

Reinforced concrete architectures of the first half of the 20th-century in Genoa

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20th Century Architecture is an Heritage at risk, caused by several factors.

It is a heritage at risk due to the short duration, despite initial expectations, of the materials with which it was built, above all the reinforced concrete which, over time, has proved to be very fragile and sensitive to the aggressions of environmental agents and, even more, to the changed climatic conditions that act even more rapidly and violently on it, often causing a deep degradation.

However, it is not so much or only the material degradation, but rather the lack of recognition of the values (material and intangible) of this heritage that generates a certain reluctance in identifying and applying adequate conservation methods to these artifacts, preferring more or less extensive demolitions.

On another side, the increase of interest and expansion of the concept of “heritage” leads us to question the values that even the most recent architecture acquires, and therefore, its eventual need of protection. It is, in fact, a heritage linked to stylistic, formal, spatial and constructive canons that are very different from the traditional ones, and which is often neglected because it was built in ways and for purposes that were soon overtaken by the epochal changes of recent decades.

It is thus a heritage subject to risks due even to lack of appreciation and care: as a living heritage it is essential to understand it, define it, interpret it and manage it well for future generations, sharing criteria and evaluation among a large community.

These cultural reflections and new research methodologies (including assessment and evaluations) have been developed within the European research project Consec20, choosing case studies in the city of Genoa (north-west of Italy). The deep analysis of these case studies, mostly of which abandoned and in search of new uses, leads to reflect on their meanings and values highlighting the essential problem of placing them in history.

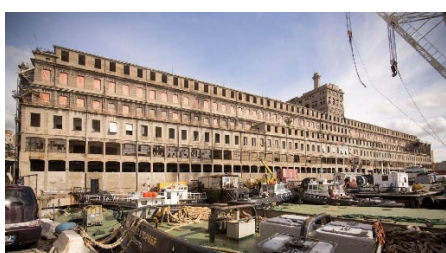
These architectures have therefore been studied from different points of view in order to define a methodology of investigation prior to the intervention of reuse and conservation of material and architectural features.

With respect to exclusively technical issues and mainly related to the material conservation of such buildings and urban complexes, the research project is even based on the conviction that the heritage of the “short century” can be a vector of promotion for social integration, a training ground for experimenting with forms of monitoring and participatory decisions, involving local communities in future conservation and enhancement processes.

Research has let the richness of this inheritance emerge, in significance and value, focusing the attention from the simple materiality of the buildings to the possible modes and forms of their more total and mature interpretation.



Soldier's house 1936–1938



Grain silos "Hennebique" 1901–1906



Fruit and vegetable Market
1925–1930