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Relevance and Role of Contemporary Architecture Preservation—Assessing and Evaluating Architectural Heritage as a Contemporary Landscape: A Study Case in Southern Italy

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Abstract: Since WWII to the 2000s, numerous masters of contemporary architecture have contributed to the construction of new landscapes with their works; therefore, these places have become part of a changing landscape and of the multifaceted process of landscape generation. Nevertheless, during this fifty-year period, capitalism has led to the destruction of many existing landscapes, and the policies of protection and preservation have often entailed a process of musealization. In 2000, the European Landscape Convention adopted a new common-grounded definition of landscape, integrating a wide set of cultural approaches and disciplinary topics. Starting from the assumption that contemporary architecture and urban projects can generate high-quality landscapes, this paper investigates the link between the architecture and the landscape, taking the opportunity to catalogue the second half of twentieth-century architecture and urban projects in Sicily as part of the national cataloguing activity “Ereditare il Presente” promoted by the Italian Ministry of Culture. Using the Ministry-proposed cataloguing procedure and adding a quality assessment methodology of buildings and urban projects, this study has produced a theoretical and applicative advancement on how architecture and urban projects of the second half of the twentieth century should be offered as a dynamic component of sustainable human settlement planning under SDG11 “sustainable cities and communities”.

Keywords: landscape regeneration; anthropogenic transformation; cultural identity; contemporary architecture; European Landscape Convention



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1. Introduction

In recent years, the European Landscape Convention (ELC) [1], signed in Florence in 2000, adopted a new common-grounded definition of landscape, taking into account as widely as possible a set of components, meanings, cultural approaches, and disciplinary topics. Among the many components of the definition of landscape, the topic of anthropogenic transformation is relevant, especially where it concerns the capacity of transformation of natural spaces by mankind.

Based on the definition of landscape as an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors, article 5 of the Convention provides that its Parties undertake:

- To recognize landscapes in law as an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity.
- To establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management, and planning through the adoption of the specific measures set out in Article 6 of the Convention.
- To establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies.

- To integrate landscape into their regional and town planning policies and in their cultural, environmental, agricultural, social, and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on the landscape.

Under this point of view, the contemporary transformation of our cities could be recognized as one of the most relevant aspects of the landscape generative approach [2], as defined by ELC. From the post-WWII period to today, numerous masters of contemporary architecture have contributed to the construction of new landscapes with their works; therefore, these places have become part of a changing landscape.

In recent decades, many disciplines have dealt with the landscape, among those aesthetics, architecture, urbanism, and ecology [3–7]. For these reasons, the innovative theoretical approach of this article is linked to the desire to identify a path of research that can recognize the interactions between the many disciplines that contribute to thinking about landscape.

In the development of this research project, we hypothesized that architecture and modern urbanism are key components of cultural identity, as are the architecture and urbanism of previous cultures, and that the transition to a new era of sustainable development can make a key contribution to the generation of new landscapes. In other words, the landscape topic is a cross-cutting issue if we consider the UN Agenda 2030 [8].

In actuality, landscape quality improvement and preservation are not recognized as a sustainable development target; however, the maintenance and improvement of the landscape through a sustainable transformation of cities and regions can support the landscape generative process awaited by the ELC and by the author of this study.

This research hypothesis was tested using the institutional framework proposed by the Italian Ministry of Culture (MIC) in the “Ereditare il Presente” program. Over the last fifteen years, the Italian Ministry of Culture, as the national body responsible for the protection of cultural heritage and landscape, has focused on the need to protect contemporary architecture, proposing to numerous research groups—organized on a regional basis—the identification and study of buildings that can be considered masterpieces, to be protected and to be part of circuits of valorization both for the inhabitants and for tourists.

The filing work of contemporary architecture in Sicily proposed by the MIC to this research group has as its basis the extension of knowledge, identification of some relevant landscapes, and the drafting of a potential model to recognize and protect modern architectures and cities as a part of contemporary cultural landscapes.

Starting from a theoretical framework concerning a more complex and multifaceted definition for generating a new landscape concept [5,7], this paper describes the method, application, and results of the research work in Sicily—an Italian island region—on behalf of the Regional Department of Cultural Heritage of Sicily and the Italian Ministry of Culture.

The results were obtained through the customization of the classifying method indicated by the Ministry and concerned the identification of five aspects, as outcomes of empowering the knowledge of modern architectures and urban projects as generative components of the contemporary landscapes, introducing a set of site-specific focuses.

The discussion presented in this article expands on the need to balance the protection of the consolidated landscape and the generation of new landscape—as a result of reaching the goals of landscape quality indicated by the ELC—and enlightens two challenges—the future protection policy and feeding the creation of new masterpieces of contemporary urban and architectural design as a new cultural heritage—which can support the pursuit of landscape quality goals as a cross-cutting contribution to the achievement of the SDGs and in particular Goal 11, “sustainable cities and communities”.

2. Literature Background

2.1. Architecture and Cultural Identity: Origins and Frontiers of the Creation of New Landscapes

The landscape generative process is extremely multifaceted [2,4,6,7,9,10], and one of the elements that the literature emphasizes is the approach to the cognitive processes that affect the landscape: Gambino [11] states that thanks to this multiplicity of points-of-view

on the landscape, it is possible to unfold a multifaceted concept as both an analytical tool and metaphoric key linked to the complexity of the cognitive and design processes.

In other words, a landscape can be defined in many ways, according to representation or design space, and it necessarily has an aspect that should be considered in architectural and urban design [12].

As stated in Doherty and Waldheim [7], it is impossible to draw a single evolutionary line of the issues; however, we can emphasize some relevant aspects.

Firstly, the aesthetic quality of the landscape [6] is reflected in art and historical culture and forms the basis for a community's cultural identity; however, the deterioration of historical landscapes, the reduction in diversity, and the pressure caused by tourism often entail a consequent process of musealization [9], mainly to preserve significant landscapes.

However, as the European Landscape Convention acknowledges [1], landscapes are plural entities, constantly changing, and the ordinary makers of architecture, cities, and territories are the first designers of new landscapes.

Secondly, as stressed in the introduction that Mumford writes for McHarg's masterpiece [4], natural forces and living beings have contributed to human evolution and thus make Man what he is today, in a common ecology. In the end, Mumford, McHarg, and Steiner [13] posit that the Man–Nature relationship is conflictual, difficult to manage, and contrary to the sensitivity of ecological relationships in natural systems.

For a long time, this vision prevailed in which Man is an enemy, almost a virus, compared to the natural system that, in the absence of anthropic action, would live in a perfectly balanced condition. McHarg's ecosystem vision later found a strong confirmation in the Anthropocene concept [14].

Lastly, we can recognize that landscapes are the product of interaction across the times of Man and Nature. The transformation of a place that becomes a landscape after that Man–Nature interaction, arises from economic reasons, aimed at building a stable territorial condition. The communities, such as architects of the past, have been "producers" of landscape as well as "inhabitants" of the places.

Agricultural landscapes, quarries, and proto-industrial productive activities have shaped territories produced by common "knowledge" that the progressive transformation of production processes has changed [15]. The landscape, therefore, represents the most representative synthesis of the anthropogenic modelling processes of the territory, and it enjoys multiple socioeconomic relevancies linked to the history of its transformations and to the recognition of its social value.

Since the 1960s, a disruptive step of capitalism started and exploded, and a strong awareness began to be confirmed by researchers [16]. The application of an econometric worldwide-spread development model produced social inequalities, and consumption of physical, social, and cultural resources went beyond the limits of the planet. The Anthropocene [14] has not only produced a massive ecological footprint on natural ecosystems but has also destroyed the fragile identity structures of the landscapes and the cultural tissues of the cities, consuming or overusing heritage, and weakening the strong relationship between cultural heritage and community.

These conflictual links between aesthetics, ecology, and historical development of local communities take on a new meaning in the global mandatory pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals. However, neither the Brundtland Report nor the UN Agenda 2030 regard landscape as a concept [8,17].

2.2. Contemporary Architecture and the Landscape as a Human Right

The literature review demonstrates a second aspect concerning the relations between modern architecture and urbanism, as well as landscape making.

In declarations and official documents, UNESCO and the Council of Europe [1,18,19] have stated that landscape and cultural identity preservation are fundamental rights.

In the progressive extension of the terms relating to the quality of life, human rights, and the environment, the Council of Europe has drawn up numerous guidelines and

principles which, due to their relevance, have marked, and in some cases preceded, the path towards the global affirmation of principles or the recognition of human rights.

The international conventions on cultural heritage, landscape, and environment since the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1972) [20], the Granada Convention (Council of Europe, 1985) [19], or the Convention for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage (Council of Europe, 1992) [21], signed in London and subsequently revised in Valletta, are bright examples of the extension of human rights concepts through cultural identity [22].

In 1999 the Council of Europe started a general recognition of the importance of the landscape and constituted a restricted workgroup under the control of the Cultural Heritage Steering Committee and the Biological and Landscape Diversity Committee. The establishment of the workgroup already reveals the need to animate the topic of landscape through broader and integrated viewpoints.

The Council of Europe recognized the landscape as essential for the construction of new individual and social well-being, contributing to the human realization and consolidation of the European identity [1].

Furthermore, the restricted workgroup recognized that the economic significance of many landscapes and the often-invasive changes produced on the European landscape require clear guidelines in regulatory terms for the Member States and accountability for individual citizens. Thus, the European Landscape Convention focuses its attention on a very wide spectrum of conditions, including degraded landscapes or areas in transformation and transition from agriculture to urban.

The definition that is produced is therefore very broad: a landscape is an area whose characteristics are the result of actions and the interaction of natural and human factors.

The level of attention to the landscape is relevant both for the signatory States and for individual citizens, therefore the resulting commitments were also developed on several levels through a participatory model of protection, management, and planning.

In the European Landscape Convention, the terms of the problem are therefore revised from a perspective that does not derogate from the constitutional obligation of protection in many European States and opens new opportunities in which transformation must not only be compatible with protection but can be an answer to the question of landscape quality to which the convention refers, producing social, cultural, and economic legitimacy of the protection itself. This approach may not be consistently applied to contemporary architectures that have often themselves been the cause of the transformation of the consolidated landscape of our cities and territories.

However, this statement is true only if we consider the landscape not as a crystallized and dynamic reality.

2.3. Step-by-Step Contemporary Architecture Makes the Landscape

As explained in Doherty and Waldheim [7], Modernism and the literary avant-garde cannot discuss cities, landscapes, and places except indirectly. In other words, no narrative interaction seems possible despite the fact that contemporary landscapes are very often the result of the action of Modernist architects and their epigones. On the contrary, literary tales can create new places often differ from reality. Urban designers and architects can create projects and realizations made of space and landscape in the same way as writers. Manzoni's Milan, Joyce's Dublin, or Italian realists, neorealists and contemporary writers built narrated landscapes as places even though those landscapes had never been designed.

In the context of the landscape project, Modernism has radically changed large parts of our cities; Modernism has designed new places, but it has not been able to implement a "community" project in which each inhabitant is an actor, each place is a stage, and each landscape becomes a performance.

Thus, in a perpetual exchange between reality and fiction, some places became the subject of literary transposition, and live in a reality narrated in the virtual world where the regeneration can never be successfully completed. We recognize this condition in

the Corviale Nuovo housing district in Rome, which acts as the protagonist of the movie *SacroGRA* by Gianfranco Rosi, and of the book that inspired him, *Sacro Romano GRA* [23].

The landscape duality can be functional in the interpretation and dissemination of modern architectural heritage. However, in order to understand the value of contemporary architecture in the generation of new landscapes, we must consider that contemporary architectures and cities write (and overwrite) on places that are already known, already inhabited, and already belong to the collective memory. Carta [24], Farinelli [25], and Doherty [7] stated that the landscape can be configured as a paratextual form that joins places to places. It can be felt as a hypertext, a result of mixed reality, tales, and spatial ambiguity, as confirmed in Reed and Hilderbrand [26].

Umberto Eco in *Storia delle Terre e dei Luoghi Legendari* [27] clarifies this concept by proposing a unique point of view on the sense of space as narrated by literature and considered realistic after rewriting. Eco's excursus on the legendary places clarifies that they have generated fables and real migrations, flows and trips, whether either depends or not on ancient legends whose origin is lost in the mists of time, and whether they are the effect of modern creation.

In this aspect, metaphors aside, we can draw an evolutionary line that was highlighted in the 80s by Frampton [28] that recognizes a progressive adherence to the culture of places in the evolution of Modernism, in which the masters' architectures and urban projects have gradually adapted to the culture of the places. We can recognize a starting point in Quaroni about the relationship between environment and architecture, and an up-to-date relevant approach in the ultimate thinking on urbanism, societal transformation and ecology in Hodson and Marvin [29,30], based on Mostafavi and Doherty [3]. The contribution of modern architecture and urban design in making new landscapes that deserve to be protected and cared for is a topic worthy of consideration. Landscapes, in this case, are the result of a cultural season that we cannot leave out, in the same way that we must consider a new concept of sustainable development over the disruptive Anthropocene, towards a new sustainable Neanthropocene [31,32].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. The Research Design: From the Cataloguing to the Assessing of the Role of Contemporary Architecture in Landscape Generation

Contemporary architecture, especially that of the second half of the twentieth century, has played an important role in landscape configuration, and has contributed to underlining the effects of acceleration of Anthropogenic transformation thanks to innovations in building technology, which has stressed some places.

In recent years, in Italy, the Directorate General for Art and Architecture of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities—later renamed the Directorate General for Contemporary Creativity (DG–CC) of the Ministry of Culture—has started a process to identify which post-WWII buildings deserve protection because they generate quality landscapes and they are part of the Nation's cultural heritage. The DG–CC has launched national research projects involving regional administrations and universities to recognize and preserve the contributions of the architecture of the late twentieth century in the definition of local landscapes.

As for Sicily, the DG–CC and the Regional Department of Cultural Heritage have embraced the challenge with a research group composed of urban planners to understand how the masterpieces of contemporary architecture influenced the context and contributed to generating new landscapes as stated in ELC.

The research was based on an articulated and coordinated set of activities carried out by this working group. The work involved the following steps:

1. Provisional selection of a greater number (316) of buildings and urban projects that were at least double the buildings to be catalogued (150).

2. Selection of buildings and urban areas of significant historical and artistic interest. A total of 170 works were selected out of the 150 expected in the research contract (Table 1) according to at least 2 of the following 7 technical criteria.
3. Compiling and uploading the compiled forms of each selected building. They were filed on the internet official portal <http://architecturecontemporanee.beniculturali.it/architettura/> (accessed on 27 December 2022).

Table 1. Number of heritage buildings per province and total.

| Province | Provisional Selection | Final Selection | Percentage of Selection |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Agrigento | 20 | 8 | 40% |
| Caltanissetta | 22 | 7 | 32% |
| Catania | 45 | 17 | 38% |
| Enna | 4 | 4 | 100% |
| Messina | 29 | 12 | 41% |
| Palermo | 116 | 75 | 65% |
| Ragusa | 16 | 4 | 25% |
| Siracusa | 19 | 10 | 53% |
| Trapani | 45 | 33 | 73% |
| Total | 316 | 170 | 54% |

Elaboration by the author.

The DG–CC has indicated seven technical criteria necessary for the definitive selection of works of significant historical and artistic interest. They are:

1. The work is published in at least two of the studies or systematic repertories dealing with architecture in the Region or Italy.
2. The work is published in one of the studies under criterion 1 and in a magazine of international relevance.
3. The work is published in at least two journals of international importance.
4. The work has a significant original role in the regional panorama in relation to the development of both international debate and research.
5. The building has a significant role in typological evolution with progressive or experimental constructive interpretations.
6. The building was designed by a prominent figure in the context of regional, national, or international architecture.
7. The building stands out for its qualitative value within the urban context in which it is built.

In addition, the cataloguing procedure proposed by the Ministry has been integrated and developed with a quality assessment methodology of buildings and urban projects, in order to enlighten in what way contemporary architecture and urbanism have contributed to the creation of new landscapes that today should be at the center of a new process of protection, in a context of creative dynamism.

3.2. Cataloguing Procedure

The methodology of selecting the works of architecture to be registered has seen, in addition to the application of the seven criteria already reported, focused attention on some issues of the regional great metropolitan cities (Palermo, Messina, Catania) and those of the rest of the territory. The methodology has identified some families of buildings and authors who have provided clues to trace analogies, authorial chains, categories, and seasons relevant to the historical and artistic interest of the late twentieth century throughout Sicily.

The first challenge was to identify the period range of study.

The “zero point” for the survey activity in Sicily can be anticipated in comparison to the rest of the nation since post-war reconstruction started in 1943, the year of the liberation of the island by the Anglo-American Allied Forces. Accordingly, the works to be included

in the census from that date, and those built up to the early 2000s but planned by 1999, were identified.

The second challenge was the reference selection.

A precise survey of magazines and specialized publications has been started, which has helped create a list of places and projects that are useful for a first selection of the works. Among other journals and magazines: *Abitare*; *Architettura Cronache e Storia*; *Casabella*; *D'Architettura*; *Domus*; *Industria Italiana del Cemento*; *Lotus*; *Ville e Giardini*. Similar research has been carried out on the largest-common manuals and guides related to the history of contemporary Italian architecture, The main ones are:

- Dal Co F. (a cura di) (1997), *Storia dell'architettura italiana. Il secondo Novecento (1945–1996)*, Mondadori Electa, Milano.
- Di Benedetto G. (2012), *Per un atlante dell'architettura moderna in Sicilia*, Itinera Lab Editrice, Marsala.
- Elmo I., (2016) *Sicilia. Architettura tra paesaggi e habitat*, ListLab, Trento.
- Iannello M., Scolaro G. (2009), *Palermo. Guida all'architettura del '900*, Salvare Palermo, Palermo.
- Mulazzani M. (a cura di) (2006), *Architetti italiani. Le nuove generazioni*, Electa, Milano.
- Oddo M. (2007), *Architettura contemporanea in Sicilia*, Corrao Editore, Trapani.
- Pirrone G. (1971), *Architettura del XX secolo in Italia*. Palermo, Edizioni Vitali e Ghianda, Genova.
- Piva A., Galliani P. (a cura di) (2005), *Ricerca formazione progetto di architettura. Architetti italiani under 50*, Marsilio, Venezia.
- Sciascia A. (1998), *Architettura contemporanea a Palermo*, L'EPOS, Palermo.

The selection of the works to be included in the census has taken into account the important role of many designers from the Sicilian academic world who have determined architectural seasons of significant historical and artistic interest in the second half of the twentieth century throughout Sicily. This is a significant presence because the Sicilian Faculties of Architecture not only play a teaching role but are also play the role of applied research laboratories on spatial transformation.

Starting in the 1950s, many great masters of Italian architecture have established themselves in Sicily, both of Sicilian origin and of national or foreign origin due to factors including:

- They were teaching in Sicilian universities (Gregotti, Pollini, Nicoletti etc.).
- They had been called to the city during particularly dramatic moments of its recent history, such as post-war reconstruction or after the earthquake in the Belice valley (Siza, Venezia, Ungers etc.).
- They had gone to the city to design important public works (BBPR, Ricci, De Carlo, Minissi etc.).

The next step was to file for more information on the DG–CC official website <http://architetturecontemporanee.beniculturali.it> (accessed on 27 December 2022). The fields included in the form prepared by the DG–CC are:

- Name of the work
- Project date
- Date of execution
- Category (based on a nationally shared vocabulary)
- Author/s
- Client
- Ownership
- Original function
- Current function
- Description
- Facilities (type and status)
- Facade material (type and condition)
- Roofs (type and condition)

- Doors and windows (type and condition)
- Legal Constraints
- Protection measures (Date of Order and Regulatory Reference)
- Cadastral sheet and parcel
- Presence and short description of artworks
- References
- Archival sources
- Notes
- Other attachments

According to the descriptions of each field, we filed 170 heritage buildings, composed of 4 main sections:

- Identity card of the building
- Details about technical aspects and cadaster coordinates, as well as criteria adopted for selecting the building
- References and attachments
- Web GIS map

3.3. Key Topics of Second Half XX-Century Architectures and Urban Projects, as Relevant Landscape Components

After the selection and cataloguing of contemporary architecture, the most interesting research focus was addressed, in which it is possible to find a significant reflection on the issues related to the contemporary landscape generative process.

In this step we defined key topics that can respond to the following main question: what type of buildings and urban projects can contribute to enhancing the landscape quality in contemporary culture and aim to right protection of them for the next generations?

To achieve goal, we have assigned keywords to architecture according to their type and function, as provided in the database under the headings “category”, “original function”, and “current function”. Then, we grouped the architecture and analyzed their socio-political and cultural context, as in the “description” field. The main socio-political and cultural criteria relate to:

- Client,
- Public or private funding (without merit assessment),
- Public relevance deriving from the analysis of scientific literature and newspapers of the time, if possible,
- The level of national and international renown of the architect/urban planner.

Since the goal was not to exclude any of the buildings but to recognize their historical, cultural, and landscape value, a word frequency analysis was created to support the definition of the key topics, using the common MsExcel tool and the online tool “WordItOut” (available at <https://worditout.com/word-cloud/create> (accessed on 27 December 2022)).

Using this qualitative selection method and taking into account all the aspects gathered in analysing the references, we defined five topics for the architecture and urban projects of the second half of the twentieth century:

- New neighborhoods outside the consolidated cities, their development and evolution,
- The University campuses as research and design places,
- The new town policies, mainly after natural disasters,
- Public facilities and services to improve urban quality,
- Masterpiece housing, reinterpreting the concept of home in cities, countryside, and seaside.

4. Results

The key topics of the architecture and urban projects of the second half of the twentieth century, as relevant landscape components, are described and commented on below, giving particular emphasis to the socio-economic and quality aspects of this project. In the light of the principles set out in the literature review, these architecture and urban projects feature

the social, cultural, and economic legitimacy of their further protection, since they are not a part of a crystallized reality.

4.1. *New Neighborhoods and Old Cities*

The first topic concerns the new neighborhoods outside the consolidated city, originally created in response to the lack of housing for workers after the WWII.

The experience of public housing in Sicily has developed in a systematic way starting from the INA Casa program and the contemporary interventions for workers' homes carried out by other similar institutes.

Architects' experiences in both cities and small towns became central to the construction of a new urban model. With the evolution of thought and the birth of Plans for public housing, the design has evolved in the form of a new city on a human scale and therefore in the processes of densification (Figure 1). On the other hand, the great ensembles and utopian visions of the masters working in Sicily, despite their innovative visions, remain imperfect in their ability to build a new sense of community [33].



Figure 1. The new city on a human scale. Residential district of Borgo Ulivia (1954) by G. Samonà, A. Bonafede, R. Calandra, E. Caracciolo, Palermo (ph. Courtesy of Carmelo Galati Tardanico).

4.2. *Universities Build Their Campuses as Places of Life, Study, and Research*

The Sicilian Universities are among the main places for experimentation of theoretical and methodological research on disciplinary contributions to the birth of the contemporary city. The university campuses of Palermo (Figure 2), Catania, and Messina, despite the formal and settlement differences, show how the architecture of this author settles in a micro-urban model of exemplary value. The logic of intervention in historic buildings within the competence of universities is not dissimilar; however, it is based on the revi-

talization of spaces that are transformed into contributions to the city and its public and shared spaces.



Figure 2. The “house” of the University of Palermo. Restoration of the Steri as University Rectorate building by R. Calandra and C. Scarpa, Palermo (ph. Carmelo Galati Tardanico, courtesy).

4.3. After the Earthquake: The Rebuilding of Belice Valley (1968–1990)

The experience of the reconstruction of the Belice Valley represents a crucial phase in the history of Sicily and the way in which the city and community project can build new models. The tragic, poor, and inadequate reality, already highlighted by the commitment of Danilo Dolci [34] in the 1960s, is suddenly and tragically placed in the national and international spotlight. The commitment of designers, urban planners, artists, and other men of culture is manifested in the presence of more than 300 authors intervening and contributing to the reconstruction [35].

Numerous post-earthquake architectures have been identified and registered throughout the area affected by the earthquake, even where reconstruction did not involve the abandonment of the ancient centers (Gibellina, Poggioreale, and Salaparuta).

The theme of spatial reconstruction of the places is accompanied by the story of an unfinished “reconstruction of the community” (Figure 3), as described in Badami [35].



Figure 3. Poggioreale Nuova. Elimi Square (1986) by P. Portoghesi (ph. by the author).

4.4. Public Facilities for Cities and Communities

Since the 1950s, Sicilian cities have been enriched with new public buildings and facilities and many exemplary cases have been filed that have contributed to building a framework of widespread implementation of urban quality.

Office buildings, municipal offices, and churches are accompanied in the filing of places of iconic urban value such as the cultural centre “Le Ciminiere” in Catania, or of strong scenic charm such as the Village Monte degli Ulivi in Riesi.

Architecture for the sake of archaeology, culture, and the enjoyment of nature marks traits of great cultural depth, in some cases going beyond the technical possibilities of the construction era; this is the character of the architecture that has been realized in Sicily during the second half of the twentieth century, where the presence of cultural heritage is the very reason for the construction of architecture (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Restoration of the former Monastery of San Francesco alla Collina (2007) by F. Finocchiaro, G. Guerrera, P. Culotta, L. Bosco, Paternò (Catania) (ph. Francesco Finocchiaro, courtesy).

In more recent decades, where the culture of recovery is more strongly influenced by the recent territorial plots, we are witnessing the development of interventions aimed at reconnecting territories through the intervention of this author on abandoned infrastructural lines.

4.5. *The House, the City and Nature*

“Home” is an oft-studied theme in the architecture of the second half of the twentieth century in Sicily and certainly takes its cue from the studies conducted by the architects of the early twentieth century.

There are many variations—rural villages, holiday homes, and contemporary buildings in place of buildings destroyed during WWII—but always with the intent to dialogue with nature and landscapes, both urban and natural (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Salem House (1972) by Culotta e Leone Associati, Cefalù (PA) (ph. published in Culotta P (1985), *Le occasioni del progetto*. Cefalù: Medina by courtesy of Leone’s heirs).

5. Discussion—Two Challenges for the Future: Conservation and New Realizations

5.1. Improving Knowledge towards an Integrated Protection of Modern Heritage

As is known in the discipline of conservation of contemporary architecture, there are two key issues that are also important to this research, insofar as the ability to produce landscape is also linked to the preservation of modern heritage. The first one refers to the necessity to analyze the statement of the significance of a property as being flexible over time, capable of being open to a continuously evolving process about its own meanings and those in relation to its surroundings [36].

The second one, strictly linked to the previous one, refers to the definition of outstanding universal value (OUV) represented by the entire system of attributes and features that constitute a property's "authenticity", as declared by the UNESCO Operational Guidelines [37]. Recognizing these features and reporting them with a methodological approach is necessary in order to justify the addition of a modern property on the World Heritage List. Many studies have dealt with the issue of restoration and the reuse of the modern, focusing on the concept of "authenticity" as well as on the concept of "continuity" [38] as instruments to evaluate the OUV.

This issue has a relevant consequence to this research topic since the conservation of modern heritage is a *condicio sine qua non* for the landscape generative process. However, no existing filing and evaluation procedure, recognized by national or international official bodies, allows due consideration to be given to the generative value of landscapes of modern architectural and urban heritage.

This research group mainly recognized the challenge of modern materials' degradation. The sensitivity to pollutants of contemporary materials, especially concretes and plasters, has caused the degradation of many buildings built in the second half of the twentieth century, which often cannot be remedied due to the fractionation of properties (for example in multi-story residential buildings) and the absence of specific safeguards (for example, legal constraints on architectures less than 50 years old).

The sensitivity of the materials in some cases also depends on the innovativeness of some realizations for whose use no compatibility test had been previously made; this question concerns in particular the places where the architectures are grafted onto the archaeological areas.

The second question is that of the unfinished: some architectures, often publicly commissioned, have remained unfinished for decades due to bureaucratic slowdowns, failures, and/or calamitous events. This condition has affected individual buildings (such as the Popular Theatre of Sciacca) or entire urban sectors; where the design of public housing complexes provided for the construction of public spaces and common services were never completed, the quality of the realization has expired, feeding the stigma of the degraded periphery.

The third issue is abandonment, which is also linked to the first two conditions.

Abandoned places are often unfinished architectures, but also unopened yards that become places of unauthorized activities or places for which an adequate plan of development and economic self-support had not been thought of.

No other digital catalogue or similar tool for decision support is officially recognized. Indeed, not even the catalogue of the architectures of the second half of the twentieth century of the MIC is an adequate support system for decision-making, but it is an important institutional digital catalogue in the "Ereditare il presente" policy. In recent years, in Italy and across the EU, other public bodies and NGOs have provided similar projects and produced files for sectoral aspects, e.g., the unfinished masterpiece buildings as a landscape of ruins [39,40], the "Archivio del Moderno di Mendrisio", or the DOCOMOMO digital archives [41,42].

5.2. Extending Building Opportunity for a Consistent Policy of Landscape Quality Making

The second aspect relevant to the discussion is the importance of new creations.

Public patronage characterizes the architecture of the late twentieth century. There are a great number of architectural works that have been carried out on large public orders, especially if we consider the presence of large NGOs and regional bodies that have built offices and branches in Sicily.

However, some themes, such as living, often confront a private client who is in the family or cultural circle of the designer or feeds on private clients interested in the quality of the project and its actual implementation.

The commissioning process in the architecture of the second half of the twentieth century leads us to reflect on the current state of patronage: who currently funds the design of valuable architecture? Which authors work with a greater sensitivity to the culture of public space or project for private use, in contexts of value or in those of historical, cultural, and landscape value? Who works on degraded suburbs with the ability to build the so-called city effect where neglect and stigma have produced negative outcomes? Who are the bodies that control the protected heritage dialogue with the designer for the realization of the works?

Since the early twenty-first century, patrons, designers, and public bodies have made a new joint approach to building new exemplary architectures as contributions to cultural and natural landscape quality.

This study has produced a selection, not exhaustive nor devoid of any value judgment on the works, that shows how contemporary architecture in Sicily contributes to shaping the city, building new centralities, as well as new public and shared spaces, which often intervene as a sort of acupuncture practice in the recovery of abandoned places.

In the end, patronage itself has been reviewed by contemporary processes of self-creation, and the expansion of bottom-up processes. The issue of the future impact of architecture and urbanism on landscape creation remains open and currently unsolved. The pursuit of landscape quality goals is also a cross-cutting contribution to the achievement of the SDGs and in particular Goal 11 “sustainable cities and communities”, and many communities are facing the challenge with different tools and effects [43–47].

6. Conclusions

The multifaceted process of landscape generation is based on an articulated cognitive and design process that involves not only the author of this project but the entire community that assumes, as a whole or individually, specific roles such as clients, designers, farmers, artisans, simple inhabitants, etc.

This process changed in a radical way in the second half of the twentieth century when a phase of capitalism involved the destruction of a lot of landscapes, to the point that the policies of protection and preservation have often involved a process of musealization of landscapes.

However, contemporary architecture and urbanism have contributed to the creation of new landscapes that today should be at the center of a new process of protection, in a context of creative dynamism.

World, European and national institutions, and NGOs in recent decades have launched cataloguing projects of contemporary architecture with the aim of understanding the value of contemporary heritage. In Italy in particular, the Ministry of Culture has launched the project “Ereditare il Presente”, within which this research has been developed.

This article investigates in what way the cataloguing activity of modern architecture from the second half of the twentieth century has become an opportunity to develop a method for examining the in-depth significance of landscapes and the need to achieve the goals of landscape quality set out in the European Landscape Convention, through contemporary architecture and urban design.

Based on some important theoretical and epistemological reflections on the landscape, this article has produced a theoretical advancement on how contemporary architecture should be offered for the comprehension and enjoyment of inhabitants and tourists, as a generative component of the landscape. This research, as delivered to the Italian Ministry

of Culture, opens new protection and conservation scenarios for “living” architectures that have not yet lost their original function and which can be enjoyed by users and visitors as places where daily community life takes place.

The choice to include an integrative part of such importance to the cataloguing required by the MIC has implied a strong change in the initial motivations of this research, which was originally conceived as a simple cataloguing activity and will undoubtedly enrich the current debate among the institutions dealing with the issues of the protection of contemporary heritage.

Starting from the scientific premises summarized above, this research has produced an advancement in the recognition of contemporary heritage as a dynamic actor of quality landscapes, identified general methodological aspects and specific experiments, and showed some issues, such as the fragility of contemporary architecture, and the need to rethink patronage.

Finally, landscape quality improvement and preservation are not recognized as sustainable development targets, and this is a limitation of the research. We hope that starting from the principles stated by UNESCO and the Council of Europe, this innovative point of view can be assimilated and used to help recognize the importance of the landscape within the SDGs, as a part of participatory, integrated, and sustainable human settlement planning under SDG11 “sustainable cities and communities”.

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