

The Urban Heritage of Modernism on the Adriatic Coast: Transformation of the Italian post-industrial Mediterranean Landscape

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In 1920, after the fascists had come to power in Italy, a programme was started for the planned building of new cities, the *città di fondazione*, in which Mussolini's aim was to exemplify the strength and élan of the new regime. These manifesto cities of Mussolini were, however, only model examples of a project of urbanisation of much broader compass, in which during 15 years, as many as 147 such complete new settlements were produced. In this modernist period between the world wars, in just ten or so years (1933-1942), three Croatian contemporary company towns were also set up, featuring functionalist concepts and avant-garde architecture – Uble (San Pietro), Raša (Arsia) and Podlabin (Pozzo Littorio). These three cities arose in the Adriatic zone of Croatia, in the part that at that time belonged to Italy, and their development was the result of Mussolini's re-Romanisation plan and was part of the infrastructural advancement of the "new provinces". Although all these cities were created as programmatic projects of the fascist government, in the domain of their city planning concepts and in their architectural expression there were some exceptionally high quality works of some of the leaders of Italian modernism (G. Pulitzer Finali, E. Montuori), who along with a rationalist composition always endeavoured to incorporate specific local elements, particularly in the details and choice of materials. This research focuses on a comparison of the architectural and planning characteristics of the Croatian and the Italian cities, particularly with respect to how the concept of "Mediterranean style" was perceived, different as it was in the various countries. The subject of research in the sequel is the some thirty cities and settlements in other parts of the Italian empire as it then was – Greece, Somalia, Eritrea, Libya and Ethiopia – which will be critically compared with the southern European examples of Croatia and Italy. Various approaches are shown, not only in the aesthetic characteristics of the designs of the individual buildings, but also in overall urban concepts. The Italian colonization of North Africa looked at Arab vernacular houses as a source of a modern colonial architecture, and this colonization was based on tourism and a primary orientation to agriculture, while in Croatia, the strategy of settling new territories involved industrial development rather than agriculture. The idea of this research undertaking is to systematise and make a proper evaluation of the historical stratum of architecture and planning, as well as to investigate the current states of affairs in the cities of the *città di fondazione* project, so as to have an overview of the transformations that have taken place since the 1930s, preparing the ground for architectural and planning proposals for the future and for the challenges that the 21st century brings with it.

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