



Fondazione  
Scuola  
Beni Attività Culturali

# **Knowledge and protection of the modern and contemporary architectural heritage: comparative experiences**

## **Proceedings of the seminar**

— Rome, MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, 23 October 2019

**this book gathers the proceedings of the seminar**

*Knowledge and protection of the modern  
and contemporary architectural heritage: comparative experiences*

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# Alessandra Vittorini

## Foreward

Were we to state the main aims of the last twenty years of research and reflections on contemporary architecture, both among academics and within institutions, they would undoubtedly be to explore and shed new light on buildings of our recent past. This is to expose their key features, qualitative aspects and the impact they have had in terms of innovation and on the cultural debate of their time. Furthermore, these studies prompt a new awareness of a widespread heritage and the need to sustain education programmes and projects to conserve and protect these buildings.

Although they are few in number, these buildings are extremely valuable for what they represent. They need far broader investigations that could go beyond the analysis of the building itself to the exploration of the entire urban environment, the settlements and neighbourhoods. For these are concrete, tangible and measurable examples of a fertile, creative period which should be looked at not only through the lens of the history of architecture but also of culture in general and for what they represent for urban practices and studies and for what is “the city as a project”.

Witnesses of our recent past and oracles of an uncertain future, the buildings of the second half of the twentieth century do constitute an unknown, indefinite and fragile heritage. Built only a few decades ago and always in use since then, these buildings and the neighbourhoods that host them look familiar and modest, perhaps due to the wide diffusion of standardized features and of the poor or easily perishable materials they are built with. They may even appear as an anonymous whole to such an extent that their real value and peculiarity may go unnoticed. The different terms of use, changing over a short period of time, or even the new environmental regulations, often leading to profound innovations, make these buildings even more vulnerable. This is why they deserve greater attention.

The only viable way to ensure such attention is to promote and support historiographical studies, critical evaluations and shrewd dissemination policies, while being keenly aware of the need to keep raising awareness of the value of these buildings. A deeper insight into our recent architectural heritage, its languages and its meanings is needed in order to build up a new sense of civic responsibility and establish the existence of new programmes for protection and conservation. It is, therefore, necessary to identify new, workable ways to relate to this heritage not only to control how this heritage changes through time but also to learn how to respect its history. Therefore, it follows that thoughtful planning for conserving architectural sites of the twentieth century will complement any new proposal for ameliorating our cities.