

Historic concrete buildings in Italy

Conservation and re-use: actors, tasks and approach

Project: CONSECH20

Working Package 1

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1. Introduction

The research carried out in the CONSECH20 project focusses on historic concrete buildings. Within CONSECH20 context “concrete” is defined as historic when dating from the end of the 19th cent. - beginning of the 20th century until ca. 1960¹. Thus, CONSECH20’s case studies belong mainly to the first and partially to the first half of the 20th century.

The aim of this report is to examine the procedures and to identify the actors in the tutorship, safeguarding and conservation, restoration and enhancement of historic concrete buildings in the Italy. Thus, it will summarize the Italian legislation in force for the protection of the 20th century architectural heritage introducing laws and actors that are part of the Italian Cultural Heritage safeguarding system. Moreover, the report will give a brief introduction to the 20th concrete buildings chosen by UNIGE as case study.

2. The safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in Italy: a brief excursus

Despite the fact that other laws were approved in the second half of the 19th century, after the reunification of Italy (1861), heritage protection in Italy starts at least with the Law n. 185/1902. This law issued during the Kingdom of Italy established as threshold for the protection a minimum of 50 years from the work realization and the death of its author².

However, the turning-point for the protection of Cultural Heritage, in the first-half of the 20th-century, is considered the Law n.1089/1939 “Per la tutela delle cose di interesse storico e artistico” (Protection of objects having artistic or historical interest) that recognized the “*movable or immovable goods having artistic, historical, archaeological and ethnographic interest*” and “*the villas, parks and gardens having historical and artistic interest*”³. In the same year, the Law n. 1497/1939 “Per la tutela delle bellezze paesistiche” (Protection of natural beauty) identified 4 classes of items that, due to their “public interest”, had to be safeguarded. Thus, as “*natural beauty*” were protected: “*the immovable goods having remarkable natural interests or geological singularity*” (1); “*the villas, parks and gardens*” (2); “*the ensembles of immovable goods having a characteristic aspects with aesthetical and traditional value*”(3); “*the panoramic beauties considered as natural paintings and also those viewpoints, accessible to the public, from which the spectacle of those beauties can be enjoyed*” (4)⁴.

Those laws reflected the contemporary cultural conceptions, debate and practice in restoration and were deeply influenced by the great Italian Philosopher Benedetto Croce’s neo-idealistic thought.

After the IIWW the situation changed. In fact, among the articles composing the new Italian Constitution, it is important to underline the introduction of art. 9 which states that “*the Republic promotes the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It protects the landscape and the historical and artistic heritage of the nation*”. Moreover, art. 117 of our fundamental Law specifies the competence of the State and of the Regions⁵ for what concern the protection of and legislation about the “Cultural Goods (Heritage)”.

¹ Heinemann H.A., Historic Concrete. From concrete repair to concrete conservation, PhD thesis, Delft University of Technology, TU Delft, 2018

² Nowadays this limit has been brought to seventy years, mainly for economic reasons and not certainly for cultural ones.

³ Art.1, Law n. 1089/1939

⁴ Art. 1, Law n. 1497/1939

⁵ The Regions at that time were only foreseen and not really established yet. Their established dates back to 1971.

With the establishment of the "*Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage*", which took place in force of the Legislative Decree n. 657, December 14, 1974 (converted into Law n. 5, 29/1975), the *General Directorate for Antiquities and Fine Arts* and the *General Directorate for Academies, Libraries and the Spread of Culture*, moved from the *Ministry for Public Education* – until then having competences in these matters - to the newly established Ministry, whose regulations was approved with Presidential Decree no. 805, December 3, 1975.

The new Ministry changed its name several times during the following decades, losing the competences upon the environmental matters and became the "*Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities*" in 1998 and then the "*Ministry for Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism*". In 1999, the legislation concerning the Cultural Heritage was organized in the *Testo Unico* (i.e. the Unified Text) of laws related to cultural and environmental heritage (Decree-Law n. 490/1999). Following the modification of the Title V of our Constitution (Law. n. 3/2001), where the principles according to which the safeguarding of Cultural Heritage was a State duty, while the enhancing functions should be led by Regions and local Authorities were established, in 2004 the new "*Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio*" (Code of Cultural and Landscape Goods (Heritage), Decree n. 42/2004) was issued⁶.

This last law, in particular, reflects a totally new conception and definitions of what can or should be considered as "Cultural goods" or, better, as "Goods of cultural interest and value". It thus reflects the deep changes occurred from the approval of the first protection laws in Italy and expresses the continuous widening of the concept of Heritage itself. Not only aesthetical or historical values are now on the fore, but a more complex set of values and meanings emerge, of material and immaterial nature. The Code introduced in any case many innovations among which there is the regulation of the transfer of public goods, implying a prior declaration of interest and preventing any change of property status that might lead to the loss of any restrictions. However, concerning the objects (goods) to be protected, the impossibility to safeguard the architectural buildings with less than 50 years of age since their construction and whose author is still alive was confirmed.

Recently, the protection issue has undergone a restrictive modification that certainly does not play in favour of the architecture of the second half of the 20th-century, which works are actually today excluded from protection, on the basis of even more selective requirements that concern the age of the edification. In fact, if in the past the "historical-artistic" protection could have been exercised on buildings that were at least 50 years old from the date of their construction, and on condition that the author was no longer alive, to date, the limit age of 50 years has been increased up to 70 years both for the public and private properties. However, the limit of 50 years remains valid, in the presence of an outstanding interest "*for the integrity and completeness of the nation's cultural heritage*"⁷.

This is the case of the building designed by Ignazio Gardella for the former Faculty of Architecture in Genoa that has been listed, although the limit of the 70 years after its construction has not been reached yet, also because it insists on a very important archaeological site.

The graduation of the "outstanding" interest was previously applied only to complexes of goods, such as collections and series of objects. Thus, to date, after the entry into force of the changes⁸ made to articles 10 and 12 of the "*Code of Cultural and Landscape Goods (Heritage)*", public and private properties, movable and immovable, not designed by a living author and that are at least 70 years old, can be safeguarded for their cultural "interest" only if they belong to the category of "public goods",

⁶ Decree-Law n. 42, 22 January 2004 "*Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio*" [Code of Cultural and Landscape Heritage]

⁷ letter d-bis, comma 3, art. 10, Decree-Law n.42/2004 (2019's amended version)

⁸ art. 175 and 176, Law 124/2017 "Annual market and market competition law"

including ecclesiastical ones, or if they are of "particular interest" if private. On the other hand, if there is an "outstanding" interest at the national level, 50 years is the limit.

De facto, for all the mentioned reasons, buildings representatives of the architecture of the second half of the 20th century cannot be considered *a priori* as Cultural Heritage according to the current Italian legislation in this field.

3. The Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism (MiBACT)

Established in 1975, the actual Italian *Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali e per il turismo* (MiBACT), (Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for the Tourism), provides for the protection and enhancement of Cultural Heritage and the promotion of cultural activities, as well as the functions attributed to the State in the field of cultural and landscape heritage, entertainment, cinema, audio-visual and tourism, according to current legislation.

MiBACT organization (Fig. 1) has been gradually structured both at central and local level. Recently, with the Decree n. 169/2019 a new Regulation has been adopted⁹ but not totally implemented yet. Nevertheless, according to it, at the central level, the Ministry is divided into 12 central general level management offices (General Directorates) and 14 peripheral general level management offices, coordinated by the General Secretary. The General Secretary ensures the coordination of the administrative action, draws up directives, guidelines and strategies concerning the overall activity of the Ministry, coordinates the offices and activities of the Ministry, supervises their efficiency and performance and reports periodically the results of its activity to the Minister. It also coordinates the central General Directorates and the peripheral general management offices of the Ministry and it is directly responsible to the Minister for the coordination and timely implementation of the guidelines given by the Minister.

The 12 foreseen General Directorates are:

- a) General Directorate for "Education, Research and Cultural Institutes";
- b) General Directorate for "Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape";
- c) General Directorate for "Cultural Heritage Security";
- d) General Directorate for "Museums";
- e) General Directorate for "Archives";
- f) General Directorate "Libraries and Copyright";
- g) General Directorate for "Contemporary Creativity";
- h) General Directorate for "Entertainment";
- i) General Directorate for "Cinema and Audio-visual";
- l) General Directorate for "Tourism";
- m) General Directorate for "Organization";
- n) General Directorate for "Budget".

Among the General Directorates abovementioned, the General Directorate for "Contemporary Creativity" (corresponding to the previous General Directorate for Contemporary Art and Architecture) performs the functions and tasks relating to the promotion and support of contemporary art and architecture at different levels (territorial, urban, architectural etc.).

⁹ Council of Ministers Decree n. 169, 2 December 2019 "Regolamento di organizzazione del Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali e per il turismo, degli uffici di diretta collaborazione del Ministro e dell'Organismo indipendente di valutazione della performance" [Regulation of the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, the Minister's Direct Collaboration Offices and the Independent Performance Assessment Body]

At the local level, the peripheral management offices of the Ministry are:

- a) the Regional Secretariats¹⁰;
- b) the Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape Superintendences;
- c) the Regional museums Directorates;
- e) museums, archaeological areas and parks and other places of culture;
- f) the archival and bibliographic Superintendences;
- g) the State Archives;
- h) Libraries.

Figure 1 shows a scheme¹¹ of the MiBACT organizational structure before the last re-organization, issued on December 2019 and approved in January 2020, that modify the previous “General Directorate for the Contemporary Architecture and Urban peripheries” into the new “General Directorate for Contemporary Creativity”. Finally, this new General Directorate will perform the functions and tasks relating to the promotion and support of contemporary art and architecture, including photography and video-art, applied arts, design and fashion, and quality architectural and urban planning. This General Directorate also supports cultural and creative businesses and promotes urban regeneration interventions.

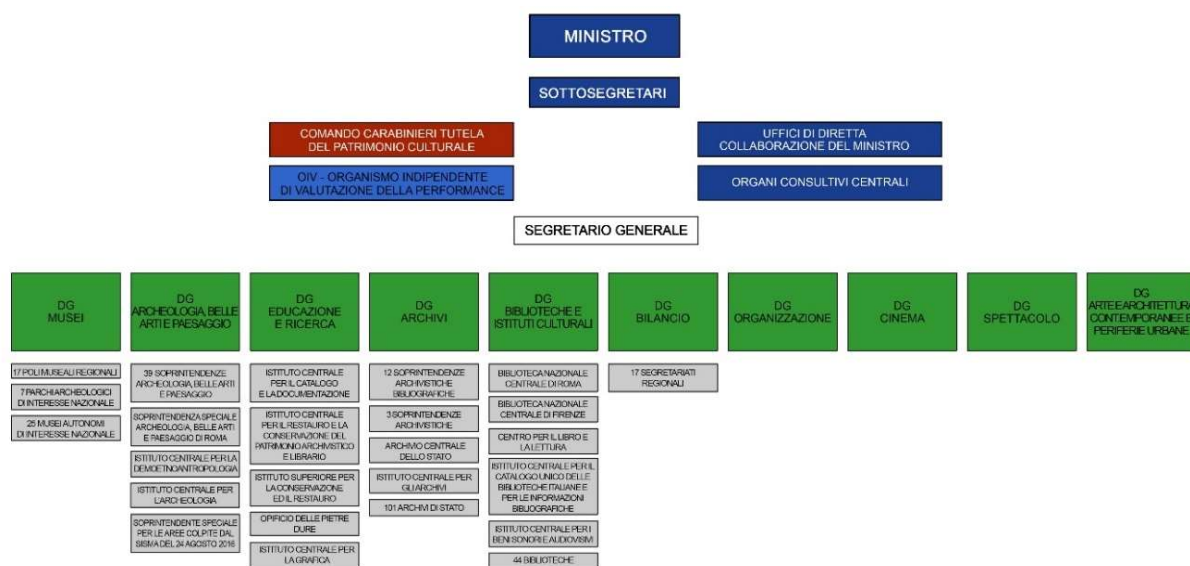


Fig. 1 The MiBACT Organization chart (2019). Source: MiBACT website¹²

¹⁰ Every Italian Region has its own Regional Secretariat, except those Regions under Special Statute.

¹¹ The scheme will be soon updated according the new MiBACT Regulation.

¹² <https://www.beniculturali.it/mibac/export/MiBAC/sito-MiBAC/MenuPrincipale/Ministero/La-struttura-organizzativa/index.html> (Accessed 10 February 2020)

4. Preserving historic concrete buildings in Italy

Within the Italian cultural context, Modern concrete historic buildings can be considered true architectural monuments that express great aesthetic potentials and retain outstanding historical values in the history of architecture, recognizing them as Goods of Outstanding Cultural Interest for the Nation. Thus, the conservative approach to modern architecture lies in the acknowledgement of the value of each object.

In the last three decades the problems of conserving modern architecture took place at the beginning as a need to preserve mainly some iconic modernist buildings, appreciated since the post-war period for their aesthetic appearance, technological-materials and construction innovation, social value and other complex reasons. Thus, some of them have been preserved or restored assuming their architectural forms as the highest value to be preserved. On the other hand, the widespread “concrete built heritage”, public and private, has been subjected to many uncontrolled interventions (systematic retrofitting, refurbishments, reuse, ordinary maintenance etc.) regardless of its historical and cultural value and this is a huge problem nowadays for the tutorship system.

In this context, the emergence of local, national and international organizations dedicated to saving and preserving modern heritage helped in advancing effective conservation efforts.

At the Italian national level, Docomomo Italia¹³ has been established in 1990 and it is dedicated to the documentation, conservation and enhancement of 20th-century buildings and urban ensembles. Moreover, since 2002, the Docomomo regional branch offices have been established in many Italian regions (Campania, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Piemonte, Puglia-Basilicata, Sardegna) while at the same time other working groups are active in others (Lazio, Liguria and Lombardia).

Other important associations of experts operating for the protection of the 20th-century concrete architectural heritage are the “Società Italiana per il Restauro dell’Architettura”¹⁴ (SIRA); the “Associazione Italiana per il Patrimonio Archeologico Industriale”¹⁵ (AIPAI), the “Fondo Ambiente Italiano”¹⁶ (FAI), the “Associazione nazionale Archivi Architettura Contemporanea”¹⁷ (AAA), etc.

Together with the MiBACT central and local bodies and in cooperation with the Italian High Educational Institutions, many research projects and dissemination and communication initiatives have been held at the national, regional and local level. Among these initiatives one of the most important is the “Censimento nazionale delle architetture italiane del secondo Novecento”¹⁸ (i.e. “National census of the Italian architecture of the second half of 20th century”).

This research project, started in the early 2000s by the former “General Directorate for Architecture and Contemporary Art”, has been continued by the current “General Directorate for Contemporary Creativity”. It is conceived as a recognition and documentation program of the architectural heritage built in Italy since the post-war period. Its very interesting methodology is based on some basic criteria that only partially can be considered quantitative (e.g. bibliographical recurrence) and critical (technological novelty; typological schemes renewal, technical or social problems solutions, etc.). In particular, the bibliographic screening considers the “critical fortune” of an architectural artefact, the citations in specific publications and reviews of recognized national and international value. Moreover,

¹³ <https://www.docomomoitalia.it/chi-siamo/> (Accessed 10 February 2020)

¹⁴ <http://sira-restauroarchitetonico.it/> (Accessed 10 February 2020)

¹⁵ <http://www.patrimonioidustriale.it/> (Accessed 10 February 2020)

¹⁶ <https://www.fondoambiente.it/> (Accessed 10 February 2020)

¹⁷ <http://www.aaa-italia.org/chi-siamo/> (Accessed 10 February 2020)

¹⁸ <http://architetturecontemporanee.beniculturali.it/> (Accessed 10 February 2020)

the historical-critical criteria take into consideration various elements related to historical and architectural events, to the evolution of the cultural and disciplinary debate, the significant role played by the building in its urban and social context, the notoriety and relevance of its author. The methodology is based on a complex and coordinated set of activities that can be summarized in 3 following phases:

1. The selection of buildings and urban areas of significant historical and artistic interest;
2. the filing of a technical form;
3. the promotion, dissemination and exploitation of results.

Within this context, the UNIGE's Research Unit lead together with the MiBACT Regional Secretariat the census within the Liguria region.

In June 2019, UNIGE started a new research aimed at updating the Liguria database. This research was therefore in continuity with the previous work, started in 2009 and concluded in October 2010. It led to the listing of 64 significant modern architecture in the Ligurian territory, regularly recorded in the National portal (Database) dedicated to modern architecture in Italy (<https://www.atlantearchitettura.beniculturali.it/>). On the basis of the first experience, in 2013 a research agreement has been signed between the MiBACT Regional Secretariat for Liguria region and the UNIGE's Department of Architecture and Design, particularly with the Research Unit participating in the CONSECH20 JPI CH Project. The research titled "*Census and cataloguing of modern and contemporary architecture complexes in Liguria*" has been concluded in June 2019. The research output were: a monograph titled "*Architetture in Liguria dopo il 1945*" ("*Architecture in Liguria after 1945*") by Giovanna Franco and Stefano F. Musso, the organization of the international conference "*Architecture and public art after 1945*" (20 June 2016) and the creation of an application for smartphones (Android and IOS), called "*Ligurarch900*" as a starting point for the census' future updating about 20th-century architectures in Liguria.

5. CONSECH20 case studies in Genova (Italy)

Among the historic concrete buildings screened by UNIGE Research Unit during the implementation of this project there are private and public properties, listed and not listed yet buildings, already restored or not. The aim of this section is to provide a brief introduction to the case-studies underlining if there are listed or not according to the national legislation in force.

UNIGE Research Unit identified the following 10 case studies shown in Table 1.

Building	Years of construction	Protection level
Museo del Tesoro di San Lorenzo	1952-1956	Listed/National (art.12)
Mercato ovo-avicolo del Campasso	1904-1907	Listed/National
Mercato del pesce	1933-1935	Listed/National
Mercato di frutta e verdura	1925-1930	Listed/National
Ex Silos granario Santa Limbania - "Hennebique"	1901-1906	Listed/National
Chiesa della Sacra Famiglia	1959-1965	Not listed
Palazzetto dello Sport	1961-1963	Not listed
Casa del Soldato	1936-1938	Listed/National
Teatro del Falcone	1953	Not listed

Ex Ristorante San Pietro	1935-1938	Listed/National (art.12)
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Table 1 UNIGE selected case studies

Museo del Tesoro di S. Lorenzo

Built between 1952 and 1956, The Museum of the Treasure is one of the greatest achievements of Italian museography. Franco Albini worked within narrow spaces, between the cathedral apses and the Archbishopric, building an underground museum. The access to the Museum is through the Cathedral' Sacristy, by climbing down a dark staircase made of Promontorio's grey stone and enclosed between black metal cabinets doors. Once in the Museum interiors, one can clearly perceive the explicit reference to the Mycenaean treasures. The tholoi are covered by lowered tapered ceilings, in fair-face reinforced concrete and with a central oculus from which the natural light filters through the concrete-framed glass blocks. The Museum has recently undergone a successful restoration intervention (2007-2011) and it is listed according to the art.12 of the Decree-Law n.42/2004.

Mercato ovo-avicolo del Campasso

The building of the Egg-Poultry Market in the Campasso area was built between 1904 and 1907. It was a slaughterhouse until 1952 when it changes its function into the Egg-Poultry Market. Due to its architectural features characterized by different structures in concept and construction, it can be considered an example of "experimental worksite" during the construction years. In fact, within the construction can be found walls made of marl limestone blocks and bricks (with lime mortar, sea sand and addition of iron and cocchiopesto scraps) simultaneously built with slabs and pillars made with lime concrete and reinforced concrete mixed with sea sand. The Egg-Poultry Market closed in 1989, and since then it is abandoned. Currently, the complex is included in the redevelopment programme of the Genoese urban suburbs and the realization of a project involving the partial demolition of some of its structures is expected in the future. Since July 2003, it is listed according to the Decree-Law n.490/1999, art. 2, co.1 l. a).

Mercato del pesce

The Fish Market, built in 1933-1935, is located in the centre of the city, between the old historic centre and the port area, next to the Molo Vecchio. After numerous functional adjustments, the building today shows several problems related to the lack of maintenance and suffers from a compromised urban situation, aspects that make its reuse problematic, despite the privileged position near the Old Port. In fact, few years ago the Municipality decided to move the fish market function to another building due to hygienic-sanitary reasons. Thus, nowadays the first example of rationalist public architecture promoted by the Municipality itself during the 1930s is abandoned. Since June 2000 it is listed according to the Decree-Law n.490/1999, art. 2, co.1 l. a).

Mercato di frutta e verdura

The Fruit and Vegetables Market is located in the urban centre of the city. It was built between the 1925 and the 1930 during a period characterized by experimental testing about the use of reinforced concrete, based on the intuition of some and patents developed by specialized companies, that left room for more systematic reflection and the issuing of specific rules and regulation. Thus, the different fabrics composing the Market complex were designed and built according to at least four different Italian standards from 1907 to 1930. The Fruit and Vegetable market closed in 2009, when it was

disused pending a new intended use. Unfortunately, even in this case, the approved project provides for the partial demolition of the complex. It is only partially listed because the 2010 declaration of interest is limited to protecting less than half the market (art 10, c. 1, Decree-Law n.42/2004).

Ex Silos granario Santa Limbania – “Hennebique”

The former Silos Santa Limbania – “Hennebique” was built in the early 20th-century in the port area (1901-1906). The Hennebique silos is considered one of the most 20th century complex architecture made of reinforced concrete conglomerate and it represents one of the symbols of this new building technique and material's development. The construction (211 m long and 41 m wide) was considered by its designers as a real industrial machine, inside which there was a mechanical system organized for the unloading, storage and sorting of the grain. The building characterized by different construction phases and its structure was designed according to the Hennebique and Monier patents. Since the 1960s the grain trade activity was over and some companies used parts of it until the last 20 years of the 20th-century, when it was abandoned. Subsequently, various redevelopment projects of the building followed without leading to any actual result due to the difficulties and the high costs of modifying the construction because of its structural characteristics. Since April 2010 it is listed according to art 10, c. 1, Decree-Law n.42/2004.

Chiesa della Sacra Famiglia

The Holy Family Church was designed by Ludovico Quaroni in collaboration with Adolfo De Carlo, Gianpaolo Nannelli and the Studio Mor & Sibilla and built between 1956 and 1959. The Church is built on a narrow lot surrounded by a very urbanized area, in the Marassi neighbourhood.

Fundamental elements, such as the nave and the presbytery, develop in a trapezoidal body that fits into the empty space of the lot, between the existing buildings and the retaining walls of the hill. In this context, the central role assumed by the bell tower strongly emerges. Compared to the project drawings, due to lack of funds, the planned internal and external walls have not been covered by Promontorio's black stone slabs. Thus, the exteriors remained for many years with the only concrete surface finished “a frattazzo”, until they were plastered. The interior was instead finished with “Genoese” plaster, painted white, obtaining, however, a high aesthetic result. Nowadays, the Holy Family Church is not listed.

Palazzetto dello Sport (Palasport di Genova)

The Sports Arena is an indoor arena built in the early 1960s. The national competition for the new Palasport was won by the “Studio Palasport Group” composed of the engineers Franco Sironi, Leo Finzi, Remo Pagani and the architect Lorenzo Martinoia. The structure of the Palasport was, at the time of its construction, at the forefront of the world in terms of structural types, static schemes and construction methodologies and remains, still today, a particularly significant and daring example of the use of reinforced concrete for large structures and one of the very first examples of tensile structures in the world. Unfortunately, the building is not listed.

Casa del Soldato

The Casa del Soldato (former Casa rionale littoria “Nicola Bonservizi”) was built between 1936 and 1938 by the Ligurian architect Luigi Carlo Daneri, one of the greatest Italian interpreters of rationalist architecture. Thanks to the wise use of the *pilotis*, a clear reference to the work of Le Corbusier, Daneri created a large covered space, from which a vertical distribution element consisting of an elliptical

staircase body enclosed in a glass-concrete structure was accessed. Above this space there is a one-floor volume characterized by ribbon windows, with a flat roof, on which a small tower is arranged. Below the atrium, the building continues to develop downwards by means of a three-floors volume horizontally cut from long ribbon windows arranged in correspondence of the rooms and vertically in correspondence of the distribution elements. The building today is in a good state of conservation and the interiors have maintained the original setting. Since December 2014, the Casa del Soldato is listed according to art 10, c. 1, Decree-Law n.42/2004.

Teatro del Falcone

The Falcone Theatre has been built in 1953 on the ashes of the old seventeenth-century theatre that, after being disused for several years due to the construction of the Teatro Carlo Felice (1828), the bombing occurred in 1944 caused seriously damages to its structure. Despite the hope for a conservative restoration intervention, Carlo Ceschi, the superintendent of the Monuments during those years, said that the Falcone "was so seriously damaged (...) that it had to be demolished". Thus, a new modern building was built in its place in 1953, designed for various cultural events. In 2004, after further restoration interventions financed by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and designed by the Superintendence for Architectural and Landscape Heritage of Liguria, The Falcone Theatre has been reopened to the public and it is used as an exhibition venue. Currently, the building is not listed.

Ex Ristorante San Pietro

The former San Pietro Restaurant was designed and built in the years 1935 – 1938 by Mario Labò. During the years it underwent several deep transformations and, in the 1960s, it has been partially demolished due to the need to build the Sopraelevata road. The interiors have been transformed into offices thus modifying the original spaces arrangement while the ground floor has been turned into a gas station. Recently, after several years in disused conditions, it served as emergency recover for immigrants. Nowadays, the building is in a severe state of abandonment. In summer 2019, a restoration project has been announced according to which the former San Pietro Restaurant will be rebuild as it was designed by Labò. The building is listed according to art. 12 of the Decree Law n.42/2004 (amended).

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¹⁹ This list of references is provisional since it is still ongoing

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