

# Architectural archives, a resource for knowledge and collective memory

## Arquivos de arquitetura, um recurso para o conhecimento e memória coletiva

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### ABSTRACT

It is difficult to fix coordinates to define architectural archives, related as they are to a discipline that has many declensions and often overlaps with others. Characterized by a multiplicity of types of documentation, from the point of view of production and organization they vary greatly in the range defined by the two poles of personal and corporate archives. Subjected to a strong evolutionary process, marked by the increasingly exclusive presence of digital technology, they constitute a field of continuous learning for archivists and researchers, with the aim of fully exploiting their information potential. Historical research, however, is only one of the fields in which architectural archives can play a primary role. Focusing on the human environment, built and natural, they are vital in the construction and development of collective memory, as much as in the management and protection of the works that make up the common heritage of citizens.

**KEYWORDS:** Historical research; Collective memory; Common heritage.

## RESUMO

É difícil fixar coordenadas para definir os arquivos de arquitetura, relacionados como são a uma disciplina que tem muitas declinações e que muitas vezes se sobrepõe a outras. Caracterizados por uma multiplicidade de tipos de documentação, do ponto de vista da produção e organização variam muito no âmbito definido pelos dois pólos de arquivos pessoais e corporativos. Submetidos a um forte processo evolutivo, marcado pela presença cada vez mais exclusiva da tecnologia digital, constituem um campo de aprendizagem contínua para arquivistas e investigadores, com o objetivo de explorar plenamente o seu potencial informacional. A pesquisa histórica, no entanto, é apenas um dos campos em que os arquivos de arquitetura podem desempenhar um papel primordial. Com o foco no ambiente humano, construído e natural, são vitais na construção e desenvolvimento da memória coletiva, tanto quanto na gestão e proteção das obras que compõem o património comum dos cidadãos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Pesquisa histórica; Memória coletiva; Património comum.

## Introduction

The awareness that architectural archives constitute, in the world of archives, a subset which deserves specific attention and elements of knowledge that not always are part of the institutional training of archivists, is by now rooted in the common consciousness. It received definitive institutionalization in 2000 at the International Congress of Archives in Seville with the creation, within the International Council on Archives, of ICA-Sar, the section dedicated to them. The formalization of ICA-Sar actually came at the end of a process of discussion and study that had begun at least twenty years earlier and had passed through differently named working groups. The first official product was a manual (ICA – International Council on Archives, 2000) dedicated to the archival processing of architectural documents, which has been an essential point of reference for years. A year earlier, in July 1999, the Italian Association of Architectural Archives was established in Venice, Italy. Sixty-six Italian institutions which collect, preserve and supervise architectural archives gather in the association, named AAA-Italia. The core goals of its activities are the enhancement and protection of the archival heritage inherent to architectural culture, the exchange of information on the technical aspects of

the archival processing of this class of fonds and the promotion of research activities, the dissemination of knowledge and specific training for the sector<sup>1</sup>. Like ICA-Sar, AAA-Italia was founded at the end of a process, begun in 1995. That year, in fact, on the occasion of a seminar organized by the Università Iuav di Venezia, the need emerged for a national coordination of the institutes that preserve architectural archives, with the aim of focusing attention on a heritage of great value and at the time not yet fully considered as such, in a context that, like the Italian one, is historically polycentric and devoid of centralized institutions appointed to collect the heritage of the entire nation. The seminar in Venice was, at least for Italy, one of the first occasions in which archivists, historians and administration officials met to discuss issues relating to the archival processing and use of architectural documents<sup>2</sup>. The need and importance to preserve, organize and promote architectural archives had already been emphasized in an international conference on archives and history of architecture held in Reggio Emilia in 1993 (Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, 1999), even though more focused on the historical research rather than on technical issues of the archival management.

At the Alcalá de Henares conference in 2004, archivists and historians from many countries met again to exchange ideas and experiences on the themes of archival processing, conservation, research and dissemination of knowledge. In the same years, within the framework of the European project named *Gau:di Programme*, an international working group investigated various issues related to architectural archives, focusing above all on the creation of a portal to give access to the online resources then available. The second output of the working group was a manual intended for architects, containing practical indications for the production and management of the firm's documentation<sup>3</sup>. The completion of the project was eventually marked by a conference held in Paris in November 2007, specifically dedicated to taking stock of the state of knowledge on the digital issue, which already in those years clearly stood out as a subject in fast and continuous evolution, on which more than anything else was necessary to focus attention<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The association annually publishes its own Bulletin, available for download on its website at <http://www.aaa-italia.org>.

<sup>2</sup> The volume of proceedings (Tonicello, 1995) includes as an appendix a first census attempt of the Italian institutes that preserve architectural archives.

<sup>3</sup> The guidelines (Architecture Archives in Europe, 2004) were delivered in five languages (English, Italian, French, Dutch and German) on the portal created as part of the project, unfortunately no longer available today.

<sup>4</sup> Peyceré and Wierre (2008).

In the following two decades, the debate on architectural archives has expanded and deepened, also according to the impressive and ever-faster evolution of the scenario. The increasing weight acquired by the topics relating to the management of digital documents requires in fact a continuous updating of knowledge, other than specific archival and conservation treatment strategies. Reading today the manual drawn up as part of the *Gau:di project* in 2004, one immediately realizes how much in less than twenty years the situation with respect to digital has radically changed. There are very few indications contained in that instrument that appear to have meaning and usefulness today. In fact, we have not witnessed a mere technological evolution of the tools for producing and storing documents. What has taken place is a Copernican revolution in which the dichotomy between analogue and digital as possible alternatives of the nature of a document has dissolved in the face of the ever-widening diffusion of documents that simply cannot have an analogue state, be they rendering to three dimensions or files produced by algorithmic design software.

In parallel with this awareness of an evolution that has no prospects of ending, it was also inevitable for archives to expand the limits of the very definition of the so-called “architectural archives”. With the deepening of the analysis and the expansion of the activities, it has taken on much broader connotations than in the past, widening its borders beyond those of architecture itself, to include also other disciplines that in professional practice are often connected to it.

## **What are exactly architectural archives?**

It is quite difficult to give a concise definition of what is commonly referred to as “architectural archives”. Archival fonds that have important connections with architecture (or, as I will say later, with the much wider world of design, in all its possible declinations) can belong to various categories, very different from each other. Together, they form a vast and highly diversified universe, placed within a net of connections with many other thematic and disciplinary areas. The positive confidence with which thirty-five years ago at the Università Iuav di Venezia we faced the idea of creating a conservation institute dedicated to architectural archives, led us to imagine very orderly and standardized collections of projects, each duly illustrated by technical drawings, beautiful perspective views and impromptu sketches, models and photographs. Very soon this idea turned out to be imaginative and devoid of connections with the real world. On the contrary, as our inter-

est deepened and the collections expanded, the vagueness of the contours that characterize this class of archival fonds emerged in all its tangibility.

The main problem is that the architect's own profession, the one from which the archives are produced, is an extreme model of complexity, and sometimes of indeterminacy. Architects work in different areas, establish relationships of various kinds and very often devote only a part of their time to design. They also teach at the university, write books, collaborate with newspapers and magazines, and hold positions in associations or in public administration. They engage in political activity, dedicate themselves to historical research, to photography or even painting and art, and so on. Since very often all these activities contribute to the production and gathering of the documents, their archives develop a much broader and more elaborate organization than the one they would have, should they consist in a plain sequence of work files strictly related to the sole activity of the design studio.

In this regard, it must be said that a key role in the configuration of the archive is played by the dimensions of the practice itself, which potentially lie in a very wide range that goes from minimal (the architect who works substantially alone or with few collaborators subordinated to him) up to extremely large. In this class, we can find architectural practices which work on an international level, have multiple offices (often in different countries) and a great number of employees who work according to an organizational scheme based on pre-established and standardized procedures, as well as with diversified specializations, positions and levels of responsibility. It is quite obvious that as one moves from the minimum organizational level towards the more complex one, the possibility grows that the practice's archive grows more and more precisely organized and comparable to that of an institution. At the same time, it will turn out to be clearly separated from any other documentary deposits possibly produced by the single architect with the aforementioned collateral activities. The more, however, the studio appears (regardless of its actual size) as a direct emanation of the activity of an individual or even a couple of architects, the more the archive will tend to be comprehensive of the many themes and areas addressed, as well as organized not so much as a consequence of homogeneous work procedures but according to the more or less developed attitude to order (or sometimes the propensity to disorder) of its producer.

Over the years, I have taken many times as an example of this common feature of the archives of architects the Egle Renata Trincanato fonds<sup>5</sup>. In the

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<sup>5</sup> The archival funds mentioned as examples in this paper are kept in the Archivio Progetti of the Università Iuav di Venezia.

Archivio Progetti of the Università Iuav di Venezia, a group composed of archivists and researchers has carried out on it a long and especially challenging work of arrangement and description<sup>6</sup>. The first woman to graduate from the Iuav, at that time Regio Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, from 1938 until her death in 1998 Egle Trincanato engaged in parallel in at least four activities, different and autonomous from each other, as much as closely connected to each other. During her long life, she worked in fact as a professional architect, as a university professor, as a historical researcher and author of scientific publications and finally as a manager of the public administration, in the role of director of the Venetian Palazzo Ducale. With a great abundance of materials, her archives document this articulated professional life in its entirety and contain documents that go far beyond what is generally understood when it comes to architectural records. I am thinking above all of the hundreds of freehand drawings she produced to illustrate one of her most famous books, *Venezia minore*, released in 1948, the documentation of university life during the long period of her stay, or the huge photographic collection in which photos made by her, great photographers, news agencies and even students document many aspects of Venetian life from the Thirties to the Seventies of the past century. The long work of arranging this collection, which also had to deal with big problems originating from the almost total absence, in Egle Trincanato, of any predisposition for a systematic and orderly keeping of her archive, made unexpected materials to emerge, such as a considerable quantity of papers logically pertaining to the archives of Giuseppe Samonà, with whom Trincanato collaborated for many years. Historical events had moved them from their original placement to this one. Here they naturally remain, properly recognized and connected to their original archive and setting.

If we abandon such a broad vision and focus solely on the design activity, we must recognize that also in this more restricted area the casuistry far exceeds the boundaries of architecture. In fact, the situations in which architectural works coexist, in the archive of the same designer, with projects for urban plans or industrial design objects or furnishing elements, works of graphics, theatrical sets or many other varieties of projects are extremely frequent. Carlo Scarpa, Giancarlo De Carlo, Gio Ponti are exemplary figures of great architects for whom, respectively, designing glass works for the Venetian firm Venini (Scarpa), urban plans (De Carlo) or decorative panels and copper objects to be entrusted to the Paduan enameller Paolo De Poli (Ponti)

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<sup>6</sup> Domenichini (2021).

has not been an activity of subordinate importance in their professional life and has left a great deal of records in the archives. These are not exceptions, and many more examples could be made. At this point, however, if it's true that urban planning, graphic, industrial design projects and so on are naturally constitutive elements of architectural archives, we cannot obviously exclude from our interest the archives of "pure" urban planners, designers, graphic designers, and above all engineers, who in turn have often activities that substantially intersect architecture. Certainly less eye-catching than the archives of architects, deprived as they are of exciting drawings, perfect to be framed and exhibited, the archives of engineers are nevertheless an essential complement for those who make in-depth research on buildings or architectural projects. Those who work in daily contact with researchers know this well, and regularly receive requests for information on where it is possible to locate the documents of this or that structural engineer.

It seems that trying to outline the characteristics of a category of archives apparently so clearly defined by the commonly used term "architectural archives", we have only been able to highlight the elements of vagueness. It is certainly no coincidence that, at least in Italy, where the designation "archivi di architettura" is commonly used, there has been discussion for some time on the advisability of finding different words that, with the same amount of synthesis, more properly define a framework in which architecture undoubtedly plays a key role, even though not always exclusive. For this reason, it happens more and more frequently that the name *archivi del progetto* (project archives) is given as preferable to the traditional one. The reason is that instead of specifying in too narrow terms the disciplinary sphere, it refers to the intellectual and practical activity that underlies the production of documents. This way, it can represent with greater appropriateness such a variegated and often elusive object.

## Special archives need dedicated archivists

Architectural archives, so naturally I will continue to call them here, have features that, although not exclusive to this category, are so substantial and characterizing as to challenge the skills of archivists. First of all, for them, a specific disciplinary knowledge is required. When arranging the project documents, sometimes up to some thousands of drawings other than every other kind of documentation, it is not possible to process them if one is unable, for example, to read a technical drawing, distinguish a report from

a specification or interpret a study model. These are primary actions, crucial to relate documents to each other, to recompose sets and to place them in the right place of the overall reconstruction for the creation process. In his work, the archivist relates to the single document mainly with the purpose of restoring the network of relationships that logically holds together the papers of the archive within a strictly organized structure. In dealing with architectural archives, the pursuit of this goal must manage, among other things, the extreme physical heterogeneity of the documents. While documents substantially similar in nature, support and size can be physically collected together, a file of an architectural archive can gather within itself (I limit myself to the general categories) drawings, text documents, models, photographs and printed materials, plus everything belonging to the digital universe. These are documents that obviously cannot be physically kept close to each other. For this reason, the archivist has to get used to thinking constantly as on two tracks that run in parallel, never touching but in constant connection: that of the logical arrangement, virtual and on paper, and that of the physical disposition, which must follow logic and criteria to be defined each time. All this in a context that, referring to what I wrote at the beginning, is in many cases closer to the sphere of personal archives than to that, more rigorously organized, of the archives of institutions. For this reason, in arranging architectural archives the archivist must know how to juggle between the typological variety of the documentation and the multiplicity of the activities of the creators, receiving a strong conditioning from their attitude towards order and organization, which may have been total, partial or absolutely nonexistent.

Last but not least, the description of architectural drawings also requires specific knowledge to recognize the techniques of representation (how difficult it is for beginners to distinguish even plans from sections, let alone perspectives from axonometric projections!), the graphic conventions, the countless media and techniques used over the course of time, sometimes employed only locally or for short periods of time, to the point of not being included in the reference manuals, which inevitably tend to refer to more or less specific geographical areas. The first manual that organically dealt with the description of architectural drawings (Porter and Thornes, 1994) was published on behalf of The Getty Art History Information Program. Ten years later, the second set of guidelines (Domenichini & Tonicello, 2004) proposed a description structure exemplified by the layout of ISAD areas and fields, focusing the analysis on examples drawn from the European, and more specifically Italian, context.



## Architectural archives and historical research

The importance of a correct and in-depth philological analysis of architectural documents for the purposes of historical research has been recognized, with regard to contemporary architecture, in recent years. I believe I am not mistaken in stating that this fact has not yet reached a full level of completeness. It is undeniable that a great many books and articles in magazines contain reproductions of drawings or references to documents and archival collections. However, it is still difficult to find studies on contemporary architecture in which archival research assumes a role and consistency equal to those it possesses, for example, in studies on Renaissance and Baroque. It is true that in those cases the amount of available documents is always relatively small so the researcher is led to seek information in the smallest details. With modern archives, however, the problem is usually that of being able to manage large quantities of documents, from which it is easy to get overwhelmed. The risk, which is still often given, is thus that of remaining on the surface, of not fully utilizing the informative potential of documents and of reducing this documentary heritage to a well-stocked gallery of images.

In the pioneering phase of the discovery of architectural archives, which at least in Italy dates back to the 1970s, archivists and researchers were each on their own in search of appropriate methodologies and working tools. The current situation is certainly still full of difficulties, especially due to the eruption, in recent decades, of digital technology, which has changed the way architectural practices work, has enormously broadened the horizons regarding the nature of archives and has put new categories of problems, for many of which adequate and satisfactory solutions are still being sought. Parallel to this move towards a horizon with still poorly defined outlines, the awareness has developed in everyone, archivists and researchers, that historical research, even on issues that are very close to us over time, cannot ignore the use of the primary source *par excellence*. Take a step beyond the analysis of the building, whether built or just designed and turn to the documentary legacy that lets us contextualize and reconstruct the entire historical and design process, it means leaving the dimension of criticism by entering the more properly historiographical one. It is a fact that the aesthetic dimension of architectural drawings can easily override that, so less outwardly captivating, of their informative potential. Drawings or large presentation models realized to be exhibited, published or on the occasion of competitions, always receive the attention that technical drawings, study sketches so difficult to interpret or provisional models made with poor mate-

rials in order to verify certain solutions cannot aspire to. This is in many cases true, but the times have definitely passed in which, arranging our archives, we wondered who could ever be interested in those endless sets of executive drawings that, whether we like it or not, almost always constitute the quantitatively most relevant part<sup>7</sup>. The process of development and maturation in which we find ourselves concerns not only the archivists but also and above all those who use the archives. Today it is clear to everyone that this type of document gets increasing attention from scholars, the fruits of which are beginning to be visible in numerous publications. It is a slow but ongoing process, which those who work in the archives witness every day and which will surely lead one day to a much more conscious and productive use of these sources. I think the recently analyzed case of Giancarlo De Carlo's studies on the occasion of the centenary of his birth effectively represents the current situation. In the years around 2019, in which the centenary was celebrated, numerous publications dedicated to him appeared. In a recently published article, Francesco Samassa examined this phenomenon with great accuracy and tried to understand if and to what extent has made De Carlo's archive available to scholars starting from the mid-first decade of the 2000s has played for this proliferation of editorial initiatives, a substantial role<sup>8</sup>. Samassa's answer is interlocutory: certainly, De Carlo's papers have been seen, used and cited in a considerable number of publications, but perhaps even in this case there is still too much limited use of the archive as an almost inexhaustible reservoir of images rather than taking full advantage of the formidable potential that the first of the primary sources offers to those who study the life and works of this important personality.

## A resource for collective memory

If, as far as research is concerned, we are therefore in a phase of evolution that has not yet fully developed the potential that archival sources offer, the matter is different with regard to the relationship between archi-

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<sup>7</sup> Not many years have passed since we were still discussing with colleagues from the French and Anglo-Saxon area on the need, which many of them advocated and always refused by us, to "thin out" this type of document considered only partially interesting, keeping only a sample of them as historical testimony.

<sup>8</sup> Samassa (2020). In the years from 2010 to 2020 and with the sole exception of 2016, at least one book a year specifically dedicated to De Carlo was released and the pace has understandably intensified with the approach of the centenary.

tectural archives and civil society, which has direct implications on the management and conservation of the collective patrimony, as much as on the construction of a memory that recovers the history and stories of our cities and our environment.

Intended in the broad meaning that I have expressed above, the architectural archives tell the story of the human environment in all possible scales: from urban planning to industrial design, from the territory to the objects of daily use, passing through cities, neighbourhoods, buildings, and interiors. For this reason they retain, I believe, a much closer and more evident connection with civil society than other historical sources. In the architectural archives we find evidence related to the history of the cities (an example for all: the archive of Ferdinando Forlati and the documentation on the safeguarding of Venetian works of art and architecture during the world wars, on the restoration of churches and palaces and the post-war reconstruction projects he managed as Superintendent in Venice) or the history of the landscape, such as the censuses and photographic campaigns on the rural architecture in the alpine valleys of Cadore, today largely disappeared or altered, in the Edoardo Gellner archive. In architectural archives we find the projects of the iconic buildings of our cities but also of many of those to which we are often led to grant little attention because they are part of an usual landscape, except to re-evaluate them once we are able, thanks to the documentary sources, to contextualize and study them. Our collective memory can find a greater part of its foundation in the architectural archives, thanks to which survive the documentation of what over time has been destroyed or more or less profoundly modified, as well as ideas, reflections, and proposals that over the decades have increased the heritage of what has been designed without finding the way to realization. That of unrealized architectures, be it for contingencies or because they were designed for competitions, research or personal pleasure, is a topic of great importance and constitutes an essential part of the history of architecture. The city of Venice, so peculiar and problematic, represents (Ferrighi, 2018) an exemplary case of this story, which finds its only source of documentation in the archival resources.

On December 28, 1908, a disastrous earthquake took only 37 seconds to almost completely destroy the Italian cities of Messina and Reggio Calabria. Together with many others, the Venetian architect Giuseppe Torres ran to the places of the catastrophe and shot an extraordinary series of photographs whose negatives, on glass plates, are still preserved today in his archive. Here we also find drawings and papers related to a visionary reconstruction project of the whole town of Messina, based on the obsessive

repetition, in always different combinations, of elements in a circular plan, considered by Torres the safest means to guarantee the resistance of the buildings to seismic stresses. A city in the far south of Italy, therefore, preserves an important part of its history in the archives of a northern architect whose life and professional career have then developed in completely different directions. Only the work on these documents, for a long time unknown to scholars and today instead available to everyone, has allowed this long-forgotten story to come back to light<sup>9</sup>.

And it was not the only one. There is perhaps no city in the world more photographed and studied than Venice, and among its many monuments, none is probably more iconic and universally known than the Doge's Palace. Yet, the memory that the large sculptural group on the facade towards the Piazzetta, representing the Doge Andrea Gritti kneeling in front of the Lion of San Marco, is not an original Renaissance sculpture but was only made in 1897, was completely lost in the memory of scholars, tourists and citizens. Destroyed by French troops at the end of the eighteenth century the original oeuvre, one hundred years later there were no elements left suitable for a philological reconstruction. For this reason, a competition was announced, which was won by Giuseppe Torres himself. To him, we owe the design of the new sculpture. Events relatively close to us can be forgotten very quickly, but also in this case the emergence of documents in the Torres archives let us recover such an important element of knowledge.

## **A tool for the preservation of the common heritage**

I close the perhaps too long parenthesis that I dedicated to the Giuseppe Torres archives with an example that allows me to introduce a new theme after those of research and collective memory, the one of safeguarding architectural works. The last part of Torres' professional life developed in the light of the long, intricate and substantially never truly completed story of the construction of the so-called Tempio Votivo (Votive Temple) on the Venetian island of the Lido. The construction of the church was established an agreement between the Municipality and the Patriarchate following a solemn vow made by the Patriarch of Venice Cardinal La Fontaine in the dramatic days of 1917 when the city of Venice seemed to be on the verge of falling into the hands of the Austrian army. Giuseppe Torres, once again, was the designer.

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<sup>9</sup> Scibilia and Sutura (2019).

This is not the place to summarize, even briefly, the history of a building that began while the First World War was still going on and ended in fact at the very end of the second one, leaving however an incomplete edifice, never really finished and never fully used except in the part of the crypt, which houses a military shrine<sup>10</sup>. Yet the Votive Temple significantly characterizes the urban landscape of Venice and with its tall cylindrical shape topped by a dome, it is one of the most recognizable elements in the skyline of the San Marco Basin. The documents related to its troubled construction are spread in the Venice municipal archives, those of the patriarchate and of course those of Giuseppe Torres, in which, among many other materials, there are about a thousand drawings and an extraordinary photographic collection, not only of the works on the site but also of the ceremonies which took place on the occasion of the laying of the first stone, the translation of the war dead and the consecration of the military shrine in the crypt. Beyond the historical significance of these papers, with which we reconstruct what happened but also can see what was never realized, these documents have played a role of fundamental importance when, a few years ago, important works of restoration of the building were undertaken. It was then that, many decades after its construction, being able to resort to the papers of the author of the project made it possible to reach an in-depth knowledge of the building, its constructive characteristics, the materials used for the structures and the decorative works. It is clear that without such detailed information, no serious restoration project could have been elaborated. What is even more important, the investigation carried out with this goal entailed the side effect of starting a historical research to contextualize the construction of the church in the intricate and still partially obscure events of city life from the years of the First World War to those of the Fascist period. Publications, press interventions, and cultural initiatives have disseminated this wealth of knowledge and are now building up a new image of the Votive Temple, also fueling the citizen debate on its possible future uses.

Knowledge of the territory, collective memory and civic awareness plays an important role in the vast theme of heritage protection which, as far as architecture is concerned, poses even greater problems the closer the objects to be protected are to us over time. Often deprived of the support that legislative instruments offer for the protection of works of the past, buildings that have not yet reached the necessary age to be considered worthy to be preserved, are frequently in situations of risk of alteration or loss, regardless

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<sup>10</sup> Domenichini and Tiozzo Netti (2019).

of quality and the cultural and artistic importance they hold. It is in these instances that the architectural archives can offer substantial support to the actions that committees, associations and even aware individuals undertake to stand up for the threatened works. They turn to the archives to substantiate their claims and to motivate requests for a formal recognition of the historical and cultural importance of these buildings. In addition, the institutes responsible for heritage protection naturally resort to the archives when it becomes necessary to collect the historical and technical information needed to initiate the procedure for specific Decrees of Constraint.

At the time of writing, the Archivio Progetti is directly involved in the initiatives in defense of two school buildings in Longarone, in the province of Belluno. The local administration has in fact decided to demolish them and replace them with a new complex to be realized with the funding provision of the European Community following the covid pandemic. Built in the 1960s on projects by Costantino Dardi the one, and the other by Gianni Avon and Francesco Tentori, the two buildings are actually important works of Italian contemporary architecture, to the point that an action promoted by ordinary citizens has immediately aroused the interest of associations for the heritage defense and of local and national protection bodies, which for their part have turned to the original documents. This is not the first time that the archive has been called upon to provide support for initiatives of this kind, nor is it the only action we currently collaborate with.

## Conclusion

Not secondary to the value of their documentary heritage and the importance of these collections for cultural and scientific production, the civic dimension of the conservation institutes represents a major incentive for the archives, to continue their work of collecting and preserving architectural documentation, in the awareness that their contribution does not only have an impact on academic production but also to people's lives and to the preservation of what they attribute substantial value to.

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