



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*

held on the 23rd October 2019

at MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome

in collaboration with

Fondazione MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo

Ordine degli Architetti Pianificatori Paesaggisti e Conservatori

di Roma e provincia

book edited by

Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali

editing

Carlotta Brovadan, Martina De Luca, Paola d'Orsi, Elena Pelosi
(coordinamento editoriale / editorial office)

Roberta Fedele, Francesca Neri, Marta Samek, Valeria Volpe
(editing)

graphic design and layout

Francesca Pavese

translation

A.I.T. s.a.s.

acknowledgement

Simona Antonacci, Carla Zhara Buda, Maria Giuseppina Gimma,
Alessandro Panci, Angela Parente, Alessia Spataro

Carla Di Francesco, *Introduction*, in *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), edited by Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali, Roma, Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali, 2022, pp. 9-13, DOI 10.53125/979-12-80311-07-8-CDF9.

Carla Di Francesco

Introduction

This publication collects the papers presented at the Seminar *Conoscenza e tutela del patrimonio architettonico moderno e contemporaneo: esperienze a confronto* (Knowledge and protection of the modern and contemporary architectural heritage: comparative experiences), organized by Fondazione Scuola dei beni e delle attività culturali in collaboration with MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo and the Order of Architects of Rome, on 23 October 2019.

The seminar, open to all interested stakeholders, was one of the in-depth thematic workshops that the Fondazione developed in the framework of the specialist modules dedicated to Protection, Territorial Development, and Contemporary Art in the first cycle of the *Scuola del Patrimonio* course, with the aim of focusing on a number of cross-cutting subjects of the modules, in light of certainties and contradictions arising from the examinations of the sector's regulations.

The authors provide elements for discussion and inquiry moving on the one hand, precisely from the Code of the cultural and landscape heritage (Legislative Decree no. 42 of 2004) and its applicability to the specific area of modern and contemporary architecture; on the other hand, from demands for protection and safeguarding, broadened and non-binding but based upon a tangible activity of knowledge, research, and recognition of values.

They therefore help us understand within what perimeter and with what tools we can deal with knowledge, heritagisation, and protection as pertains to twentieth-century architectural phenomena.

Intertwined in this framework are studies and considerations on the role of architectural historiography in recognizing interest for the purposes of protection, with particular regard to the boundaries between the now-historicized heritage and the effectively contemporary one that belongs to the present. These boundaries are blurred, and relate to different time frames and cultural horizons when the problem is observed from the standpoint of legal or historiographical protection – a question that gives rise to quite a few contradictions.

Although the architecture we define as «modern» has a time reference in the Modern Movement born between the two World Wars, it is more generally considered, in extended fashion, as twentieth-century architecture; on the other hand, the term «contemporary» refers to the architecture that, starting from the mid-1980s, in addition to using the materials typical of the modern and those of cutting-edge technical research, relies on advanced IT for design.

If we understand protection from the perspective of regulations, as a tool that conditions ownership to the benefit of society at large, which coincides with conserving the asset and keeping it alive, reference is made to the Code of cultural and landscape heritage; however, for contemporary architecture, the Code shows a much-reduced potential. The first limitation is the very age of the architectural heritage; since a work may be protected for its quality and the values it expresses in itself only if it is over seventy years old, and has been created by an architect who is no longer living.

The road of the declaration of interest pursuant to articles 10 and 13 of the Code is therefore not available to contemporary architecture; all that remains is the application of the Code's articles that consider the work as an expression of values linked to history more generally (article 10, paragraph 3, letter d, the so-called 'historical-relational constraint', for which the age limit does not apply), or as a complex with landscape value.

A work of contemporary architecture can instead be protected by the architect (or, after his death, by his or her heirs) through application of Law no. 633 of 1941, articles 20 and 23, on the basis of which, by claiming

paternity of the work, the architect can oppose the modifications deemed as damaging his or her honour or reputation.

The Italian juridical situation is broadly discussed here, also through particularly interesting case studies reporting the grounds for protection and the pronouncements of administrative justice (Carpentieri).

Therefore, Italian legislation essentially relates the time limits established by law in order to be able to protect an asset to the generational change needed to make a historicized judgment. On this basis, one may ask whether historicization is truly a parameter to be applied when speaking of the contemporary.

The rigidity of this system has been broadly examined and discussed during the Seminar from a variety of perspectives, essentially leading to the position that it is not so much age as other elements of assessment that ought to be taken into account in order to be able to exercise effective protection of contemporary architecture – an architecture that, precisely because it is a product of the present time, is suited not to a legal, merely declarative protection (a decree of cultural interest), but to a dynamic formula of reading and interpretation.

The relational and site value, the context, good territorial programming, the graduality of protection and the related operative indications: these are the fundamental elements that form the mosaic of assessments in other European countries and in other continents, which are the tools for attributing quality and sustainability for the current time. Furthermore, in several nations, time limits, where they exist, may be disregarded in view of a better protection of the asset, understood as the recovery of function and as conservation in the broadest meaning of the term (Carughi; Visone).

At any rate, as discussed at the beginning, the problem of the protection of contemporary architecture should be seen through other eyes: study, research, and growth of knowledge and of the awareness of value and quality; all these actions are prerequisite to the activation of protection practices.

The all-round activity deployed by MAXXI in its twenty years of existence, ranging from acquisition of archives to exhibitions, from research to publications, and from conservation to training, exemplifies the results obtained by the Museum in recognizing architects and architectures of the twentieth century in Italy, and in disseminating knowledge (Guccione).

Moreover, the case study of the city of Asmara focuses on the vast and particular phenomenon of the architecture of Italian colonies in terms of design of public spaces and representative buildings. But it reaffirms how the colonial urban landscape is now perceived as a substantial and identifying part of Eritrean society today, to the point of its inclusion in the Unesco's World Heritage List in 2017 (Bortolotto, Cattaneo).

In conclusion, the Seminar introduced the idea of changing the Code of cultural and landscape heritage to eliminate for architecture the limit of seventy years of life, so as finally to be able to clearly state that a contemporary building may be declared cultural heritage; however, we think this should also be supplemented with indications originating from the broader analysis of DO.CO.MO.MO., which is to say with the document that indicates guidelines for interventions and management as a consequence of identifying the characterizing and fundamental elements to be protected.

We choose to support this proposal, in the conviction that post-War architecture in Italy, even considering the uncontrolled growth of cities in the building boom, still suffers from underestimations that condition critical judgment and therefore the possible protection, in spite of the constant activity that starting in the first years of this century, the Italian Ministry of Culture, the University, and research bodies like MAXXI have carried out to build awareness of the modern. For this reason, too, the Fondazione, along with the Direzione generale Creatività Contemporanea of the Italian Ministry of Culture, has initiated the research project *Strumenti e metodi per la conoscenza, la tutela e la valorizzazione dell'architettura contemporanea* (Instruments and Methods for the Knowledge, Protection, and Promotion of Contemporary Architecture), which in the first place includes the update of the Censimento nazionale delle architetture italiane del secondo Novecento (National Census of Italian Architectures of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century), an essential cataloguing tool begun in 2002 that, since the dissemination of its initial results, has brought unprecedented attention to the contemporary.