



POLITECNICO
DI TORINO

Honors thesis

Master in Architecture Heritage Preservation and
Enhancement

Abstract

Title

REPORT FROM LA HABANA.

*Investigation of the Cuban architecture 1960-1990.
First project proposal of "Plaza de la Revolución"*

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The Revolution of 1959 marks an important turning point in modern history of Cuba and of its capital Havana. The country reaches the independence from an oppressive dictatorship and has to reestablish its social, political and economic values. This offers the opportunity to establish new expressive forms in the field of art and architecture, different from any other existing international language.

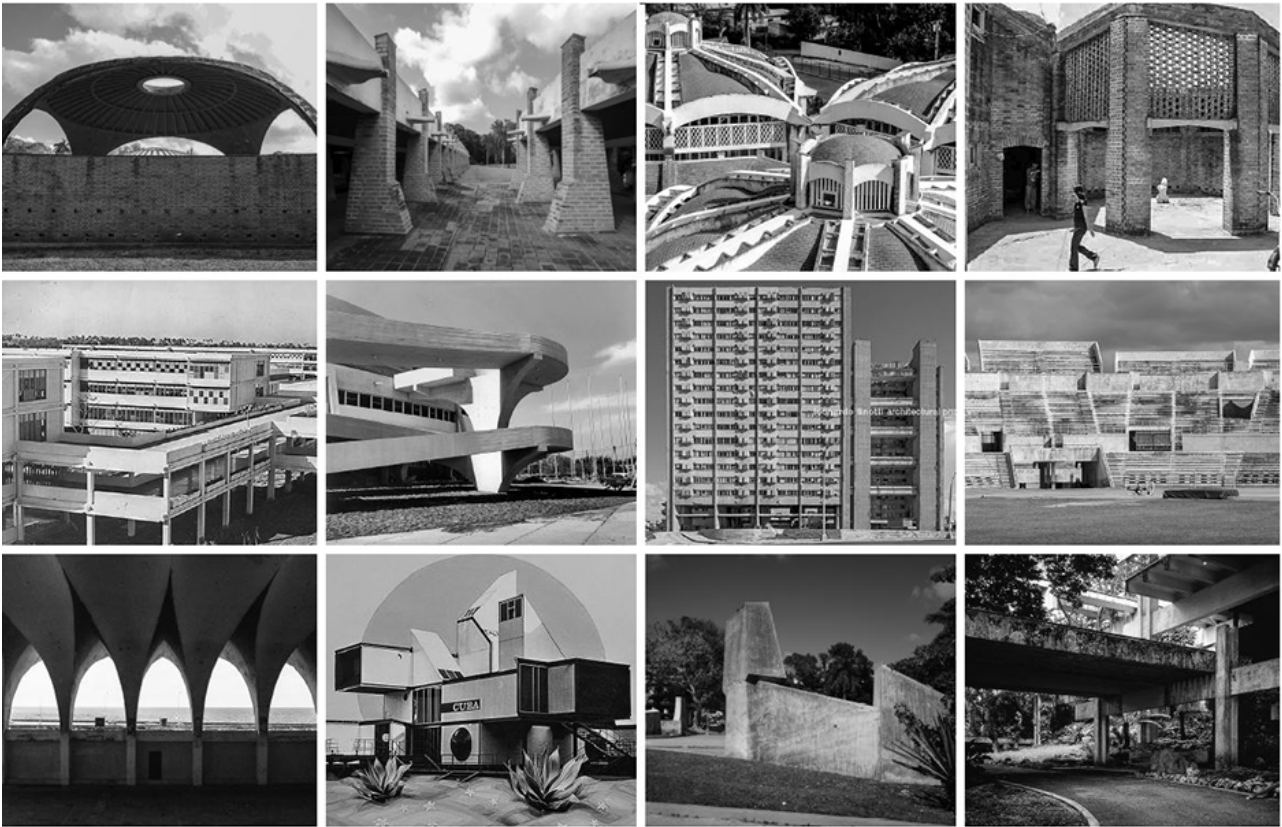
Several goals were achieved and concretized, like the “Campaña Nacional de Alfabetización”, and the “Escuelas de campo”. In addition, discussions over health, sport, and housing as a territorial system became of public interest: «This was the moral, political and economic environment where the so-called “Architecture of Revolution” took place. Today, the architectures of that period still constitute the pivotal point of reference for what is being realized in the country.» (Sergio Baroni, *Rapporto da L'Avana*, in “Zodiac”, n°8, October 1992, p. 15).

In the early stages of the Revolution, the new structural systems and imported materials resulting from the political alliance with the URSS, or from the choice of using materials and solutions diametrically opposed to the traditional culture (spacing from large-scale construction sites to industrial technologies) have marked the new Cuban architecture, creating the uniqueness of this experimentation.

This little known heritage often suffers of an advanced state of decay, remaining excluded from preservation programs.

During the field trip to Havana, (supported by the Politecnico di Torino scholarship) planned for February to June 2020 - and interrupted in March due to the COVID outbreak – we had the opportunity to examine and document architectures designed and built in the city between the late fifties and the early nineties. An assessment of their preservation and risk status was carried out, highlighting their value and the potentialities. Particular attention in the investigation process was paid to the major public works projects. This research work ends with a renovation project proposal for one of the most iconic and representative areas of the capital, “Plaza de la Revolución”, a wide urban space, representing the economic and political center of the capital, built to celebrate José Martí. “Plaza de la Revolución” later became the emblem of the Revolution victory which now risks, especially in these years of great change, including political change, to lose its original nature to a sort of “abstract place”.

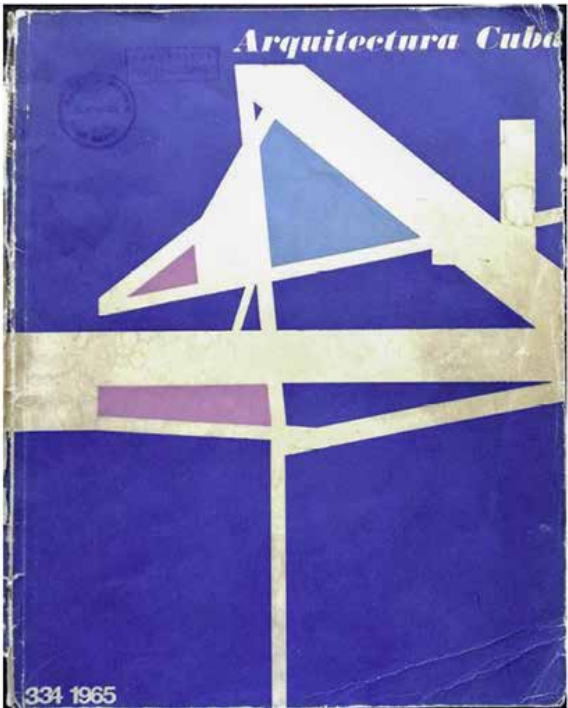
The modern approach of the Cuban legislation in the field of cultural heritage - that already in the seventies ruled the restoration standards and the preservation of the “National Monument” - combined with the project proposal of 1968 for the completion of “Plaza de la Revolución”, by Vittorio Garatti in collaboration with Jean Pierre Garnier, Max Vaquero, Eusebio Azque, Mario Gonzales, have led to a new architectural project approach that considers preservation not as a bond but as an opportunity to safeguard its social and historical value, further strengthening it with new compatible functions.



Extract from the "Census on Cuban architecture 1960 - 1990"



Cover of Arquitectura/Cuba n°333/1965



Cover of Arquitectura/Cuba n°334/1965



Fidel Castro speaks to the Cuban people in the Plaza de la Revolución, 1962



View of the project hypothesis developed by the authors

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