

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO  
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 2  
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**Honors theses**

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**Italy and Germany: is there a dialogue about conservation?**

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“The protection of monuments as reconsideration of cultural values” (S. SCARROCCHIA, R. SPELTA, B. KOHLENBACH in *“La tutela come revisione dei valori culturali. Esperienze attuali di Restauro architettonico in Italia e nella RFT.”* Cluva, Venice, 1991) was the title of the first congress in March 1987 in Cologne that confronted the experience of architectural conservation between Germany and Italy. Another Italo- German conference about restoration took place in Berlin in 1991, as an initiative of the I.C.E. (Italian Institute for Foreign Affairs).

The misunderstandings that appeared during the conferences, due to specifics about competence, technique or simply the uneasiness in using terms, show the crisis that marks the protection of monuments in both countries: public opinion ignores the meaning, the sense and the use of it.

That is why it is necessary to prepare a cultural basis for cooperation. That work is yet to be done.

In this thesis I propose a broader vision of the actual conservation-concepts as the result of long development. First the intention to analyse case by case the legislative background, the public debate and the historic-cultural panorama, related especially to the methodical decisions of interventions. Second, in order to understand the origin of the differences of attitude in Italy and Germany, a brief “excursus” on the history of conservation. The beginning of the nineteenth century can not be accepted as the birth of restoration, as it is often erroneously considered in discussions, that embrace the usual conventions. It is true, that public interest in these aspects rose with the history of “legal conservation”, but interventions of reintegration, reconstruction, completing or recycling have already been practiced in Italy as in Germany, since architecture itself exists. Thus it is useful to analyse the history of the “treatment of the original artefact” in both countries to emphasize the instances that differ substantially from tradition. Actually, this behaviour was quite similar at least up to the late-Middle Age, but it changed through the Gothic “*Bauhütte*”-institution, the Renaissance-conception of space, the eighteenth-century discoveries of antique sites in Italy, nineteenth-century historicism and finally the propagandistic exploitation of conservation by Prussia and the Third Reich as well as the economic consequences of industrialization.



Three buildings that show alterations due to ideological interest: the *Reichstag* in Berlin, the Court theatre in Dresden and the "*Kaiser-Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche*" in Berlin again.

In post-war years, while Germany went through the *economic miracle*, Italy saw participation by cultural figures such as Cesare Brandi, Roberto Pane and Bruno Zevi, especially through the ICR (*Istituto Centrale di Restauro*).

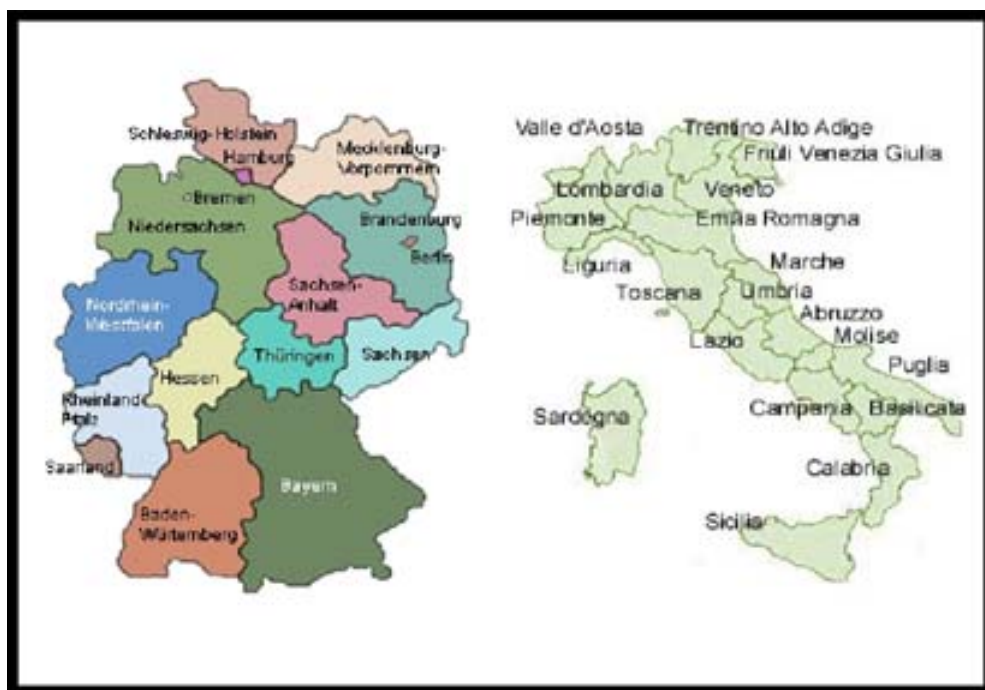
These different priorities, economic on the one hand, cultural on the other, cause this clear division of conservation methods, the negative consequences of which are still evident in our time.



Reconstruction, restoration and conservation are subject of numerous discussions in both countries. The borderline between private, public, economic, cultural and social interests can only be found with difficulties.

Only from 1975 (the *European Year for the Conservation of Architectural Heritage*), there seems to be a diminishing of the differences between the countries that persist in various aspects. In any case, critical confrontation of the actual legislative structure and economic

practices makes the similarities appear rather than the differences, but this is also due to the international restoration-Charters.



Germany has sixteen laws for conservation (one each *Land*), while Italy has only one for its entire territory. Italy's federal structure however, isn't much different from the one in Germany and political tendencies seem to lead to a structural approach on European level.

Independently from these difficulties, the involvement of Italy and Germany in this debate is to be considered as a positive sign: it is the starting point for future Italo- German meetings to develop cultural dialogue.

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