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Architecture and mobility in Italian Africa during the Fascist era

Rest house, *Strada litoranea*, Tawergha, Libya, March 1937.

Construction of bridge for upper highlands *camionabile*, Eritrea, 1935.

This research project studies the conflicted nature of mobility in Italian Africa during the Fascist era, with a particular concern for the architectural and spatial implications of Italian colonial policy, which strove to shape the movement (or non-movement) of Italians and local populations. The central argument is that while Italians were encouraged to immigrate to their African colonies as a modernizing and civilizing force, the movement of the local populations was largely restricted through measures that attempted to preserve their traditional culture. This research is being conducted through a close examination of Italy's activities in Africa, with a particular focus on the colonial systems that both facilitated and restricted various forms of mobility. As such, it examines the uneven access to mobility as a discriminatory practice that had a profound impact on the respective status of Italians and local populations within the colonial environment and culture.

The architectural and spatial impacts of the Italian colonial policies will be indexed through both the architectural and the urban planning strategies that were employed in North and East Africa,. This research will also focus on the introduction of infrastructures of transportation and systems of governance that were applied to Italy's African colonies. These examples include the construction of the *strada litoranea*, or coastal highway, in Libya (1937) and the *camionabile*, or truck road, in Eritrea (1935). This research effort will facilitate a comparative discussion across Italy's various colonial possessions—from Libya to Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia's four regions of Amhara, Galla-Sidamo, Harrar and Scoia. In so doing, this research offers a broad conceptual basis to understand how political policies related to access to mobility, and especially as related to systems of governance and commercial enterprise, shaped the architecture and culture of colonial environments in Italian Africa in multiple and varying ways.