, where the images provide hints of an impending end to the summer vacation with its moments of high excitement.

Google Street View composites

Each section of the book commences with a Google Earth view of the building as an aerial plan, followed by a composite image, made up from a number of Google Street View captures. Colourised picture postcards were used for colonia Rovegno as the Google Street View car / bike does not appear to have reached it, barring a single visit along the approach road in 2011, before retracing its path. Perhaps it was lost. Rather than presenting historical sequences of Street View images side-by-side or in grids, they are displayed as composites. Inspirations for this approach included ways of condensing and representing time spans, including the *photodynamism* of the Bragaglia brothers, extended exposures used by Hiroshi Sugimoto, and techniques of repeat photography, described earlier in the thesis.

Each individual image was adjusted for alignment, perspective and colour, and cropped to give a reasonable match between the area included within each view. Street View images may vary significantly from one capture to the next, despite sharing a common viewpoint. Idris Khan used a similar technique with different objectives, but Lucy Soutter's article on his photographic composites (Soutter, 2006), could also apply to the rationale and methods used here. Soutter describes Khan's work as appropriation that transforms, and demonstrates engagement with the past. She considers that Khan's composites are smooth and make for a comfortable viewing experience. In the context of another advocate of the composite image, Sir Francis Galton, the father of eugenics, Alan Sekula considers that:

> The Galtonian composite can be seen as the collapsed version of the archive. In this blurred configuration, the archive attempts to exist as a potent single image, and the single image attempts to achieve the authority of the archive, of the general, abstract proposition (Sekula, 1986, p. 54).

While Galton's experiments and Fascism's *Uomo Nuovo*, or New Man, might share a common goal, the decision to use image compositing, for this research into factories for New Italians, is coincidental.

Soutter claims that Khan's works take advantage of this power of the collapsed archive to achieve an authoritative presence. She claims that Khan controls the framing, contrast and transparency of each layer within his composites to generate a finely nuanced image. Khan's images are typically displayed as large monochrome prints, the only exception I have come across being *Every... William Turner postcard from Tate Britain*, which beautifully captures Turner's colour palette, but

would be nothing more than a smudge if presented in black and white (Miro, 2004).

Other works include *Every...Bernd And Hilla Becher Gable Sided House*, and

Every...Bernd And Hilla Becher Prison Type Gasholder (Saatchi Gallery, 2022). The

titles clearly refer to Ed Ruscha's groundbreaking *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*

(Princetown University Art Museum, 2022). The methods of this research were more

automated than Khan's, and with less concern for visual aesthetics. Advances in

hardware and imaging software over the intervening years have also assisted in

automating some of the work that Khan did manually. Google Street View and

postcard composites feature on pages 6, 12, 18, 24, 30, 34, 40, 50, 58, 64, 72, 78,

82, 90, 96, 102, 110, 114, 118, 126, 132, and 140 of my book (Figures 38 & 39).

Colonia Bolognese / Decima Legio - Rimini Miramare

Figure 38
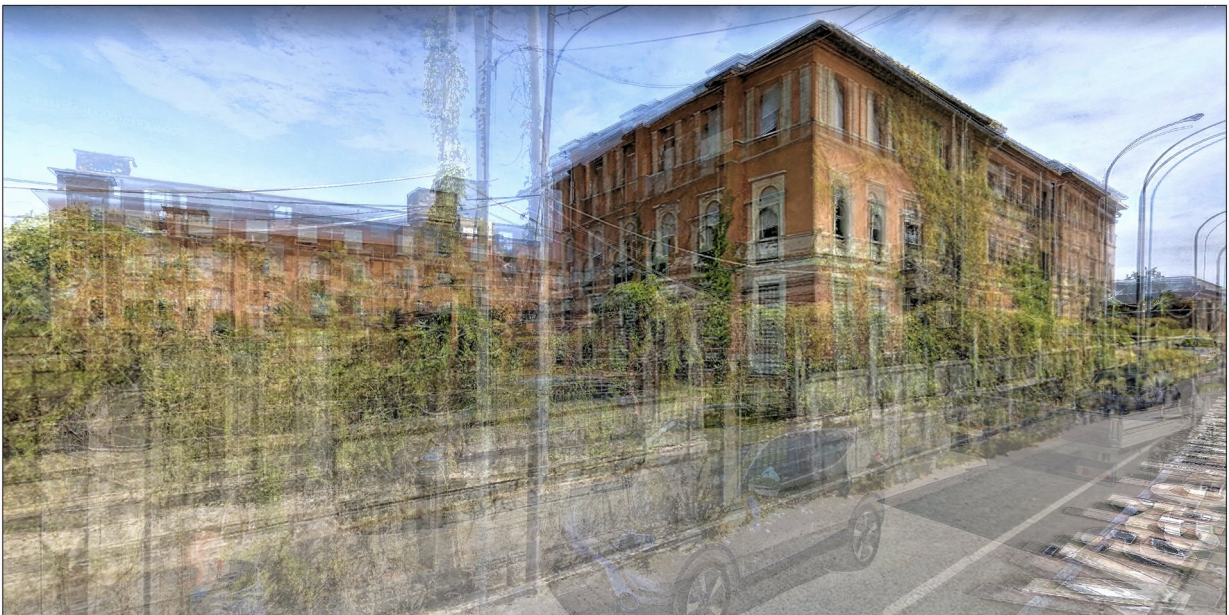
Colonia Ettore Motta / Gruppo Edison - Marina di Massa

Figure 39

Serendipitous repeat photography

The book includes a number of image-pairings, based on notions of repeat photography, and adhering loosely to principles outlined by Mark Klett, discussed in this thesis. Pairings feature on pages 9-10, 15-16, 31-32, 45-46, 65-66, 69-70, 75-76, 79-80, 87-88, 93-94, and 112. Several of the pairs were serendipitous rather than planned. I photographed the sculptural feature in front of Stella Maris before I was aware that it featured in a 2015 architect's visualisation of its restoration (pages 15 and 16). My photograph of the Post and Telegraph colonia at Pesaro happened to be similar to a postcard view (pages 31 and 32). I photographed a space inside Colonia Roma, presumably occupied by homeless people, before coming across the news article relating to the eviction of a group of Romanians (pages 65 and 66). One of my photographs of the exterior of colonia Roma happened to be from a very similar viewpoint to one included in the 1986 IBC survey publication (1986, p. 57), (pages 69 and 70). I photographed the fancy iron gate of Colonia Firenze because I was captivated by its intricacy, and it was much later that I came across an architect's drawing of the same gate (Cerasa, 2012, p. 155), (pages 75 and 76). I would like to be able to claim otherwise, but these were coincidences rather than planned repeat photography (Figures 40-42). This might suggest that repeat photography can be performed in reverse, searching for an earlier photograph after having taken the present day one, so uninfluenced by the 'original'.

Figure 40

Pineta a Pini neri e Pini marittimi
nella Colonia Varese a Cervia. (Foto
R. Vlahov)

57

Istituto per i beni culturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna, 1986

Figure 41

2016

Figure 42

Archival images and colouring

Almost all of the monochrome archival images were coloured with DeOldify, leaving just a couple in monochrome to draw the viewer's attention to the believability or otherwise of the coloured images, and the colouration process. AI-coloured images feature on page 4, 7, 8, 9 (the image on the left), 31, 36, 37, 43, 44, 45, 47, 56, 61, 74, 79, 85, 87, 93, 111, 112 (the image on the left), 113, 121, 129, 136, 143, 144, 146, 148. I left one of a panel of four images in monochrome on page 36, The pair of pictures on page 47, showing the Colonia Varese construction crew, are presented side by side as a monochrome and coloured image. The archival image of a group of children on their way to the Fiat colonia, on page 111, contains a thin monochrome strip overlaid onto the coloured version (Figures 43 & 44).

1938/39, the CMC Ravenna construction team pose in front of the majestic almost completed Colonia Varese.

Figure 43

36

Figure 44

My photography and the present day

My photographs in the book are mostly digital, but include a number of scanned medium-format panoramic photographs. My photographs feature on pages 10, 14, 15, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 38, 42, 46, 54, 60, 62, 66, 67, 68, 70, 76, 80, 84, 86, 88, 92, 94, 99, 100, 104, 106, 116, 120, 124, 128, 130, 134, 138, and 142; a total of 40 photographs from the hundreds I made on my travels. I could have included more, but consider that the book is better for an even-handed approach, not valuing any one type of image over another. The present day photographs included in the book, act as pivot points between pasts and futures. They anchor the work in the present day while forming bridges between the past and the future, complicated by futures that predate the present, and images from the past that have been given a contemporary sheen through colouring. While I have something of a phobia of converging verticals, several photographs look up towards towers and inside stairwells, included on pages 14, 92, and 116, to provide an element of shock that ripples through the images that succeed them (Figures 45-48).

Figure 45 Colonia Novarese

Figure 46 Torre Fara

Figure 47 Colonia UNES / ENEL

Figure 48 Colonia Varese

Speculative futures

The book contains images relating to a number of renovation schemes. On page 16 is a visually pleasing speculative image of a future colonia Stella Maris dating from 2015, but never accomplished. Two ideal couples head towards the building while a flock of birds flies overhead and other figures are visible on the ground floor of the building. Its proposed new purpose is uncertain from the image, while the accompanying text simply states that it is a project to restore the Colonia Stella Maris. Page 48 contains an image from a 2014 scheme, to restore and convert Colonia Varese into a national library and gallery. A single young woman points towards the sky and a family group can be made out in one of the wings of the building. The designer has gone overboard with the extras and, in addition to the obligatory flock of birds, there is a hot air balloon and an airplane. Pages 51 and 52 show the construction site and visualisation for a development of luxury apartments on the site of Colonia UNES / ENEL at Senigallia, which now appears to be going ahead, twelve years after its demolition. Page 98 shows a visualisation of a proposed, but not started, redevelopment of Colonia Principi di Piemonte, which dates from 2014. The Google Street View composite on page 96 reveals an advertisement from 2011 for a complex *Residenze Aquarius*, which would apparently have replaced the original colonia structure. Page 122 is from a 2002 plan for Colonia Amos Maramotti / Reggiana, another scheme that came to nothing. The image is likely a product of the computer technology of the time, with an unlikely looking group of figures including a shirtless muscular man and two women who appear to be on a catwalk. Another figure appears to be meditating, while two

women in dresses recline on the tessellated beach. It is difficult not to draw conclusions regarding the use of affluent young white stereotypes from this visualisation of an ideal future.

Promotional literature for colonie Fara, Costanzo Ciano / Varese, and Principi di Piemonte, is included on pages 25, 48, and 97 of the book, and each instance appears rather coy regarding the Fascist origin of the building. The description for the redevelopment of Principi di Piemonte / Padova states:

> The colonia Marina di Padova on the Venice Lido is a sun-therapy centre designed in 1936 by Daniele Calabi. The rationalist-style buildings, due to their prestige and architectural quality, are protected heritage monuments. The colonia is set in the Oasi delle Dune degli Alberoni, a rare and protected biome in the upper Adriatic Sea (ASA Studio Albanese, 2014)

(Figures 49 & 50).

The Lido Resort & Spa is a reconversion, refurbishing and extension project to turn the former Colonia Marina di Padova, designed by Daniele Calabi in 1936, into a resort with spa, in the setting of the Dune degli Alberoni on the Venice Lido.

CLIENT	Private
YEAR	2014
STATUS	In progress
SIZE	17.000 sqm
TEAM	DIRECTOR OF PROJECT Flavio Albanese — Franco Albanese PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR Piero Corradin — Simone Matteazzi TEAM Lisa Bisarello — Alessandro Melotto — Gad Peralta — Giuseppe Santonocito — Giacomo Tomasini — Filippo Zampese

Studio Albanese, 2014

Figure 49 Colonia Principi di Piemonte

PROVINCIA DI PESCARA
SETTORE V
Pianificazione Territoriale, Lavori Pubblici, Viabilità, Edilizia
Scolastica, Patrimonio e Genio Civile Servizio Gare & Contratti
LAVORI DI RECUPERO DELLA COLONIA MARINA "STELLA MARIS"
IN MONTESILVANO (PE)
GARA N°6 15PA-PL   BANDO PROT. 351007/15
IMPRESA EDILE GASPARI GABRIELE srl
PROGETTISTA: arch. Antonio Michetti
Cons.imp.elettrici p.ind. Ilario D'Intino Cons. imp.meccanici p.ind. Tommaso Martellini
RENDERING INTERNI ED ESTERNI

IG14 pag.2

Figure 50 Colonia Stella Maris

Children of the colonie

A number of images feature children in various situations, from relaxing on the beach on pages 4 and 148, to presenting themselves to Fascist officials on pages 85 and 87, or forming the word DUX with their bodies on page 56. Pages 143, 144, and 146, contain coloured archival images of Colonia XXVIII Ottobre for sons of Italians abroad at Cattolica, where it appears that no effort was spared to impress, or perhaps overwhelm, the sons of Italian emigrants on their summer visit to the fatherland. Page 143 shows diners in the refectory, under the watchful gaze of a larger than life muscular figure of Mussolini, as helmsman and navigator. At the base of the statue is inscribed Italia! Avanti! As far as I can tell, the fate of the statue is unknown, which makes me wonder whether it forms the centrepiece of a private collection of *Mussolinia*. Page 144 shows a young resident in naval style uniform, standing on guard duty with a real or dummy rifle, next to a cannon that was presumably fired at midday and for ceremonial events. XXVIII Ottobre appears to have accommodated older children and for longer stays than in other colonie, commensurate with the journeys undertaken to reach Cattolica from other parts of Europe and beyond. Eduardo Paolozzi (1988, p. 10), describes making subsidised (£5) journeys from Edinburgh to Cattolica, which involved travelling to Newhaven for a boat-train crossing to Dieppe, before travelling onto Milan, sometimes with a stopover in Paris, followed by a train journey to Cattolica on the Adriatic coast. Page 146 of the book is a screen grab from a LUCE newsreel on the occasion of the visit of Galeazzo Ciano, foreign minister and son-in-law of Mussolini, in 1936. (Figures 51 & 52).

Figure 51

per Figli Italiani all'Estero.

00·19·48·15.3
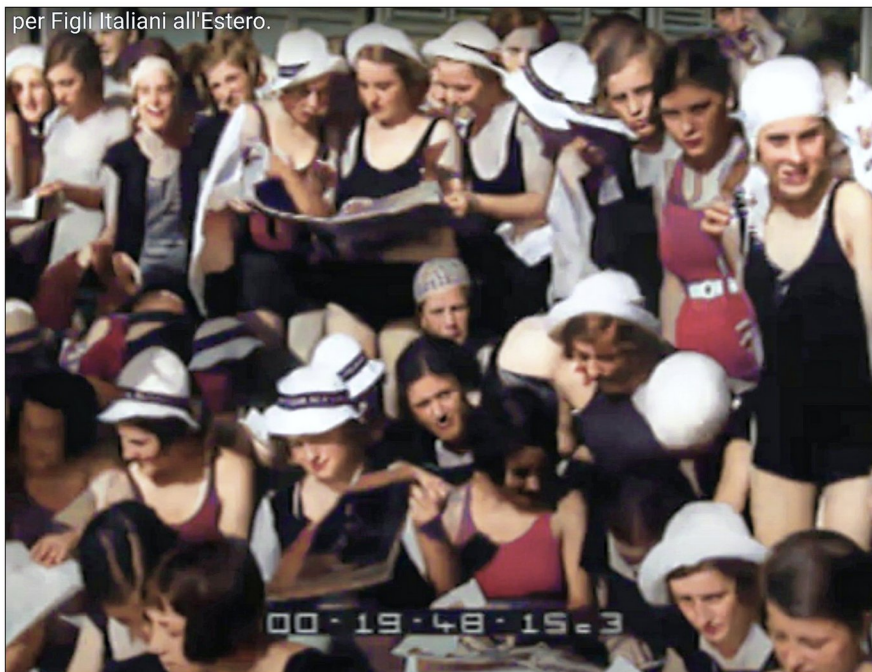
Colonia for daughters of Italians abroad. 1935

Figure 52

Newsreels

Out of hundreds of screenshots of *Istituto LUCE* newsreels (Archivio LUCE, 2022a), just a couple are included as AI-coloured images, on pages 8 and 146. Restricting the number in the photobook seemed more effective in its impact than providing numerous examples.

Regulations and quotes

A number of articles from Fascist Party regulations for colonie from the *Regolamento delle Colonie Climatiche* (PNF, 1939), are included to prompt the viewer to consider where the Fascist ideology might be hiding in them. The majority of rules could be considered eminently sensible and practical, while only a few make direct reference to Fascism or Mussolini. Extracts from the regulations can be found on pages 3, 35, 55, 105, 136, 145, 150-156 of the photobook. The translations are intended to retain something of the flavour of the verbose and longwinded original regulations. They present something of a contrast to Fascist minister Achille Starace's decree that official notices must be dynamic and concrete (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997, p. 106). The rules relating to admission procedures required extensive form-filling, box-ticking, and referring back and forth between committees. The *Fascist Revolution* had perhaps become mired and bogged down in bureaucracy and paperwork?

Notices are included that reference the past, present, and futures of the colonie, sourced from real estate advertisements, press articles, and promotional materials concerning renovations and repurposing. A number of included texts also capture various aspects of the contradictory and fuzzy essence of Fascism and the colonie (Labò & Podestà, 1941; Eco, 1995; Mira & Salustri, 2019; Domus, 2010; in_bo, 2022; Lasansky, 2004; Il Palloncino Rosso, 2022; Dubowitz, 2010; Samuels, 2015; Centro Primo Levi, 2015; Winkelmann, 2015).

The published photobook

A printed version of the book was produced with Blurb Book's *BookWright* software and online printing facility (Blurb Books UK, 2022). The book was designed by me as a photographer, without input from a designer. While I recognise that there is room for improvement in its layout and style, I consider that it fulfils the objectives of demonstrating research outcomes in a visually appealing manner. I may consider engaging the services of a designer for a future implementation of the work. The following pages comprise a condensed view of the book, for reference purposes. (Figures 53-63).
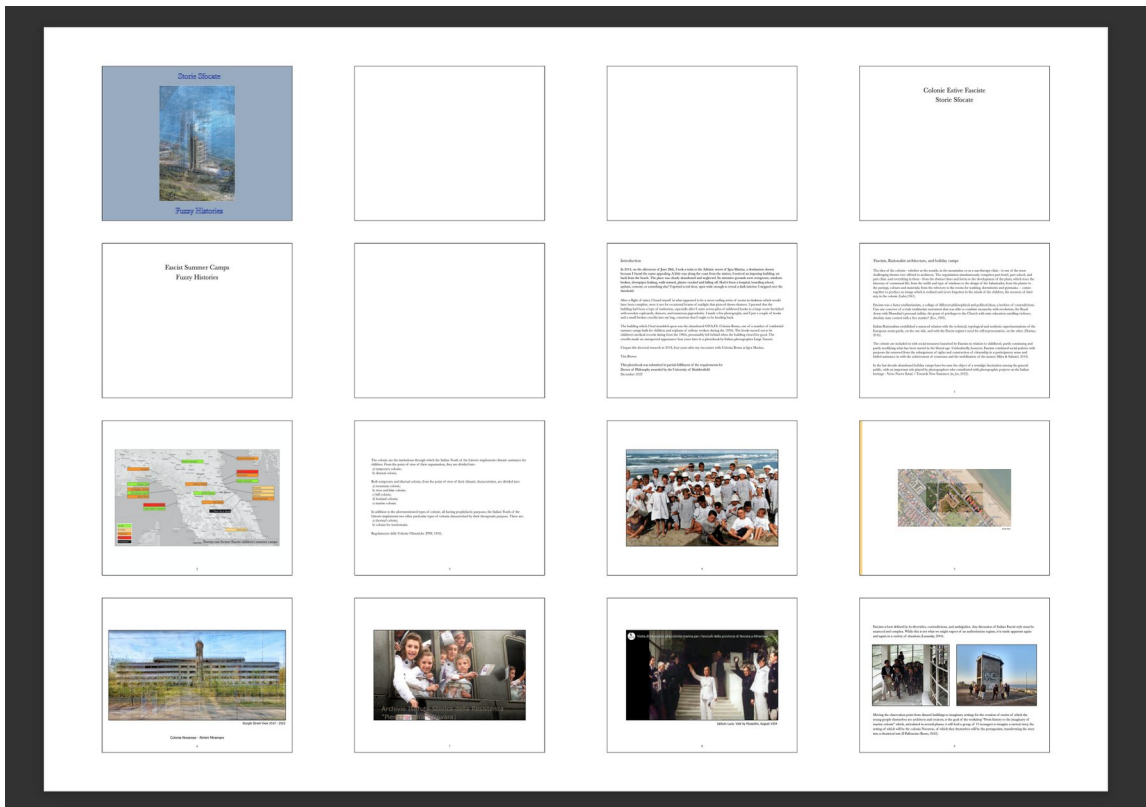
Figure 53

Figure 54

315
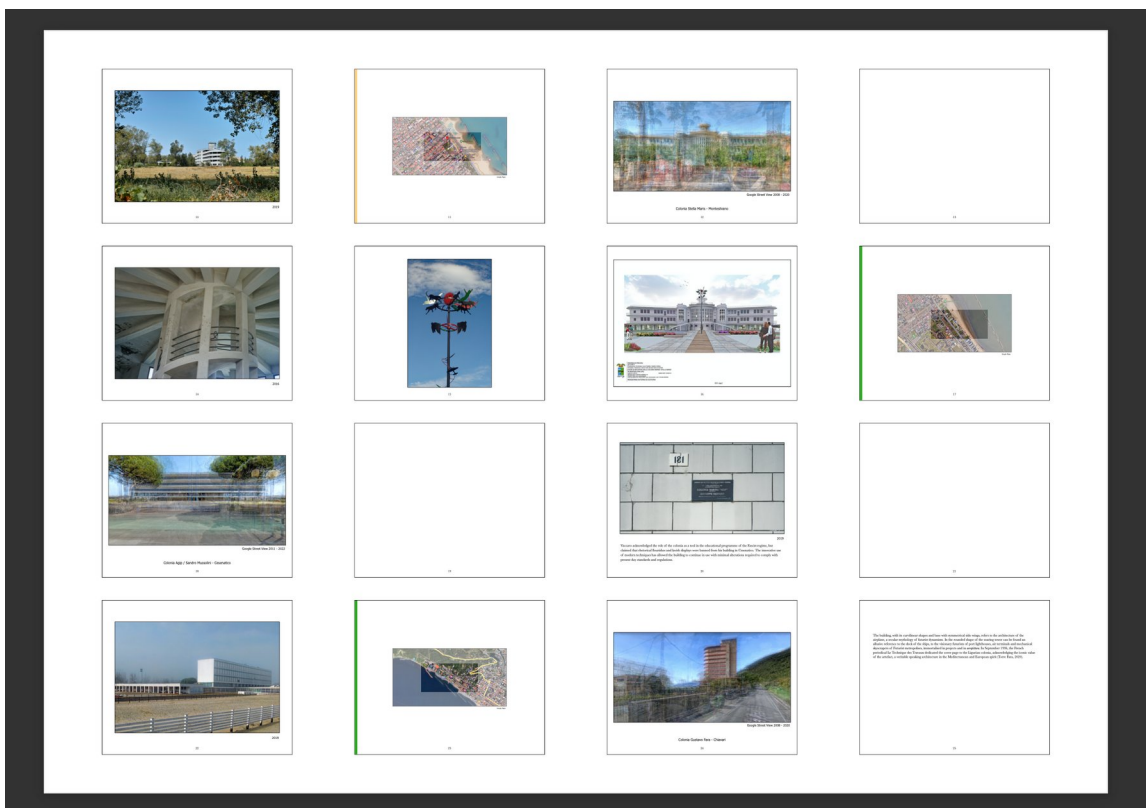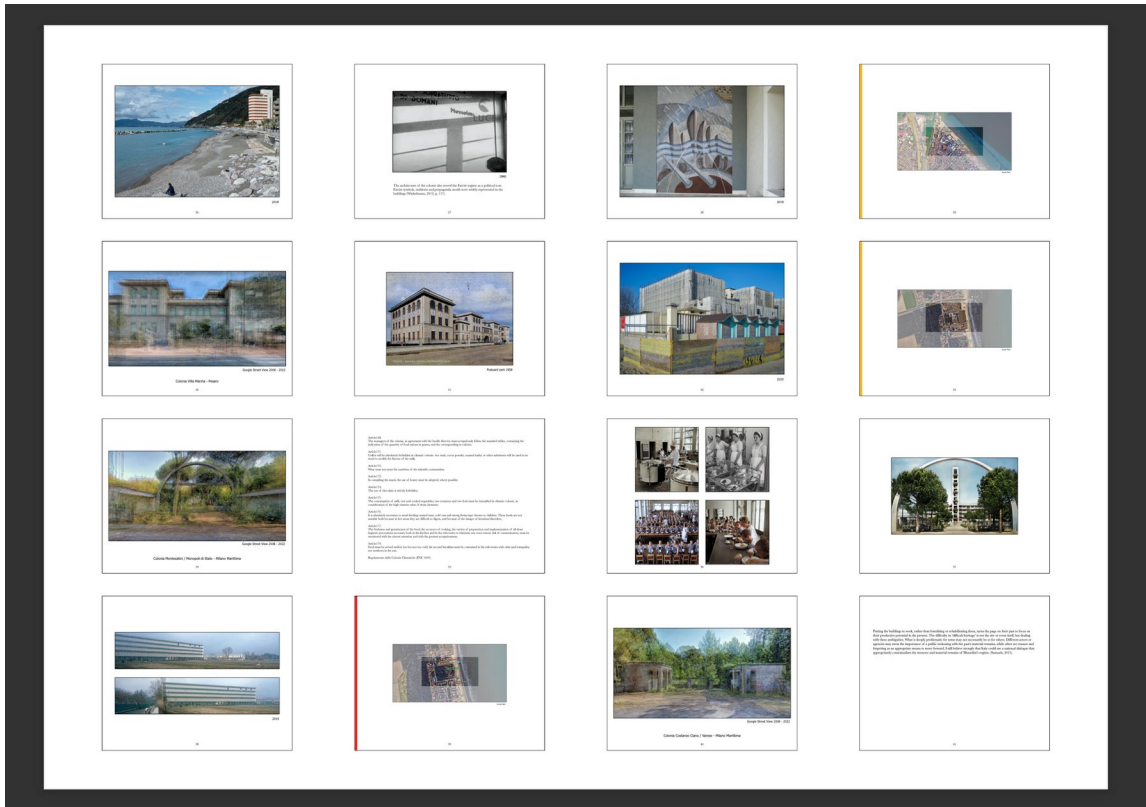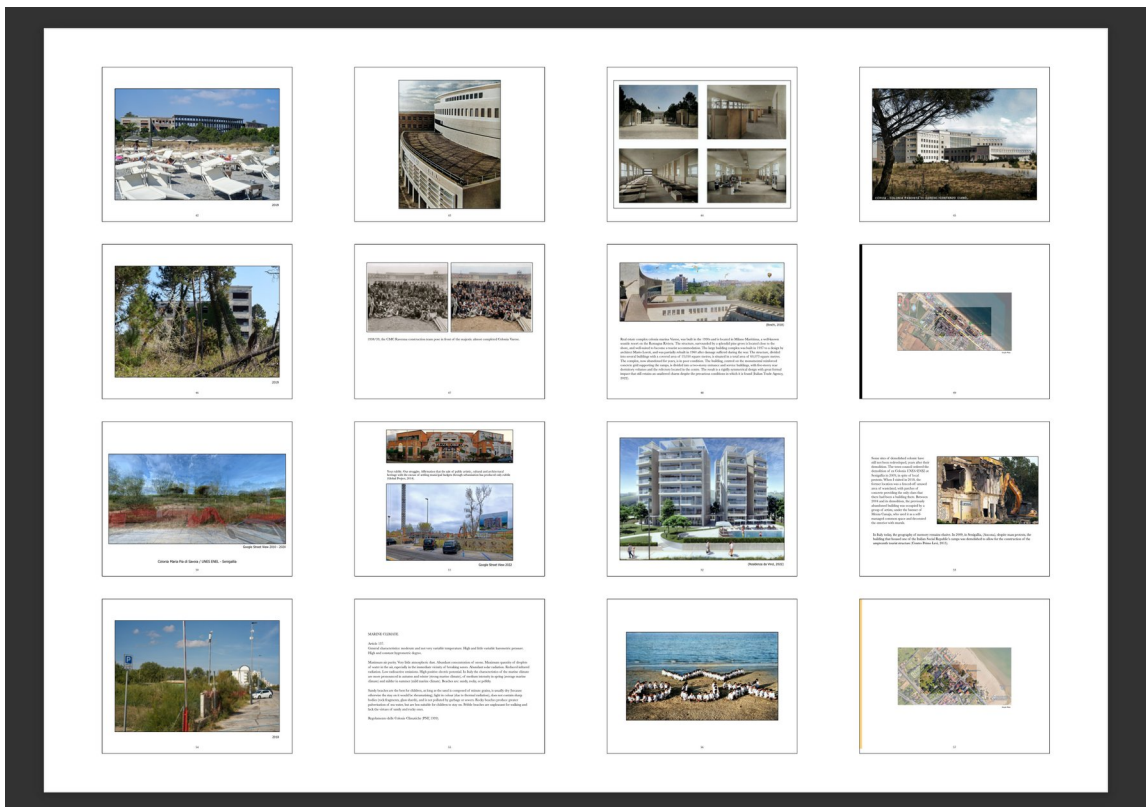
Figure 55

Figure 56

316
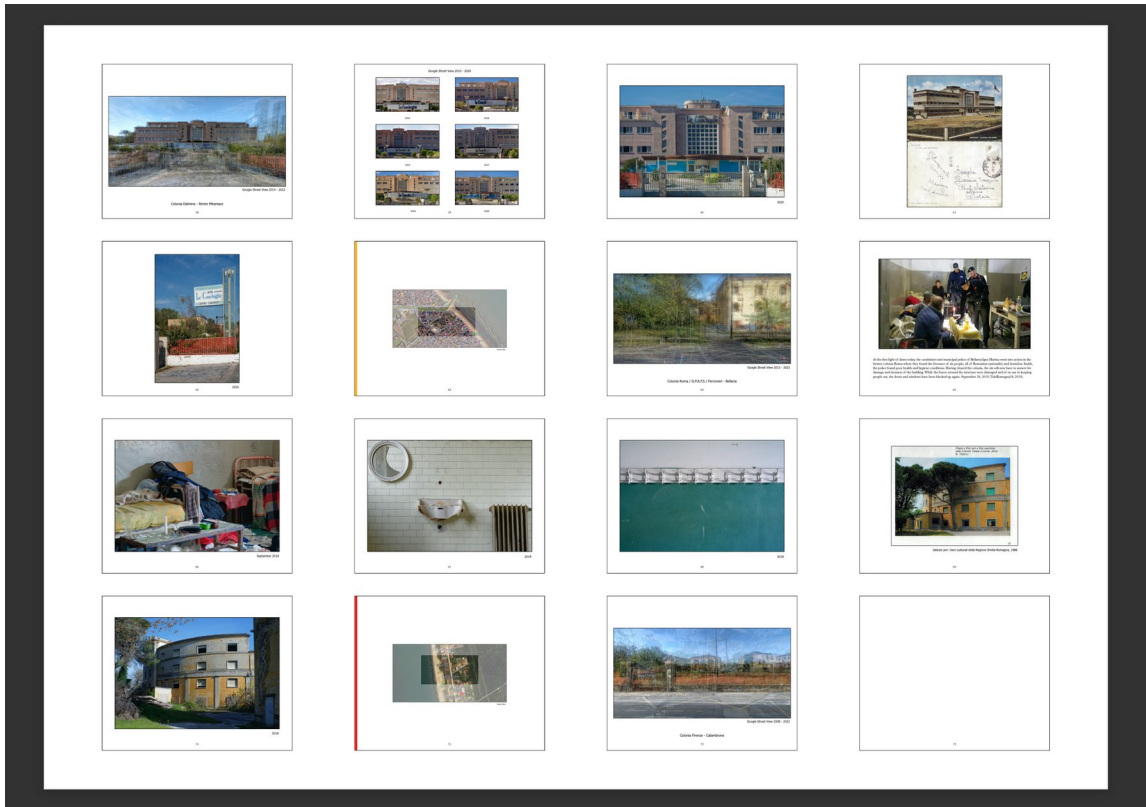
Figure 57

Figure 58

317
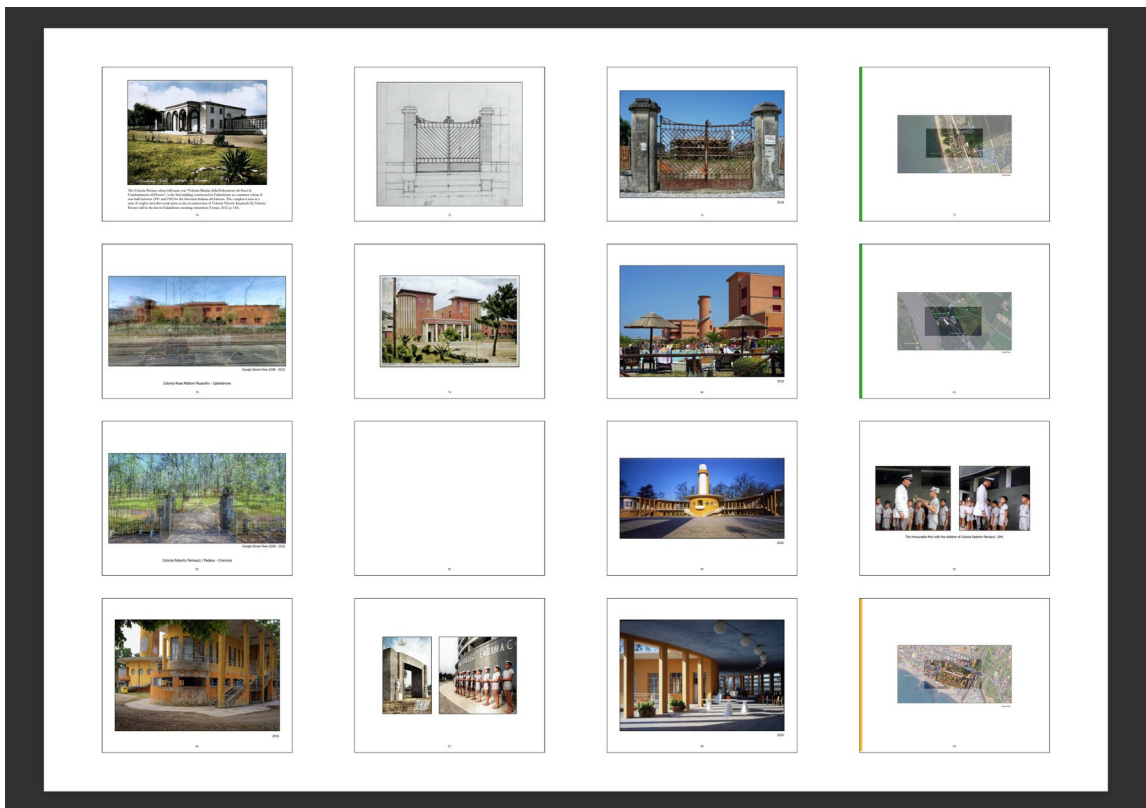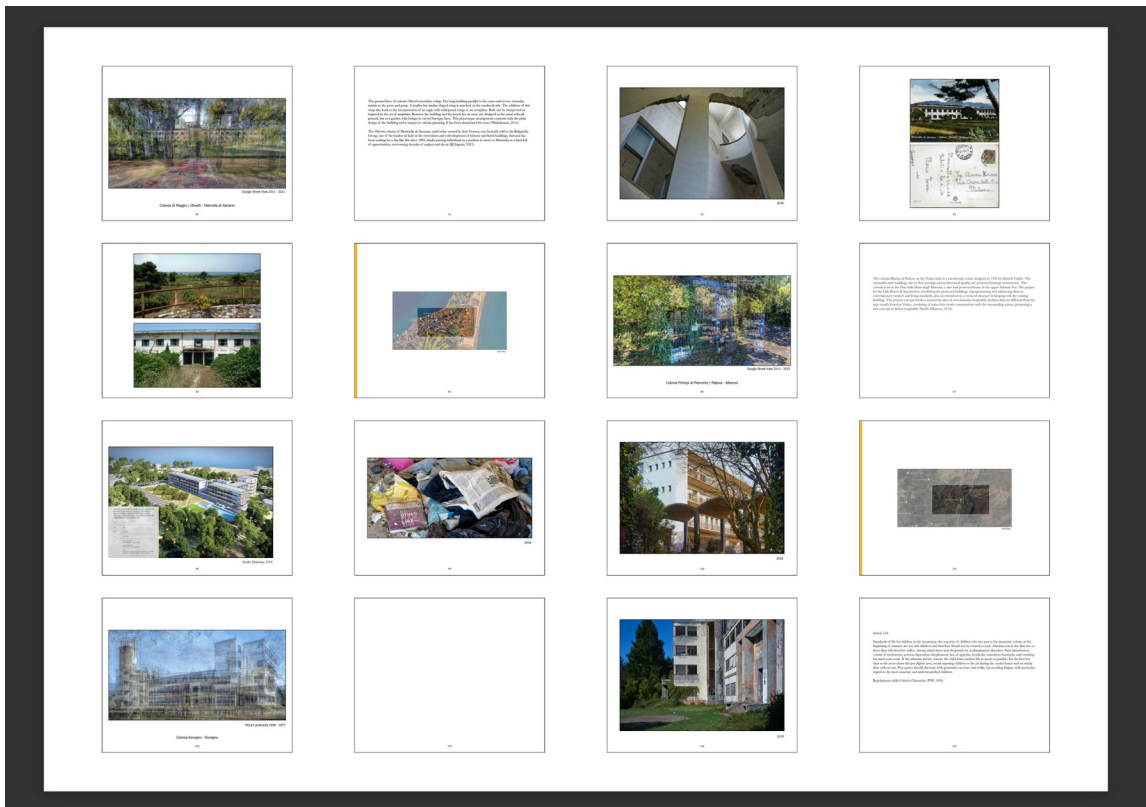
Figure 59

Figure 60

318
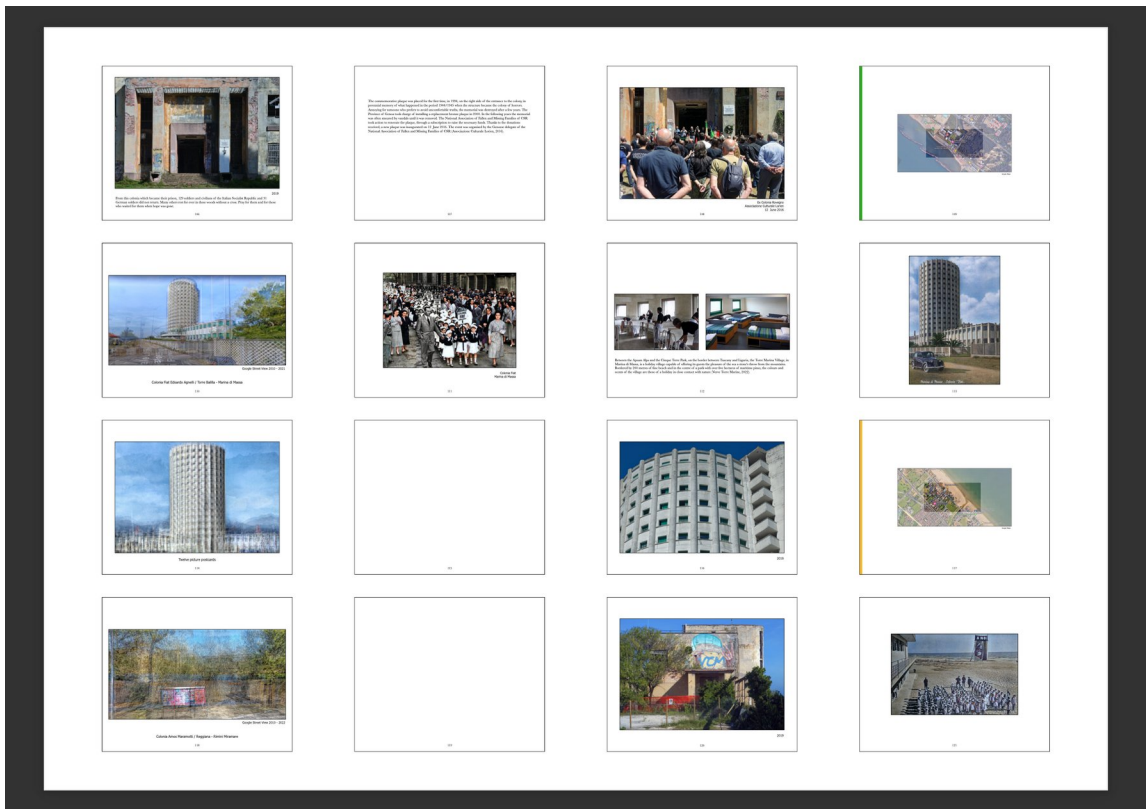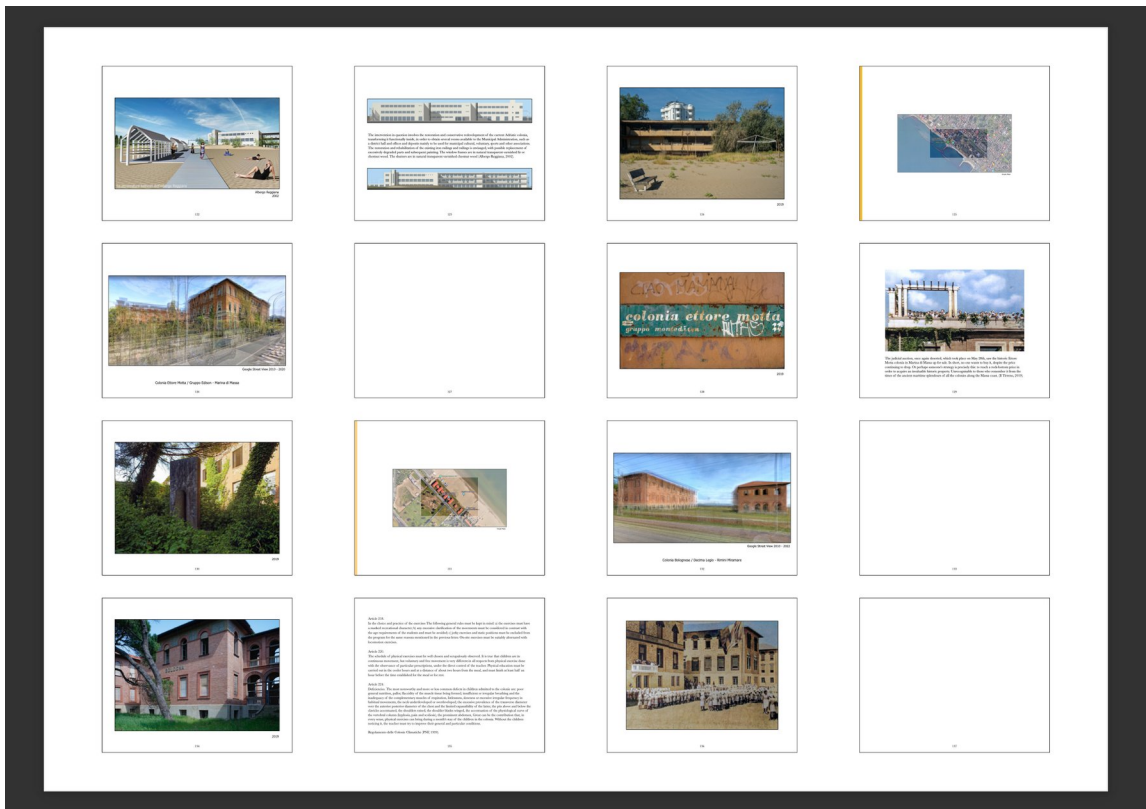
Figure 61

Figure 62

319
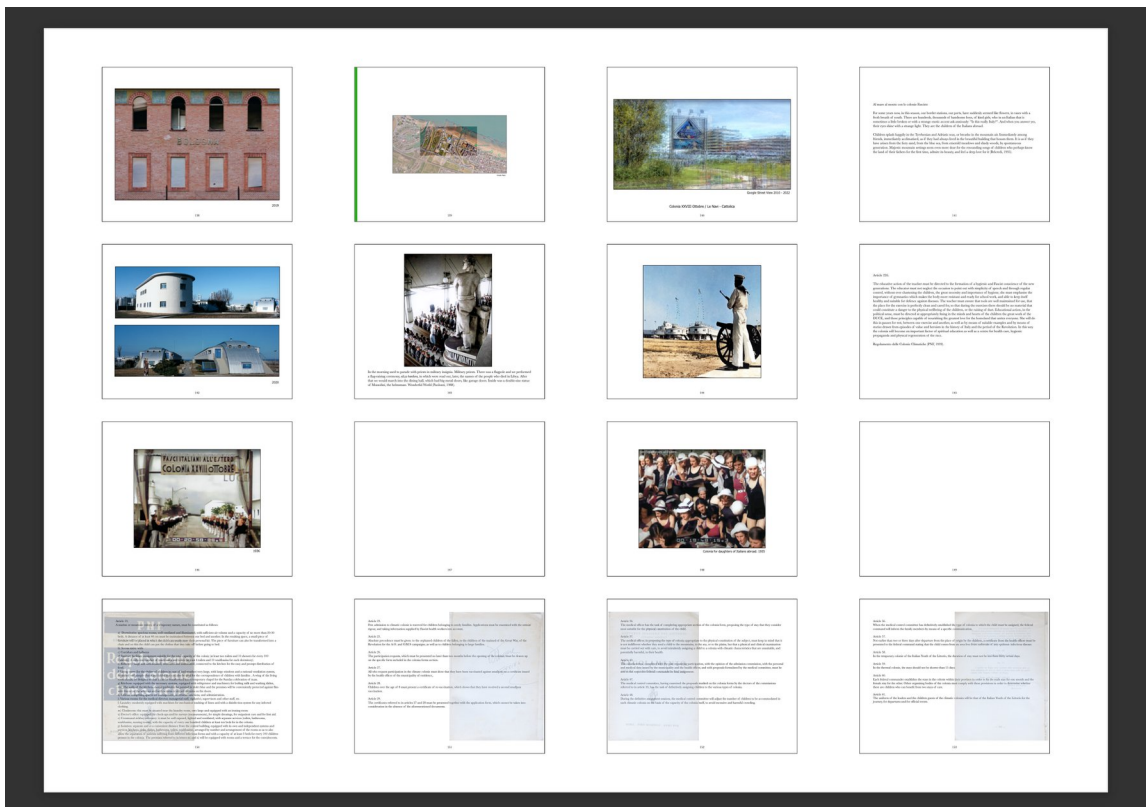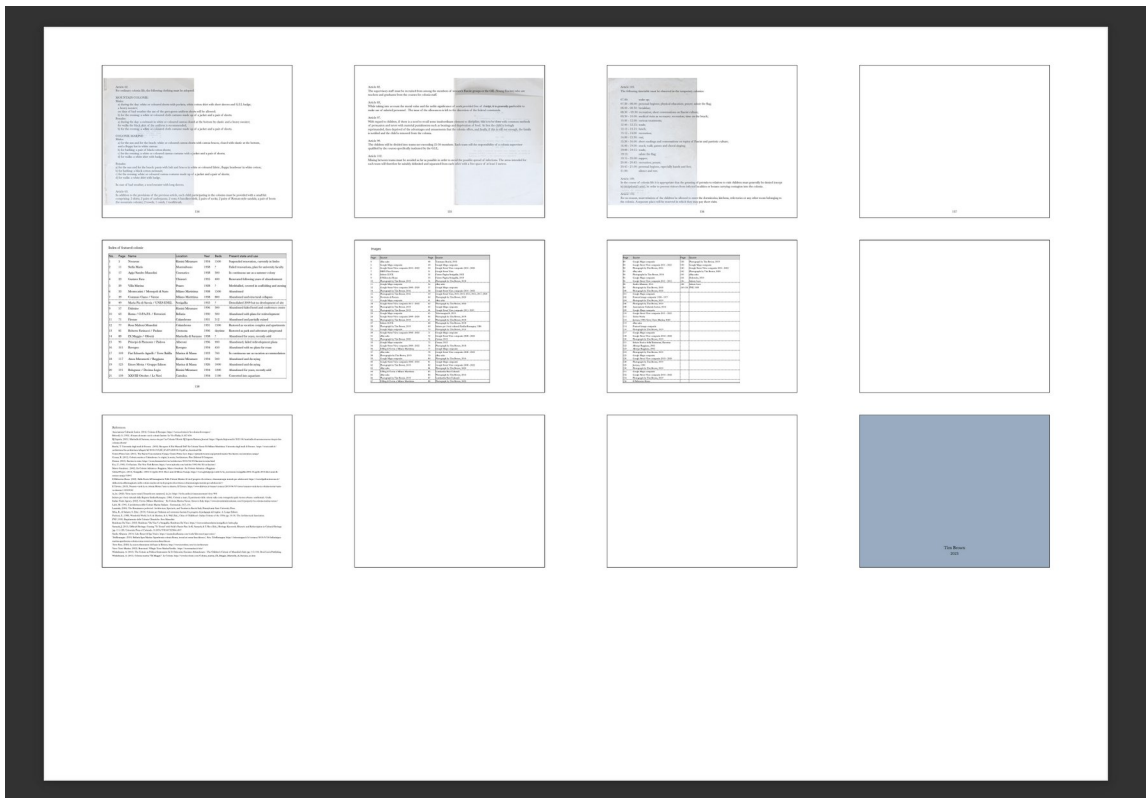
Figure 63

Conclusions

Summary

The primary aim was to examine the legacy of Fascism's adoption and adaption of an existing system of children's hospices and camps, that the regime put its stamp of ownership on. With significant investment, the Fascist regime ultimately created a significant network of buildings across the whole of Italy, a number of which were, and still are, notable examples of rationalist architecture. This research engaged with photographic practice, walking practice, virtual investigations of space, and reviewed contemporary and historical literature. The research proved more complex than anticipated, further complicated by the need to adapt and devise new ways of working within imposed practical restrictions. While the scope and circumstances were limited in terms of physical access to sites and time available for photography, decisions to diversify and complement the original research methods of walking and photography contributed to a more far-reaching thesis than would otherwise have been the case. The narrative of the thesis combined with practical research outcomes contribute to knowledge of the colonie, and propose a number of novel opportunities for further research into Fascism, welfare and the colonie system.

As discussed in the body of this thesis, a number of authors have referred to Foucault's theory of heterotopia in the context of the colonie, but in passing rather

than in-depth studies. This research aims to fill that space, through a detailed investigation of colonie as heterotopias, and concludes that the model is useful in advancing appreciation of the 'otherness' of colonia space as a more fundamental phenomenon than the abject atmosphere that clings to and surrounds them in their abandonment. The research also considers Fascist era colonie as examples of difficult heritage, and considers similarities and differences between them and other Fascist architectural typologies. This study reveals that the past, present, and futures of the colonie are far from straightforward, and avoids jumping to the conclusion of branding them as irretrievably tainted by Fascism. In this respect, Eco's concept of Fascism as a fuzzy totalitarianism provided an anchor for the research, allowing it to accommodate the complexity and ambiguities of the colonie as a reflection of that of the regime that fostered them.

The research favours the notion that Fascism worked towards what has been termed a totalitarian pedagogy, delicately poised between welfare and ideology, promoting the health of the race in the guise of benevolence. The Fascist colonie may be considered as difficult heritage, albeit more ambiguous than the Nazi rally grounds of Sharon Macdonald's study. While the testimonies of a number of colonia architects act as counters to Arne Winkelmann's assertion that they glorify war and violence, Valter Balducci's assessment of colonia architecture, harnessed as a silent educator in shaping the spirit of children, suggests that their spaces were far from innocent.

I had expected that the colonie would start to lose their unsettling effects as I became more familiar with them. However, Bolognese, Roma, Varese, Novarese,

322

Rovegno, Principe di Piemonte, and the others continued to impart a sense of awe and personal diminishment whenever I wandered through their spaces. From outside, they appear oversized, constructed to impress and convince the viewer. They remind me of products in a vastly oversized photography studio set up for a photoshoot, in which horizontal lines of sea, beach and horizon, or deep green forest surroundings, form an atmospheric backdrop. It was only towards the end of experiments with panoramic and infrared photography, that I appreciated how my photographic response had progressed, from a fascination with internal spaces and arrangements to pulling back, creating a distance between myself with the camera and the objects of my photography. In regarding the colonie as carefully arranged and spot-lit in Fascism's studio, my photographs perhaps dispel their mystique, to reveal them as staged products set among the scenic props and backdrop of the landscape.

This summary concludes with a challenge to the claim that 'Fascism is history', as made by Giorgia Meloni (Giuffrida, 2022), and suggests that it should be considered in the context of Eco's *Ur-Fascism* (Eco, 1995). The Fascist regime's obsession with demographics, the battle for births, and Mussolini's mantra of power in numbers, appear to have returned in the form of an uneasy alliance between government and Church, that saw Meloni and the Pope sharing a stage to exhort Italians to produce more babies (Associated Press, 2023). Less clear is how Italy's new government might act to entice Italian youth, in lieu of uniformed parades on Saturday afternoons and subsidised holidays by the sea.

Contributions to knowledge

More than thirty-five days, hundreds of miles walking, and extensive photographic work make up the core of this research, intertwined with personal responses, experiences, sensations, impressions, and recollections. As remarked in the thesis, Edensor considers that walking can create knowledge and awareness, albeit hampered by an intrinsic difficulty in communicating personal experiences and insights. The photobook was constructed around sequences of photographs and images with this in mind, and is intended to bridge what might otherwise be a gap in understanding between researcher and audience. The photobook brings the research together as a multilayered and nuanced piece of work that represents the culmination of this literature and image based research.

This study contributes to debates concerning the status and fates of Italy's Fascist heritage in general, and the situation of colonie in particular. It contributes to traditionally discrete academic fields, through making connections, joining the dots in ways in which they had not been joined before. It encompasses creative practice, architecture, space and heterotopia, difficult heritage, internal and external colonisation, Fascist welfare, and the indoctrination of youth. A consideration of literature across a number of academic disciplines enabled the research to evaluate Fascism's adoption and appropriation of the colonie within a historical continuum,

from hospice to children's summer camp, pre-military training centre, religious and charitable camp, closure and abandonment, survival and revival. Concepts of heterotopia and difficult heritage, neither of which had previously been applied to the colonie with any particular rigour, served their purpose well as tools for understanding the complexity and implications of their spaces and history.

This appears to be the first English-language doctoral research into the colonie, and the only work to have blended literature-based research with photography and creative practice. It is the only research that has carried out a detailed study of Fascist colonie as heterotopias and difficult heritage. It also appears to be the only study of any kind to combine heterotopia and difficult heritage as theoretical models. The photobook differs from the work of other colonia photographers in that Janus like, it looks towards both the past and utopian visualised futures, intersected by present day photography. The photobook opens the topic of Fascist era colonie as heterotopia and difficult heritage, to questions and debate. Along with the thesis, it is not designed or intended to provide a neatly packaged solution to research which can only be ongoing. I consider this it to be a unique study in its own right as well as contributing to knowledge of the colonie under Fascism.

Opportunities

Several authors acknowledge that there is a need for further research into aspects of the colonie beyond those relatively well covered in regional studies, research papers, and monographs. This thesis and photobook have created space to look beyond the colonie as architecture and structure, through work with images and literature. The research has employed a number of theoretical lenses, including visual representation, heterotopia, and difficult heritage. In consequence, the research has opened up novel avenues of inquiry, some of which it has pursued, while for practical reasons, others must remain as topics for further research. The following paragraphs suggest potential future opportunities, suited to a variety of academic interests and creative practices.

Photography

Among the photographic investigations carried out into the colonie, several techniques could usefully be explored further. Repeat photography, based on the practice and theories of Mark Klett, could be developed and refined, while it would be interesting to extend the practice of infrared photography, to include infrared film and a variety of digital filters, in a range of situations relating to the colonie.

Similarly, Josef Koudelka's panoramic photography could provide a point of reference for further panoramic representations of the colonie.

Regional surveys

There is still potential for pursuing ideas that were rejected at the start of this research, including updating an existing regional survey. Sofia Nannini refers to a recently completed update of the1986 IBC study for Emilia Romagna (Nannini, 2023), but there is scope for updating the knowledge of colonie on the Tyrrenhian coast, where the most recent comprehensive studies appear to be Cutini & Pierini (1993), Camaiora (2011), and Cerasa (2012). I am also unaware of the existence of a study dedicated to mountain colonie as a distinct subtype which Mario Labò identified back in 1941, as representing an architectural response to distinct environmental and topographic conditions. While coastal colonie proliferated in the years following WWII, the construction of mountain colonie appeared to finish with the demise of Fascism. It might be interesting to investigate whether they had a particular strategic and military significance, over and above whatever health benefits were attributed to high altitude and rarified atmospheres.

Environment and natural history

My chance meeting with Gianni Porcellini, who was engaged in studying native flora in the grounds of colonia Bologna, along with comments made by Dan Dubowitz

about rare orchids growing on the roof of colonia Varese and this summer's unprecedented hatching of a batch of sea turtle eggs, on the beach directly opposite the colonia (euronews, 2023), could provide opportunities for a study of these areas as valuable wildlife preserves, with the aim of obtaining recognition, and to safeguard them from development and destruction. The extensive grounds around some coastal colonie have lain largely undisturbed for the best part of fifty years, allowing their recolonisation by nature. The dunes between them and the sea also form welcome breaks in an otherwise continual progression of summer beach concessions, especially along the Adriatic coastline. This would be a project for a researcher with a grounding in natural and environmental history.

Internal colonisation and geopolitics

This research suggests that the colonie may be regarded as components of a geographical network or web, in which outwards-looking coastal and defensive mountain locations are meaningful expressions of Fascism's colonial ambitions. The theme of internal colonisation by the Fascist regime appears to be recent, comprising research into Fascist new towns, Sicilian agricultural resettlement projects, and the study of Colonia Villa Marina at Pesaro, referred to in this thesis. There appear be fewer studies of Fascism's adoption of notions of *spazio vitale, mare nostrum,* and geopolitics than the Nazi equivalent of lebensraum. There may be opportunities for further research in this area, and into relationships between internal and external colonisation by the regime. David Atkinson's *Geopolitics and the Geographical Imagination in Fascist Italy* (1995), could form a starting point.

LUCE newsreels

The Istituto LUCE archive may contain sufficient material for a research project based on still images and newsreels, and appears to be a largely uncharted resource for research into the colonie. Online newsreels are low resolution, but my approach of a stop-start view and capture process yielded freeze-frames of apparently unguarded moments within otherwise orchestrated footage. What inferences might be gleaned from editorial oversights and background details, concerning a more realistic view of a child's time spent in the environment and boundaries of a colonia, during the years of the Fascist regime? Online marketplaces such as eBay, have a good number of colonia picture postcards for sale, from the Fascist era through to the 1970s, and there may be potential for a study based on the colonia postcard, with *Fascismo di calcestruzzo, architecture di cartolina* (Sturani, 2018), as a starting point.

Women and the colonie

There appears to be limited, and mostly incidental research into the training and work of women as gymnastics instructors and colonia supervisors, along with the treatment of girls and boys, and changes in attitude towards the gender of colonia residents during the Fascist regime. A number of groundbreaking studies into the treatment of men and women in sport and physical culture under Fascism, are due to the investigative work of sports historian Gigliola Gori (2004a), including Fascist colonie, in terms of health, gymnastics, and indoctrination of youth (2004b).

Youth, Fascism, and the Church

This study has not explored the complex and somewhat fraught relationship between the Catholic Church and the Fascist regime, regarding youth organisations, the control of youth, and matters of gender, gymnastics and physical exercise. While considered beyond the scope of this research, wider literature searches suggest opportunities for fertile research into these topics. Vanysacker (2020), for instance, provides an overview of the Catholic Church's regard of 'the masculinisation of women and gender equality to be great dangers toward Catholic marriage and maternity' (p. 385).

Experiential research

This research began with a phenomenological and experiential methodology in mind, which would have required appreciable time on the ground, immersed in the spaces, surroundings, and atmospheres of the colonie. With hindsight, and even excluding the imposition of restrictions due to covid, it may have been impractical for me, based in the UK and unable to make the number of visits required. However, a phenomenological approach could offer opportunities to a researcher willing and able to spend however much time the colonie demanded of them. I found Gernot Böhme's writing on 'atmospheric architectures' and 'felt spaces', particularly inspiring in considering a phenomenological investigation of the colonie (Böhme & Borch, 2014; Böhme, 2017; 2018), as was Dylan Trigg's *The Memory of Place* (2012).

Intangible heritage

The heritage of the colonie beyond architecture appears to be a little explored legacy of the programme. While few colonie children of the 1930s will still be alive more than eighty years on from Italy's entry into the war, the same Fascist era buildings continued to host children for a further thirty or more years, apparently with little change in their operation. It appears that colonia children of the 1950s, 70s, and 70s are beginning to get together to share their stories, with the encouragement of initiatives such as *Il Palloncino Rosso*, and there may be opportunities for research into less tangible aspects of colonia heritage.

Comparative studies

Comparisons between the youth organisations of Fascist Italy and other totalitarian regimes appear to be rather thin on the ground. Alessio Ponzio's *Shaping the New Man: Youth Training Regimes in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany* (2015), while providing a historical account of the development of youth groups under the regimes, and the relationships and interactions between them, does not dwell on how the New Man was shaped. Neither does Ponzio seem interested in the notion of a Fascist New Woman, and there appear to be opportunities for further research. As mentioned in this thesis, Luca Comerio (2018), in his comparison of French *colonies de vacances* and Italian *colonie vacanze,* considers that the research is in its early stages, with further research required on the Italian side.

A return to the start

In September 2022, a few days before the *Towards New Summers* conference, I returned to colonia Roma, as a fitting way to finish a process set in motion one summer afternoon eight years previously.

As I approach the building, following a now familiar path, it is clear that the intervening years have not treated the colonia kindly, and the area around an upper floor window appears blackened and scorched by fire. Trees and shrubs are taller than I remember. The stucco walls seem greyer and dirtier, and the red door has been boarded up, only to be broken through. After a little while, the changes begin to dissolve and I feel the years slip away as I am drawn towards this place of new summers with its difficulty and complexity (Figures 64 & 65).

Figure 64

Figure 65

333

Reference

Glossary

Balilla

The ONB (and GIL) section, originally for boys and later for girls too. Balilla was the nickname for Giovan Battista Perasso, a Genovese boy who, according to legend, started the revolt against Austrian occupation in 1746.

Bonifica

This popular term with the Fascist regime was used to refer to various *reclamations,* including *cultura* (cultural) and *umana* (human). *Bonifica integrale* referred to the three strands of Mussolini's ambitious anti-malarial campaign: *idraulica* (drainage), *agraria* (agricultural), and *igienica* (hygienic).

Casa del Balilla

Local centres for ONB activities, with modern sports amenities, including swimming pools, gymnasia, theatre, library, and educational and administrative facilities.

Casa del fascio / casa littorio

Local Fascist Party offices, often with a small theatre or cinema for showing propaganda films and newsreels, and with spaces for educational classes. The typology evolved to be characterised by a littorio tower and speaker's balcony.

Colonia (plural: colonie)

In the context of this thesis, colonia refers to a children's summer camp and to the structure built to accommodate and facilitate its activities. As the thesis will reveal, the colonia became considerably more complex after its appropriation by Fascism.

Fascio littorio (plural: fasces)

The ubiquitous symbol of the Fascist regime, refers to a bundle of rods enclosing an axe blade, originally carried in procession as a symbol of Roman authority. The term was in use before Mussolini's rise to power, to denote a group united by a common ideology. Fasces can be seen throughout Italy today on everything from monuments to cast-iron drain covers.

Fascism, Fascist

I use Fascism with an upper case 'F' to distinguish Mussolini and the Italian Fascist regime, from fascism as a synecdoche for any number of totalitarian movements. Some scholars use a lower case 'f' regardless of the context, while others refer to Nazism as fascism.

Gioventù Italiana del Littorio (GIL)

This translates as Italian youth of the lictor, and refers to the Fascist Party organisation that replaced the ONB in 1937, and assumed responsibility for all youth activity. Life for the young residents of the colonie became increasingly regimented and militaristic under the GIL.

Giovinezza

Meaning youth, the word was adopted to emphasise the regime's supposed youth and vitality. Giovinezza was also the title of a song, appropriated and adapted to become the unofficial Fascist anthem, sung by children in colonie during the morning flag-raising and evening flag-lowering ceremonies. The song was banned at the end of the war, and its singing remains illegal.

Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB)

This was the official Fascist youth organisation between 1926 and 1937. It was a part of the Ministry of National Education.

Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF)

The National Fascist Party, created by Benito Mussolini from the *fasci di combattimento*.

Piccole Italiane

The ONB (and GIL) section for girls between 8 and 14 years old, which translates as little Italians.

Repubblica di Salò / Repubblica Sociale Italiana (RSI)

Mussolini's puppet republic, formed in 1943 after the German army rescued him from prison. Its headquarters were at Salò on Lake Garda.

Squadristi

Action squads of WWI veterans, formed to break up socialist activities through intimidation, attacks, and destroying property. Methods of *persuasion* included truncheon beatings and oral administration of castor oil (*manganello e olio di ricino)*. They paved the way for Mussolini's Fascist Party and government.

Totalitarismo / totalitarianism

Invented as a derogatory description of Fascism, but Mussolini appropriated and subverted the word as an expression of the quintessence of the Fascist regime.

Ventennio

Twenty years, used as to designate the years between 1922 and 1942 during which Fascism held power. Some authors refer to the *black ventennio*, or *ventennio nero*. A disadvantage of bracketing the years of the regime in this way is that Fascism could be regarded as an aberration within the otherwise glorious history of Italy.

Vigilatrice (plural: vigilatrici)

Single women, trained and qualified to supervise children in colonie, each being responsible for the discipline and welfare of a group of around thirty children.

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Supplements

Appendix

José Pinto's home in Colonia Varese

Endings can change without warning or notice. The press book that accompanies the film *di che colonie sei?* (Giostra Film, 2023), reports that since 2003, José has occupied Colonia Varese, building a home in the dilapidated area of the colonia, where the building overlooks the inner courtyard. His home is a unique dwelling, with a kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom, made by collecting and recycling discarded objects to give them a second life, while on the walls are photos from his own first and second life. He cultivates the land, and tends to the garden behind the colonia, where he has created flowerbeds, bringing order to the disorder of abandonment, and restoring beauty to this place. Over the years, he has become something of a local legend, with people visiting to hear his story, visit his home, leave an offering, or a thought in the visitor's book in front of the entrance. Thanks to José, the place has been transformed into an imaginary world, a parallel universe. When night falls, and darkness engulfs this place isolated from the rest of the world, José is left alone with his thoughts and his out-of-tune guitar, whose sounds echo through the halls of the former colonia. The booklet concludes that thanks to José, this otherwise abandoned colonia is still alive with memories of the past. Then on June 30, shortly before the first showing of the film, José's home was set alight and gutted, possibly from a personal dispute, while he was away from the premises (Il Resto del Carlino, 2023). While I have not engaged with him beyond exchanging greetings, I do feel a certain affinity with José Pinto I include a few photographs that I took of his home (Figure 1).

Colonia Varese - José's home
Photographs by Tim Brown
2016 - 2022

Figure 1

Escape from the Colony

Amedeo Manieri

My name is Amedeo Manieri, and I am 72 years old.

From 1953 to 1958, my parents, despite my objections, continued to send me to the Colony. To Miramare in Rimini. And for six consecutive summers, the same story played out...

After finishing the school year and enjoying a brief period of freedom and carefree days, I begin to sense the signs of what awaits me soon. My mother buys small rolls of fabric with three distinct numbers in red, carefully cuts them out, and sews them onto all my clothes. I'll have to memorise this number because it will be used to identify both me and my belongings. In a few days, I'll hear them repeat, "Number xxx, come pick up your laundry!"

As the date approaches, my parents vaguely start talking to me about the sea, how lucky I am to be able to go there, and how it will be good for my health. Right before my departure, a family friend, oddly enough a barber, is invited for lunch and shaves my hair almost to zero. I don't like the look, but of course, my parents tell me I look great!

And so, the fateful day of departure to Miramare in Rimini arrives! I manage to endure all this because my sister, who is almost the same age, is also coming with me. However, I might only see her during the two daily walks. Our parents accompany us to the De Amicis schools near Bologna Railway Station, and there we have to say goodbye. I already know that the ONLY direct contact within a month will be for a few minutes, DIVIDED by a metal fence, when, on the Sundays they can come to visit us at the Colony. In those few moments, we will only be able to pass two fingers through the mesh of the fence and hold the two fingers of our parents. When our hands touch, we can't even speak due to the lump in our throats.

At De Amicis, myself and all the other children are taken care of by unfamiliar people who divide us into groups in various classrooms, forming the future teams. From the start, we are alone and complete strangers to one another! After forming the teams, we go to the train station where we board a private train used only for our transfer. The mayor, Giuseppe Dozza, comes to say goodbye to us at departure. For many of us, he was like a second father!

During his frequent outings around Bologna, especially in the new neighbourhoods built after the war, he was always surrounded by many children, happy to be near him. I was one of those children! I board the train with a small suitcase, probably made of pressed cardboard, and a small white canvas bag like a container for a quick breakfast, a couple of packs of crackers, and perhaps a banana... a luxury for me.

Upon arriving at the Colony, our adventure begins. We wear uniforms consisting of a kind of poncho-like jacket with a V-neck opening, sleeveless, with light gray and blue vertical stripes, and a stiff white cap with a wide, rigid visor (though it will shrink and the visor will droop after the first wash). From here on, almost every day will be the same, except for rainy ones, which become longer and filled with nostalgic memories of home, and Sundays when, seeing our parents again, we experience both happiness and despair.

Every morning, we wake up fairly early, then everyone goes to wash up (though I don't recall showers, toothbrushes, or toothpaste). We descend the external staircase on the north side and, team by team, enter the dining hall, where there's already coffee with milk and bread to dip. After breakfast, all the teams, both boys and girls, go to the central cemented courtyard. Under the central balcony with completely unfamiliar figures (probably with important roles), the national anthem is played, and the flag-raising ceremony takes place! On Sunday's flag-raising, in addition to the tricolour flag, there was also the flag of the City of Bologna (white with a large red cross). The usual unknown figures are present, but the time the mayor Dozza visited in the month, it was a big celebration.

After the daily flag-raising, we finally head to the beach... and the stroll begins. We move away slowly from the Colony, both north and south, walking in pairs and forbidden to separate. However, when we spot "precious" seashells, which we call "pilgrims," or even better, a small dead seahorse on the shore, breaking the rule becomes a must. We do our best to hide and keep those little treasures the sea gives us, but somehow they're taken away, and we never see them again. If, during the walk, I'm fortunate enough to cross paths with my sister's female team, we'll greet each other for a few seconds from a distance. Our games under the shade of a large rectangular tent, where we all huddle together to escape the sun, are... not really games, and they're accompanied by the constant chant of the lady: "don't dig holes!"

At this point, the most awaited and liberating moment arrives.
At a specific signal, EVERYONE INTO THE SEA!
Everyone rushes into the water but doesn't go beyond a certain perimeter.
Unfortunately, we don't even have time to get used to the water before...
EVERYONE OUT!
Gymnastics in the sun to dry off, then back inside the Colony.

On the small space beside the staircase opposite the dining hall, there are two circular pools, about a meter and twenty in diameter, glazed white, with a central faucet of six to eight taps. Before lunch, we wash our hands, and to dry them, we sing "One, two, three... jack, horse, and king," while clapping them three times alternately and making them flutter in the air. Maybe it's the heat, maybe it's the fluttering, maybe it's the song, but our hands dry up! We're ready to enter the dining hall, and from the (let's call it) aroma, we can tell if we'll be having dry pasta or broth. I still remember that particular smell, which I found unpleasant!

The food was perhaps good, but in those conditions, I couldn't appreciate it. After lunch, everyone goes to various corridors of the institution, and I can't recall if we took a nap. But from many testimonies that have come out in this group, I understand that the nap was even mandatory. Before returning to the beach, more than games, we engage in various pastimes.

In those moments, we would write on postcards that our parents had already stamped and placed in our suitcases so we could stay in touch. They would respond with letters that were delivered to us after being opened and read by some "watchful eye." I remember it perfectly because at that time - the mid-1950s - my idol was a boxer who made it to the world heavyweight championship and trained at the Bologna Stadium, just a few tens of meters from where I lived. His name was Francesco Cavicchi (known as Checco). My father, knowing about my interest, would include newspaper clippings about him in the letters! And this remains a fond memory for me. Another pastime was waiting to see a freight train pass by and counting its cars; it was almost a challenge to find the one pulling the most!

Perhaps it was then that some friends and I planned our escape from the Colony. All those impositions, restrictions, having to ask for permission (without the certainty it would be granted) for everything, even to use the bathroom, all this regimentation had fuelled in me and some others the desire to run away... to break free! We had studied the fence and discovered that in the north-east corner at the base, there were large rocks that would facilitate climbing over. We began to make supplies, hiding mainly biscuits. Looking out of the dormitory room windows, we realise that by going out onto the main road, near the Colonia Novarese, there is a path that could lead us to the railway tracks. We know that by following those tracks and heading to the right, patiently, we could reach Bologna, or rather, our parents' place. Planning the plan takes several days, and in the meantime, some of us abandon the idea. After various hesitations, the last days of the Colony arrive, and then we all decide to cancel the escape.

And so comes the day of absolute carefreeness, the day of the final performance. Not all the teams participate in the exhibition. Mostly, we are spectators, but the euphoria of that last afternoon is such that even though the attention to individual performances takes a back seat, we still feel like protagonists of that moment full of emotion! The rules are tossed aside, with everyone's liberation. And so, off we go with songs, dances, masquerades, and tomorrow we return home, to Bologna, to our parents!

Sweet memories of the colony and Claudia Tabaroni's quince jam

Claudia Tabaroni

My name is Claudia Tabaroni, and along with my sister Cristina, I attended Colonia Bolognese during the summers from 1967 to 1971.

I remember... snacks

The little jams at the camp were good. I was 8 years old, and back then there weren't many fancy snacks. Thinking about those jelly jams takes me back... your face would get messy if you weren't careful with the little paper. The bread wasn't sliced, but it was in rolls... they brought them in white plastic baskets. We would go down the exterior staircase, line up in front of a window if I'm not mistaken, and there they gave us the roll, which was hollow inside, and inside that hollow they put a little jam or a small cheese. How delicious they were... I would eat the cheese by making a little hole in a corner and squeeze it into my mouth like toothpaste!

I remember... the infirmary

I was in the infirmary once, but I must have been there briefly, probably just one feverish night. Afterwards, we usually returned to the dormitory and were looked after... no sun, no sea. To know how you were feeling, they often asked if you had a bowel movement. I would say yes even if it wasn't true because I knew otherwise they would give you a spoonful of something... maybe... castor oil? But I never tried it. Thankfully.

In the infirmary, on a little bed, you would sleep... then plain soup and a thermometer. I don't remember a doctor, the environment was all white, it felt like a hospital, and I didn't like it.

I remember... dawn (and immense joy)

Often in the early morning, I would wake up and curiously go to the bathroom. The camp was mysterious at those times. Some background noises, open taps, the sound of someone's dreaming breath⋯ I remember the silent and wide corridor, and along the corridor, you would reach the big arched windows, closed but with glass at our height. I remember... how many times during these morning explorations at 5:30 AM, I saw unforgettable sunrises. For me, as a child, it was a spectacle every time. And while on one side you could see the sea, on the other side, you could see the road. It was there that one Sunday morning, I saw my parents' Fiat 1100 parked. They had left early to visit me. During my stay at the camp, they would come once or at most twice... not more, but it was nice (at the time, despite the little traffic, it was the norm). It was an immense joy to feel the presence of family and I couldn't wait to spend time with them beyond that fence.

I remember... that I liked to write

In 1967, I kept a camp diary... I wrote:

Little Diary.
Morning.
"At 7:30 we wake up, have breakfast, then the flag-raising ceremony and on to the beach."
Afternoon and evening.
"We're in bed, the alarm rings, and we get up at 3:30. We have a snack and then go to the beach. Flag-raising in the morning, then we eat.
The end."

And together with my sister Cristina, postcards from the camp to our parents:

"Dear parents, everything is fine here. Cristina is having a great time and wants to see you all. Dear Carla, how are you? I hope well, like us. Yesterday I participated

in the high jump competition but lost. We've already taken a swim and had a lot of fun. I've made many friends. I hope you'll come to visit on Sunday. Waiting for you, we send our greetings. Claudia and Cristina."

I remember... the songs

"Do do do tomorrow I'm going home... / Re re re I breathe the pure air... / SI is is I feel safer / Sol sol sol sol only one thing upsets me... / La la la leaving the young lady... / Si si si ...yes I will leave her... / Do do do tomorrow I will leave... / When I'm in Bologna, I'll see my mommy waiting for me at the station, she's waiting for me at the station. Mom, don't cry, I'm here with you, dry your tears and give me a kiss."

or...
"The Indians
In the centre of the ea-earth
They ride
With the whole tribe... ahiabu ahiabu... Ja ja ja, yuppi ja ja lele
Ja ja ja, yuppi ja...ja buuuu"

And then in the morning, the wake-up call, Schubert's Ave Maria. It's a shame it came through those crackling loudspeakers.

I remember... the girls' clothes

The girls were all dressed in white, white shorts and tank tops, and often, over the white apron, which seemed like their own, not provided by the camp.
I don't think they went for a "swim" with us, I don't remember them in swimsuits... While all our personal clothes stayed in our suitcases, we only kept our underwear... and during those years, between 1967 and 1970, we were always dressed in the camp's shorts and shirts, all the same. Maybe the sweaters were ours? I don't remember that.

I remember... the Olympics

I was very athletic... and good, I competed in everything. And I even won some medals, I still have them... the competitions weren't in the water, but in high jump, long jump, barefoot running on the sand. "Snadrazzare" in my dialect means splashing in the water, like ducks. Our swim in the sea, consisted of just that: when the counsellor whistled, we had 10 minutes of freedom in the water, some teams all together. I remember the lifeguard not far away with his float. Then we would get out of the water at another whistle, and to dry ourselves, we would run and do exercises. Towels? Nooo!!!

I remember... that it was beautiful

I always felt privileged to go to the camp, for me it meant play, sun, friends, sea. I had a very nice counsellor, I know she was from our hills, but I only remember her name, which was quite unique: Zelinda.

Even though I know it wasn't like this for all children, my memory is sweet and enduring. Like quince jam.

Beautiful Colony Hello

Angelica Trotta

My name is Angelica Trotta, and I attended Colonia Bolognese from 1960 to 1966.

I didn't go there in '62. In '64 and '66, I went there with my sister, who was three years younger.

The train that took us to the colony didn't stop at a station but in the open countryside near Bolognese. Then we crossed uncultivated land that led to the road. That was the most unpleasant part of the stay, at least for me. I understand the children who didn't want to go willingly and started their turn in the midst of thorny bushes, with no one to help carry the suitcase, which, though small, felt quite heavy to small hands. I always thought that the power to order a train to stop outside the station must be extremely influential. Only once we arrived at the colony would we know which team we would be part of. The number to put on our belongings, however, was communicated to us several days before departure. I remember my mother buying white ribbon on which she wrote the name with indelible ink and sewed it onto each item. She also bought individual digits with which she composed the registration number and sewed it next to the ribbon with the name.

The numbers were bought in a string from the haberdasher. Then my mother composed them one by one into a three-digit registration number and sewed them onto the items. In my mother's house, the rag for polishing shoes is my towel with the number 112 still on it. I'm talking about the personal registration number. I don't remember the team number sewn on the items. However, I have received clean items after a shower that weren't mine because the registration numbers were read incorrectly.

My father made a list of what I was taking to the colony and typed it on a sheet of paper that he glued inside the suitcase, so when I returned, I could check to make

sure I had everything. In fact, I don't think I ever lost anything. My father was the only one in the family working, or rather, working outside the home. My mother had a lot to do with me and my sister, as well as an endless series of relatives and fellow villagers from the South who came to be treated at Rizzoli.

We lived in a new house, just built and bought with a lot of sacrifices. There was a semiannual mortgage payment to be made, and saving the necessary amount was always very difficult. I remember that one summer, when I was 6 years old, my father came to visit me on Parents' Day. We were sitting on the sand, a bit away from the others, and he confessed that he didn't know how to find the money he was missing to complete the mortgage instalment that would be due in a few days. My father was a strong man, someone everyone relied on, and whom I always considered invincible. Only illness got the better of him. He was tenacious, always accomplished the goals he set for himself. If he confessed such a problem to me, a defenceless child, it truly meant that worry was eating him alive. I remember that my reaction was quite frightened, and he tried to take back what he had said, concluding with his mantra: Don't worry, dad will take care of it. And he succeeded. I don't know how he did it, but he did. Even today, I can't think of that moment on the beach without seeing his lost look and feeling a huge lump in my throat. Dear dad.

Despite many years having passed, one of the things that left a strong impression on me from my time in Cologne is undoubtedly the flag-raising ceremony. We sang the national anthem while the flag was being raised. As we entered the courtyard, the Navy Anthem played, a long piece that allowed all the teams to position themselves around the flagpole. This took place every morning before breakfast, in the courtyard in front of the direction's balcony, facing the beach. Each team formed a line, I don't recall if it was a single line or two, and as the anthem began, we started marching in place before entering the courtyard, still marching, following a predetermined order known initially only to the supervisors (referred to by everyone as "misses"), then, after a few days, also known to us children. The anthem was quite long, but there were many of us, and it needed to be played in full to

accommodate all the teams. Once we were at attention, the flag-raising ceremony began. A boy, selected for reasons I don't know, assisted by an adult, operated the rope. As the flag rose, we sang "Fratelli d'Italia" with great enthusiasm. Perhaps a prayer followed, but what I remember for sure is that the director often appeared and provided us with information about the day's activities.

I had already heard on the radio the way Il Duce (Mussolini) spoke, and I found many similarities with the director. This made her seem like a kind of ruler who could do with us as she pleased. However, she was a nun, and I convinced myself that precisely because of that, she couldn't be as bad as Mussolini.

Yet, when she started with "Children! This is another day that the Lord sends us..." and proceeded with the day's information in her rhetorical and lofty voice, she was a precise middle ground between Il Duce and a narrator from an Istituto Luce documentary. The influence certainly remained even after the war, and when I attended in the first half of the 1960s, the adults present there, whether supervisors or staff, were very much influenced by the culture they had been raised in. The "misses", even if they were born around the time of the war, had breathed the atmosphere of the Fascist regime, and they were often stern with us, thinking that things had to be done a certain way. The way we children were organised was definitely military-like. However, I don't think all adults were nostalgic about Fascism. Quite the opposite. At Bolognese, for instance, I learned "Bella Ciao," and we sang it often and willingly!

After the flag-raising ceremony, we would head to the cafeteria for breakfast, still maintaining the same military-like order, although the lines were less neat, and our walk had a childish nonchalance. Sometimes we went there singing, which I really enjoyed. It seemed to add appeal to the breakfast, which was quite monotonous and featured milk that tasted like nothing. I didn't like the milk coffee at the colony at all. It was almost flavourless and slightly brownish. It hadn't seen coffee from a distance, and certainly not barley, which I liked a lot and whose flavour I didn't find. I've never been a picky eater and have always eaten everything, but I can't say

that the food was good at the colony. Well, at least not at Miramare.

Perhaps that's why I remember a tablet labeled "surrogate chocolate," but I have no recollection of its taste. And then there was jam, every day, that was supposed to be a snack.

Moving from sweet to savoury, there was a cold cut, something between what they called "salame rosa" in Bologna (delicious and, alas, now hard to find) and poor-quality mortadella. I ate it because there was nothing else, but let's say it wasn't really good.

I remember the cafeteria well. There were these long tables and benches. You had to climb over to sit down. The food wasn't great. The pasta didn't taste like anything, and it was usually seasoned with tomato sauce. No trace of ragù, or maybe, if it was there, the meat had only been glimpsed from afar. On Thursdays, we had chicken and potatoes. I always prayed silently for a thigh, but it happened rarely. Still, we always said a little prayer of thanks for the food before meals. Perhaps not at breakfast, but certainly at lunch and dinner.

Sometimes it rained, and we stayed inside. They would take two or three teams at a time to a room filled with books (I think they were from Edizioni Paoline) and souvenirs (like glass balls with snow, boxes with seashells, etc.), and if someone had money, they could buy something. Each supervisor had a notebook with the children's names, one per page, along with the money they had on arrival and the expenses incurred during the stay. Some kids were wealthier, but most of us had very little, if anything at all.

And then there were songs to pass the time... Do do do tomorrow I'm going home, re re re I breathe the pure air, mi mi mi I feel safer, fa fa fa I'll do what I like, sol sol sol solely I'm sorry, la la la leaving the misses, si si si I'll leave her. Do do do tomorrow I will leave. When I'm in Bologna, I see my mommy, waiting for me at the station, waiting for me at the station. Mommy, don't cry, I'm with you now. Leave the tears and give me a kiss. And if friends ask you, where we have been, we've

398

been at the Colony, for our recovery. Goodbye sea, goodbye company, if I go away, if I go away. Goodbye sea, goodbye company, if I go away, I won't return anymore. And if I return, I'll come back in the spring, with the flag, with the tricolour flag. If the flag is white, red, and green, it's a colour that doesn't fade. If the flag is white, red, and blue, I won't return to Miramare (a variant of the Colony)!

At the first sun, the marine citadel awakens, while in the air resonates the sweet Argentine bell. As the silver sea goes, the happy fisherman passes and bows to his Madonna, whispering softly: "Madonna of the sea, don't forget me. I go far away to row, but the sweetest thought is for you." The fisherman sings as he goes, Madonna of the sea, with you, this heart will be secure.

Second verse: The last ray of sun dies on the sea wave, while in the distance, the sweet Argentine bell resounds. As the silver sea goes, the fisherman goes with the wind (happy), passes and bows, etc., just like the first verse.

In the woods, there is firewood, in the woods, there is firewood, in the woods, there is firewood, the beautiful bayonet, zigzag zigon, and ciumbalala, in the woods, there is firewood. And then, following. We want to see the firewood. The fire has burnt it. We want to see the fire. The water has put it out. We want to see the water. The ox has drunk it. We want to see the ox. But I can't remember if we then sang "Death killed it." I do remember, however, that in the end, it went: "We want to see death. Death cannot be seen." And it concluded with a long, low note. With this song, our walks covered kilometres!

I received a very Catholic upbringing, even though in adulthood, I stopped attending church as regularly. However, I remember the various liturgical functions perfectly. One of these was also held at the Colony in Miramare: the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament. I recall that on that occasion, once during the shift, Cardinal Lercaro came, and we children were gathered in the courtyard. The ceremony always took place towards evening. I remember that the sun was no longer intense, in fact, we couldn't see it at all (it was setting on the side of the road), the sky was

399

tinted with pink stripes, and a pleasant breeze would pick up, making it enjoyable to be outside. Candles were given to us, wrapped in oiled paper of various colours. There weren't enough for everyone, and a battle would ensue to see who could get one. Then the candles were lit, a procession was formed led by Lercaro, dressed in vestments, holding the Blessed Sacrament. All the nuns of the Colony and perhaps other priests accompanying the cardinal, us children behind, and off we went, all in a line, singing the "Tantum Ergo." Naturally, at that age, none of us children knew Latin, and you can imagine the mistakes we made. However, I immensely enjoyed singing that chant that accompanied our steps as the day ended and the candles shone with coloured lights. I then distinctly remember the subsequent litany. God be blessed, blessed be His holy name, blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man, blessed be the name of Jesus, blessed be His most sacred heart, blessed be His most precious blood, blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, blessed be the Holy Spirit the Paraclete (I thought of a kind of aviator), blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary Most Holy (it sounded like a curse to me), blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception, blessed be her glorious assumption (I wondered what kind of job that was), blessed be the name of Mary, virgin and mother, blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse (and I verified that this has left an impression in the minds of many of my generation!), blessed be God in His angels and in His saints. This last invocation was pronounced by us with great force and almost shouting, as a declaration of the end of the ceremony.

Then Lercaro would step onto the director's balcony and bless us with the Blessed Sacrament. That evening was a worldly event for us since there weren't many other forms of entertainment offered to us. The squads I was a part of never participated in any performances. The peak of excitement was precisely when Cardinal Lercaro came, and we sang the "Tantum Ergo," one turn at a time.

I don't recall Mayor Dozza coming to the Colony, although he was still in office when I was there. Lercaro did. As for the notion that "Bolognese" was considered right-wing, I have vivid memories that confirm it. I lived in San Donato, a completely Scarlet [left-wing] district, and in my building, there were a couple of

families who were very much in favour of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), and one lady once commented to my mother one summer, "Of course, if you can't do anything else, you might as well send them to the priests."

Before departing for the Colony, we had to undergo a medical examination, which included checking our vaccinations. I particularly remember the injection for the anti-tetanus and anti-diphtheria vaccination with terror, in addition to the chest X-ray. The vaccination was done at the Health Office located in the courtyard of Palazzo d'Accursio, the one with the well, while the chest X-ray was done at the dispensary on Via Gino Rocchi. During the period I went there, I don't recall anyone being sent away due to lice, fortunately.

In addition to us children from the POA, there was a pavilion for children from Federconsorzi. They had nicer uniforms than ours and ate different things (at least for snacks). They seemed like wealthy kids to us. They never mixed with us. Probably it wasn't allowed. They also came from other regions.

Saturday afternoons were reserved for showers. We would go to the designated area, which I vaguely remember was on the side closer to Riccione, on the ground floor. We entered the changing room, one squad at a time, and found other chattering girls. We took off everything, and the soiled clothes were collected in large white canvas bags, one for each squad. The supervisor provided us with clean clothes to put on, which were probably stored somewhere since we had to return them when we were done. But my memory falters a bit here. In any case, these were our own items, each marked with our names and identification number. We were also given clean overalls, and several times I ended up with ones that weren't my size, which made me feel quite uncomfortable. Then we entered the shower room, warm and steamy. We were completely naked, with soap in hand, and we weren't washing ourselves completely on our own; I remember strong women who scrubbed us thoroughly. I felt extremely embarrassed. I wasn't accustomed to all that nudity, and I found it offensive. Probably, it's the aspect of the Colony that I've always liked the least.

Now that I'm an adult and have learned about the horrors of gas chambers, I understand how those poor deportees must have felt, amplified compared to my own embarrassment. The fact remains that it was an utterly depersonalising moment, where one felt like just a piece of meat. Not to mention that the water was often quite chilly. Then we were dried with cotton towels, probably bed sheets, but not one for each child. If you were lucky to be the first to use it, great, but otherwise, the sensation was that you weren't drying at all. In fact, you remained wet and immediately felt dirty again.

We only went to the dormitory after lunch and in the evening to sleep. By evening, the sun was already gone, so if we had waited, we wouldn't have suffered from the heat. In the afternoon, it seems to me that we went up right after finishing lunch. I don't have a precise memory, but I didn't like the afternoon nap at all, and even the slightest waste of time, even under the sun, would have been welcome to me. I would have even swum if they had allowed me! And the diving board was also very tiring, given the concentration of children per square meter! The ladies and nuns entered the water, positioned themselves in a semicircular area, and we had to stay inside that area. I got very nervous about swimming like that, thinking that the year before, when I was at the sea with my parents, I was always in the water. Not to mention that when you got out of the water, they made you run back and forth to dry you off, which I hated, literally.

And imagine how deep the water must have been, because already on our coast, you can touch the bottom for kilometres, and the nuns who were in the water pulled their skirts up only to their knees at most. They couldn't show their thighs. In short, we stayed close to the shore.

When I went to the Colony, the overalls were provided directly by them, and we would wear underwear, undershirts, and shirts underneath. To be honest, most of the kids only wore the undershirt. There are already many photos where you can see the overalls. We also brought our swimsuits from home. Nowadays, we all have different swimsuits. At that time, I don't remember any girl showing off more than one swimsuit. Nobody wore bikinis.

I remember that during those years, there were stories circulating about the "Black Hand." However, I didn't believe it, even though the first time I went to Miramare, I was 6 years old. What did scare me, though, were sleepwalking girls that someone had talked to me about, even though I never met one.

Of course, the facilities, due to their spaciousness and long corridors, were conducive to all sorts of horror stories. When I started reading Harry Potter, long before the movies were made, I imagined Hogwarts as my Miramare Colony.

My Summer Camp

Raffaella Amadori

The seamstress marked the hem of the little apron with white and red checkered squares. "We'll put the buttons in the front," my mother had said, "so she can fasten it herself." I stood on the kitchen table, pleased with all the attention; my sister, seated in the highchair, watched while nibbling on a piece of bread. I would wear that little apron a few days later, setting off for summer camp: I had just turned six, and in October, I would start the first grade. I knew how to write my name, read a few words, draw a little house, sing "Pulcino Roccocò," say the Ave Maria, but I couldn't write a letter, and above all, I couldn't even remotely imagine what a summer camp was.

But the sea, I knew that. I was one year old when my father, with his new taxi, took us to the sea for the first time: my mother, my grandfather, and I, to a farmhouse surrounded by the countryside. To reach the beach, we crossed long fields: my grandfather, a farmer, would pluck tufts of alfalfa and hold them up to my face, saying, "Smell how nice it is!" That wasn't just a vacation; it was a therapy to try to tame the asthma that took away my breath, strength, sleep, and appetite. At the sea, I felt good, I could breathe, run, sleep, and even eat!

A doctor at the Antituberculosis Dispensary, where I went for treatment, suggested to my parents that they send me to a seaside camp to improve my health: the proposal was accepted. After the examination and the usual X-ray, we returned home with a list of clothes to pack and a pack of sweet tablets for typhoid fever! It was done: I would soon leave, with my checkered apron, the cardboard suitcase my mother had used when she went to work as a rice-picker, a straw hat, and a bag of cookies. I had already been on a train before, in third class, with my grandfather when he went to visit his sister in Bologna: but that was a different train. This time, I would board the train alone, with my suitcase and bag of cookies. The station was immense, a hubbub of parents and children, a voice from the loudspeaker croaked instructions.

"Be good and eat," a hug, and I was on the train, next to the window, waving to my mom and dad. I felt grown up, along with all those other girls: some who were experienced gave advice and suggestions, others explained how the day would unfold, others, upon meeting, recalled the moments spent together. The station was far from the camp: when we got off the train, we found ourselves crossing a long orchard, and among those plants, I immediately felt at home. Then, at the end of the long path, beyond the grey ribbon of the asphalt road, finally, there it was: the camp, huge, made of red bricks, large trees in the garden, green meadows on which bright white sheets dazzled, drying in the summer sun. And behind the camp, beyond the large square with the flagpole, beyond the immense beach, the sea, blue, with white waves! And then the good smell of salt, and the gentle lapping that seemed enchanting... and in all that wonderful confusion, the girl with the red checkered apron got lost.

The twilight enveloped the long corridors, bordered by large windows, and the blue lights of the night began to turn on. Then a gentle hand took mine, and a smiling nun asked me, "Child, what's your name?"
"My name is Raffaella, Mother."
"And do you know which team you're on?"
"No, Mother. And besides... I think I'm lost."
"I think so too."
That's where the wandering between the dormitories began:
"Whose child is this?"
Finally, we found my "Signorina," my team, my dormitory. I sat on the green enamel bed to eat a cookie. Everything was fine.

Years and decades have passed, but the memory of the camp never leaves me, and one day, returning from a trip, I pass by it: "Stop."
"Why?"
"That's my camp."
And my husband stops. I look around and see nothing but absolute desolation.
"Where are you going? Turn back! There's a sign with a no-entry symbol." No entry?

I move a barrier and enter. In the advancing evening silence, an infinite sadness descends upon my heart: "Camp, what have they done to you?" I enter the dining hall, go up to the dormitories, then take the grand staircase that leads to the administration office, walk through deserted corridors. And suddenly, there they are: I hear the running steps of children, the voices singing, the whispers in the night, the march of the navy, the smell of bread in the morning, the whistle that makes you run between the waves. And I see the white tents in the sun, the red bathing suits of the lifeguards, the white coats of the ladies, the black headscarves of the nuns, the pink syrup for coughing. And the little Chinese hats and swimsuits drying on the fence. Then that silence again, that destruction, that pain. And so I cry, alone, at the entrance of the dormitory, looking at the sea through those windows, which seem like tragic empty orbits. Poor camp of mine, leaning on the shore of the sea, like a dying whale, alone, in the silence of the evening. I got back in the car. My husband looks at me amazed: "Why are you crying?" "For my camp." He shakes his head, doesn't understand: he went to camp too and never liked it... but he didn't go to my camp!

Then, one day, an image appears on my smartphone screen: it's her, my camp! The wonderful kids from il Palloncino Rosso are taking care of it, an association that has managed a small part of the camp in an attempt to bring it back to life. They're talking about it on Facebook. Thanks to them, I find many who, like me, remember the camp. Hope is reborn: old camp, we haven't forgotten you, we're here again, and we love you.

The Summer Camp

Alba Tinarelli

Since the town is located in an extensive plain surrounded by hills, in one of these, about 3-4 km from the town, on the edge of a forest, a colony has emerged to accommodate the children. It borders on a well-trodden but unpaved road, the fields of a farmer, and, of course, the forest where outdoor toilets have been adapted. It occupies a fairly large area, all enclosed by a sufficiently high metal fence and closed by a large gate.

The area designated for the colony is nestled in the forest, 100 meters from the main road. It has been cleared of undergrowth, leaving some oak trees here and there for shade, and young saplings destined for the care of the children. At the edge of the dirt road that connects the colony to the main road is the *Conservone* (a small spring that provides water to the entire town), and from the gate of its enclosure, you can hear the sound of flowing water, creating a sensation of freshness.

On one side of the dirt road, at the forest's edge, are fields and the farmhouse of a farmer who has agreed to grant permission to use a part of his land for "sunbathing" and for the stops of the carts destined for supplies and other necessities required for the children's stay in the colony. In the colony, a large shed without walls has been built; the roof is supported by concrete columns with wooden hanging compartments in the upper part, each labeled, closed with strings. These compartments also hold white and pink squares for the females and sky-blue and white squares for the males, used to store their own cups, napkins, glasses, and utensils brought from home.

This construction serves as the dining hall and is equipped with 2 long tables covered with waxed checkered tablecloths in white and pink and white and sky-blue, matching the curtains, and 4 long wooden benches of appropriate length for the tables.

Paths are followed, and they are filled with moss, on top of which, with small marble pebbles, they create the breakfast area. The cook and her assistant uncover the steaming pots of milk and barley coffee and the toasted bread, still warm. Finding their designated spot, while breakfast is being distributed, some struggle to adjust, but after the first few days, it becomes a true blessing for many, given the difficult conditions of their families; for others, it's a chance to appreciate everything they had accepted with some difficulty until then.

After finishing breakfast, and quickly folding and placing the napkin back into their respective compartments under the watchful eyes of the ladies, everyone lines up on the main road to go to the water fountains near the kitchen to wash their cups and utensils. Then, still in line, they return them to their compartments along with the napkin.

Not far away, there is also the dining hall, in a smaller form, for the headmistress (a kindergarten teacher and a very skilled embroiderer), the supervisors, the cook, and her assistant. At the end of the dirt road, at the junction with the beaten path leading to the park, a small hut has been built to serve as the kitchen. Nearby, six water fountains and showers have been installed.

On the day the summer colony vacation begins, all the admitted children gather in the town square at 7:30 AM dressed as required by the regulations: the girls wear a white jumpsuit with a white and pink checkered apron on top, a white picot cap with starched brims on their heads, and leather or white canvas sandals, custom-made; for the boys, it's the same, except that the colour of the checks is sky blue instead of pink.

All excited, the youngsters wait for the cart driver, hired to bring supplies and rolled-up blankets used as sleeping bags for their afternoon nap. While the boys each carry in their own little bag, made from the same fabric as the apron, everything they need for lunch and personal hygiene. Then, in pairs, they set off, singing patriotic hymns they learned at school.

Just outside the town, still under the supervision of the female supervisors (young women aged 19 to 21), they are granted a certain degree of freedom, and then everyone dedicates themselves to observing the remaining free time, before heading for sun therapy, each person dedicates to their own leisure activities: some tend to the small flower beds created around the young trees, others play cards, some read, and some lie on the ground to rest, think, and daydream.

When the time for sun therapy arrives, starting at 11 AM, the children once again quickly line up, equipped with a towel and a hat, to head to the neighbouring farmer's field that has been prepared for this purpose. They spread their towels on the stubble and begin sunbathing, arranged in rows.

On the first day, in silence, lying on their towels with shoulders and chests exposed and hats on their heads, sun therapy begins with 5 minutes on the back and 5 minutes on the front, increasing each day until reaching 30 minutes on each side. The children, while not enthusiastic about it, participate resigned and convinced of the benefits it would bring them. However, they eagerly await the headmistress, holding a white parasol like her uniform and those of the supervisors, to announce the end of the daily therapy with a whistle. Then, even though sweaty and sun-strained, they all jump up like crickets at the same time. After vigorously shaking their towels to free them from dry grass and any ants or other small insects, they slowly make their way to the showers, where they freshen up and get ready for lunch.

After eating, refreshed and clean, they sit in a clearing under some pine trees near the kitchen, where the headmistress awaits them to share some beautiful readings or moral tales, asking for their impressions afterward.

Lunch is ready, and Colomba (the cook) rings the bell. Everyone springs up like a coil, lines up, and rushes to the mess hall, where everything is already prepared. After finishing their meal, still in line and accompanied by the ladies, they all go to wash their utensils and glasses, while the plates are collected in baskets by the cook

and her assistant and washed in the kitchen by them. Before their afternoon nap, the children have some free time at their disposal, which they can use as they please, as long as they respect the existing regulations based on respect, obedience, and the safety of colony life.

At a set time, everyone lays their blanket on the ground in the shade of the remaining oak trees, and in the silence of a hot summer afternoon, the rustling of the tree branches, the chirping of birds, and the gentle breeze caressing their tired faces overcome even the last resistance of those who didn't want to nap.

After about an hour of rest, the headmistress or a supervisor rings a bell, and those who wake up first try to awaken those who are still sleeping soundly and didn't hear the bell. After a short while, everyone gathers in the area near the mess hall to engage in about 20 minutes of physical exercises before having a snack consisting of bread and honey or bread and jam, which everyone appreciates and devours eagerly.

The departure for the return to the town is scheduled for 6:30 PM, and in the time remaining after the snack, the children, all in a line, go to the water fountains to wash and get ready. Then, together with the supervisors, they learn and repeat some fascist hymns that they will sing when they return to the town and on the last day of the colony in the town square in front of their families and local fascist authorities. Sometimes, in the afternoon, a thunderstorm breaks out, and thus the nap-time is skipped, bringing great joy to the children, especially the boys, because in the event of such occurrences, they go to take shelter with the nearby farmer.

The farmer's barn, still empty, is made available, where, amidst jokes and humour, they overcome their fear of lightning and thunder, and it all ends with unexpected fun. When the time comes to return to the town, all cleaned up and ready with their aprons, they line up in pairs and head back along the morning route. On the way, they laugh, happy to be returning to their families. They observe the young girls and tease them, trying to show off, not letting anything around them go unnoticed.

Upon reaching the town's threshold, the ladies and the headmistress organise the lines of the children, who, singing the hymns they learned at the colony, enter the town, heading to the square where the children and parents await them in front of the monument dedicated to the fallen in the war.

A month passes quickly, and the last two days are special because they are dedicated to the preparation and decoration of the farm carts, lent by the farmers and pulled by oxen, which will bring the children back to town on the last day of the colony. Each team chooses the cart they like the most (usually, the carts are all red but with different decorations) and decorates it according to their tastes with wildflowers, green branches, strips, and coloured tissue paper bows. Even the oxen are adorned in red ribbons.

The return to the town on the last day of the colony is earlier, and the boys, all cleaned up with starched hats and shoulder bags, feeling both excited and sad, are assisted by the ladies (also looking neat) to settle into the carts. As they reach the town's gates, the carts separate from each other and parade one by one to the singing of the children. They are followed by a trail of curious onlookers, children, and parents. They stop in the square, lined up in front of the usual monument dedicated to the fallen in war.

On a stage set up for the occasion, the fascist authorities of the town and many parents are present, welcoming them with a big round of applause. The most representative authority congratulates the children on their behaviour and, on behalf of the parents, thanks and praises those who have taken care of them for a month, watching over them, guiding them, and educating them.

Verso
nuove estati *Towards*
Passato, presente e futuro
delle colonie per l'infanzia in Europa
New Summers

*Past, present and future of holiday
camps for children in Europe*

**Convegno internazionale
Ravenna, 15–16 settembre 2022**
*International symposium
Ravenna, September 15th–16th, 2022*

Seminario Arcivescovile
Piazza Duomo 4, Ravenna

Figure 2
412

15 09 2022 mattina *morning*

08.30
Registrazione *Registration*

09.00–9.30
Saluti d'apertura *Opening remarks*

09.30–10.00
Micaela Antonucci, Luigi Bartolomei, Sofia Nannini, Università di Bologna
Verso nuove estati: introduzione alla conferenza
Towards new summers: Introduction to the conference

10.00–10.45
Keynote speaker | Valter Balducci, ENSA Normandie
Le promesse delle colonie per l'infanzia

10.45–11.00
Pausa caffè *Coffee break*

VERSO UNA STORIA DELLE COLONIE PER L'INFANZIA
TOWARDS A HISTORY OF HOLIDAY CAMPS FOR CHILDREN

La nascita delle colonie per l'infanzia, tra sanità, beneficenza e turismo *The emergence of holiday camps for children, between healthcare, charity and tourism*

Moderatore *Discussant*
Valter Balducci, Ensa Normandie

11.00–11.20
Invited speaker | Dolf Broekhuizen, Independent researcher/ Rotterdam
The first model holiday camp in the Netherlands: Kerdijk holiday camp in Egmond at Sea (1907)

11.30–11.45
Luca Comerio, Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca
Sulle tracce delle prime colonie di vacanza italiane: i casi milanesi della Cura Climatica Gratuita ai Fanciulli Gracili, alunni delle scuole elementari comunali di Milano e delle Colonie climatiche autunnali per fanciulli e fanciulle (1881–90)

11.50–12.05
Philippe Clairay, Université de Rennes 2
Dai sanatori ai colonie per l'infanzia : l'esempio della Bretagna (Francia)

12.10–12.25
Pedro Silvani, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"
Freguesias marítimas: l'esperienza delle colonie balneari infantili dell'intorno di Lisbona nei primi decenni del Novecento. Il caso O Seculo

12.45–14.00
Pranzo *Lunch*

15 09 2022 pomeriggio *afternoon*

Colonie come strumento di propaganda politica nei regimi totalitari del Novecento *Holiday camps as a tool for political propaganda in totalitarian regimes*

Moderatrice *Discussant*
Simona Salustri, Università degli Studi di Padova

14.00–14.20
Invited speaker | Arne Winkelmann, Independent researcher/ Frankfurt am Main
Sleeping in rank and file: Colonies and Soviet pioneer camps – A comparison

14.30–14.45
Tim Brown, University of Huddersfield
A Difficult Heritage of Italy's Fascist Era Colonie

14.50–15.05
Elettra Malossi, Sonja Magnani, Regione Emilia-Romagna, Marco Pretelli, Leila Signorelli, Università di Bologna, La Colonia Marina Varese a Milano Marittima. Prospettive di riuso per "architetture di cristallo"

15.10–15.25
Alberto Ghezzi y Alvarez, Università degli Studi di Firenze
La voz del hogar: la residencia infantile estiva per i dipendenti della Cristalería Española di Alejandro de la Sota, José Antonio Corrales e Ramón Vázquez Molezún (1957)

15.30–15.45
Elisa Pegorin, Università Iuav di Venezia
A Infância da modernidade: Le colonie estive dell'Italia fascista al Portogallo di Salazar

15.50–16.05
Gianluca Drigo, Università Iuav di Venezia
La macchina e l'accampamento

16.10–16.30
Pausa caffè *Coffee break*

Moderatrice *Discussant*
Micaela Antonucci, Università di Bologna

16.35–16.50
Simonetta Ciranna, Patrizia Montuori, Università degli Studi dell'Aquila
Dalla Mostra internazionale contro la tubercolosi (1928) alla Mostra delle colonie estive (1937): politica sanatoriale e propaganda di regime da Cesare Valle a Ettore Rossi e gli artefici delle due esposizioni romane

16.55–17.10
Maria Rossana Caniglia, Università degli Studi di Messina
"Per i bimbi che il mare redime": L'Ospizio Marino a Messina, dai baraccamenti della colonia elioterapica nel 1918 alla nuova costruzione "Benito Mussolini" negli anni del Fascismo

Figure 3

413

14.30–14.45

Tim Brown, University of Huddersfield

A Difficult Heritage of Italy's Fascist Era Colonie

The Fascist regime inherited a system of colonie which it expanded dramatically over the following years, until there was a colonia for every child; for children of war veterans; transport, industry, and public service workers; for cities, regions, and Italians abroad. A presumably well-oiled system oversaw the relocation of many thousands of children each summer, and necessitated standards; rules of operation; inspections; efficient transport; supply chains; and communications. The colonie system could perhaps be seen as an enactment of the regime's colonial ambitions with its futuristic forms resembling battleships, submarines, airplanes, machines and towers as metaphors for expansion and conquest.

As some of the most iconic colonie buildings were started after Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia and declaration of Empire in 1936, it seems likely that the regime's imperial and warlike ambitions were reflected in the design and scale of these constructions. This is perhaps what Dan Dubowitz and Patrick Duerden experienced while visiting the colonie, and what they articulated through their photography and writing, along with contributions from writer Penny Lewis, and architect and researcher Arne Winkelmann (Dubowitz, Lewis & Duerden, 2010). Their conclusions that the Fascist colonie are inexorably tainted as metaphors for the legacy of a regime that glorified war and violence and the subjugation of its population would seem to situate hundreds of Italian colonie firmly in the realm of difficult heritage. Roberta Mira and Simona Salustri suggest that the colonie represented a system suspended between providing welfare and political ideology (Mira & Salustri, 2019). Joshua Samuels (Samuels, 2015), proposes a number of alternative adjectives for difficult heritage, including; dissonant, negative, undesirable, and abject, any of which may usefully describe the challenges posed by the material remains of a period, site, or event, that is problematic for one reason or another in the present day. Samuels recognises a tendency to seek for the darkness that must lurk within any Fascist scheme, whereby anything related to its material legacy is regarded as inherently problematic, so potentially influencing the expectations of the researcher. While Samuels' research involves a different Fascist project to the colonie, his conclusions support my research findings as to whether the colonie represent just another part of the widespread and difficult legacy of Italy's Fascist regime (Ben-Ghiat, 2017). The website of the renovated colonia Fara, now Torre Fara, celebrates Futurist inspiration; avant-garde influences; and speaking architecture of the Mediterranean and European spirit, but omits to mention Fascism. (Torre Fara, 2022).

My PhD research is a study of Fascist colonie and their relationship with difficult heritage. The starting point for understanding of difficult heritage is Sharon Macdonald's work on the remains of the Nazi Rally Grounds at Nuremberg (2006, 2009). I ask how appropriate is it for Fascist colonie? What kinds of 'difficulties' from the past may be influencing their present-day situation and, frequently uncertain, futures? To acknowledge or airbrush out the past? I investigate to what extent the colonie adhere to definitions of difficult heritage and what may make them a complex case. I consider their past, present, and speculative futures through research and creative practice. My research utilises photography, archival images, newsreel footage, and speculative development proposals, to discover what kind of difficult heritage might be found within the history of the colonie. I explore ways in which unrealised and uncompleted restoration and conversion projects may bear testament to unresolved difficulties. To dismiss the colonie as unimportant remains of the Fascist regime misses out on comprehending their complexity and enduring impact on the Italian landscape.

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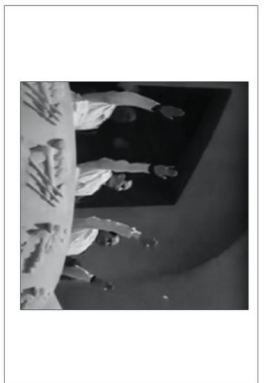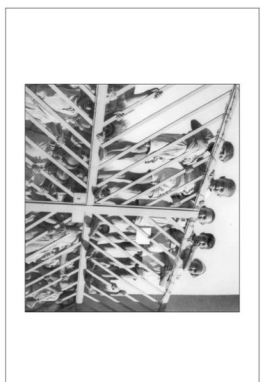
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Bio

Tim Brown is a researcher and photographer, in the process of writing up a practice- based PhD on the difficult heritage of Italian children's summer camps during the Fascist regime. The research draws on photographic practice, images from the past, present, and imagined futures, primary sources, other literature, and themes of difficult heritage.

Figure 4

414

Experimental heterotopia sequence
Tim Brown 2021

a space that is other,
another real space,
as perfect, as meticulous,
as well arranged as ours is messy,
ill constructed,
and jumbled.
This latter type would be the heterotopia,
not of illusion,
but of compensation,
and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner.
In certain cases,
they have played,
on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space,
the role of heterotopias.

The
daily life of
the
individual was
regulated,
not by the bustle,
but by the bell.
Everyone was awakened at the same time,
everyone began work at the same time;
meals were at noon and five o'clock,
then came bedtime.

TCR 00:43:46:03

Figure 5

Experimental heterotopia sequence
Tim Brown 2021

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures.

The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.

Figure 6

Experimental heterotopia sequence
Tim Brown 2021

These are those linked,
on the contrary,
to time in its most flowing,
transitory, precarious aspect,
to time in the mode of the festival.

Figure 7

417
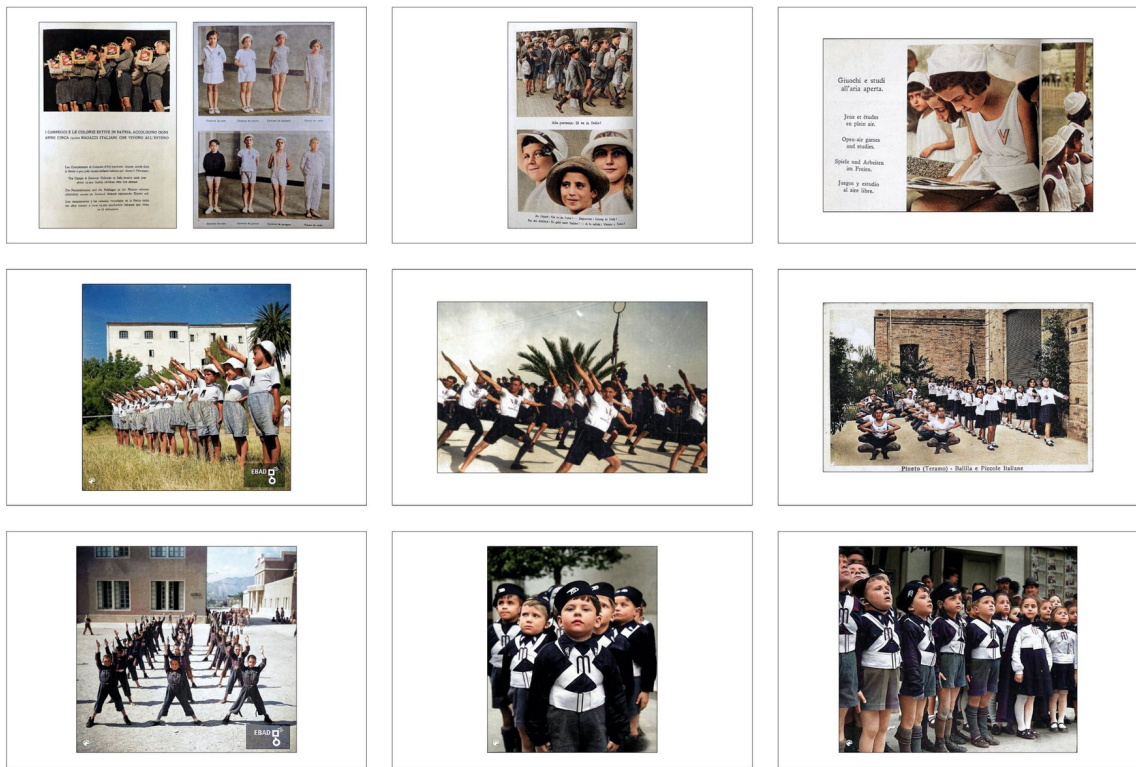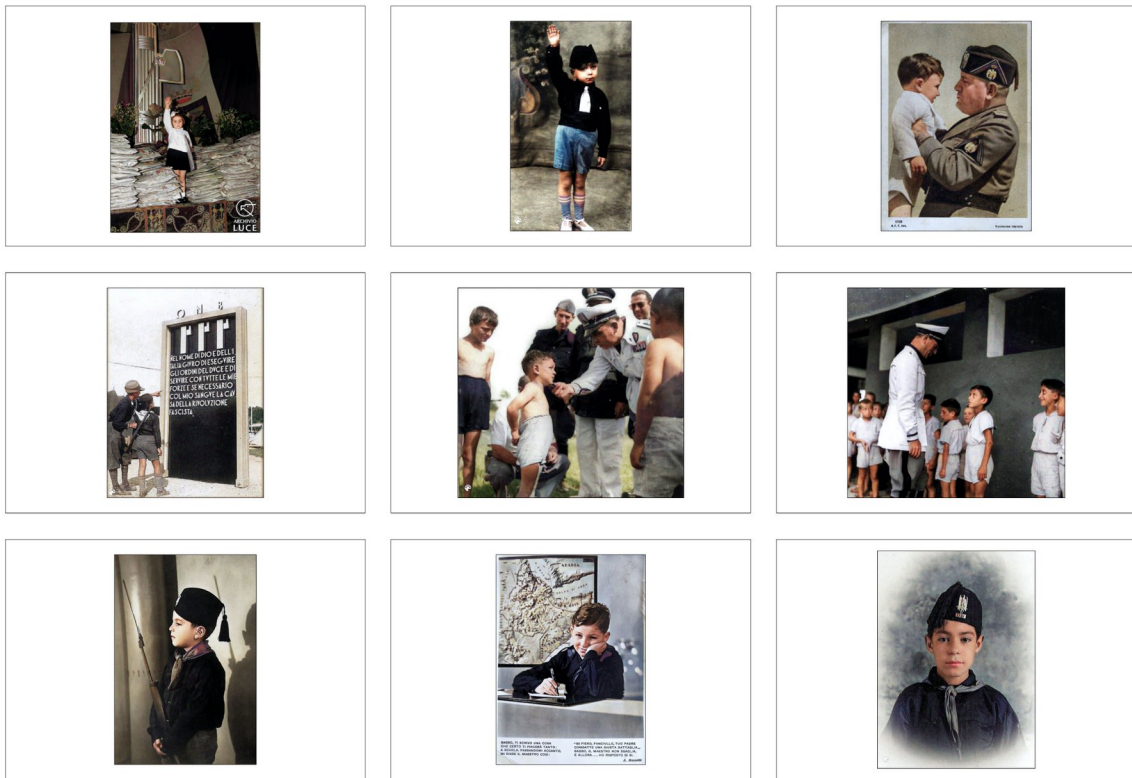
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Figure 9

Figure 10
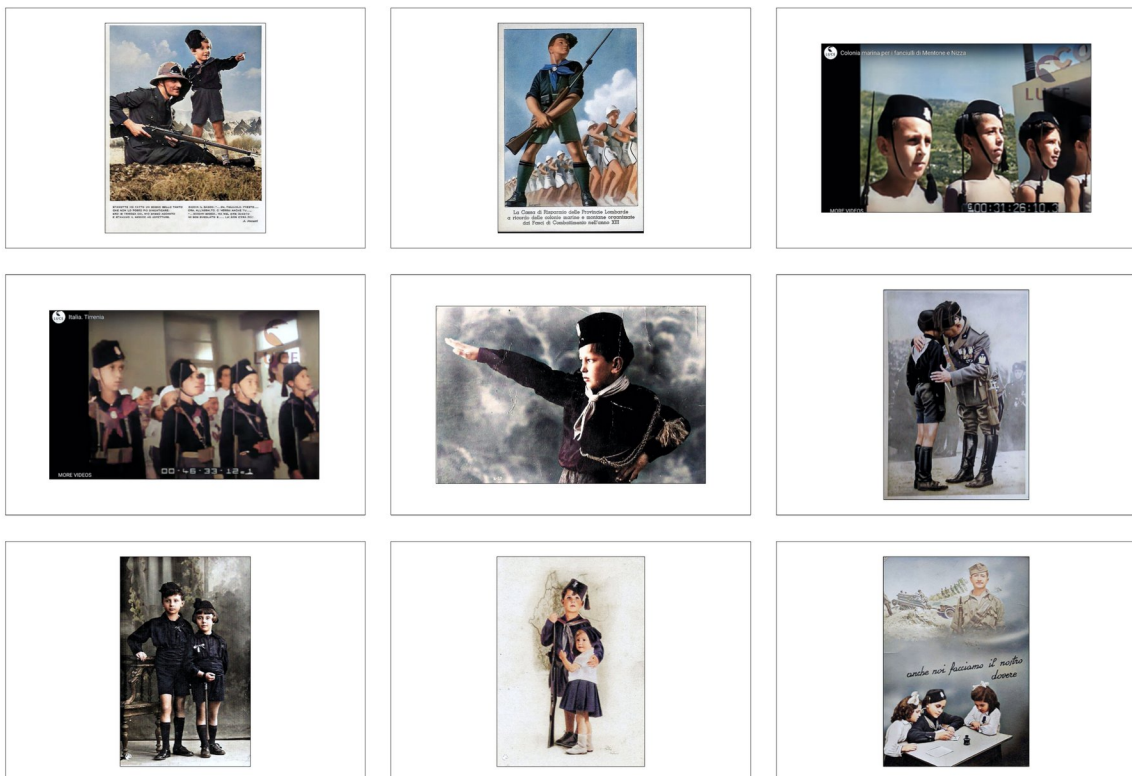
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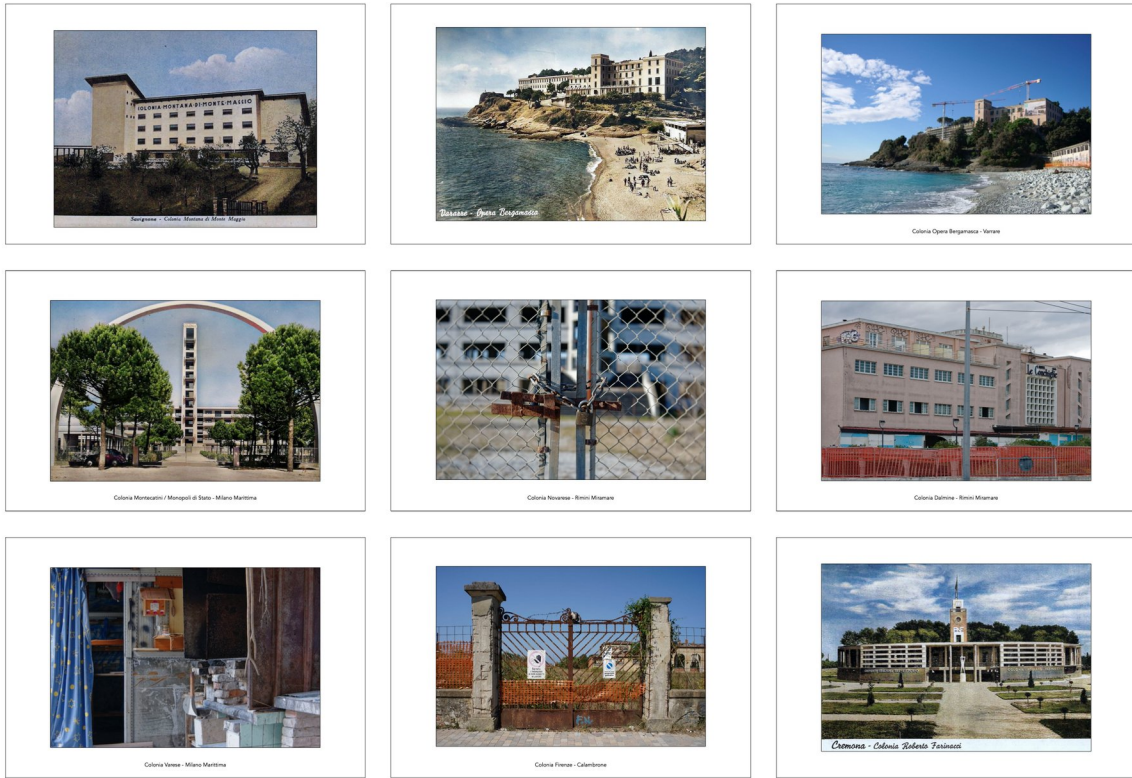
Figure 12

Figure 13
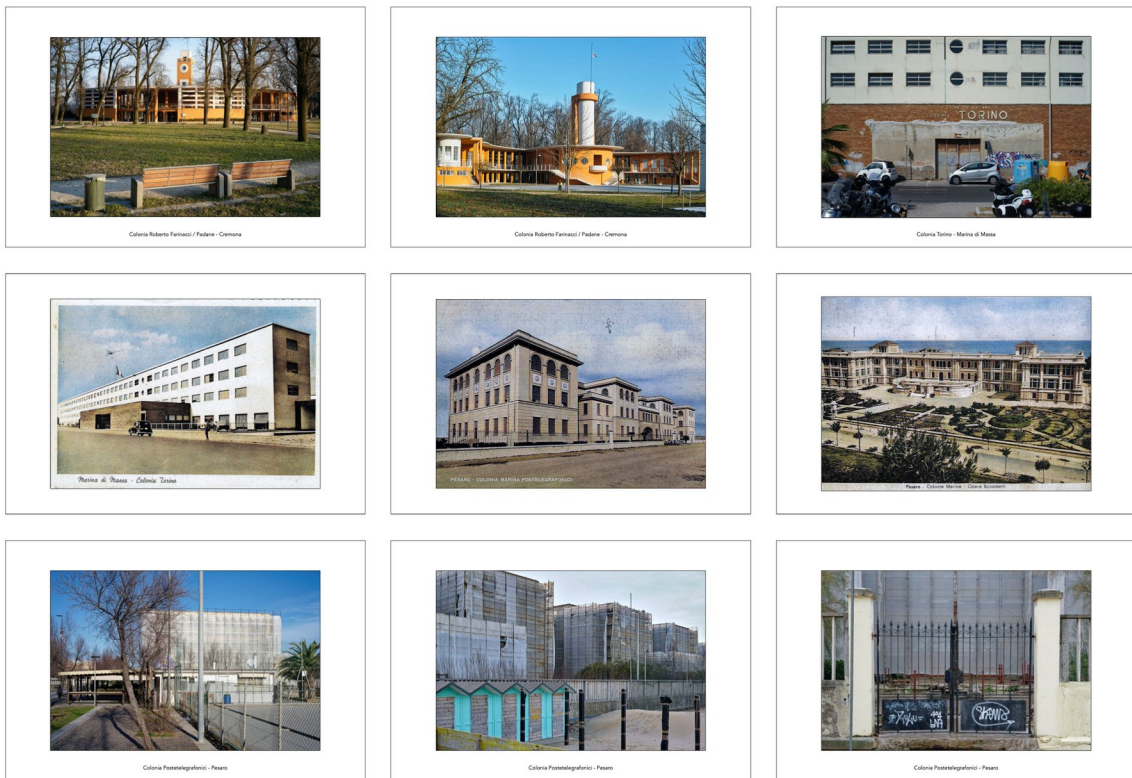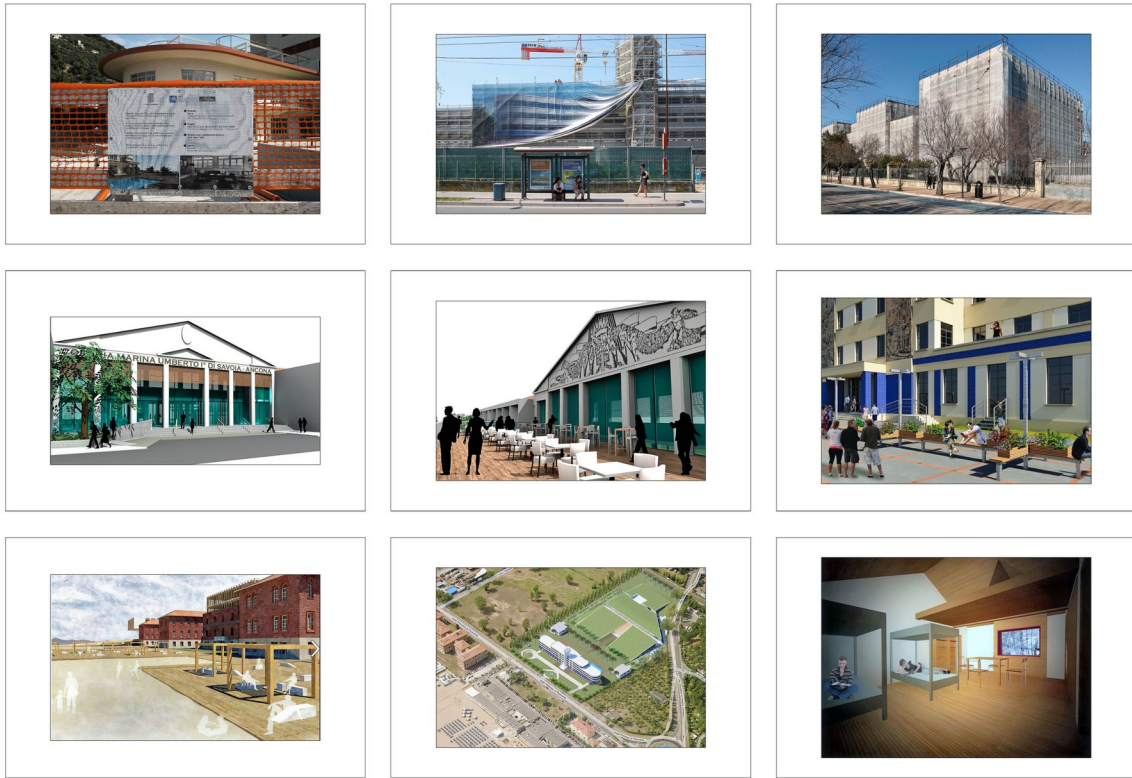
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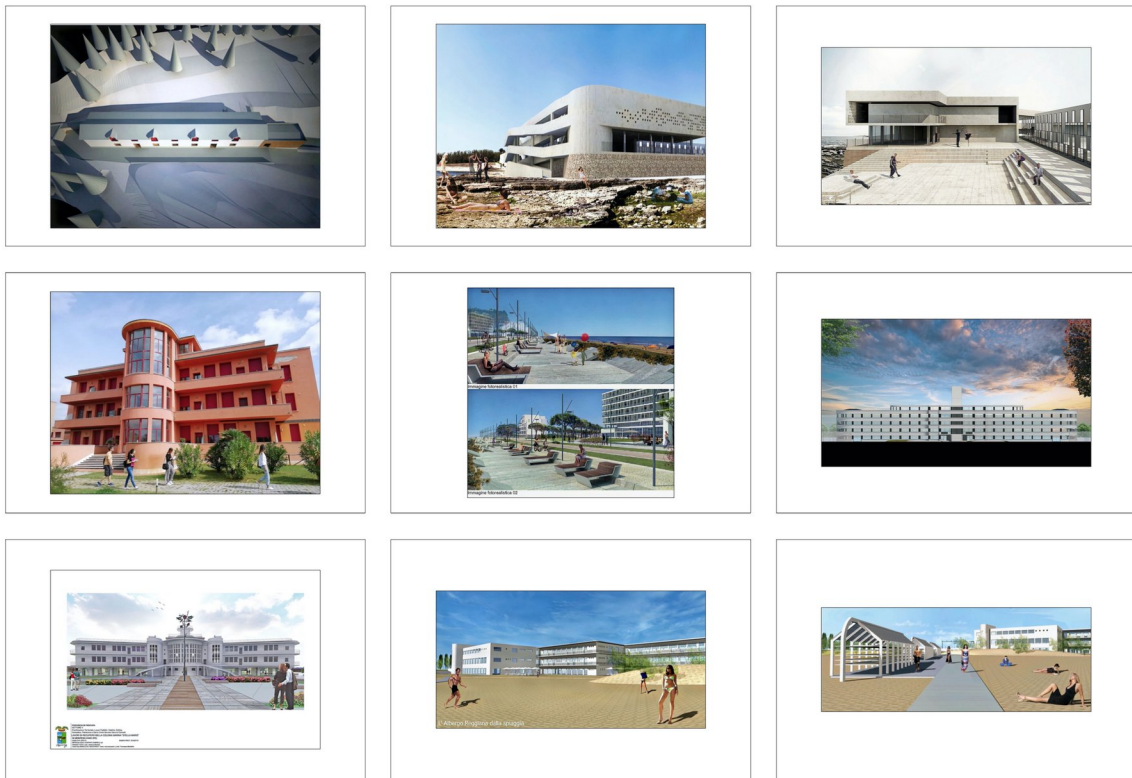Figure 15

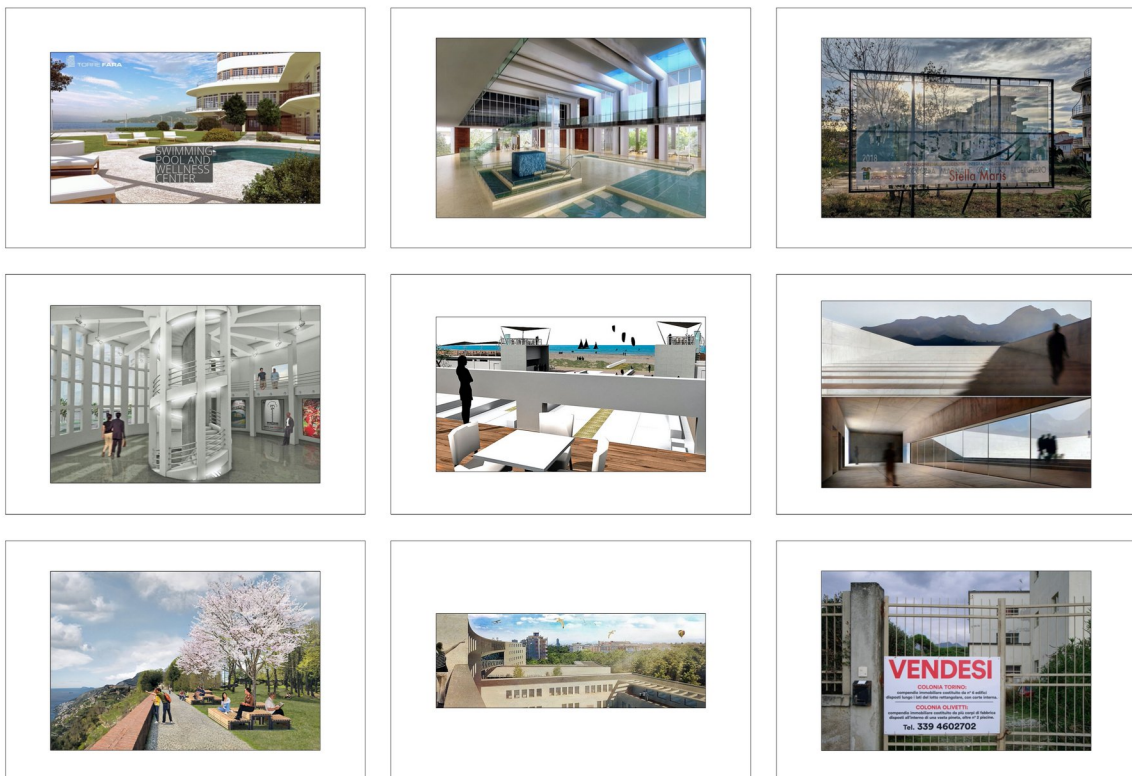421
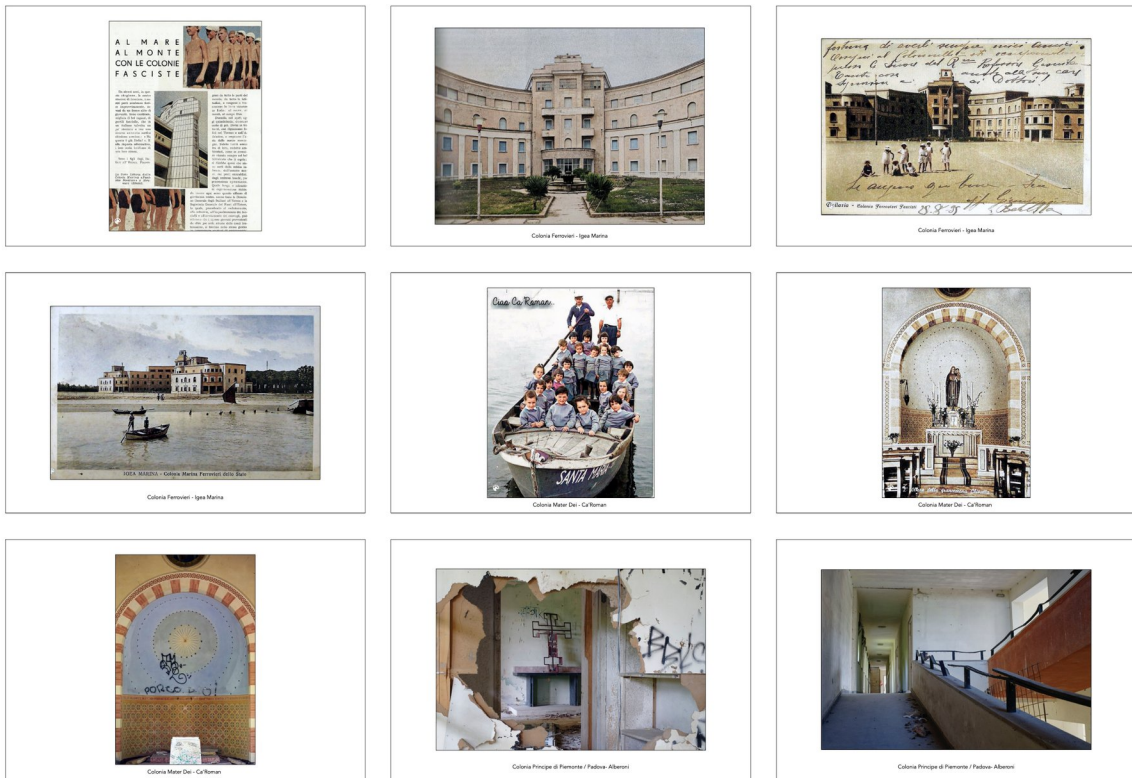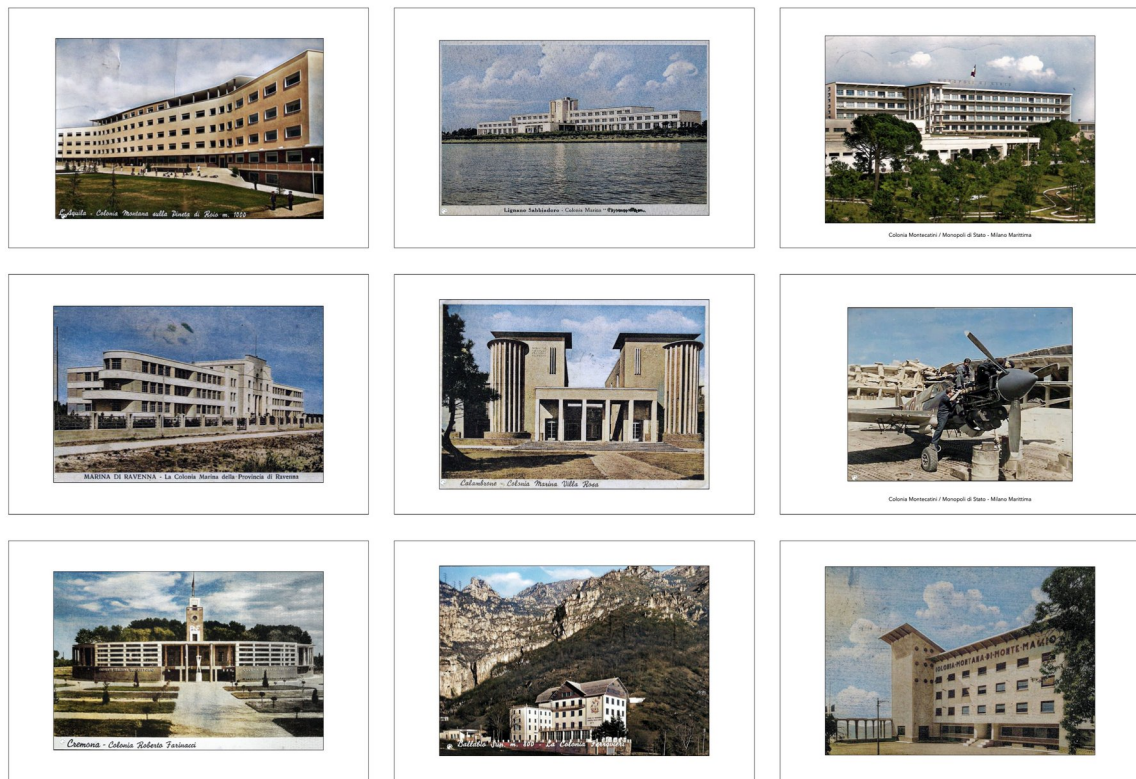
Figure 16

Figure 17

Figure 18

Figure 19

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23

425