

VOL VII

# Ciências Humanas:

Estudos Para Uma Visão  
Holística Da Sociedade



Silvia Inés Del Valle Navarro  
Gustavo Adolfo Juarez  
(Organizadores)

 EDITORA  
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2023

VOL VII

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## PRÓLOGO

En este **séptimo volumen** de la obra titulada ***Ciências Humanas: Estudos para uma Visão Holística da Sociedade***, tenemos la oportunidad de acompañar a los autores, participantes de esta publicación de la Editora Artemis.

En ella se evidencia el interés por la divulgación de las investigaciones realizadas, siendo muy variadas en cuanto a temáticas, no así en lo disciplinar. En efecto, la investigación en educación incluye desde lo histórico, lo socio-cultural realizada mediante el análisis de figuras, gráficas y modelos matemáticos, técnicas comunitarias para escuchar música clásica, la educación superior portuguesa, la pedagogía eficaz desde la aplicación de una encíclica papal y el mantenimiento cultural-religioso.

También observamos temáticas sociales desde la psicología con problemáticas indígenas, los efectos de tareas que producen agotamiento, la problemática del divorcio en su influencia con los hijos, la cultura de la alimentación que produce obesidad infantil, y las relaciones en épocas de gobiernos de factos donde se observó violencia sexual. Las actividades más liberales como la arquitectura, produce en personajes, una identidad creativa que se transforma en influyente como así también la actividad de la construcción que produce una organización institucional para determinar tareas de gerenciamiento.

Esperando que estos trabajos sean de gran aporte a los lectores, les deseamos una buena lectura.

SILVIA INÉS DEL VALLE NAVARRO

GUSTAVO ADOLFO JUAREZ

## PRÓLOGO

Neste **sétimo volume** da obra intitulada ***Ciências Humanas: Estudos para uma Visão Holística da Sociedade***, temos a oportunidade de acompanhar os autores, participantes desta publicação da Editora Artemis.

Demonstra interesse na divulgação das pesquisas realizadas, sendo muito variadas em termos de temas, mas nem tanto em termos de disciplina. Com efeito, a investigação em educação inclui desde o histórico, o sociocultural realizado através da análise de figuras, gráficos e modelos matemáticos, técnicas comunitárias de audição de música clássica, ensino superior português, pedagogia eficaz a partir da aplicação de uma encíclica papal e cultural -manutenção religiosa.

Observamos também temas sociais da psicologia com os problemas indígenas, os efeitos das tarefas que produzem esgotamento, o problema do divórcio em sua influência sobre os filhos, a cultura da alimentação que produz a obesidade infantil e os relacionamentos em tempos de governos de fato onde a violência sexual era observado. As atividades mais liberais, como a arquitetura, produzem nos personagens uma identidade criativa que se torna influente, assim como a atividade de construção que produz uma organização institucional para determinar tarefas de gestão.

Esperando que estas obras sejam de grande contribuição para os leitores, desejamos uma boa leitura.

SILVIA INÉS DEL VALLE NAVARRO

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# CAPÍTULO 13

## ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY IN FLUX: ERNESTO ROGERS AND THE DUALITY OF ESTRANGEMENT AND FAMILIARITY

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**ABSTRACT:** Ernesto N. Rogers was the key figure in post-war Italian architecture, both in the field of theory and practice. An architect, educator, writer, and editor, he was a man of great erudition and talent. Like many intellectuals in post-Second World War Italy, he theorized history and used sources somewhat eclectically to promote his idea of continuity as a temporal model in architecture. His theory, on the one hand, emerged from a particular Italian pre-war intellectual tradition but was also based on a wide spectrum of resources, including Enzo Paci, Henri Bergson, John Dewey, and Henri Focillon, among others. It found its way into the narrative of architecture in some of the works of his office, notably the project for Torre Velasca in Milan, which we will use as a case study in this paper. Following his idea of “sensing history,” he created buildings and pieces that are in a constant state of flux between what one might feel is

familiar, a “true” representation of history, and, on the other hand, estrangement that comes with the desire to physically embody history in pre-existing environments (i.e., cities or natural environments) that were never truly present. The result is the uneasiness that arises from the question of representing history in physical form, which oscillates between history as we imagine it and history as a source of future imagination.

**KEYWORDS:** Ernesto Rogers. Continuity. History. Tradition. Torre Velasca.

### HISTÓRIA DA ARQUITETURA EM FLUXO: ERNESTO ROGERS E A DUALIDADE DO ESTRANHAMENTO E DA FAMILIARIDADE

**RESUMO:** Ernesto N. Rogers foi a figura chave da arquitetura italiana do pós-guerra, tanto no campo da teoria como na prática. Arquiteto, educador, escritor e editor, foi um homem de grande erudição e talento. Como muitos intelectuais na Itália pós-Segunda Guerra Mundial, ele teorizou a história e usou fontes de forma um tanto eclética para promover sua ideia de continuidade como modelo temporal na arquitetura. A sua teoria, por um lado, emergiu de uma tradição intelectual italiana específica do pré-guerra, mas também se baseou num amplo espectro de fontes, incluindo Enzo Paci, Henri Bergson, John Dewey e Henri Focillon, entre outros. Encontrou o seu caminho na narrativa da arquitetura em algumas das obras do seu escritório, nomeadamente no projeto da

Torre Velasca em Milão, que utilizamos como estudo de caso neste artigo. Seguindo a sua ideia de “sentir a história”, ele criou edifícios e peças que estão em constante estado de fluxo entre o que se pode sentir como familiar, uma representação “verdadeira” da história, e, por outro lado, o estranhamento que vem com o desejo de incorporar fisicamente a história em ambientes pré-existentes (ou seja, cidades ou ambientes naturais) que nunca estiveram verdadeiramente presentes. O resultado é o desconforto que surge da questão de representar a história em forma física, que oscila entre a história tal como a imaginamos e a história como fonte de imaginação futura.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ernesto Rogers. Continuidade. História. Tradição. Torre Velasca.

## 1 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In the period immediately after WWII, Italy was a country of political confusion, economic desperation, blurred borders of national identity, and a site of artificially induced “self-absolving collective memory” created in order to ease the transition into postwar political, social, and building reconstruction. Building activities reflected land speculation, backed up by traditional building techniques and the need to reduce an enormous unemployment rate. Italy lacked a comprehensive urban planning policy which had multiple consequences for the development of its cities in the 1960s.

A plan for Milan sketched out in 1945 as a comprehensive regional plan by Franco Albini, Pietro Bottoni, Ignazio Gardella, Ernesto Rogers, Ludovico Belgiojoso, and Ezio Cerutti, did not go through. After the Christian Democratic Party (DC), strongly supported by the United States, won the election in 1948, it offered a national housing plan that gave only partial solutions to the current urban problems. In 1949 INA casa (Istituto Nazionale Abitazioni) came into being initiated by DC minister Amintore Fanfani which gave again, partial solutions to the problems of the cities.

For Italian architects, grappling with history and its integration into their work was not simply a matter of progressing seamlessly from previous times. Instead, they faced the challenge of re-engaging with modernism. Modernism, as widely debated, promoted a linear approach to time and a continuous pursuit of the new, reflecting an ahistorical stance in architectural production. In contrast, Italian architects cultivated a complex understanding of historical time within the context of their rich architectural heritage.

The political and social context of the time was also complex. The concept of ‘temporal’ raised the theoretical challenge of balancing tradition with the present moment and also manifested as a concern in building practice. These challenges converged explosively when architects worked within and around the historic city. In this reexamining of architectural and urban policies, there was not always an interest in novelty per se, and

<sup>1</sup> This topic was first discussed at the 2017 IAFOR Conference on Arts and Humanities, “History, Story, Narrative.” <https://papers.iafor.org/submission34539/>

while many other art disciplines developed an avant-garde approach, Italian architectural production of the 60s was considered to belong to 'incomplete' avant-garde or rearguard.

Ernesto Rogers was an internationally renowned Italian architect with remarkable career that lasted from 1932 until his untimely death in 1969. Apart from his involvement in the office BBPR, which he established with Gian Luigi Banfi (1910-1945), Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso (1909-2004), and Enrico Peressutti (1908-1976), he also taught in Great Britain, the United States, and South America, and was one of the best-known Italian CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) members. As with many intellectuals of post-Second World War Italy, Rogers theorized history and used sources somewhat eclectically to promote his idea of continuity as a temporal model in architecture. Following his ideas of "sensing history," pre-existing environments, continuity, and mediation, he created buildings and pieces that are in a state of flux between what one might feel is familiar, a "true" representation of history, and, on the other hand, estrangement that comes with the desire to physically embody history in the field of pre-existing environments (i.e., cities or natural environments) that was never really present. The result was the uneasiness that comes with the question of representation of history in the physical form that oscillates between history as we imagine it and history as a source of future imagination.

## 2 ERNESTO ROGERS AND THE CONCEPT OF CONTINUITY

*Continuità*, as a cultural concept and temporal model, was propagated through Rogers's editorial politics in the journal *Casabella*, one of the most influential and widely read media outlets that supported both modern architecture in its struggle against formalism and the continuation of Italian rationalism in the post-war period. As a model of time, *continuità* encompassed several of Rogers's concerns, ranging from the notions of tradition and memory to invention, experience, individualism, and cultural unity. At its core lies the idea of an evolutionary process, representing the cumulative power of gradual change. Rogers often used the term 'evolution' to describe the development of urban forms.

Furthermore, 'continuità' marked the continuation of the pre-war experience and the legacy of Giuseppe Pagano and Eduardo Persico in *Casabella*. Through their editorial policies, these two authors critiqued academic approaches influenced by right-wing philosophy that prevailed in architectural education during that period. In the late 1950s, Rogers featured the works of Modern masters in *Casabella*, emphasizing their role in the evolution of architectural modernity. He deliberately underscored the enduring significance of the word, insisting on the cumulative power of more or less gradual changes. Rogers'

understanding of historical shifts is clearly articulated in his debate with architectural historian Walter Gropius: “No opposition, dialectically conceived, can be isolated as an absolute negation, just as no continuity can be considered outside of a dialectical action, which, above all, contributes to the process of evolution.” (Rogers, 1963, p.2)

At the same time, *continuità* functioned as a methodology, a tool, and a ‘complex ideology progressively theorized by Rogers.’ It signified, in Rogers’s words, ‘historical consciousness.’ As a methodology, it supported his theory of pre-existing environments. As an ideology, the concept of *continuità* encouraged the integration of modernist principles with historical and traditional elements.

The concept of *continuità* emerged from Rogers’s understanding of tradition as a broad cultural activity to which the subject had direct access through art. Rogers and his friend, philosopher Enzo Paci, attacked modernist ideology reflected in functionalism as well as Crocean idealism by offering phenomenological reading of history. They intended to bring artistic expression down from the world of the ideal into the world of culture, presented as a unity of the social, technical, and historical.<sup>2</sup> Rogers’s writings often express a desire to return to what Lukacs referred to as an ‘integrated civilization,’ one that is pre-modern and reflects a society where the subject and the world exist in unity. This unified world, free from intellectual mediation and cognitive a-priori, allows for the immediate experience of the subject and is what Rogers refers to as tradition.

At the beginning of his article “L’architettura e il mondo della vita” published in *Casabella* 217 Paci (1957), summarized key issues of two opposite tendencies that, in his view, needed to be superseded: Crocean detachment from the realities of the world, and the tendency to prioritize function and deny the artistic qualities of architecture. Paci goes on to problematize Marxist philosophy for its claims that artistic form is conditioned by economic structure:

“It is true that every human activity is conditioned. But what conditions it is not solely economic structure but a complex set of factors, between which, in the case of architecture, reenter the nature of materials, utilitarian functions, geographic and environmental situation, ways and means of communication, psychological character of a given population, historical traditions and so on.” (Paci, 1957, p.53)

Both Rogers and Paci believed that architecture is a way of exposing the ‘life-world’, “the world of straightforward intersubjective experiences,” in Husserl’s terms, as a pre-meditative, mutually shared ever-changing cultural ‘horizon.’ The changes in the life-world are temporal phenomena, which is why Rogers considered the past significant for

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Rogers ascribes the short life of Style Nouveau to the non-unified society where the relationship between content and representation is broken. See Ernesto N. Rogers, Cesare de Seta, *Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico*, p.70.

understanding human existence and the existence of architecture as one of the necessary human practices: “It is while questioning the past (but not by becoming the past) that I understand the present and the interest of the present for its own transformation.” (Paci, 1972, p. 24). Paci furthermore deployed Husserl’s ‘suspension of judgment’ and ‘seeing things the way they are,’ as immediately accessible for perception. New ‘style,’ according to Paci, could only be born of new encounters with the life-world, through lived experience unburdened by prejudices. The architect, who can uncover certain aspects of the life-world through his/her work, can find in it a society that is not “theorized or ideologized or structured beforehand according to the perspectives of a given sociology... but make[s] alive and real social relationship of his country, with its needs and miseries, with its illusions and hard sense of reality, of the limits and conditions of life.” (Paci, 1957) This heightened awareness of the world is what the architect can bring forth if only (s)he herself can “see the things the way they are.” It is the collapse of an ordered relationship between human subjects and the world – ‘authentic living’ that goes beyond purely rational and involves bodily engagement – that Paci and Rogers wanted to see in new architecture.<sup>3</sup>

### 3 ERNESTO ROGERS, T.S. ELIOT AND HENRI BERGSON

In a February 1954 editorial, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” Rogers borrows the title of T. S. Eliot’s well-known essay advancing the theory of artistic depersonalization. Rogers described how Eliot “invites artists and critiques to broaden the terms of historic sense while warning them against inborn deformations, which alter the quality of the judgment.” (Rogers, 1997, p.262) It is the capacity to critically approach one’s own and other cultures that is the prerequisite for a true artist. In this context, tradition is the field in which artist continually erases himself, and his progress is a “continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” which enables mediating or channeling experiences outside his/her own sphere. In this vein, tradition, as Eliot claims, cannot be inherited:

“...if you want it you must obtain it by great labor. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order... This

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<sup>3</sup> It is precisely this request for authenticity and abstraction of historical contextualization of the subject that will be attacked by Theodor Adorno. According to Adorno, thinking that it is possible to grasp something substantial behind the thought generates the ideology of a “universal humanity” that blurs distinctions between the subject and historical conditions to which it belongs. In Adorno’s opinion, “jargon” of authentic existence does not liberate the subject from alienation but masks the circumstances under which it operates. See Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*.

historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer more acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.” (Eliot, 1982, p.37)

This understanding of historical sense is what fuels Rogers’s understanding of historical time: at once continuous time and the atemporal content of history shape themselves in the form of tradition. Instead of the causal chain of events, Rogers thought of history as the layering of events, layers that for him were equally visible in anonymous architecture as well as in the structured historicity of classical architecture.

How are temporal phenomena manifested in physical form in Rogers? Through invention, of which memory is an agent.<sup>4</sup> It is the memory that “confers on space the measure of time, of all the time which comes before us.” (Rogers, 1960) Following Bergson’s (Bergson, 1911) discussion of two kinds of memory, Rogers claims that memory has two functions in design, related to contemplation and activity respectively: “one that moves from us towards things” and one that moves “from things to us and beyond us.”<sup>5</sup> In Bergson the former uses “centrifugal movements” and constitutes bodily memory registered in the body itself, while the second suggests “centripetal movements,” marked in representations within the external world. The first implies action formed by a habit, while the second requires recollection. In both cases the human body is the medium that communicates between the external world and the perception of it.<sup>6</sup> While Bergson’s understanding of memory remained a discussion of individual memory, Rogers did not explicitly delineate how this individual memory becomes collective; it is clear, however, in his writings that the artist/author is the one “who knows” the collective.

The work of art also engages Bergson’s concept of contemplative memory, which transitions ‘from things to us’ and shapes representations of the world as it exists within us. Rogers and Paci, in line with their beliefs, assert that for a work of art or architecture to fulfill its role, it must strike a delicate balance between utility and beauty.<sup>7</sup> The definition of form, moreover, was to Rogers one of the central problems of misuse of history in architecture:

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<sup>4</sup> Rogers claims that memory is just one element necessary for art to address larger cultural issues.

<sup>5</sup> While Rogers does not explicitly cite Bergson in this editorial, he affirms his familiarity with Bergson’s work in ‘Economia e armonia,’ where he explores the concept of tactile vision.

<sup>6</sup> Bergson’s dual memory concept stands in contrast to Paci’s notion of continuity as a life-world. The former suggests a sense of directionality, moving from the subject towards the world and vice versa, a quality not readily apparent in Paci’s perspective.

<sup>7</sup> By eliminating the element of stability or firmness from the Vitruvian triad, Rogers sidestepped certain structural concerns. This shift aligned with Paci’s lack of interest in the technological aspects of architectural work. In contrast, Rogers, well-versed in emerging technologies, showed keen interest in the potential of prefabrication and its role in reconstruction – a topic explored in the pages of Casabella. During a discussion with Roberto Pane, Rogers argued that the concept of ‘firmness’ is implicitly included as a practical concern within ‘utility.’ While some modernists advocated for technology, Rogers exhibited limited enthusiasm for such technological pursuits.



“it is clear that the measure of these terms [utility and beauty] is different from case to case and that, therefore, their internal relations are in each case different. But it is just this identity of method, which consists in drawing form out of the reality intrinsic to each case that, in penetrating each case, reveals it for what it is and finds a different expression from one to another.” (Rogers, 1960, p.2)

The ‘case by case’ method served as Rogers’ doctrine, enabling him to critique the perceived universalization of architectural language on one hand and the use of typology, such as that advocated by Saverio Muratori, on the other hand. This method was Rogers’ means to enact his ideology, addressing the classical ideal of ‘Concordia discors,’ which involves a strategy of mutual interdependence among architectural works, urban environments, and man-made landscapes/nature. Additionally, it allowed him to challenge the repetitiveness inherent in typological approaches. It was in his mind also the most powerful tool against formalism. To avoid formalism, new architectural creations should result from a specific process or method that engages in a dialectical relationship between the past and the present:<sup>8</sup>

“Thus, the most profound discovery of the Modern Movement, i.e. the inclusion of methodological research in the process of form, transformed the very essence of traditional theory and practice which, however variable and rich, was based on a belief in few principles subject to the play of variations.”<sup>9</sup> (Rogers, 1961, p.1)

Paradoxically, in Rogers’s discourse, method generates specific autonomy of architectural work: “[p]recisely because the method of approaching is the same, it follows that the solution to every problem is different.” (Ockman, 1993, p.201) Thus the solution to what Rogers sees as formalism and lack of historical awareness lies in keeping and balancing the distinction between *particular* generated by the method and *universal* created by typology. In Rogers’s view method requires careful recognition of the “concreteness” of a pre-existing environment, while typology abstracts its complexity. The duality between method and typological approach maintained in Rogers recurs as a problem in Torre Velasca, one of the most disputed and difficult projects BBPR built following the theory of pre-existing environments.

#### 4 THE THEORY OF PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS

Rogers introduced the theory of pre-existing conditions in the editorial “*Le preesistenza ambientali e i temi pratici contemporanei*” in *Casabella Continuità* (February

<sup>8</sup> “The style, as a unification of figurative expressions, is each time specified through facts and there can be no mechanical repetition nor analogical (imitative) transference, where its formal constitution is already defined somewhere else. To empty forms from their defining content would be completely external operation which would precipitate into *formalism*.” (Rogers, 2006, p.99)

<sup>9</sup> Rogers acknowledged Walter Gropius’ influence on his thinking in several instances, while also expressing his disagreements regarding the treatment of history.

1955). The text summarizes much of his thinking on the relationship between a building, urban environment and man-made and natural landscape. *L'ambiente*, or context as it came to be translated in English, is the place of pre-existences, of the “prime plasmatic matter” as Rogers defined history.<sup>10</sup> “It is clear then,” he further explains in *The Image: the Architects Inalienable Vision*, “that building cannot be isolated from the environment which surrounds it; and this does not merely include the landscape [paeasaggio] that which visually embraces the place where the building is erected; but also that unity of images born of the most diverse associations, all of which are legitimate by reason of the serrated logic of sensation.”<sup>11</sup> (Rogers, 1966, p.246) In a relational universe, where objects constantly create and recreate mutual connections, new buildings must enter “organically into the given spatial-temporal situation” where each form is specific to its own set of circumstances. This means that architecture is “profoundly connected to environmental conditions,” which are determined both by socio-economic and cultural factors. For Rogers, language, nature, and architecture are products of the long history of transformations. Evolution of forms is the result of a long period of adaptation and selection.<sup>12</sup> Evolution is culturally constituted but also has its natural determinants. However, when a building is set in relationship with the context, “the copying of the traditional forms will obviously be impossible, but so will the design of an architecture only abstractly satisfying our taste and the conditions of contemporary technology[.]” Furthermore, forms must “convincingly document the subtlest ethical claims of a collective and individual man, continuing the ancient discourse.” (Rogers and Molinari, 1997, 279-286)<sup>13</sup>

In his discussions of architectural continuity and evolution, Rogers had in mind both spatial and temporal consistency, notwithstanding radical shifts that mechanisms of change might bring in certain epochs or certain places. One must understand history and time as underlying the overall structure of human existence to understand why for Rogers it is not possible to eschew living in history:

“Whether history evolves according to a continuation of customs, content, form or whether history is characterized by a fracture that causes an emergency, in any case, as I was suggesting, there is a relationship in time between the present time and the period that preceded it.” (Rogers, 1999, p.55)

<sup>10</sup> In *Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico* Rogers defines history as an “available heritage, becoming once again malleable raw material (*materia prima plasmabile*), according to the will and interpretation of which we are capable.” (Rogers, 2006, p. 32) Interestingly enough, Marc Bloch, founder of the Annales School of History claimed that “history’s time is the plasma in which phenomena are immersed and the locus of their intelligibility.”

<sup>11</sup> Rogers contributed to this book together with Jean Arp, Naum Gabo, S. Giedion, Walter Gropius, Fernand Leger, Richard J. Neutra, Norbert Wiener, and others.

<sup>12</sup> Rogers had a familiarity with Henri Focillon’s work, and his theory of pre-existing conditions resonates with Focillon’s theory of the evolution of form.

<sup>13</sup> Translated and republished in Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, pp. 200-204.

Continuity, then, is not marked by the rate or nature of change, gradualness, or finding similarities between epochs but is a ubiquitous principle. It simply implies a dynamic historical process, where every stage of development relates to the previous one.<sup>14</sup> Continuity thus needs to be distinguished from chronological, or linear time, segmented into measurable units that succeed one another. Continuity, channeled through the theory of pre-existing conditions, molds two concepts of time in one: while it implies diachronic<sup>15</sup> processes of adjustment in the evolutionary development, working with pre-existing conditions understood as a historical pre-requisite requires a horizontal cut through the grain of time.<sup>16</sup>

## 5 TORRE VELASCA AND TIME COLLAPSE

At the 1959 CIAM conference in Otterlo, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR) exhibited the project of Torre Velasca, representing several years of exploration into methodologies for skyscraper design within historic urban environments.<sup>17</sup> The twenty-eight story building, located in the heart of Milan, was an opportunity to further explore the theory of pre-existing conditions and a case by case method. Initially conceived as a modern steel structure, the design eventually evolved into a reinforced concrete tripartite tower.

<sup>14</sup> This understanding of continuity resembles the notion of continuism in science. Continuism assumes that “any event of today was directly preceded by some event which must have taken place yesterday. However, the event of today is not necessarily an ‘advance’ over the event of yesterday, but it is only a ‘reaction’ to it, and the reaction may be a positive or negative one. That is, the event of today may concur with yesterday’s event and carry it forward, or it may disagree with it, and oppose it with something different.” See “Continuity and discontinuity in nature and knowledge”, Dictionary of the History of Ideas. <https://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=DicHist/uvaBook/tei/DicHist1.xml;chunk.id=dv1-62;toc.depth=1;toc.id=dv1-62;brand=default>

<sup>15</sup> In *Course in General Linguistics* Ferdinand de Saussure distinguishes between two branches of linguistics: “Synchronic linguistics will be concerned with logical and psychological connections between coexisting items constituting a system, as perceived by the same collective consciousness. Diachronic linguistics on the other hand will be concerned with connections between sequences of items not perceived by the same collective consciousness, which replace one another without themselves constituting a system.” See p. 98. Diachronic time is related to diachronic history, often represented along a vertical axis. Diachronic history is inherently evolutionary, documenting changes and the emergence of events over time. Synchronic history, on the other hand, adopts a structural approach and concentrates on a system or situation at a specific, fixed point in time.

<sup>16</sup> In a few instances, Rogers mentioned cyclical time in the context of modern architecture. He was familiar with Vico’s *corsi e ricorsi* from his student days and described, in one of his texts, historic change in terms of culture exhausting itself and creating a new one. This concept of historic time is not elaborated upon in his writings, but it does, however, contribute to the overall understanding of historical time, which is not based on the notion of progress.

<sup>17</sup> In 1959, members of CIAM (Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne) convened for the eleventh time. The congress took place in Otterlo at the Musée Kröller-Müller. Richard Rogers was part of the coordination team, along with Bakema, Roth, Voelcker, and Wogenscky. The presentations showcased irreconcilable approaches to the direction of architectural thinking, marking the end of CIAM. Peter Smithson, Alison Smithson, and Jacob Bakema strongly criticized BBPR’s project. Giancarlo de Carlo, Ignazio Gardella, and Vico Magistretti also exhibited their work at the conference, sparking debates among the members. For instance, Jacob B. Bakema argued that Rogers was resisting contemporary life. Projects by Vittorio Gregotti, Aldo Rossi, Guido Canella, Aimaro Isola, and Roberto Gabetti were featured in Casabella, becoming known as Neo-Liberty.

For an architectural practice rooted in the Italian rationalist tradition, Torre Velasca was not only different from other BBPR works but also posed challenges for many CIAM participants.<sup>18</sup> Rogers' (and BBPR's) interpretation of history as an overarching principle and tradition understood as 'life-world' liberated from any sort of elitism, once implemented in the urban context, was seen as static and anachronistic. While Italian architect and theorist Giuseppe Samonà astutely recognized Rogers' primal plasmatic matter of history in the project and described the building "as the explosion of a compact magma that, suddenly in a specific point, has shot with a vertical jet the matter of which it consists," to many outside Italy it was a building that conveyed the wrong message to modernity. (Samonà, 1959, p.659)

In a heated conference debate, Peter Smithson commented that the building belongs to an anachronistic "closed aesthetic" and wielded a "plastic vocabulary" of an "immoral" and dangerous sort: "[n]ow I suggest that you, in a way, created a model here which has included certain consequences which, if you had been aware of your position in the society and your position in the development of things, you would have seen are dangerous." (Newman, 1961, p.92) Jacob B. Bakema thought that the building's silhouette looked as if it could have been there for fifty years, and its form failed to communicate contemporary life.<sup>19</sup> In his answer to Smithson's charge of immorality, Rogers insisted on the structural integrity of the building: "[t]o me the intimate morality of architecture is the clarity and sincerity of the structure and the awareness of the use of the many things required in the putting up a building – that is the morality of the object."<sup>20</sup> (Newman, 1961, p.95).

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<sup>18</sup> There are other projects in this period that exhibit BBPR's interest in building with the theory of pre-existing conditions in mind. One of those is a mixed-use building in Corso Francia in Torino. Most of them, however, do not exhibit historical elements in the manner Torre Velasca does.

<sup>19</sup> Bakema's statement points towards a lack of understanding of the specificity of Italian situation and the building constraints in Milan in this period.

<sup>20</sup> In response to Smithson's argument that BBPR's project is aesthetically and ethically wrong, Rogers pointed out a significant challenge: '...you think in English. Now that is not my way of thinking.' It is difficult to assess whether the argument between Rogers and Smithsons is, as Rogers pointed out, purely a consequence of cultural differences. However, Rogers's insistence on the structural integrity and methodological consistency and unwillingness to accept the fact that these two parameters create particular aesthetics in the case of Torre Velasca is highly problematic. In contrast to Rogers' stance, the idea of immediate access to culture and its history has demonstrated its lack of universality, as it may not be universally accessible or comprehensible to all.

Figure 1. Torre Velsaca (Authors's images).



At the conference, Rogers claimed that “the general shape of the building is the result of a very rational design approach,” where “in the design of any building there are three things to be considered: how the building meets the ground, how it meets the sky and the variation of the body (how it goes around the corner).” (Newman, 1961, p.92) Rogers thought that the three-part division of the façade in Torre Velasca was satisfactory, without reference to non-differentiated vertical (metaphorically infinite) compositional structure which is the usual typological determinant for a skyscraper. At the same time, Rogers claimed, the horizontal division of the high-rise enabled contact with human dimension. He emphasized how the building was an “articulation of the structure,” which comports

with Paci's idea that architecture has the particular power of articulating the relationship between function and construction as a part of a larger agenda of art to demonstrate social life.

Apart from the "structural coherence" that allows for the construction to have an aesthetic role, Rogers claimed that the significance of the project also lies in the collection of images it evokes without direct reference to any particular Milan building. "The value of this design," Rogers explained, "lies in its intent to epitomize, culturally speaking – while avoiding repetition of the expressive language used in any of its buildings – the atmosphere of the city of Milan, its ineffable yet perceptible character." (Rogers & Molinari, 1997, p.289) According to the architect, the design was a product of a carefully crafted method of looking into pre-existing conditions and that is the only lens through which it can be seen.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Rogers's theory of *preesistenza ambientale* and his desire for cultural unity generated a methodology that introduced a temporal conflict between events and structures, or processes and systems. When applied to Torre Velasca, it dismantled historical continuity by making a horizontal cut through the grain of time thus allowing for the simultaneous occurrence of architectural elements that belonged to separate time periods of the historical development of Milan. These elements, such as the concrete color, shape of the windows, and the tripartite shape of the tower, referenced the cumulative evolution of the city over time. However, their amalgamation in one place in one/present moment could not but freeze the historical process. This created an aesthetics, (something Rogers and his team claimed to have little interest in), that simultaneously evoked feelings of both estrangement and familiarity.

This tacit dualism in the architecture of Torre Velasca drew from the notion of continuity, while also embracing the "collapse of time" within a contextual approach. The contextual framework that Rogers and BBPR posed as a starting point was a complex historic environment and a resource for the work of art that imaginatively addressed the whole of the history of Milan. However, to many observers, the synchronization of the past embedded within the image of the building seemed to stem from an eclectic approach to history. This approach, often labeled as stylistic, aligned with what George Kubler referred to as the "spatialization of time," a characteristic feature of stylistic representations of history.<sup>21</sup> (Kubler, 1967, pp. 849-855)

Torre Velasca can be seen both as a skyscraper and a scaled-up fragment of a historic city; it is a prefabricated system with expressive structural components and

<sup>21</sup> Kubler: "The idea of style is best adapted to static situations, in cross-cut or synchronous section...Thus style and the flow of happening are antinomies. Style pertains to a timeless sphere..."

heaviness that resembles August Perret's work, one of Rogers' favorite masters. One can say, however, that history in this building operates as the mechanism of memory: it is fragmented and somewhat remote. This brings us to the question of whether cultural unity was ever broken or its nature was transformed. If there is any reason why this work cannot be named historicist, proto-post-modern or any other lexical interpretation of the reaction to modern it is because it still belongs to the period of crisis of history. The attempt at timelessness of the building manifested through the set of historical references belonging to different time periods and consequently different cultural expressions brings us back to the question of the familiar and estranged. In this "time confusion," without the possibility of true contradiction, Rogers found a source of cultural richness and the capacity for dismantling the dualism between the Nietzschean interior and exterior. Architecture's task of mediating the aesthetic and ethic, or what Smithson called "morality," proved difficult (Tafuri, 1989): "This was an architecture that reflected on everything – the past, the city, and the possible dialogue between intellectuals and the masses – less than on itself."

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