



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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COURSE OF  
ARCHITECTURE FOR HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND  
ENHANCEMENT

*Abstract*

**Tokyo and the Metabolism heritage.  
History and transformation of two buildings  
of the Seventies**

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In Japan – as stated by architectural historian Hiroyuki Suzuki in 2011 – there is an unwritten law according to which only buildings older than fifty years can be worthy of conservation operations. This has unfortunately caused the loss of an important part of the architectural heritage, which on one hand have been considered obsolete by the standards of development of the buildings, on the other hand they were considered too recent for the attribution - to legislative level - of historical and cultural value.

This last point today seems to be the main justification on which the Japanese government relies in order to pursue the urban development of the nation without further resistance. Most of these structures, in fact, are located in those that, since the post-war period, have become the major financial centers of the Japanese cities and they still continue to play this role in their respective prefectures. The continuous growth and transformation of these areas, today, leaves no way out to the architectural heritage of the recent, not bound by legislation, which occupies a part of those lands, in which there is a need to maximize their use and value.

The need to continue these processes grows exponentially if we take into consideration the Tokyo megalopolis and its ever-changing context. Here the heritage of the recent past most at risk consists of the architectural production of the Sixties and Seventies that lives between the limbo of expansionist and economic logics, and the will to conserve and to protect this heritage.

From these considerations on the dynamics that today influence the preservation of the recent heritage in Japan, and the previous interest in the case study of the Sky Building No. 3, born the idea to undertake this thesis path.

To the Sky Building No. 3, a 1970 building still set in the special Shinjuku district in Tokyo, and today counted among the most representative metabolic productions, it was decided to juxtapose the case study of the Nakagin Capsule Tower.

The two buildings – respectively from 2009 and 2006 on the Docomomo Japan list – are part of that architectural and cultural heritage of the recent past that risks or has risked being absorbed by the feeding progress of Japan. The Capsule Tower and the Sky Building, moreover, constitute two parallel design experiences, not only for the contemporaneity of construction but also for the affinity of the architectural, historical and cultural values of which today they are still a tangible expressions.

The thesis, through what it wants to be a trip to the capital Tokyo, intends to offer, between historical and current perception, a reflection on the heritage symbol of its recent past, on the cultural and technological uniqueness of the chosen case studies, as well as on the variety of palimpsests and actors, which still allow us to admire them within the urban fabric of the megalopolis.

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