

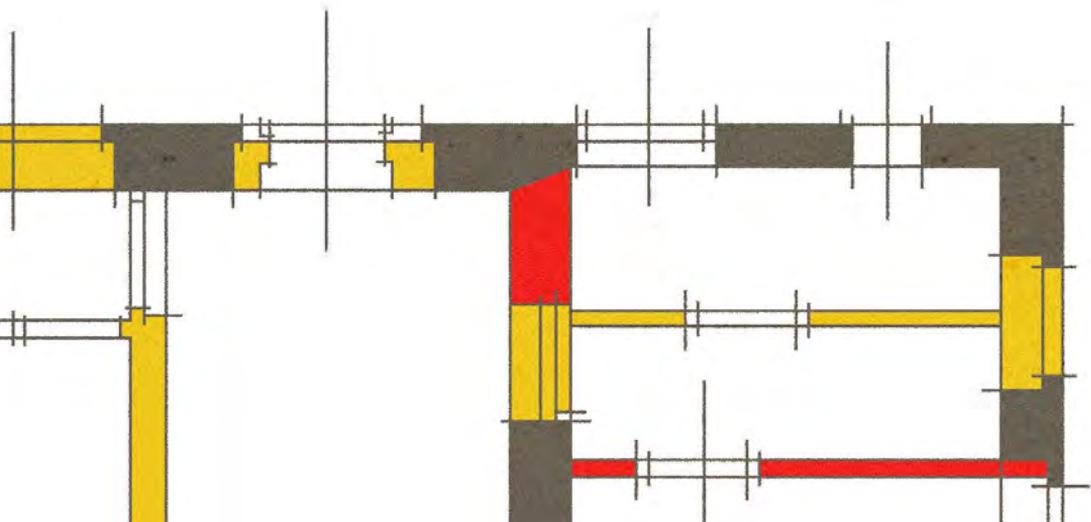
CONSERVATION



DEMOLITION

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Editors





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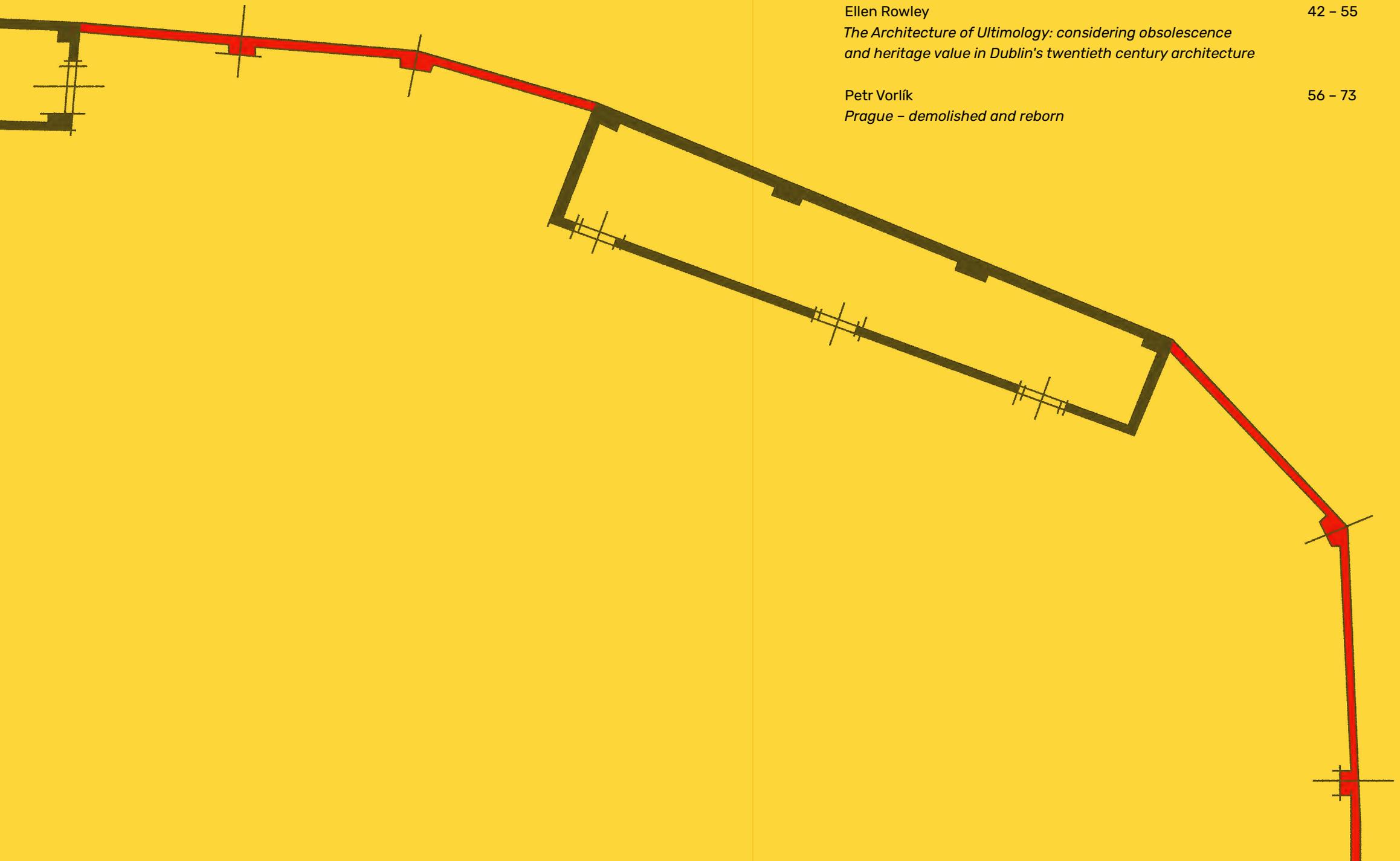
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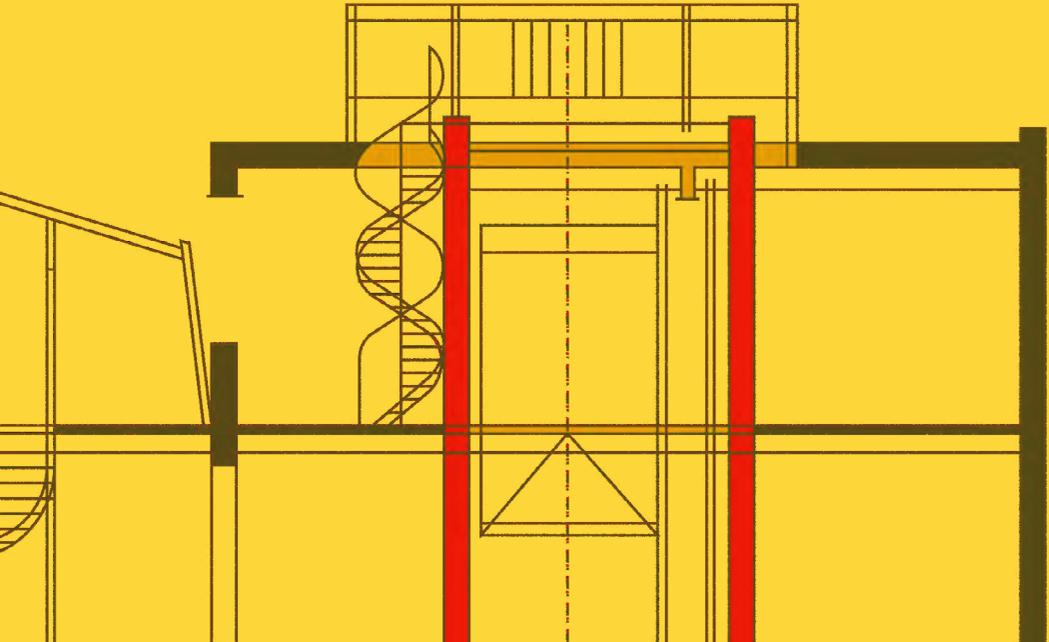
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Fragments from the margins

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«The tapestry model of time offers meagre protection; we can bundle it into a wad to blunt the point but we are still impaled upon the perspectives that constitute us.»
(Robinson 2019)

Prologue

One can start with unravelling the interweaving of perspective and time.

A recollection: leaving the bright sunlight behind, crossing the floor of the tall domed vestibule – an antechamber to the exhibition beyond, where architects offered their visions of the present and future and of the lessons drawn from the past; on the wall a plaque, unseen, like the floor beneath one's feet. The entrance space of the Central Pavilion in the Giardini at the Venice Biennale seemed a mere transition, bare, devoid of the extraordinary.¹ Yet, its quiet surfaces spoke of the paradoxes of urban renewal and of its historical experience more clearly than anything else on view – an alternative view of the value of architectural intervention. The discrete elaboration of that space became evident as one retraced one's steps, and brought recognition of the profound achievement represented there: the creative imprint of the people over whose products the thousands walked, made in a place that had somehow survived half a century of neglect, of near-abandonment by public policy, followed by a redevelopment programme that virtually destroyed its community along with most of its physical fabric.² In the stream of visitors, it took less than a minute to cross the vestibule. (Fig. 1, 2)

For a half-century, the countries of the developed world have pursued a clear policy direction as they faced the problems of managing the redundancy of knowledge and skill and of their supporting environments in post-industrial societies. The "knowledge economy" has been seen as underpinning innovation, trade and employment into the future.³ In the context of planning and urban design, the "smart cities" concept has underlined the interdependence of technology and infrastructure and the conjunction of these concepts has been a driver in much of the urban regeneration initiatives over recent decades. The so-called "brownfield" opportunities offered by former docklands, redundant transport infrastructure facilities, industrial complexes and military bases have witnessed major investments of finance, political capital and human imagination in attempting to realise the urban future. This fusion of vision, optimism and opportunity was expressed a generation ago by Bernardo Secchi: «Finally, it would not seem unreasonable to suggest that declining industrial areas might provide a very clear and explicit opportunity for rethinking the nature of today's living environment... In other words, this problem could serve as the opportunity for fundamental changes in the attitudes of society.» (Secchi 1990: 16)

The Green Paper on the Urban Environment, published in 1990 by the Commission of the European Communities, identified the redevelopment of abandoned land within cities as a key concern on the way to creating cities that were better attuned to human and planetary wellbeing. (CEC 1990: 60). This conjunction, the explicit link between cleaner environments, healthier, prosperous people and urban regeneration, has achieved quasi-mythic status in the interim. It is what we want, what we believe we can achieve, and we look for evidence to confirm the hope. There have been many essays in attempting its realisation.

An examination of their success or limits is beyond the scope of this paper. It is instead concerned with how inherited built elements can be read or accommodated within the regeneration project. This paper presents some fragments of experience – a sketch. It reflects on the nature of the regeneration project from the perspective of cultural transmission, extracting some antinomies that lie at the heart of urban renewal, most particularly as these apply to those directly impacted.

The re-use project in regeneration: synecdoche or cuckoo's egg

One can observe that redundant urban industrial areas have embodied the hope of rapid transformation and renewal in cities where conventional development has struggled. At times, new agencies have been created for the purpose, with the intention of accelerating the transformation, and have operated in parallel with established authorities. Some cities have engaged in what an architectural critic has termed an "architectural arms race" to gain perceptual advantage in the global competition: (Fig. 2) well-known architects (too many to list here) have been invited to design projects as re-animation devices, where the trophy name has become the marketing tool and the building promotes a transfiguration of the city's image, sometimes temporary, sometimes fugitive and at times more lasting (Heathcote 2017). The image of the project becomes understood as the lever to accelerate change.

An analogous imaginative space is occupied where the project utilises key elements of the inherited fabric of places – exemplified, again among many others, by the work of Herzog and de Meuron in London or Chipperfield and Foster in Essen.⁴ Restoration, adaptation and reuse share some common territory with regeneration and redevelopment: all are future-directed, even if they are rooted in different understandings of the present and its relationship to the past. In sharing that territory, they cannot altogether avoid being joined in the perception that intervention needs to embody its intent in some distinctive image, one that is also marketable, even if the reused building is more reticent about it.

The reuse project embraces a particular role in the context of the larger project of urban regeneration. While the prospect of demolition and replacement is never far away, that suggestion of continuity can persist within transformative interventions, even where what has been re-purposed is a fragment of what has been inherited.⁵ The reused building makes concrete the point that the aspiration for continuity has been embraced by the new development. The combination of re-purposed buildings and new structures gives an added frisson to the regeneration endeavour. Since inherited

buildings need to be adapted for uses different from those for which they were built, this process has added value from a sustainability perspective.⁶ The marketing image and re-branding of the resulting environment can lean heavily on this hybridity (O'Shea 2013). The re-animated building becomes representative of a creative energy – one that promises to reinvigorate what was in decline and to suggest, even to promise, deeper transformation in terms of human potential through the conscription of the cultural capital that inherited buildings represent. In this, one can see an alternative to the attraction of demolition: the act of demolition offers a cleansing of the accumulated rubbish of outdated economic and social activities and relationships, a lifting of burdens that clears the way for a new life. In this sense, the notion of empty space as a precondition for “the project” belongs to a simpler time, suggestive of modernist disregard for elements of value inherited from the past. The re-use project, even when it represents a contingent intervention, suggests that there is another way, nuanced in its embrace of built inheritance. Nowadays, the relationship between demolition and re-generation is dialectical rather than contradictory.

Today the visitor to the Holešovice district of Prague can traverse multiple versions of a city in transition: mature environments where buildings still seemed assured of their function; new and occasionally startling architectural insertions; streets dominated by scaffolding and the hoardings of active building sites; lacunae masquerading as open spaces awaiting a new existence, built or unbuilt; visions of re-furbished apartments still uneasily connected to their urban tissue. Mixed with this are the places where new functions have been inserted into this formerly working class, predominantly meat-packing area: a minimally redeveloped minor industrial building; a re-animated and enhanced office complex; an arts centre, extravagantly proclaiming the particularity of its function within the conventional grain of the urban grid, and an area for shopping in a former yard. (Fig. 3) To this extent, the regeneration of the area follows the dominant model and adopts its characteristic devices. The area, whose nature at the beginning of the 20th century has been described as a “mighty bastion of the Czech proletariat” is to be presented as a new experience, combining familiar markers of quality while the promise of further opportunity is represented by the unfinished: the insertion of bourgeois attractions, both for the emergent clientele and for outsiders, such as boutique shops, cafes and galleries, and the presence of cutting edge professional and creative entrepreneurs (Demetz 1997: 317). The area covered by the project for regeneration is extensive. Inevitably, the visitor experiences a fraction, a fraction that not so much represents the whole, but provides an inviting glimpse that represents the hope of the whole.

The juxtaposition of new use with the inherited meaning and material is powerful and purposeful in conceptual and well as in marketing terms: the sight of the familiar – with its accumulated imperfections – in its new role changes the perceptive context, creating a frisson of incongruity and a kind of shock. (Figg. 4, 5) It can evoke the aesthetic dichotomy facing contemporary architecture articulated by Tschumi, when he placed in opposition the need to experience familiarity with the desire to create a new experience of the city (Tschumi 1994). The potency of reused buildings as symbols of

regeneration can be seen against such a backdrop. Although the juxtaposition between new and old remains hierarchical within the larger framework, the re-imagined historic building nonetheless becomes both a metaphor and a symbol of knowledge and intent and of the capacity to select and recycle. But an implicit hierarchy becomes visible through a primary disjunction when one addresses the issue of scale. The thrust of regeneration establishes a move away from the idea of area character – the idea that one can identify a quality that makes an existing place distinctive and that this might inform future development. The disjunction serves to signal a deeper issue that will be explored below.

The idea of area character is implicit in several of the primary “doctrinal” texts on urban conservation (the *Washington Charter*, the *Leipzig Charter*, the *Nizhny Tagil Charter*, to list a few). The concern with the physical scale of built elements is expressed in the Venice Charter in relation to the setting of the architectural monument: the later documents relate more to the historic and architectural character of the area and the experience of the beholder.⁷ But whether the idea of scale is related to the significance of a monument in its physical context or is framed in arguments about aesthetic experience, the appeal to scale has at its core, the idea that the inherited environment often embodies spatial and formal relationships that are coherent, and that can still provide templates to guide contemporary development towards aesthetically satisfying outcomes.⁸

That particular understanding of scale has a cold home in major redevelopment projects, where the attraction of investment is the essential driver, and which, in turn, affects the quantum of space allocated to specific purposes, and largely determines priorities. The disjunctions with conservation perspectives appear at several levels (scale as it applies to the juxtaposition of new and old buildings being the most evident), and embrace instead an idea of hybridity both of activity and of environmental character. The re-use project can be deployed as a synecdoche that captures – represents -- a sense of the whole while at the same time becoming an unconscious contributor to a process that leads to eventual effacement.

Hybridity / dissonance / marginality

The embrace of architectural and functional hybridity in regenerated areas creates an excitement that masks the deeper changes that must occur: the processes of regeneration are more complex and take much longer to unfold than their protagonists envisage. The issue of time applies both to environmental and to social transformations. In entering this hybrid, transitional and provisional space, perspectives that value continuity confront issues that have dogged urban conservation from its inception and that raise questions about how conservation principles are understood in such contexts. More deeply, they ask how these principles are challenged by the contexts in which they try to find expression.

Transformations of the functions of an area bring changes to the meaning of surviving elements and challenges to the sense of place and identity: striking examples of infrastructure become icons – “heritage” objects that serve to connect and distance



Fig. 1, 2) The entrance vestibule to the Central Pavilion at Giardini, Venice, Italy. (The Factory Floor 2018, photo Assemble 2018)



Fig. 3) An entrepreneurial exploitation of opportunity: provisional interventions allowing flexibility as events unfold at the Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Loughlin Kealy 2019)



Fig. 4) Port Company building designed by Zaha Hadid Architects at Mexico-Eiland, Antwerp, Belgium (photo Petr Vorlík 2017)



Fig. 5) In the context of the Holešovice district, the device of shock is given a cosmetic twist in the former factory that opened as the Dox Centre of Contemporary Art in 2008, announcing its new life as a gallery through the juxtaposition of form, alien to the existing context. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Loughlin Kealy 2019)

at the same time. The reused building takes its place in that context. Redevelopment of sites formerly devoted to industrial uses is a particular case in that industrial inheritance is now regarded as a cultural “good”. It has its own international charter guiding intervention that could safeguard its value to society. In Europe alone, twenty-two industrial heritage sites are on the World Heritage List, comprising 4% of the properties on the list as a whole (Mihic, Makarun 2017).

«... by extending the life cycle of existing structures and their embodied energy, conservation of the built industrial heritage, can contribute to achieving the goals of sustainable development at the local, national and international levels. It touches the social as well as the physical and environmental aspects of development and should be acknowledged as such.» (ICOMOS 2011: Preamble 2).

«... It touches the social ...»: yes, but how and what are the consequences of this touch? While using cranes and chimneys as landscape features or as sculptural objects is a conventional device in specific locations, regeneration has wider urban parameters. Increasingly, urban regeneration initiatives are placed in the context of strategic visions for a city within its region, with sustainability specifically embraced in regeneration projects “going green” at the level of landscape transformation and infrastructure investment.⁹ The articulation of the value of the inherited environments in these planning frameworks is not straightforward: it often involves the canonisation of the “historic centre” and the identification of otherwise branded localities (as where established areas outside the core are designated as “urban villages” for example), and using these as focal points around which the strategic vision is concretised. Redundant industrial areas lend themselves to such re-imagining and the Holešovice district is a case in point. Such designations allow the creation of articulated hierarchies within the urbanised territory, from an external perspective they establish granular destinations within the territory. Thus, for example, the Strategic Plan for the city of Antwerp has identified a range of themes associated with particular localities; the Prague Institute for Planning and Development has identified goals for areas of the city, while placing these in the context of major infrastructural works to the river basin, and so on.¹⁰

There are many potential levels at which conservation might enter this arena, all of them fraught with difficulty of thought and language. It may be that many within the discipline would see the arena of urban strategy as being outside its scope. Re-animating areas that have declined, but that are also significant in terms of cultural inheritance, poses questions that are at the edges of the conceptual frameworks within which conservation operates. Indeed, some of the power of the adaptive reuse perspective lies in its ability to traverse the conceptual terrain and move comfortably into the land of regeneration. And it does so while evoking an aesthetic of incompleteness, of new opportunities for reanimation. But transmission of cultural inheritance is not the core purpose of regeneration. Anomalies persist. The disjunctions with regard to physical scale are mirrored in setting the economic value of new versus existing enterprises and in the weight accorded to new as against existing populations in the provision of services and living environments. It is in this respect that a particular challenge arises for the field of conservation.

Urban redevelopment sites have generally included residential areas that housed, and often continue to house, workers (or former workers) and their families whose livelihood depended on the displaced functions. Although numbers may have declined over time, residual populations maintain memories of personal experiences or family histories that encompass both the disappearance of formerly characteristic activities and the arrival of a new vision for the places they inhabit (ESRI 1996: 65–67). The experience may have occurred more than once in their lifetimes or in the shared memory of the population. There is ample evidence that points to the disconnect between them and the forces of change, the phenomenon of gentrification being almost universal. Despite the aspirations, and despite the inclusion of these aspirations in regeneration plans, the resident population may not be lifted in unison with the endeavour as a whole, increasing both the fact and the perception of the marginalisation already experienced, perhaps over generations of decline. And perhaps over generations of regeneration also. The tensions and contradictions and methodological challenges encountered in engaging with local populations have been exposed over the past half-century, and these are echoed in the world of urban conservation also.

The distance between regeneration processes and the aspirations espoused in urban conservation documents is striking where the physical inheritance is concerned and one can ask where the idea of transmission can find practical effect beyond the fleeting aesthetic experience. If the regeneration process leaves the population behind does it carry the “heritage” that it embodies with it? Describing conservation as the management of “continuity” and “change” can become a misleading cliché that has little resonance in the localities affected, where hybridity has a different connotation. The evolving conservation field senses the difference but has yet to place itself with regard to it.

Collaboration / effacement / alignment

The engagement of existing populations has long been seen as an essential element in both regeneration and in conservation. But one needs to go further and to ask – to what end? Ensuring that the perspectives of people living in regeneration areas are mirrored in development priorities is a challenge that has resonance with historic essays in fostering the “participation” of communities in planning. The need for engagement emerged in the 1960^s in response to the urban unrest that affected cities in the United States in particular, although other countries had their own versions. The disturbances had varying roots (factors such as race, poverty, unemployment, threatened displacement, infrastructural developments, for example, and combinations of such factors). Participation has since evolved as a widely-adopted objective, and measures to engage with populations have become established in planning processes in many jurisdictions. Their effectiveness has been the subject of analyses across the fields of sociology, anthropology and urban studies over the years. Many of the factors that generated disaffection half a century ago, persist to this day.

The participation of inhabitants in heritage protection has been envisaged in conservation charters and declarations for almost as long and the trajectory of intention has moved from instruction (Athens), to involvement (Venice) to participation (Washington), reflecting an evolution in social awareness and conditions as much as the development of understanding of the cultural inheritance. In any event, when one looks to the arena of urban regeneration, one encounters a paradoxical effect of the mainstreaming of both population engagement and heritage protection. Mainstreaming of both might suggest a convergence of thought and practice, but it also reflects a form of institutionalisation that bears examination, since it touches on the uncertain place of conservation within urban development processes.¹¹

A recent international seminar on the challenges facing cultural heritage protection in World Heritage cities that were experiencing strong development pressures, discussed the limitations of provisions such as “buffer zones” and the potentials of the “historic urban landscape” perspective in mitigating the more extreme impacts of development.¹² It featured a striking contribution from the social anthropologist, Antonio Arantes.¹³ He spoke of a challenge facing international organisations promoting heritage protection that arose from differences in the understanding of what constituted heritage, and which led to a form of “cultural equivocation” in societies where different cultural traditions persisted. In effect, instead of being a source of unity and a common ground on which to build, the cultural inheritance could itself be the source of differences and division. He was speaking in the context of societies emerging from mindsets established through the experiences of colonialism, but there are unsettling echoes of his comments in urban regeneration processes. He singled out the area of heritage tourism, probably the strongest feature of the institutionalisation of heritage protection and its mainstreaming in future-directed policy-making, and spoke of its role as contributing to the showcasing of “otherness” into soft exoticisms. It is precisely such an exoticism that is represented by the aesthetic embrace of the redundant artefact as a symbol of regeneration.

One of the common weaknesses in conservation thinking lies in the use of the word “community”, with its assumption of underlying shared identity and purpose. Change processes expose the fact that urban populations comprise many, overlapping and sometimes divergent “communities”, related and divided by their experiences over time. The processes of re-animation can expose and make explicit past social and economic exploitations, and their persistence into the present. The “working class” perspective on their living experience may be rendered impotent by its confirmation as “heritage”, a “good” that by definition belongs to all. In this context, “heritage” becomes a form of reconstruction, an objectification of what continues to be lived out in everyday experience. Without a countervailing strategy of empowerment, it can become an irrelevance or even an alienating factor. Of course, the picture of alienation and cultural re-alignment is more complex than that: Arantes speaks of building understanding from the ground up and the predicament this process creates for international heritage organisations who must work with established institutions of the state. The implications for the field of conservation can be generalised: in the face of social change its

understandings and methods need to be examined from the perspective of how their embeddedness in wider processes impacts on their effectiveness.

An analogous point can be made when we consider the re-animation of places formerly associated with industrial production, storage and transportation of goods and the current inhabitants of those places. The statement cited above, concerning the importance of industrial heritage, speaks of the inherited environment touching on the social world. It does this in particular ways when it is officially declared to be “heritage”, when it is embraced by change agents such as tourism, the entertainment industry or area redevelopment.

The Nara Declaration directed attention to the importance of immaterial inheritance for conservation theory and by implication, for practice in facing conditions of the “real world”. One can apply that insight to the immaterial inheritance represented by the existing inhabitants of urban areas that have lost their original function and fallen outside the ambit of development, or have existed in a displaced state because of poverty and disadvantage. The focus on the material elements of inheritance can sit uncomfortably with another aspiration of regeneration, the provision of better living opportunities for existing inhabitants (ICOMOS 1967: par. 9). Penetration of “heritage” into wider processes of regeneration or development brings with it first of all the need to articulate most fully the authenticities of inheritance.

The regeneration of deprived areas demands the infusion of new purpose, this time rooted in the understandings and capacities of existing populations. This essay began with the vestibule floor of the Central Pavilion in the Giardini in Venice, a floor tiled with the products of a workshop that insists that each tile should bear in a unique way, the imprint of its maker. The workshop is located in the Granby area of Liverpool: its existence – as well as its products – bearing witness to a half century in the life and near-death of an urban area. The workshop exists within the Four Streets Regeneration Project, the result of architect-inspired, locally-driven initiative that took control of development processes within the streets that remained standing in the aftermath of widespread demolition of this Victorian inner city area (Polyak 2017). This project is one of many that continue to offer a transformative alternative to conventional processes of urban redevelopment, one that is significant from the perspective of transmission and that has the potential for still wider application. The key to recognising elements of the built environment that have meaning for the residents and to ensuring that they are used as the fulcrum of development may not lie with built inheritance itself. In many instances, what holds the sense of identity is the recollection of people and personalities that gave shape to lives, who had a role in maintaining the functions of community. The challenge for conservation is to work from there, from what persists, to establish the connections with the built environment, the habitat in which these immaterial inheritances are rendered material.

This involves connecting with the thread of lived experiences, in ways that include and go beyond the kind of harvesting exercises that result in striking images, exhibitions, books, dissertations and development plans. Conventional consultations, even where there is good will, are often contingent, episodic collaborations, temporary coincidences

of interest in which local people look for opportunities in the fractures introduced by the infusion of resources. It becomes necessary to work towards a different kind of end point – an end point that is, first of all, a changed relationship between actors, between developers, residents and social entrepreneurs such as conservators and designers. Utopia, perhaps. It would require an explicit alignment with a human development perspective that is also essentially ecological in its embrace of the person/environment relationship. But there is enough evidence of the transformative potentials of working with residents to drive revisions of professional methodologies and pedagogies: the processes of exploratory dialogue elaborate and enrich connection with the physical environment, re-animating the cultural inheritance of places. In this way, the conservation and transmission of the physical evidence of inheritance into the future begins to have real meaning, a grafting of new vision and purpose, expressed in the everyday, accessible environment.¹⁴

And so

The paradox cited earlier arises in the translation of ideals into action. In these “enlightened” times, the devastating experience of the Granby area would be exceptional in the western city: in the processes of regeneration, demolition tends to be less comprehensive. Much like the felling of trees in the forest, it becomes selective, changing its mode if not its nature. It is, in any event, a component in a societal process that has been in operation over time – a process of intentional transformation rather than of “managed decline” as a prelude to demolition (Brown 2017). Demolition is not merely a physical act. It is an erasure, an effacement, not so much of the living cultures of urban populations, but of the possibility that the inherited physical environment will contribute to social and cultural continuity. That matters, even as urban populations become more diverse, notably in those areas seen as most in need of re-animation. The condition of marginality of these populations is a contemporary echo of past (and sometimes continuing) disassociations. In such a context, establishing common purpose is a goal rather than a condition.

In reflecting on the inter-weaving of perspectives and time, this essay has strayed far from the arena of conservation practice, but not too far from the ambivalence and paradox of its engagement with urban change. To engage positively with the processes of transformation rather than lament their end point, the field of conservation requires an unambiguous shift in understanding of itself: a clear recognition that implementing conservation principles very often needs to espouse *a priori* active engagement with diverse populations in determining both the value of inheritance and the means to be adopted in its transmission. The toolbox needs to be augmented if existing and familiar tools are to continue to find significant uses in the transformations of our times. Secchi’s dream could come true.

Notes

- 1 Venice Architecture Biennale 2018 (26 May – 25 November). The theme was *Free Space*.
- 2 Granby is a residential quarter of Liverpool where regeneration had been the subject of public policy since the 1960^s. In the process, much of its urban landscape has been erased. Granby was formerly a vibrant, ethnically-mixed area associated with the Liverpool docklands, it had deteriorated even as the port declined. Caught in the aftermath of the Toxteth riots, public policy vacillated between “managed decline” and transformation through demolition and redevelopment to the point where only four streets remained of the former, dense Victorian urban landscape. The tiles are made in a local workshop, part of the recovery initiatives of local groups, architects and craftspeople. The Turner Prize 2015 was awarded to Assemble studio for their re-animation work.
- 3 The phrase “knowledge economy” was popularised by Peter Drucker and is often attributed to him. While he uses the term as the title of Chapter 12 in his 1968 book, *The Age of Discontinuity*, Drucker attributed the phrase to Fritz Machlup, economist.
- 4 The engagement of international architects adapting existing buildings has been a recurring feature of regeneration projects across the industrialised world. The Essen regeneration was part of a major re-vitalisation project for the Ruhr Valley. Formerly the industrial heartland of Germany, its economy rested on its coal mines and steel mills. Its re-envisioning resulted in the Essen area (including 53 cities and towns) being designated the European Capital of Culture in 2010. A somewhat uncritical celebration of adaptive reuse is exemplified by Powell in the book, *Architecture Reborn*, published in 2000, which features the adaptation of a former coal mining complex by Foster and Associates. See also Cameron Abadi, “How the Industrial Ruhr Valley became a Cultural Capital” *Global Post* January 22, 2010. The World, Agence-France Presse. <www.pri.org> [Accessed 30 August 2020].
- 5 Part of the issues lies in the disparity in scale between the new structures and those that survive with a new purpose. In the regeneration of Dublin’s docklands in the 1990^s, the Docklands Authority commissioned an inventory of architectural and archaeological heritage as an input

to the Master Plan. A fraction of those elements identified in the study survives today, at times appearing as an anomalous incident in an environment dominated by blocks of new construction. Built within urban design criteria, they establish a new and consistent scale that dwarfs buildings that were previously significant elements in the landscape.

- 6 The conjunction between maintaining the cultural value of historic environment and the sustainability of adaptive reuse is endorsed in the *Leeward Declaration*, issued to mark the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage, ratified 23 November 2018 by ACE (Architects Council of Europe, Europa Nostra, EFFORTS (European Federation of Fortified Cities), ERIH (European Route of Industrial Heritage) and FRH (Future for Religious Heritage). It explicitly cites the Davos Declaration, January 2018.
- 7 The ecological imperative in large-scale re-casting of former industrial areas is also the focus of the EU Horizon 2020 Innovation Action: “proGireg. Productive Green Infrastructure for Post-industrial Urban Regeneration”. <<http://www.progireg.eu>> [Accessed 20 August 2020].
- 8 Thematic areas are identified in the Antwerp Strategic Spatial Structure Plan of 2006, which was drawn up in the context of the 1997 Strategic Spatial Structure for Flanders (RSV): In the case of Prague, the Strategy and Policy Section of IPR Praha has issued a series of documents setting the re-ordering of the river catchment in the context of the evolution of planning for the city, and includes a comparison with selected other European cities.
- 9 The doctrinal texts understand the experience to be primarily visual, viz. Venice Charter Article 6; while the Washington Charter, under Principles and Objectives, par. 2 refers to material and spiritual elements, mentioning mainly visual factors.
- 10 In so far as the Charters espouse visual criteria for urban areas, their approach seems rooted in Sitte’s vision as set out in *City Planning according to Artistic Principles* (1889) – the prescription for quality in the urban realm is to be found in the morphology of European cities. Echoes are to be found in Lynch’s *Image of the City* (1960) and Gordon Cullen’s *The Concise Townscape*. The perspective is given more scientific underpinning in the work of Muratori and Caniggia.

11 Wikipedia gives the following definition of institutionalisation: «In sociology, institutionalisation (institutionalization) refers to the process of embedding some conception (for example a belief, norm, social role, particular value or mode of behaviour) within an organisation, social system, or society as a whole.» Perhaps it is stretching the point too far to see an echo with an article written at the time when advocacy planning was in its infancy in the United States. The sociologist Frances Fox-Piven asked, «Whom does the Advocate-Planner Serve?» Her answer was that the advocate-planner served the status quo: by removing the activists from the streets the advocate planners helped to institutionalise the distance between a particular and discordant experience of reality and the ability to engage in direct action to address it: in *Social Policy*, May/June 1970.

12 The seminar was entitled: *Heritage in Urban Contexts: Impacts of Development Projects on World Heritage properties in Cities*. It was co-sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan, in cooperation with UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM and held at Kyushu University, 14–17 January 2020.

13 Antonio Arantes, urban anthropology specialist, State University of Campinas, Brazil, author of several works on cultural disjunctions in public policies.

14 An important perspective on this question can be seen in the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) concept propagated by UNESCO (2011).

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Constructing / Conserving / Destroying

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It may seem a paradox, but it is perhaps necessary to rethink “*destruction*” as a constitutive element of *constructing* and, in some way, also of *conserving* / *restoring* our architectural and urban heritage. It is almost unavoidable, if only to go beyond that widespread common sense of “useless and definitive annihilation”, that the term seems to arouse. Reconsidering it, of course, does not certainly mean to encourage the diffusion of destructions, but it responds to the need for understanding the multiple and contradictory – or conflicting – meanings of the word, thus revealing some less negative aspects and consequences of it. On the other hand, *destruction* can really take on extremely variable connotations and meanings and we should always take into account a fundamental difference between an imposed destruction and a thoughtful and intentionally guided one.¹

The *art of building* and its historical practices demonstrate how this “negative” activity often emerges as an integral part of the architect's thoughts and actions, especially when he/she proposes himself/herself as a conservator and a restorer. The meanings that the term *destruction* assumed in the recent and distant past, the ways in which it has been implemented, its reasons from time to time, the involved subjects, the characteristics of the objects to which it was directed and the cultural and social conditions in which it took place offer, on a closer inspection, many reasons for reflection.

Men have always built by destroying and destroyed through building, in a sort of unavoidable cycle, for reasons and with changing proportions, but almost never in random ways. Yet, even if in the past men demolished, destroyed, ruined, erased an infinite number of buildings and artefacts, they rarely wasted in unreasonable or casual ways existing resources. We could indeed argue that the cities and the entire anthropized territories we are now living in, are the result of complex processes of construction and transformation that produced their rich historical and material stratifications in which demolition often appears as a passage that is almost necessary and in some way productive. We can then try to understand the reasons for this deep intertwining between *demolishing* and *constructing* but also *conserving*, starting from a reflection on the words and trying to find out if, with the memory of some constructive past events, we can better grasp aporias, meanings and gnoseological implications related to this particular aspect of our constructive activity.

The experience of the workshop in Prague and particularly the visit to Holešovice district gave me the opportunity to think again about some topics I faced some years ago to which I will selectively refer hereafter.²

Words and (variable) meanings

It is perhaps not a simple coincidence, but almost everyone considers the term *destroying* as the real and simple opposite of *constructing*.

Destruction and *demolition* are in fact certainly not the final goal of *constructing*, but sometimes this *constructing* can only happen after *demolition*, for different reasons and in variable contexts (to free a plot of land from existing artefacts, for example). Apparently, *demolition* or *destruction* are not part of any *conservation* intent. Once a construction site ends and the new building is standing, men have always tried to maintain it in efficiency over time, that is, in some way, to conserve it, especially for its multiple values (economic, pragmatic, social, historical, memorial...), if they exist and are accepted by society.

Yet, sometimes, at least if we consider *restoration* as part of *conservation*, *destruction* and *demolition* can be (or sold as) necessary or prodromal in order to reach the ultimate and declared goals of restoration. It is nevertheless true that *demolishing* and *destroying* seem the opposite of both *constructing* and *conserving* but we should ask if this is always indubitable and which are the many relations between *constructing/conserving/demolishing*.

*Constructing*³ is a verb linked to the term *structure*⁴ and recalls the idea of putting together, adding or assembling different parts and elements in a non-random way, according to rational principles aimed at creating a stable, durable and safe building.

The term *conservation*, derives from the Latin verb *conservāre* composed by *con* – or *cum* (with) – and *servare* or *serbare*, meaning to keep together, to take with us, to maintain something so that it can be not altered, damaged or removed, to keep alive or present, to avoid the disappearance of something and so on.

Yet, the opposite of the action of *constructing* (in Latin *con-strūere*) could be not only the English verb *to destroy* (Latin *de-strūere*)⁵ but also *de-structuring*:⁶ a term without a direct correspondent in Latin and only recently used in Italian but very frequent in many architectural theories with strong links to contemporary philosophy (Deridda). The term *de-structuring* is in reality emblematic since it seems to allude to an ideal – but also material – *disassembly*⁷ of a building reduced to its basic components. And if, instead of *destruction*, one speaks of *disassembly*, within the limits in which the word is applicable to architectural artefacts,⁸ it would be alluding to an operation that is somehow inverse but not totally released from the act of *constructing*.

It is now worth noting that this reasoning on words is only a pretext, an auxiliary tool that can help us to glimpse some aspects of the problem that are often buried by the hastiness of common language.

The verb *to assemble* (and the reciprocal *to disassemble*) does not always adapt to architecture, especially the most ancient and distant from today's pre-fabrication and industrialization techniques and processes.⁹ Nevertheless, we can consider some traditional practices of building and even of restoring in this light.

We must also underline how, by using the term *destruction*, we are alluding to the disappearance of the object, whilst the expression *de-structuring* (or *de-construction*) essentially alludes to the splitting of the bonds established in the act of construction, but not to the loss of the individual components of the building. Therefore, the act of *constructing* is not opposed only by *destruction*, understood as *demolishing* or breaking down, but also by the *de-structuring* or *dismantling*.

Different kinds of destruction

The kinds of destruction just quoted are in any case all actions whose effects are more or less evident in the former industrial district of Holešovice and in the other buildings and sites we visited during the workshop in Prague. The dialectic intersection and overlapping between them, in different ways and with variable impacts, certainly contributed to the definition of the present status of places and artefacts. All together, they are a sort of demonstration of how *conservation* and *restoration*, but also *destruction*, in selected and controlled ways, can contribute to the future life of a contemporary city, not forgetting or losing its heritage, ancient or recent, and not impeding the further development and creative *regeneration* of the town. The places we saw and experienced pose a particular problem (among others) in distinguishing the different ways in which *destruction* of various kinds – planned, intentional, driven by a critical thinking, designed or random, unexpected, not regulated – contributed to define their new status, with its real motivations (positive, negative, sincere, ambiguous, mendacious ...).

The Vnitroblok complex, that now hosts a social, economic, professional and creative center, with its activities, had survived from the industrial age and after a long abandonment has been re-used, almost maintaining its buildings in their imperfect conditions, incomplete, consumed and partially ruined (Fig. 1) as a living memory of their past of places of work and fatigue.

The recovery of the existing spaces and structures implied the insertion of few new elements. They are mainly technological, linked to services installations and seem essential and even poor but are immediately recognizable. (Fig. 2) This choice, as the young managers of the site explained to us, mainly arose from the lack of economic resources, the uncertainty about the legitimacy of the use of the complex in the future and from the need to use the site in free and flexible ways. Whether it was supported by the idea of some architect or not – the choice ensured what Donatella Fiorani here defines as “*unplanned conservation*”.

One can also read and evaluate this result in the light of a lyric intention and research, following the poetic – or the fashion – of a living and unfinished palimpsest of different things, materials, shapes, spaces and uses.

It is for sure a very diffused way of recovering and *re-using* abandoned former factories, buildings conceived and used for decades – or even more – for productive purposes of an incredible variety of types of activities (manufacture, electricity, and alimentary industry and so on). This applies across all of Europe and the industrialized world, after the end of many “heavy industries” that left hundreds of abandoned complexes and sites within our contemporary cities, rural territories and landscapes.

In some cases also selective destruction, whether planned, designed or simply realized on site, has intervened to create these material and formal palimpsests, thus going far beyond the demolitions that already occurred before the new interventions and which were not necessarily done for safety, technical or functional reasons. (Fig. 3)

This has happened also in some other former industrial sheds that we visited in Prague, but also in Dordrecht, in the Netherlands, for example. Here, an abandoned and disused power plant is now a civic and social center named Energiehuis, completed in 2013 and with improbable olive trees inside, (Fig. 4) new iron trusses for the roof structure, the remnants of demolished bathrooms with their cladding tiles hanging at middle height of the main hall. (Fig. 5) We do not know if this is the result of previous demolitions simply accepted by the new re-use design, or if the design itself was responsible. This of course makes it difficult to make a final and definitive assessment of the outcome.

A rather different case is the Dox Centre of Contemporary Art, not far from Vnitroblok, finished in 2008. In this very alive place, many new architectural or artistic elements appear, deeply marking the contemporary character of the complex, dialoguing with pre-existing buildings that have been completely renovated in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish these different components. The Zeppelin that crosses the inner courtyard from the top of the flat roofs is immediately recognizable and is certainly a strong sign of innovation. Nevertheless, inside, it is not easy to recognize or to imagine the status of the buildings before the intervention. (Fig. 6) It is also difficult to understand how diffused or intense the demolitions have been in order to realize the spatial layout necessary for the new uses. This marks a difference with the aforementioned cases of Vnitroblok and Dordrecht.

Destructions and memories

As we have seen, however, the implications of an imposed destruction, carried out for several reasons but mainly to definitely erase something on the one hand, and a thought out, selective, partial and guided demolition, even if not really designed, are very different. This circumstance throws new light on apparently similar actions that characterize the field we are exploring.

On the other hand, the history of architecture and of urban settlements reveals different and contrasting attitudes in this regard.

In some moments and places, the total and programmatic elimination of ancient buildings took place, often by virtue of the principle of “*damnatio memoriae*” that required the disappearance of the symbols and possessions of a defeated enemy, a condemned person or an exile. This particular aspect of destroying seems to offer little reason for reflection, because the term here has the real meaning of *demolition*, of definitive cancellation of every trace of the good. Yet, even such a radical action sometimes leaves clear, even if not always easily interpretable traces, as archaeologists or those involved in stratigraphic analysis know very well. Albeit in a negative sense, *destroying*, understood as erasing, bears within itself interesting



Fig. 1) The internal alley at Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2019)



Fig. 3) A “designed” punctual destruction at Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2019)



Fig. 2) The bar at Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2019)

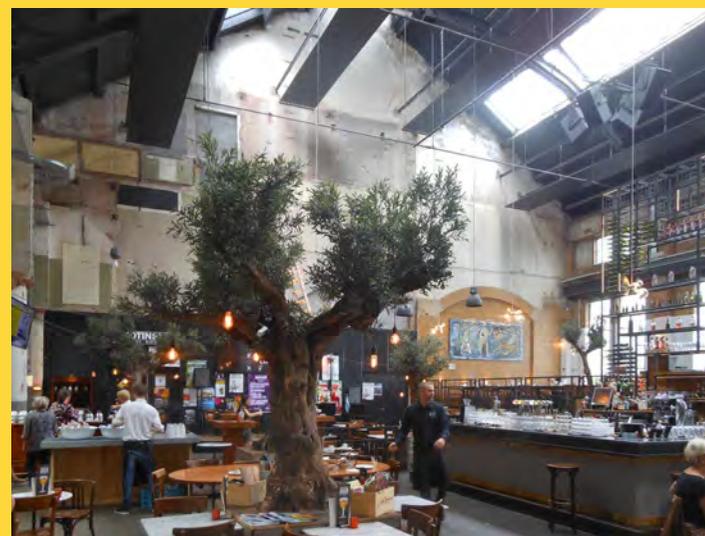


Fig. 4) Central hall of the Energiehuis in Dordrecht, Netherlands. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2016)



Fig. 5) Detail of the central hall with traces of demolished bathrooms. Energiehuis in Dordrecht, Netherlands. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2016)



Fig. 7) The Schloss under construction in Berlin, Germany. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2018)

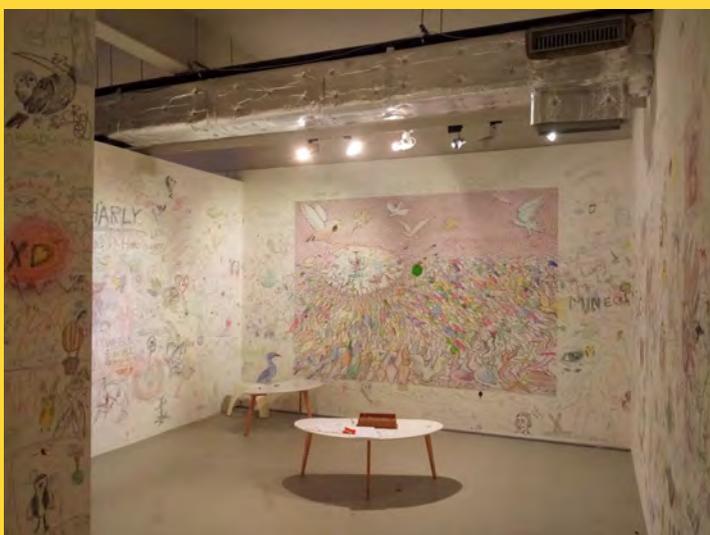


Fig. 6) The interiors used for temporary exhibitions at Dox Centre of Contemporary Art in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2019)



Fig. 8) Medieval Church of SS Clement and Panteleimon in Okrid, Macedonia. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2007)

gnoseological consequences and real opportunities for our studies and inquires on existing buildings. Not only the presence of a constructive residue, but also the signs of its absence and removal, lends themselves to reconstructing the past events that affected an artifact. The most drastic destructive action may in fact have left indicative fragments or traces useful for scientific investigation.¹⁰

The problem is on the other side complicated by the fact that “*damnatio memoriae*” acted in the past and can still act in very singular and unexpected ways, with cycles and re-cycles as history changes, as demonstrated for example by the stories of the Schloss in Berlin and of the Church of SS Clement and Panteleimon in Okrid (Macedonia).

The Schloss, symbol of the Prussian Empire, founded in the 15th century and afterwards modified several times, was damaged by the WWII bombing and demolished during the communist regime, in 1950, because of its historical and symbolic meanings, saving only its third portal and some other fragments. The new “Palace of the German Democratic Republic”, hosting the Parliament, was then erected on part of the site of the Schloss and inaugurated in 1976. It was a modern building with a steel structure, external walls covered by white marble and a continuous glass façade of bronze color, incorporating the saved elements of the Schloss. After the fall of the “Wall” and the reunification of Germany, Berlin was again the capital of the country and this palace was destroyed, despite a long debate about its historical value, and applying once again the “*damnatio memoriae*” principle to forget and erase a trace of a rejected part of national and European history. On the same site of the demolished Schloss and of the Palace of the Republic, a new building was erected in 2008, reproducing the ancient facades of the Schloss facing towards the square and the urban spaces fronting it. This had a new “modern” addition designed by the architect Franco Stella, Aldo Rossi’s pupil, facing towards the river Spree, the “new Schloss”. This building, finished in 2020 attempted to recover (or artificially bring back to life) the lost but preferred memory of the previous centuries. (Fig. 7)

Okrid is an ancient city on the route from the eastern world and Constantinople towards western Europe. During the medieval age, it was economically and culturally very important. It hosted one of the first universities and some very important churches, rich in astonishing fresco cycles. The one dedicated to Saint Clement, built during the 9th century, was demolished when the Ottomans occupied these lands, and it was replaced by a mosque, during the 16th century. When the Balkan war ended, after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavian Republic, this region was again in the hands of a Christian government. The Mosque was demolished and since 2005 a “new clone” of the ancient church of St. Clement and Panteleimon stands in its place. Only the original crypt and a little fragment of walls overground survived from the destruction carried out by the Ottomans but, incredibly, the label posed by UNESCO to celebrate its reconstruction “*a l’identique*”, says: “*Medieval Church of SS Clement and Panteleimon – 9th–15th centuries*”. This is not a good way to explain what a visitor stands in front of, respecting the complexity and contradictions of the story of the place. (Fig. 8)

In other cases, a different form of destruction has prevailed, understood as relocation which alters or interrupts the physical links between the materials and elements of an artefact, or between the entire building and its site. They are cases of a kind of “*hidden destruction*”, since there is no real and definite cancellation of the artefact, nor the complete loss of its material and of formal elements and appearance.

From ancient times we can find many cases of the transfer of ancient buildings to places other than those where they originated and survived for a long time. At times, it was a question of skillful operations of disassembly and reassembly; at other times the characteristics and consistency of the artefacts, or external constraints of various kinds, have led to radical demolitions followed by more or less faithful analogical reconstructions (or reassembly), perhaps ennobled by the re-use of some decorative and symbolic elements belonging to the demolished artifact.

One can think of the transfer of the temples of Abu-Simbel away from the destructive waters of the Nile, the displacement of many orthodox churches ordered by the Romanian dictator Ceausescu to realize his plan for a (re)newed and monumental Bucharest, and many others similar cases.

These operations were not trivial in respect of the relevant technical implications and of the political, social, and cultural reasons that determined them (saving memories in alternative ways if it was not possible to maintain their traces where rooted).

Another form of *destruction* is what we can define as a “*masked*” one and is well represented by the numerous interventions of *re-use* and formal or symbolic re-definition of pre-existing buildings. Such a kind of interventions were carried out every time that a civilization or a social group wanted to affirm its own otherness, superiority or distance from those that had preceded it and produced those artefacts.

We can thus remember the transformation into Christian churches of the Greek temple of Syracuse, or that of the Tempio-Duomo in Pozzuoli (restored by Marco Dezzi Bardeschi while maintaining the traces of the several past demolitions, casual or intentional, suffered by the monument). We can also quote the ancient residential *re-use* of the Roman amphitheatres in Nîmes and in Aix en Provence or that of the theatre of Marcellus in Rome that demonstrate how extensive demolitions and consequent integrations and new insertions in the past allowed new lives to ancient buildings, somehow *conserving* them at least in part. The material of the pre-existing buildings was not always totally lost in these cases, but their forms, meanings, roles and characters changed radically. Further, we could recall the many partial re-buildings (and in some cases “*physical incorporations*”, quoting Erwin Panofsky) of early Christian and medieval churches, realized during the Renaissance period and continued in later ages. Think of the intervention by Leon Battista Alberti on the gothic church of San Francesco in Rimini (the Malatestiano temple) or the transformation in baroque forms of the early Christian basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano by Francesco Borromini. Something was destroyed in all these cases of course, but something survived, conserved even if within a new framework and context that was not only physical.

Destruction, conservation, renewal

Finally, as previously stated, there are countless testimonies of how, in the not too distant past, *destructions* often revealed themselves as a patient, accurate and sometimes codified action of *disassembling* architectural elements. There was the will and/or need to recover these elements and along with their built matter the economic, technical, artistic, symbolic or emotional values of the destroyed buildings, that were thus somehow saved, conserved and transmitted to the future. Let us think in this regard of the long and rich tradition of the "*spolia*" of classic antiquities often re-used within medieval or later buildings.

On a larger scale, the analysis of numerous interventions testifies how the *demolition* of entire parts of European cities was accompanied, in some measure, by an accurate and coordinated *dismantling* of individual buildings, to accord with more general plans of urban *renewal* or *regeneration*. We can refer, as to a simple example, to the opening in Genoa of "Strada Nuovissima" (now via Cairoli), at the end of the 18th century, "Via Carlo Felice" (now via XXV Aprile), "Via San Lorenzo" and "Via Roma", during the 19th century. They were always based on the reinterpretation of the enduring model of the Renaissance and Baroque examples of "Strada Nuova" and "Strada Balbi". These "new streets" are deep caesuras of the medieval urban tissue, carried out by cutting the pre-existing buildings with great courage and skill, along the alignments of the new designed streets. The cuts saw the use of numerous specialized workers who, descending from the roofs to the foundations of the existing buildings, removed the materials in place, selecting those recoverable from those to be sent to landfills. The frugality was not only the result of an innate foresight of the local population, but was rigorously regulated by the tenders and was based (in a by no means secondary way) on the minimization of the damage induced on the surviving part of the buildings, as well as on the recovery of part of their material. All these interventions, like others, have been certainly heavily *destructive* but, in some of them, a *constructive* and technical culture applied, similar to that required by the parallel or subsequent building actions. Moreover, these interventions have often determined the acquisition of knowledge or the experimentation of executive practices that the destruction itself imposed or made possible.

The ancient programs of "*renovatio urbis*", like the "*Plan of the five-pointed star*" conceived by Pope Sixtus Vth in Rome around the Apostolic Basilicas during the XVI Century, were somehow the ancestors of the recent *regeneration plans* of our cities.¹¹ After those ancient examples, other *demolitions* changed the shape and the tissues of many European cities, especially after the new Paris designed by Haussmann and down to more recent episodes like Potsdamer Platz in Berlin. (Fig. 9)

Changing perspective, we must recognize also that sometimes a disaster can impose demolition as the inevitable outcome for a building, of series of buildings and of entire urban sectors, as happened in Genoa after the collapse of the "Morandi Bridge". Several blocks of apartments disappeared after the disaster to leave room for a new urban and technological park for the *regeneration* of this former industrial district, assigning to an abandoned shed and to the new trees the role of a living memorial to

honor the victims of that tragedy. Unfortunately, another significant part of the individual and collective memory will evaporate overtime: that of all those who lived in the demolished residential blocks and were compelled to go away. (Fig. 10)

Speaking again of monuments, we recall also the recent story of the collapsed baroque cathedral of Noto, in Sicily, which after long discussions, ended with its *reconstruction "a l'identique"*. It is nevertheless interesting to highlight that the final reconstruction implied the *demolition* of the parts survived after the collapse in order to ensure to the "new clone" of the lost church the requested resistance against the earthquakes risks.

On the other hand, selective and limited or extensive *destructions* characterized also many interventions of *restoration* realized during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, following the leading theories and cultural positions of the different periods. Once again, the relationships between *destruction* and *conservation* were in those cases very complex and sometimes inverted. One thinks of the many cathedrals or castles brought back to their "ancient splendor", by *demolishing* parts that were added through the centuries and later judged as incoherent, dangerous or negative in terms of their perception, understanding and appreciation. On a larger scale, we could remember, among others, the radical *demolitions* of the central part of Rome realized during the Fascist period in order to unveil and then *restore* the archaeological remains of the forums buried under hundreds of buildings erected on the place during the medieval period and the following centuries. *Destruction* leading towards *restoration* but certainly not only for cultural reasons.

Destruction and conservation techniques

In any case, the centrality of destruction in architectural thought and action is not predicated on its historical precedents in transformative works. When one looks at the protection, conservation and restoration of heritage, architectural thought and action (sometimes unconsciously) may follow similar paths. One can see the recurring attempts at a theoretical level to affirm the legitimacy and necessity of such radical intervention, while innumerable destructive, demolishing, techniques are practiced. The "*sew and unstitch*" technique, frequently applied to masonry structures or to generic stone artefacts, as if it were a painless tool, should for example be redefined as the "*unstitch and sew again*" technique. In it, the *destructive* act in fact precedes the re-integrative one and the operation, however neutral and respectful it may seem, can lead to the total *destruction* of the artifact, to its replacement with a sort of simulacrum, a full-scale model in which only feeble traces of the ancient consistency remain.

In addition, numerous cleaning techniques presuppose the *destruction* of a certain amount of matter that has been added over time on the surface of the objects, either by natural deposit or by voluntary actions – a factor argued about in the polemics about the removal of the "*patina*". The application of such techniques therefore poses significant scientific, technical and cultural problems. It imposes caution and thoughtfulness, precisely because the consequences and significance of interventions are often unknown.



Fig. 9) Potzdamer Platz,
Berlin, Germany.
(photo Stefano
Francesco Musso 2018)



Fig. 10) The new bridge
"Genova San Giorgio",
designed by Renzo
Piano, with the area
of the demolished
residential blocks
waiting for the future
urban park and the
provisional "clearing
of memory" in honor
of the victims of the
collapse of Morandi
bridge in 2018. Genova,
Italy. (photo Stefano
Francesco Musso 2020)

These apparently "positive" actions, imbued with the confidence of being able to improve the qualities of the existing buildings (ensuring cleanliness, decorum, hygiene, stability ...) can be *destructive* and turned into "negative" actions because they subtract matter and meanings from the artefacts. Therefore, whether in some cases the need to intervene concerns a marble attacked by devastating incrustations, or whether in other circumstances it will be necessary to remove, replace or partially transform an artifact, we must know that we are in any case *engaged in destructions* and losses and this will require great caution.

It would be easy to provide further arguments or other examples in this regard, but they would not change the meaning of these reflections. New evidence could only expand, in number and quality, the objects, operations and problems that we need to re-read with attention in relation to the theme of *destruction*.

On the other hand, the question is of a much more general nature than the particular examples would suggest, as the nature of the language we use to describe the various operations seems often to denounce.

Between words and actions

Very often our discourse around the topics of the workshop seems based on a sort of fiction that prevents us from fully recognizing the *destructiveness* of many operations carried out in the name of *protection*, *conservation* or *restoration*.

Think about the consequences sometimes evoked by terms such as *renewal*, *recovery*, *rehabilitation* or by the same term *restoration*. In each of them, the prefix "re" seems to indicate the inevitability of *destruction*, albeit hidden behind reassuring appearances and distinguished by degree, since it alludes to the possibility of reversing the course of events, by erasing the traces left by them on the objects to which the corresponding actions are applied.

The theme of *destruction* has therefore a character of absolute generality and the need to investigate it does not arise exclusively from the observation of how important it has been or still is for architectural thought and practice. A more general issue overpasses any necessary documentary scruple of the rigorous researches. As paradoxical as it may seem, in fact, even within a *destructive action*, there can be unpredictable opportunities for knowledge, for scientific and technical progress, and it is this possibility that requires us to take a more incisive interest and enhanced attention.

Destruction, especially if understood in the form of *disassembling*, can teach and not just cancel or condemn to disappearance an artifact entrusted to our care.

The craftsman is aware of this when he disassembles the doors and shelves of an ancient wardrobe to reassemble them after the *restoration* and, in doing so, he learns how the furniture is made and how it works. The watchmakers or the mechanic know this aspect of the problem even more clearly, and why, only by *disassembling* the mechanism in front of them, they can really understand its secrets and acquire knowledge and skills that can be used on other occasions.

Finally, there are specific skills that the *destructive* act can sometimes stimulate or determine: this is testified by military history and the connected evolution of fortifications.

Explosives experts prove it even more clearly having developed extremely sophisticated tools to control the implosive demolition of skyscrapers or other infrastructures in our contemporary metropolises.

Towards the future

At the end, but not to conclude, we must recognize that starting from the proposed annotations, new research itineraries can open in front of us, not forgetting those already started long ago within the scientific and cultural community of restoration. We have then to look carefully at *destroying* because it is not unrelated to *constructing* nor to *restoring*, especially if this last is aimed at preserving and *conserving* what the past ages and civilizations have left us in provisional legacy.

Notes

- 1 As regards the analysis of the terms used in the text, the notes refer directly to the following works: Castiglioni, L., Mariotti, S., 1970. *Vocabolario della lingua Latina*, Loescher, Turin; Devoto, G., Oli G., 1985. *Dizionario della lingua Italiana*, Le Monnier, Firenze. The following have also been consulted: *Vocabolario della Lingua Italiana* and *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano*, published by the Istituto per la Enciclopedia Italiana G. Treccani of Rome, respectively in 1987 and 1956
- 2 Musso, S.F., 1996. "Costruere/Destruere", in *TeMA*, Milano.
- 3 From the Latin "con-struere" = "heap; arrange; build".
- 4 From the Latin "structura" = "arrangement, arrangement, structure", but also: "structure, construction, masonry" and "in the concrete sense: construction, building, factory, wall".
- 5 From the Latin "de-struere" = "destroy, tear down". An analogous meaning is moreover in the term "demolish", derived from "de-moliri", where "moliri" means not by chance: "build, erect, fabricate, found, make".
- 6 Term related in a more literal way to the union of the Latin verb "struere" with the subtractive prefix "de": hence the induced meaning of: "to break the original order".
- 7 In Italian "smontare", from the French "montér", with the subtractive prefix "s". The Italian has therefore borrowed the verb from a neo-Latin language but in Latin the French verb "montér" corresponds to the verb "in-struere", composed of the verb "struere" and the prefix "in", which indicates, in the sense side, "union". If it is therefore true that, in Latin, the correspondent of the verb "to disassemble" is "resolvere"

- or "dissolvere", the fact remains that if the term "mount" can be associated with "in-struere", the opposite term "disassemble" it can be traced back to the verb "de-struere". "Destruere" can therefore be interpreted not only as "destroy" in the sense of "demolish" but also as "disassemble", since "build" corresponds to "con-struere" and "mount" corresponds to "in-struere".
- 8 It is not certainly the case of a mortar, of concrete works or brick masonries, for example, because their construction processes do not allow any kind of reversibility, or of simple disassembling. In many other cases, the idea of being able to "dismantle" a building instead has a certain basis.
 - 9 In Italian, however, the meaning of "mounting" is: "to perform an assembly operation", where by assembly we mean: "an operation by which the various constituent elements of a device, mechanism, machine or a structure are placed according to the manufacturing scheme in their functional place, so as to form a single functioning complex".
 - 10 Francovich, R., Parenti, R. ed., 1987. *Archeologia e restauro dei monumenti, I Cycle of lessons on Applied Research in Archeology*; 1988. *Sienna*. All'Insegna del Giglio, Firenze; Mannoni, T., 1994. *Archelogia dell'urbanistica, and: Caratteri costruttivi degli edifici storici*. ESCUM, Genoa.
 - 11 As for the Regeneration topic see: Crişan, R., Franco, G., Kealy, L., Musso, S. F. eds., 2012. *Conservation/Regeneration: The Modernist Neighbourhood*. EAAE – European Association for Architectural Education, Leuven (BE).

The Architecture of Ultimology: considering obsolescence and heritage value in Dublin's twentieth century architecture

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Introduction: The Architecture of Ultimology

Ultimology, as defined by the contemporary international art practice based at Trinity College Dublin's (TCD) CONNECT Research Centre is, "that which is dead or dying in a process".¹

The term was coined by the Endangered Languages Alliance in New York, and now appropriated by the international practice (an artist, Fiona Hallinan and a curator, Kate Strain) to firstly tackle knowledge forms and methods that were disappearing from the university. In 2016, they established a fictional academic unit in TCD which they named *The Department of Ultimology*. Having themselves graduated with a humanities degree in Art History about 15 years ago, they had used 30mm slides on a daily basis, to learn and to show their learning. The two practitioners recall the very physical experience of using the slides – removing them from cases, inserting them into the clunking lightbox – and the particularity of each image, organised according to place or artist. (Fig. 1)

This was in the earlier part of the twenty-first century, in the age before Google searching became ubiquitous. And so, as the slide library was superseded, they lamented its loss. Their exploration began, and they found more and more instances of learning processes shifting and disappearing, dying, such as the practice of glass blowing by the Chemistry Department. Here was John Kelly in 2016, a professional glass blower employed by the university for the sole purpose of making bespoke glass instruments for student experimentation. (Fig. 2) John retired in 2018 and his position was never replaced.

The Department of Ultimology acknowledges that they are providing a language and a container because "Ultimology" responds to a contemporary environment of anxiety around endings. They point to our age, now, as being an age of depleted resources and rapid obsolescence. And in that way, this paper uses "The Architecture of Ultimology" as an alternative title, almost as a call to arms in defence of Irish architecture made from the 1930s through the 1980s. By drawing on a series of mid-century Dublin buildings, from architectures for further education to office buildings, this paper highlights universal issues around the value of recent architecture. As the theme

of the 2019 EAAE workshop is Conservation/Demolition, presented as an emphatic juxtaposition – the choice is: conserve or demolish – the condition of "Ultimology" is provocative, suggesting that endings need not be an "either/or". This paper shares an ongoing state-sponsored research project from Ireland's capital city, Dublin which, beginning with an inventory, maps out how some architectural typologies are more susceptible to obsolescence (and subsequent demolition) than others.²

The paper reflects upon the nature of value in buildings that sit outside of heritage's timelines and categories. In thinking about the value of more recent architecture generally, we note that while older buildings endure as historical situations and objects, modern buildings come out of a more direct social programme (Rowley 2016, 2019). They might be artistically and technologically significant, but a large portion of Ireland's mid to late twentieth-century buildings are mostly significant due to the needs of their (sub)urbanising communities at the time of their design. These buildings are so familiar to their communities; they have become bread-and-butter architecture; they are the everyday built environment. They constitute what we might term, architectures which are hidden in plain view.

Public appreciation of this architectural generation is low while public perception is negative. In Ireland, which was neutral during the Second World War and saved from large-scale destruction and subsequent reconstruction programmes experienced elsewhere in Europe, these buildings represent the undoing of the traditional (usually Georgian or eighteenth-century) city during the 1960s. However, such hyperlocal anti-urbanism seemingly realised through the 1960s was engrained much earlier, from the 1910s and 20s. It was in fact rooted in the original obsolescence paradigm coming out of the American Great Depression; a catalyst for this rising capitalist pattern which was responding and reacting to industrialised urbanisation, its economics and its slums (Abramson 2016: 2–3). In a word, the common condition of obsolescence is the thread that runs through all of this architectural history.

More than concrete blocks: architecture, the inventory and folklore

Architecture has always been at that uncomfortable crossover of culture and commerce. Older architecture has achieved a status within capitalist value systems, of heritage value – a piece of cultural tourism, commodified precisely because of its age.³ On the other hand, the value of the "Architecture of Ultimology" is completely skewed. This architecture is not old enough to be considered historically significant, and yet it is too old to function successfully in the twenty-first century. As such, these buildings are at once too old and not old enough.

If value is suspended like this, somewhere between age and worth, society needs to inscribe value alternatively. To inscribe we need to, in the first instance, construct the architecture's history; to release the stories around the buildings' making and more. In the specifics of the Irish context, where the buildings are mostly not innovative (in strict DoCoMoMo terms) and where there is a natural inclination to story-tell, the architectural historian moves to celebrate the distinct Irish voice.⁴ The task of rescuing these locally undervalued buildings means establishing their ethnography, their folklife.

So, in thinking about the stories behind the making of this architectural generation, we come ideologically to Ultimology which is rooted in considerations of language. Indeed, the symbiosis between architecture and language carries forth: both are upheld as the fundamental modes of representation in culture; both are essential tools for orientation in the world, one to shelter and the other to communicate (Vesely 1987: 32). The Endangered Languages Alliance warns us that with the extinction of a language, we lose so much in terms of cultural, botanical, ethnographical insights (Perlin 2017). In fact, we do not really know what we lose when we lose a language. Up to half of the world's 7,000 languages will be lost in the next 100 years, the Alliance tells us (Magan 2017). And so, the Endangered Languages Alliance is founded upon fear; fear of a homogenous linguistic landscape.

Fear of a homogenous built environment is also markedly valid, today in the twenty-first century. That fear, coupled with skewed value around buildings made from the 1930s through the 1980s, motivated Ireland's first significant research project into twentieth-century architecture. Setting about in 2011 to write the architectural histories, this project was commissioned by the local authority, Dublin City Council and part-funded by the Heritage Council of Ireland. As such, it was and continues to be an Irish state initiative, expressed through inventory and disseminated through an inexpensive general reader book series entitled *More Than Concrete Blocks: Dublin's C20th Buildings and Their Stories*.⁵ According to the first book's foreword by UCD Professor of Architecture, Hugh Campbell:

«*The project is born of a conviction that our understanding of architecture has as much to do with what Louis Sullivan called the "life-facts of building" as opposed to the "art-facts."* Hence the story of a building's inception and construction on the one hand, and of its inhabitation and adaptation over time on the other hand, are as important as an appraisal of its physical and aesthetic properties.» (Campbell 2016: 4–5).

The project's steadfast motivation to capture stories as a way of shifting public perception and eventually, of instilling value, meant that it was as much about compiling a folklore; or maybe, about employing folk methods and using vernacular sources from interviewing, where possible, to reading the daily papers of the time. With such determinedly non-rarefied and non-canonical ambitions, the *C20th Architecture of Dublin City* research project was not to produce a hierarchical "best of" twentieth-century Dublin architecture. Rather, the project was founded upon inclusive representation, taking account of small "a" and capital "A" architecture. As such, the tool of the architectural inventory became the starting point for this Dublin research project, evolving into the project's enduring baseline while the project developed, phase by phase, year by year over the past decade.

The inventory, much like the map's inscription upon the natural landscape, acts as an organising and ordering tool. It asks, "what do we have?" and then imposes a rational order in its action of assembling a list. In this way, the "C20th Architecture" project began with gathering, categorising and chronologically listing buildings and sites made in the city borough between 1900 and 1999. Attempts to demonstrate contemporaneous priorities would soon bring a Marian grotto to bear alongside a grain silo, a public toilet

alongside a department store, an electricity generating station alongside a suburban Catholic church, and so on. (Figg. 3, 4) In acknowledging the many building typologies, a view of the city became clear and the inventory of Dublin's twentieth-century buildings grew to c.300 sites. Each of these sites was mapped, photographed, dated, provenance identified and a rationale (of 150 words) composed in terms of the site's significance.

The inventory here is a working scaffold ("what do we have?"), translated along the way as a guidebook through the century while enabling the loose questioning of "what do we prioritise?". Then, in the vein of Ultimology, as a push back against the societal slide into an uncritical and speeded-up approach to knowledge generation, the inventory enabled deeper research into specific sites. Called case studies, and published as chapters in our book series, these deeper studies initially adapted the DoCoMoMo International case study fiche.⁶ However, finding that DoCoMoMo's fiche placed a premium on innovation as the core characteristic of modernism, our markedly local (for which read "peripheral") project evolved an alternative method; a method closer to the ICOMOS Twentieth-Century Scientific Committee's definition of the "modern" as regional and context-specific and thereby working better for Irish bread and butter architecture.

Enduring and emotive: buildings for education

If the research is about illuminating, about throwing light on unknown material or forgotten experiences enabled by architectural intention, it has not disappointed in the realm of buildings for education. The project's encounters with a corpus of technical or vocational schools around Dublin, commissioned and managed through the local authority, revealed a mid-century archaeology of frozen-in-time woodwork rooms and pottery and metal workshops. A highlight and the clearest proponent of a building and its interior preserved due to benign neglect, is the Inchicore vocational school. Located in an inner suburb of Dublin and built in the mid-1950s as part of a radicalising programme to produce a more technocratic workforce for industrialising Ireland, this college was designed by an unsung hero but established figure of mid-to-late twentieth century Irish architecture, Andy Devane (1917–2000).

This is a long sweeping building, comprising two blocks. (Fig. 5) And as our account attests, its exterior is like an essay in the American modernist Frank Lloyd Wright tropes, from the tiny entrance to the colliding horizontal and vertical planes, large concrete planters and exaggerated canopies (Rowley 2019a: 228). A fascinating and mostly unnoticed aspect of the building which comes out of its sloped siting is the terracing; a system of stairs and balconies in smooth rendered concrete, and more than a nod to Wright's iconic private house, Falling Water (1938, Bear Run, USA). Clearly the Irish architect was a fan of Wright and as our account explains, Devane had studied and worked at Wright's Taliesin studios in Wisconsin and Arizona between 1946 and 1948. The Inchicore school was probably Devane's first public project on his return to Dublin. The two blocks contain different teaching spaces with the fronting two-storey block housing standard classrooms and the other, a one-storey block, housing an exciting series of canteen and industrial-like workshop classrooms with semi-sawtooth roofs and clerestory lighting. It is in here that we found the intact metal and woodwork rooms from the early 1960s. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 1) Slides as Investigation, Dept. of Art and Architectural History, TCD, Ireland. (Department of Ultimology, photo Fiona Hallinan and Kate Strain)



Fig. 2) Manifold, Dept. of Chemistry, TCD, Ireland. (Department of Ultimology, photo Fiona Hallinan and Kate Strain)



Fig. 3) Reinforced Concrete Marian Grotto, 1926–1930. Oblates, Ireland. (Dublin City Council C20th Architecture Research Project, photo Paul Tierney 2012)



Fig. 4) Donnybrook Bus Garage, colour drawing of main elevation dated 10th February 1949. Dublin, Ireland. (Michael Scott Collection, Irish Architectural Archive)



Fig. 5) Inchicore Vocational School, 1953–1958. Dublin, Ireland. (Robinson Keefe Devane Archive)



Fig. 6) Inchicore Vocational School, 1953–1958. Interior view of woodwork room. Dublin, Ireland. (Dublin City Council C20th Architecture Research Project, photo Paul Tierney 2012)

A more recent Dublin vocational school, opened a generation later in 1973, is the North Strand college. Bombastic in scale, perhaps Brutalist in tone with its mix of in-situ and prefabricated concrete, this school also reveals shockingly good and intact interiors. At the building's top floor – a kind of penthouse *piano nobile* overlooking Dublin's north east inner city – we find glorious art rooms with original timber and terrazzo pottery tables which have survived again through a process of neglect. The neglect is less benign when we consider that the building was designed for 200 students in the late 1960s, but through the 1970s and 1980s, due to the change in education legislation introducing free secondary education to Ireland in 1966, there were c.700 students being educated there.

The survival of the original fabric, despite intensification of use at North Strand, comes out of the combination of dire underfunding of the Vocational Education sector and genuine affection, becoming love, for the building by the teachers and staff who are ultimately the primary users of buildings for education. It is notable that in relation to the value impact of education buildings, the observations of Historic England in their listing document of 2017 resonate with our own: that schools are at once modest and easy to overlook but are striking local landmarks «designed to inculcate pride in learning... For many, schools are formative buildings and much valued elements of the public realm. They are an emotive category.» (English Heritage 2011: 1)

A third example of a remarkably intact teaching and learning space, in defiance of Ultimology's endings, is the School of Theoretical Physics (STP) of 1971 (part of the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies DIAS). Dublin's purest homage to Louis Kahn's Richards Medical Labs (1960), this physics building is a well-crafted reinforced concrete structure with a functioning single-glaze window system and handsome perfectly formed brick. (Fig. 7) Inside, nothing has been changed from the original windows to the original blackboards. Unlike the other two further education buildings, the STP has never wavered in its function as a haven for physics learning and as such, by 2019 and our visit, all that the resident physicists sought from their 1971 building was more blackboards. However, while the other two colleges are sited in resolutely working-class neighbourhoods, the STP sits by Dublin's Grand Canal, in the city's leafy inner office belt. As such, the city itself is pressurising this structure and its position on a prime corner of Dublin 2 (for which read, Dublin INC.) renders it vulnerable in 2020: not its fabric nor its users.

Obsolescent offices: the case of a demolished pioneer

In 2020, the School of Theoretical Physics was added to Dublin City's Record of Protected Structures.⁷ This action counts as a small victory in a larger battle against the might of obsolescence and the consequent undervaluing of this generation of buildings. Probably the most susceptible to demolition and erasure of the local building types is the mid-century office. Along with older housing and the functionally redundant oversized mid-century Catholic church, offices teach us much about architectural value and attendant issues of obsolescence. Obsolescence is persistent, often blind and dangerous because it is founded upon the compunction to devalue and discard. Beginning



Fig. 7) School of Theoretical Physics, 1971, Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, Ireland. (G+T Crampton Photographic Archive, UCD Digital Library)



Fig. 8) Bord Fáilte headquarters, 1958–1963. Dublin, Ireland. (Dublin City Council C20th Architecture Research Project, photo Paul Tierney 2011)

as a commercial presumption, it is by now relentless. The word obsolete designates ‘substandard’ and as the twentieth century progressed, bringing with it the tyranny of its own progress, obsolescence became the by-word for change in architecture.

A pioneering office building, the tourist board headquarters or Bord Fáilte (1958–1963) (Fig. 8), situated close to the School of Theoretical Physics on a pocket of Dublin’s most valuable real-estate, was recently lost (demolished in 2018) and its demolition raises issues around the relationship between the sustainability paradigm and the obsolescence paradigm. Bord Fáilte was demolished despite it generally being considered the first central core building in Ireland; despite it having been designed by the leading critical architect of the period, Robin Walker of Michael Scott and Partners. And furthermore, it was demolished despite there being a relatively extensive historiography – or more fittingly, an architectural biography – around it which led a campaign to save the building.⁸ This architectural biography recounted episodes of influence, of formation. In truth, it was a typical, protagonist-driven architectural history: that of a gifted white male, exceptionally educated, in touch with the canon of architectural modernism despite being of Ireland, of the periphery. For Ireland, Robin Walker was special and the Bord Fáilte building was Walker’s earliest complete project in Michael Scott’s office following his postgraduate studies at the Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago USA) under the former Bauhaus tutors, German urban planner Ludwig Hilberseimer (1885–1967) and German modernist architect Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), during which time Walker also worked in the office of Skidmore Owings Merrill, Chicago (summers 1956 and 1957) and taught in IIT. Prior to this, Walker had apprenticed in Le Corbusier’s studio on Rue de Sevres at the end of the 1940s.

While the Irish tourist board, Bord Fáilte, wanted an internationalist corporate image, it had little money to pay for this. As a result, the streamlined modernist aesthetic of collegiate Chicago was adapted by Walker to the native Dublin conditions of five storeys rather than eight storeys, and fair-faced concrete rather than steel. The Miesian prototype was not Mies’ downtown corporate model nor was it his iconic steel and glass temple of education the Crown Hall (IIT), but rather his more modest student housing block (Rowley 2010). In this, Walker was satisfying the restrained nature of his commission whereby Bord Fáilte’s desire to be “modern” did not correspond with its means – by means, I’m referring to the tourist board’s small budget. Office spaces were organized at the building’s glazed periphery, leaving the central core to accommodate circulation and services, the offices were compartmentalized while the larger board/meeting room space looked out along the south canal-facing front, and the principal offices for the various directors, wrapped around the corners. By the early 1960s in urban Ireland, clerical practices continued to involve a complexity of skilled labour over machines, and organisation hierarchies generated the need for cellular spaces where management offices fed into sub-spaces for typists. The architectural brief then was intricate.

Whatever about its innovation and modernist credentials, by the new millennium the late-1950s building’s functionality and value were being called into question, and in 2009, the tourist board staff moved out. The Bord Fáilte building lay fallow. As

a national recession lifted in 2015, the building's owner began to examine the feasibility of the building's life. Crucially, since the time of its design, Bord Fáilte's canal-side neighbourhood was increasingly the site of white-collar Ireland. Today, in the era of Ireland or Dublin INC., that commercial bias is more acute than ever and sets the scene for the building's demise. The original building contained just over 2,000 sq.m. of office space – simply not enough in the office-hungry context of Dublin 2 in 2018! And the as yet unbuilt proposal which won out, bringing about the Bord Fáilte building's demolition, incorporates over 3,000 sq.m. of office space, over six storeys.

Interestingly, aside from subjective comments about the older building's aesthetic contribution to the street scape, the proposal won out on the grounds of sustainability, citing the existing building's thermal conditions and fitness for purpose: «It would be possible to replace the building's glazing and to introduce insulation to the fabric but the end result would produce a fabric performance that is notably worse than a modern new build.»⁹ The commentary also pointed to the «sub-standard floor to ceiling height [which] is not capable of being practicably remediated within the constraints of a refurbishment project.»¹⁰ Discounting the building's embodied energy, in the end, the Bord Fáilte building's demolition was justified because (ironically) of the sustainability paradigm. While originally the sustainability paradigm had sought to address obsolescence's blindness, by now as Abrahamson comments, «sustainability inherits obsolescence's obsession with measurable performance, in this instance for energy efficiency». (Abramson 2016: 6, 151–156)

Confronting endings

What is most problematic, underpinning this discussion is the equation of land cost with cultural value, through the action of a building. Of course, the Bord Fáilte building was not fully exploiting its site, so ultimately, it had to be done away with. To paraphrase Phineas Harper and Maria Smith in a recent issue of *Architectural Review* on architecture and capitalism: design decisions around structure, form, programme, cultural legacy are mostly made on the basis of the project's performance as a sellable commodity (Smith Harper 2019: 6–12). The problem is clear when say, the land, materials and labour that go into making schools – or something with intense social purpose and value – are measured in the same pot, as part of the same economic market, as the land, materials and labour that go into making lavish hotels or luxury homes. This brings us from the semi-state office building to a more everyday architecture of the social housing block. Also alarmingly susceptible to architectural obsolescence in Ireland, less from a property economics perspective than from the ever-present but intangible shift in standards of living, the future of older social housing hangs in the balance. And amidst a national housing crisis, the question which confronts Irish local authority housing architects is, do we conserve or do we demolish?

Dublin's handsome 1930s–1940s Expressionist brick flat blocks were themselves founded upon the principles of modernist obsolescence. On top of the early modernist urban agenda, Ireland was actively decolonising in the 1920s and 1930s (Rowley 2019b: 180–224). Slums were associated with the colonial past and so, new

structures were needed. Quickly, as elsewhere, the obsolescence paradigm provided Dublin with a method: purchase, decant, demolish, build anew. As such, Dublin's new flat blocks were embedded in what Daniel Abramson calls obsolescence's «progressive dimensions, striking at the status quo without remorse, clearing the way for new physical environments and more socially just distribution of resources – air, open space, and housing» (Abramson 2016: 138). Now, 80 or so years later these slum-clearance blocks offer neither high enough density, given their urban setting, nor adequate floor space per inhabitant. Their energy rating (BER) is unsustainably low while outdoor spaces, long taken over for car parking, are scant. Residents consistently complain to the local authority about dampness and mould. In short, the blocks are obsolescent housing solutions in 2021.

However, crucially, due to a shift in sentiment brought on not least by the belated historiography around their urbanism and the chief architect responsible for their design, Herbert Simms (1898–1948), these 1930s/40s schemes are now considered to be historically significant. Simms tragically committed suicide in 1948, blaming overwork as the cause of his mental anguish. Driven by this human tragedy, the architectural history of these housing blocks initially developed and was then overlaid with aesthetic reasoning coming from the buildings' handsome urban disposition and material quality. As such, the blocks may be saved from the wrecking ball. In 2020, Dublin City Architect Ali Grehan announced a pilot scheme to “deeply retrofit” one block, Ballybough House (1937–1941), stating that the blocks are «important to the city's identity» (Neylon 2020). In a bid to maintain a newly valued old streetscape, the blocks will be retained but so adapted through cork-lined insulation, heat pumps and breaking two units into one, as to decrease their density by half. In this example of Ballybough House, the buildings' embodied carbon is at last being acknowledged while the historic city, and pointedly the pull of Dublin's more recent social history, its folklife, has won out.

Is this nostalgia? And in the face of creative destruction and demolition, does nostalgia have a role?

As a final thought we recall that the obsolescence paradigm elides the distinction between the physical and the social. It also assumes that architecture has a temporal limit. This is what Abramson termed “the myth of obsolescence”, commenting that buildings do not magically disappear at forty years but that «their fates are contingent, not biological» (Abramson 2017). The demolition of Dublin's Bord Fáilte building was signed off with a concluding paragraph in the planning document that the building had come to the end of its useful life.¹¹ But buildings do not disappear on predictable schedules and indeed, the indeterminacy of history teaches us that the past persists as much as the future pushes onwards.

Notes

- 1 Department of Ultimology, part of Orthogonal Methods Group in Trinity College Dublin CONNECT research centre: <<http://www.departmentofultimology.com/>>.
- 2 This Heritage Council of Ireland-funded research project is commissioned by Dublin City Council and disseminated to date through a book series, *More Than Concrete Blocks*: [online] Available at <<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/news/news-features/more-than-concrete-blocks-vol-2-1940-1972-dublin-citys-twentieth-century-buildings-and-their-stories>> [Accessed 18 March 2021].
- 3 For discussions of architectural heritage as consumerism, see Lisa Breglia, *Monumental Ambivalence: The Politics of Heritage*. University of Texas, 2006 and Mark Jarzombek, "Art History and Architecture's Aporia", in James Elkins ed., *Art and Globalization*. Pennsylvania State Uni. Press, 2010, 188–194.
- 4 DoCoMoMo refers to the international organization, Documentation Conservation Modern Movement: <<https://www.docomomo.com/>>.
- 5 The *Architecture of the Twentieth Century in Dublin City* project is ostensibly a state initiative but is commissioned and overseen by the enlightened Dublin City Council Heritage Officer, Charles Duggan. Though not anomalous in terms of Dublin City Council's wider cultural and archaeological projects, and indeed the C20th Architecture project is educationally motivated and does not make official recommendations in its

annual reporting, the research findings have often run contrary to Dublin City Council's planning decisions around building demolition, since 2011.

- 6 The DoCoMoMo fiche categories are as follows: identifying information; rationale for inclusion; original brief; context; significant alterations; current use; current condition; client name; protagonists; general description; context; construction; technical evaluation; cultural + aesthetic evaluation; social evaluation; historical evaluation; general assessment.
- 7 Dublin City Council, *Dublin City Development Plan 2016–2022. Record of Protected Structure*. [online] Available at <downloadable at <https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/planning/archaeology-conservation-heritage/record-protected-structures/about-record-protected-structures>> [Accessed 18 March 2021]. Presently there are c.1000 sites of which fewer than fifty date from the twentieth century.
- 8 See Simon Walker's curatorial and editorial efforts culminating in publication (Walker 2015) and exhibition at the Irish Architectural Archive, March 2015: "An Exhibition of the Work of Robin Walker, 1924–1991".
- 9 Tom Phillips + Associates, *Planning Report, Bord Fáilte* as part of Planning Application in association with A+ U Reddy, submitted 21st November 2016, 6.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 See conclusions of Coll + McCarthy Architects, *Building Assessment, Bord Fáilte*, submitted 20 September 2016.

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Prague – demolished and reborn

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To see and be seen

“Demolition” is a word with a priori negative connotations. But St Vitus Cathedral at Prague Castle would never have been built without first demolishing an older basilica on the same site, which itself had been erected in the place of an even older rotunda; Wallenstein Palace (Valdštejnský palác) in Malá Strana would not have been erected without first doing away with the small buildings and gardens that were there before it; the renaissance and baroque buildings of Old Prague would not have arisen without the drastic reconstruction or replacement of the older wooden and stone buildings that stood there. Demolition or, more commonly, aggressive redevelopment and the new structures that are then introduced have always formed two sides of the same coin. If today we admire the picturesque qualities of historic urban centres, what we are admiring is their vitality and their capacity for regeneration in response to constantly changing conditions. These changes were rendered more acceptable by the ambitious individuals who commissioned the architecture, who in the past offset these demolitions with their efforts to build outstanding works of architecture. This architecture not only reflected the social and financial status of these figures but also their broad cultural horizons, and thus their ability to attract remarkable creative figures and apply, in a stable historic setting, new, enriching, initiatory artistic ideas, which in most cases were imported from western Europe (cf. Italian, French, or German architects and the import of the gothic and baroque styles into the Czech lands).

This same path of realising a “vision of society” and a display of “cultural identity” in material form was also followed by the figures who commissioned and the architects who designed the buildings that were created during the National Revival at the end of 19th century, or that were erected as part of the project of building the new republic and then later state socialism. Once again, this came at the cost of demolitions and covering the “unsuitable” remains of earlier social orders with new layers of development. The National Museum was built on the ruins of the Horse Gate (Koňská brána) on the city’s outer fortification ring, and today it dominates Wenceslas Square; the Municipal House (Obecní dům) arose on the site of a royal palace and it now commands the space of the adjacent Republic Square (náměstí Republiky); the grand boulevards of Příkopy, Národní třída and Revoluční were laid atop the path previously followed by the city’s inner fortification ring; the picturesque Vltava Embankment (Vltavská nábreží) and its elegant apartment buildings were built on an area along the riverbank that was originally used to service river transport and for storage and small-scale manufacturing. After 1918 the newly independent state of Czechoslovakia visibly established its existence in Prague’s urban landscape primarily through the construction of impos-

ing administrative buildings and public institutions, erected, of course, on the site of smaller-scale development located on lucrative and in visibly prominent places that was then gradually demolished – examples include the buildings of government ministries on Palacký Square (Palackého náměstí) and at Na Františku and the exclusive Intercontinental international hotel (the only American hotel in the Eastern bloc) that sits at the end of Pařížská Avenue (Pařížská třída) with a direct view of Prague Castle. Prague needs to be understood as a multi-layered response to the ambitions and key institutions of different periods.

For a hygienic future

Charles IV, the educated medieval sovereign considered the country’s founding father, was in many respects ahead of his time with the visionary plan he had for Prague’s New Town. He essentially saved existing buildings in the city’s centre from sweeping demolitions through the generous scale of redevelopment he planned – in the ensuing centuries growth was concentrated in the space between the city’s inner and outer fortifications. After the death of Charles IV, Prague lost its position of central political significance for many centuries and except for occasional fires the city was largely spared any massive, destructive catastrophes. It was consequently not until the onset of the industrial revolution that the rapid new development of entire districts began to “overflow” beyond what were by that time the no longer necessary city walls. However, the ring of new neighbourhoods that emerged did not satisfy the demand that existed in society to acquire an exclusive and prestigious location at the very centre of events, a demand that surged sharply with the success of domestic industry.

However, the bleak hygienic conditions and social conditions in the Old Town of the city became arguments for sweeping demolitions. Following the example of Paris and Vienna, Prague was to be given a “cleansing incision”, right in its very heart, in order to improve material conditions in the centre and drive out social phenomena and groups of the population deemed unwelcome. Luckily this harsh expansive plan was ultimately only applied to a comparatively small (but still extensive) area of the city that was frequently subject to flooding from the river – i.e. the Jewish Quarter, whose picturesque lanes were replaced with grand boulevards, interwoven in places with the isolated remains of the foundation stones of the city’s history, especially its churches, monasteries, and synagogues.

The extensive changes to the charming Old Town and the aforementioned redevelopment of the fortifications and the river embankments provoked stormy counter-responses from the cultural community. The Club for Old Prague (Klub Za starou Prahu) was founded, which to date continues to foster public awareness and defends the multiple layers and diverse character of Prague’s urban neighbourhoods. This shift in the social atmosphere then in the positive sense of the word complicated further “cleansing incisions” planned by the modernists, who had been seeking, for example, to implement radical redevelopment of the embankments and the districts of Malá Strana and Letenská pláň (Letná Plain) and even wanted to build skyscrapers. While these far too radical ideas initiated a stimulating debate in society, the chances of their being

realised were always quashed early on because of the negative experience with the sweeping redevelopment of the Jewish Quarter and the somewhat poor opinion of the picturesque historicising buildings built on that site. Nevertheless, the idea of a new, modern, hygienic city that would free the “oppressed” residents of the dark, tangled, and musty working-class lanes still landed on fertile ground in Prague. Where else but in the characterful neighbourhood of Žižkov could the demolition of a closed block of buildings make way for a material manifestation of bright tomorrows and an admired example of the new light-infused functionalist architecture with the construction of the Trade Unions House (Dům odborových svazů).

During the interwar years, however, the inevitable growth that occurred in the capital of the new republic largely took place beyond the borders of the existing built-up areas and moved instead into the agricultural suburbs. The neighbourhoods of Holešovice, Smíchov, Vršovice, Dejvice and Bubeneč all arose in the first half of 20th century and underwent the biggest developmental expansion. The original rural structures and fields in these areas vanished, but the new main traffic axes in these districts often follow the same tracks as historical routes, and in several places the original churches, estates (e.g. Hanspaulka), or enclosed village squares (Ovenec, over time transformed into what is now Bubeneč) were preserved and became a source of identity, continuity, and even local names for the large new developments.

Ideology or incompetence?

Demolitions, whether on a large or small scale, have always inevitably also reflected contemporaneous ideological clashes and represented an act of breaking with the past. Some of the boldest yet most admired examples of new architecture being introduced into a delicate historical environment are Josip Plečnik’s structural interventions into Prague Castle. Behind the charming new paving of the courtyards, the poetic gardens, the passageways and stately halls, and the President’s Room, one must also recognise the demolitions that occurred first – for example, the massive hole through the walls of the south wing to accommodate the Bull Staircase (Býčí schodiště) or the removal of the historical kitchen to make way for the Column Hall (Sloupový sál). The liberality and openness of Masaryk’s democracy was designedly intended to cut through and increase the structural lucidity of the spaces created by the hereditary dynasties.

With Czechoslovakia’s post-Second World War tilt in the direction of the Eastern bloc, however, the situation slowly changed, even in the capital city of Prague.¹ One positive aspect of the situation immediately after the war was the lack of funding for any major redevelopment projects, while the emphasis was by contrast placed on historical and national identity. Heritage conservation flourished, especially on the theoretical level, i.e. in the form of research and the development of visual plans for the rehabilitation of entire historic districts. Even small scars dating from the time of the war began to be healed – for example, the lots on Wenceslas Square left vacant due to damage during the war were filled in with the construction of the House of Fashion (Dům módy), the House of Food (Dům potravin), and the luxurious Hotel Jalta. But the time had also arrived to repair more severe historical damage – for example, with the

reconstruction of the long time more or less non-existent Bethlehem Chapel (Betlémská kaple) and the modifications made to the Karolinum. Both of these examples are sites that are strongly tied up with national pride and identity and are directly connected to the Hussite movement and Charles IV. The thoughtful reconstruction work and new contextual structures these projects involved were designed by the originally functionalist architect Jaroslav Fragner. And all of this occurred during the socially tense and fear-filled time of the Stalinist 1950s, when one could never be too cautious. On the other hand, however, it was in the second half of the 1950s that we saw the greatest demolition activity in our history, when following political orders abandoned and neglected buildings and even entire villages in the border regions were demolished by the army on a wide scale. The argument given was that neglected heritage posed a threat to the population, but the real reason was the attempt to erase the expelled German population from our history.

The 1960s marked the onset of greater freedom and success and it became possible to steal glances at what was going on in the progressive West, but the cultural and economic competition between the state-socialist and capitalist blocks paradoxically also brought with it greater pressure on the city and damage to the heritage of the past. The buildings intended to represent the country’s image internationally, to serve the needs of conspicuous consumption, and to form the epicentres of technological infrastructure (as evidence of the successful state-socialist economy) all required lucrative plots in strategic locations – for example, for international trade enterprises and exclusive hotels (Omnipol, Intercontinental), department stores (Kotva, Máj), or dispatching centres (the Public Transit Company, Transgas). Again, naturally, at the cost of demolitions. In the cases that emerged at this time the argument unfortunately became easier to make. Since the 1950s the endless housing shortage meant that almost the entire capacity of the production and construction industries was focused on the construction of vast residential complexes. Housing estates, which gradually succumbed to ever stricter standardisation and prefabrication, sucked up the state’s finances and labour (and combined with nationalisation of all businesses led to the demise of traditional tradesmen and manufacturers). The historical building stock in urban centres thus from the middle of the 1950s descended into irreversible and sweeping decline, without the slightest ambition on the part of the regime to invest any energy whatsoever in repairs. Buildings were in most cases owned by the state, while there was no clear responsibility for their condition, and they suffered from a lack of basic standard maintenance. Arguments about their derelict condition served as the basis for taking a rapid decision and then demolishing heritage structures or sites on exclusive lots and replacing them with new buildings. In historic city centres, the complicated plot divisions moreover meant it was difficult to insert uniformly sized prefabricated buildings or buildings assembled from a limited selection of prefabricated components in these areas. The decline accelerated quickly.

The happy exception in the sad story of state-socialist heritage conservation (except for selected palaces and monuments that were repaired) is represented by the interventions made in connection with the construction of the Prague metro sys-

tem, which was intended to cut through the historic centre of the city and connect it to the suburbs. While in the peripheral areas the metro system's stations became centres of new above-ground construction (cf. the high-rise development at Pankrác, the housing estate complexes at Jižní Město and Jihozápadní Město), in the historic centre the metro system was supposed to usher in a modern lifestyle that had to be very sensitively integrated with the enchanting historical environment around it. Many above-ground interventions were thus concealed within passageways and the ground-floor areas of historical buildings. In places where demolitions were unavoidable, new, modern buildings were erected relatively quickly above the station, and often these new buildings were designed to fit into the face of the city (e.g. Družba and ČKD – currently Můstek station, Metrostav – Palackého náměstí, the Ministry of the Electronics Industry – Hradčanská). It is also important to note another radical traffic-related intervention in the city, which was the construction of the north-south arterial road that cuts through the city, the construction of which was accompanied by massive demolitions; it traces a route above-ground that even today remains an open wound on the city's face, and in the near future it will continue to be an unsolvable weak point in the urbanism of central Prague.

As with the demolition and redevelopment of the old Jewish Quarter, drastic structural interventions in the 1970s, despite the censoring of state-socialist society, provoked surprisingly sharp criticism and a counter-reaction (in part thanks to postmodern ideas that were trickling in from the West). Criticism was voiced about the lack of maintenance of the building stock. There gradually arose a recognition of the qualities of 19th-century districts with their historicising or secessionist buildings, and in the 1980s even designs were drawn up for their rehabilitation. However, in an environment where there was a shortage of traditional technologies, craftsmen and tradespeople, and financial and personal responsibility, the rare examples of sites that were restored did not turn out the best. But the atmosphere was changing.² A major argument moreover continued to be that of achieving the declared equality of socialism (which in a society of political cadres was increasingly less realistic), which meant building a city where everyone is equal and where people live their lives surrounded by the same standard of facilities for all households (something that at the time only housing estates could provide).

Even towards the close of the 20th century the aim of communist leaders was to create a technocratically designed new (!) city, whose construction was supposed to be cheap, fast, and paradoxically would also offer a high standard of living and hygiene. A representative example of care for the socialist citizen was supposed to be the demolition and redevelopment of the smoky "working-class" neighbourhood of Žižkov, renowned for its colourful living conditions and an illegible environment that was somewhat too convoluted for the normalisation regime's otherwise pervasive supervision. The fascinating labyrinthine world of small courtyards, lanes, and courtyard balconies that cover the district's dramatically sloped terrain was supposed to be replaced with orderly high-rise blocks of prefab buildings of an altogether different size and scale, intercut with high-volume arterial roads. Opposition to this surfaced quickly. An alternative

design, which was still something of a compromise, was actually created at SÚRPMO (State Institute for the Reconstruction of Heritage Towns and Sites), an organisation that focused on the reconstruction of protected objects. However, young architects in particular became an important voice in the discussion. With heightened engagement and at no small risk to themselves, they organised a series of civic activities where they criticised the plan to redevelop Žižkov (Horský, J. et al., 2010; Vorlík, P., Brůhová, K. ed., 2020; Poláčková, T., 2015). Not only for its simplistic structures and the use of banal prefabricated buildings, but especially for its destruction of a distinctive social environment and the unmistakable character of the place. Photographs, drawings, and alternative designs turned developments in at least a slightly different direction. In the time of late and collapsing normalisation, wider society, which was already very unhappy with the condition of historical buildings and the look of the new housing estates, embraced as their own this criticism of the plans to redevelop Žižkov. This had the effect of delaying the implementation of the redevelopment plan and consequently only a small part of the area targeted in the original plan was lost to demolitions before the Velvet Revolution. After the change in regime the plan could no longer be carried forth and the little streets of Žižkov that have survived to the present day make it one of the most attractive areas in Prague (unlike the several prefabricated buildings that unfortunately were built in the eastern part of the area). (Fig. 1, 2)

Truly new times?

The Velvet Revolution in 1989 seemed to mark the rise of an altogether different cultural environment, a return to the values of democratic society and the celebrated interwar tradition, enriched by the introduction of new ideas and experiences from western Europe. In relation to the residential environment, the shift was to manifest itself in the righting of historical wrongs and the rectifying of internal relations that had been warped by the policy of centralisation. The first years of the new democracy truly ushered in the processes of privatisation and restitution and a heightened sense of responsibility for the state of the city. This was at the same time accompanied by a Havelesque and Velvet Revolution-inspired willingness to discuss and to try to find a consensus and common interest. The transformation of inner Prague thus unfolded gradually and locally and oftentimes through rather more cosmetic repairs to the grey and cracked building façades, while opening up picturesque passageways and arcades and above all bringing back active life to small shops and restaurants. All this took place in a situation of a general shortage of financing. But it also occurred amidst an increased pressure to get hold of and occupy the best locations in a suddenly open and competitive environment. The changes therefore occurred quickly, but on a small and non-destructive scale. Before the 20th century had reached a close, bigger interventions were being made in the inner courtyards or the attics of buildings, but these changes therefore were still occurring in places less visible from the street. Sleepy, Kafkaesque Prague was slowly beginning to wake up.

More visible interventions in the form of showily modern buildings with a western European elegance, however, only began to appear at the start of the 21st century with

the arrival of more powerful investors who were capable of making a skilful appraisal of the sharply rising value of properties in the city centre (e.g. Myslbek Palace, Euro Palace, Dancing House/Tančící dům, Hotel Metropol). As it opened up to the world, Prague's attractiveness grew and so, too, did the pressure for the commercial exploitation of the city centre. It was almost impossible for any project other than commercial ones to take advantage of the astronomically high prices of empty lots. Heritage conservation, which had been weakened by the speed of the transformation and the extremely liberal environment (in opposition to socialist collective ownership and responsibility), gradually lost its influence on determining what the centre of Prague as a whole was to look like. Further massive changes in the first decades of the new millennium occurred primarily hidden from the street view in the form of increasingly dense and higher inner courtyard developments. A fortunate alternative emerged in the form of conversions of existing buildings (e.g. the Edison transformer substation and Langhans Palace).

However, the next step in the battle over empty lots for new development unavoidably had to be demolitions. It is certainly not easy to argue that a city centre that enjoys heritage protection and is on the Unesco list and where most of the buildings are already repaired and stable has new needs. Is it possible to demolish renaissance or baroque buildings, palaces, and public buildings associated with the National Revival or the establishment of the new republic? No, it is not. Industrial and technical buildings and structures and the architecture built in the state-socialist era came to represent the proverbial grey area where heritage institutes and the public are able to close their eyes and accept demolitions. These are easy targets, overlooked as relics of years not long past that we would rather forget about or force out of our collective memory.³ If we look at their internal spatial structure and construction, industrial architecture and buildings erected during state-socialism do not by any means represent a more complicated transformation assignment than older historical layers. The problem lies elsewhere.

Industry is still equated with pollution. Even the professional community often still questions the cultural value of buildings and structures devoted to production and technology. And the industrial buildings of the past are still in our mind associated with the past regime's pride in the successes of the socialist economy and working-class rule. The buildings erected in the state-socialist period suffer from similar prejudices. They represent the product of a time when "drab housing estates" were built and when the quality of the construction industry and ethics generally had hit rock bottom. In the view of the public, these are buildings full of unhealthy, obsolete, and unsustainable materials and technologies.

The "muck and failures of the past" had to be entirely erased from the time of freedom we enjoy today (e.g. by demolishing the transformer electrical substation at Klárov, the Bubny railroad depo, the Transgas complex, the Dejvice telephone exchange, Hotel Praha, the House of Children at Prague Castle). (Figg. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) Industry and socialism must be superseded by something more contemporary, democratic, effective, and environmental (regardless of whether the outcome genuinely fulfils these criteria in reality). Those are the usual arguments raised. The real reasons however often

remain unspoken: most notable one being the pragmatic commercial exploitation of the city. And understandably the other reasons are the ones summarised in the brief historical excursion above that remain alive even in the present day – prestige, ideology, an obsession with novelty at any cost, the sweeping demolition of anything that seems obsolete, neglected maintenance, or the absence of the appropriate technology to make the repairs.

If we look at our heritage from a slightly wider perspective, ideological "cleansing" arguments seem even more absurd. The defenders of industry and post-war architecture are still facing the recurring emphatic declaration: All this socialist architecture needs to be demolished. However, does this mean that even the Prague metro is to be filled in? Should a key motorway connecting Prague and Brno be removed? The majority of hospitals, schools, and cultural and sports buildings be demolished? Should almost one-half of the country's citizens be moved out of their housing estates and new residential buildings immediately be erected for them? Is this financially, organisationally, socially, and environmentally realistic and responsible? Certainly not. It is therefore necessary to look for alternatives.

Live and let live

The loss of places from deep in our history affects us in strange ways. Popular films, books, and exhibitions that capture a historical environment that vanished long ago do not just awaken a sense of nostalgia and reminiscences of "lost youth".⁴ They always depict events that existed far outside our narrow personal memories and cultural experiences. They allude to a period when time flowed differently. They record interpersonal relations of a different nature, and works that were created by the human hand (not as a product of an industrialised construction industry). They also remind us of our mortality and the irreversibility of events. Finally, they provide an anchor to our present where we see it as the outcome of gradual development (which humanity has always liked to describe as a journey of improvement).

The current decline, the demolitions and new structures put up in the place of the old ones, which is occurring right before our eyes, is, however, of a somewhat different nature. It is attended by prosaic arguments about the uselessness of heritage, about the impossibility of repairing it, its inefficiency, demanding maintenance, and inconsistency with current regulations, and so forth. Sentences that in an observer necessarily raise a question about one's own relevance amidst new and rapidly changing conditions. Am I not myself in fact unsustainable, and little suited to life in the present day and the future?

Evidence of the prevailing atmosphere in society and in the professional community is also provided by the nature of instruction at universities, which focuses mainly on the subject of new structures. Upon leaving their alma mater graduate architects know how to design a new and ideal layout, a structural framework, and façades, and understand the legal and economic context, but they enter an environment where most of what is being done occurs in the midst of existing historical development (and this includes modernist architecture). Graduates are expected rather to provide small



Fig. 1) Demolition of the eastern section of Žižkov. Prague, Czech Republic. (private archive of Ivan Vavřík, photo Jaroslav Kocourek)



Fig. 3) Demolition of neglected tenement buildings prior to the construction of the Public Transit Company's dispatching centre in Prague, Czech Republic. (archive of the Prague Public Transit Company)



Fig. 2) Young architects at an exhibition organised in 1989 to save Žižkov. Prague, Czech Republic. (private archive of Ivan Vavřík)



Fig. 4) The dispatching centre of the Prague Public Transit Company, one of the most heavily criticised buildings to be built in the historic centre of Prague and frequently mentioned in discussions about potential candidates for demolition. It remains in full use to date and the Transit Company is not considering any major changes. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 5) The Telephone Exchange in Prague-Dejvice before it was demolished. Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2016)



Fig. 7) The Transgas building before it was demolished. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2017)



Fig. 6) The Telephone Exchange in Prague-Dejvice during demolition. Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2017)

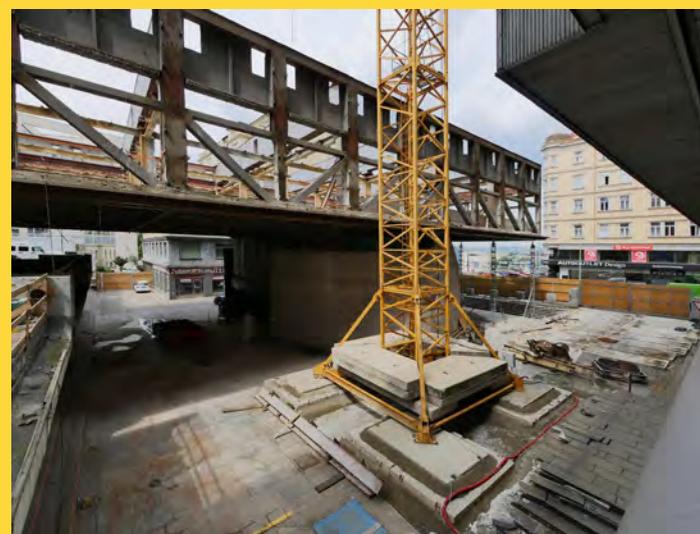


Fig. 8) The Transgas building during demolition. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)

injections, little pills, and gentle acupuncture rather than the type of resolute surgical interventions that they learned in school. Do they know how to cope honestly with the responsibility for the inherited cultural environment? Are they able to resist what the suppliers of building technologies are offering, with their focus largely on quick, easy, and cheap solutions? Are they capable of persuading clients that we do not live in a throw-away world? That the energy invested in architecture should endure longer before being interfered with by the narrowly defined interests of a contemporary, fashionable, and trends-oriented world of consumption that operates with a temporal perspective of three to five years (cf. mobile telephones, cars, furniture and other consumer (!) goods)?

The Enlightenment, the industrial revolution, and the concept of modernism embraced a process that involved looking for a *problem = defects* and finding a *solution*. If one *solution* failed (as it often did), then another *solution* was arrived at. And then another *solution*. And another. The vicious circle of changes and what at first look like appealing, logical, or easily defended innovations. And growing insecurity. But has the time not finally come for *acceptance*? Should we not learn to make better use of what already exists (as our forebears used to do in times of less prosperity), instead of introducing constant changes and *solutions*?

What if we were to finally acknowledge that our ancestors were not hopelessly backwards and that they created much that was good and that we do not necessarily have to change? An enormous amount of energy has been invested in the environment that we utilise. The time when we were convinced our resources were inexhaustible is moreover long past. Recycling should not just apply to disposable cups and paper. Structures can also continue to serve well, with minor interventions, but often even just as they are. It is enough just to think and be discriminating. Do we truly need new plastic windows, polystyrene insulation, floating laminate flooring, plasterboards? Do they offer better quality and durability than original, often handcrafted materials, than wood, brick, and stone? Before launching into superficial arguments about savings, have we made certain that producing new glass façades and heating systems (with limited physical longevity and moral sustainability) won't consume more finance and energy than the old heating system in an existing building?

Do we give any thought at all to what we are actually doing? Or do we just simply yield to the banal point of view that "that's the way things are done nowadays"? Are architects still able (and do they even want) to persuade an investor that a demolition or radical reconstruction is not necessary? Is it not easier for them to simply first "clear the playing field" (I've too often heard these embarrassing words from students) and then apply the tested, intelligible, and straightforward solutions that they learned in school, that dominate the architectural press, and that both clients and the majority of society respond to?

Abandoning established routines

In the Czech Republic we have been able to observe with growing alarm how much the natural world around us is being destroyed. Spruce monocultures have been weakened and are unable to cope with the constant strain they are under from drought

and bark beetles, the landscape is being ravaged by fluctuations in the water distribution, chemicals are everywhere, animal habitats are shrinking, and so forth. These threats did not just suddenly drop out of the sky. We have known and been talking about them since at least the 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, economic interests and a shallow emphasis on personal convenience continue to win out in arguments and in determining what actions we take. How does this relate to architecture? Let's ask ourselves a self-critical question: as we go about creating our built environment, are we not perhaps likewise stuck in the kind of familiar routines that generate and support fragile architectural and urbanist monocultures?

A typical example is our (inability) to accept *deviations*, the exceptions in our carefully constructed world. The buildings that stand out in height, that extend beyond or retreat from the street line, or that are inconsistent with contemporary taste, and the stubborn lines of a city's infrastructure (bridges, viaducts, transport routes, city wall remains) that often emphatically divide it into parts. These *deviations* created over the colourful course of a city's history are now usually the targets of harsh criticism and calls for rectification. Yet, those buildings that tower up above the others may act as important points of orientation and spatial reference; the ones that violate the street line may then offer space for a restaurant garden or may provide a pleasing visual disruption to the long line of streets; "tasteless" buildings may in a few years find their admirers and see their value increase dramatically; and the lines of division not rarely also delineate the space of a distinct local identity. What today we view as a *deviation* and a violation of the given order could before long become a vehicle of longed-for diversity. After thirty years of democracy we painfully recognise that freedom foremost requires that a responsible balance be maintained between the collective and the individual, the common and the unique. A society that is created by a mass of individualities must offer a very wide range of possibilities. The more diverse the architecture and landscape we inhabit are, the more resilient and sustainable our environment in a free and open future will be.

What stance then should we take to the everyday and to the exceptions, the deviations? There is a well-known saying that to err is human. Perhaps perfection is actually a danger, the dead surface of a stagnant lake. In an increasingly more exact and strictly regulated world, errors are something unexpected, welcome, a path to unforeseen situations, to more layers, variety, and indeterminateness.⁵ After all, many revolutionary inventions were discovered by mistake. It is enough to open one's mind. Many (and in reality perhaps most) ground-breaking and catalysing cultural works moreover were created by means of a deliberate violation of the rules and established procedures, the joyful and curious acceptance of the insecurity of experimentation. Should we not consciously support deviations and errors in architecture as a positive force? Despite the enormous financial and social responsibility of those who work with, manage, or change the built environment. We want to have everything in a perfect condition and constantly under control, but in the unpredictable reality of everyday life perfection is unattainable.

In biology the term *hybrid* is used to describe what results from the mixing of two different species, whose union gives rise to a stronger and more resilient individual. Instead of building new, ideal, and current worlds, shouldn't architecture make greater

use of this kind of creative (!) mixing, where we accept something imperfect but authentic (a specific identity, durability) and combine it with something characterised by novelty and precision (technology, flexibility) and thereby produce something far more resilient and socially and environmentally sustainable and more capable of weathering the unavoidable conflicts that arise over time?

In discussions on the future of Prague and the preservation of historic heritage, an oft-heard statement is “we want to live in a modern city” – without, however, it being specified what is meant by the word “modern”. Usually, “modern” is still equated with “new” (this was hammered into us by the development rhetoric of the industrial revolution). Since the 1950s, however, more nuanced interpretations and aspects of this term have surfaced in modernist discourse. Today, after the experience of recent decades, “new, current, hygienic, transparent” is no longer enough. Our present-day lifestyle and the demands on the built environment are noticeably broader than that. It is no longer enough for a genuinely modern city to be just hygienic, rational, and effective. It also has to be multifaceted, diverse, integrated, flexible, variable, vibrant, distinct, it has to offer places that are exciting and calm, soft and hard, full-fat and low-cal; places that are full of surprises and ones that are intimately familiar. It has to offer a broad spectrum of possibilities. (Figg. 10, 11, 12) Only then will it be able to satisfy our legendarily insatiable longings.

Notes

1 The text was written at the Faculty of Architecture, Czech Technical University in Prague, as the outcome of the project “Architecture in the 1980s in the Czech Republic – the Distinctive Quality and Identity of Architecture and Parallel Reflections against the Backdrop of Normalisation” (DG18PQ20VV013) conducted under the NAKI II programme of applied research and development of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic (principal investigator: Petr Vorlík).

2 Several competitions have even been organised inviting designs for the rehabilitation of entire blocks, regrettably in most cases at the price of large-scale demolitions and the construction of new post-modern buildings, although in forms intended to fit better within a historic environment. The highest example of the “new” way of thinking was a never built design for an experimental prefabricated

building, “P1.31”, with ground-floor shops, post-modern elements on the façade, and, unusually, a pitched roof.

3 Czech historian Milena Bartlová said on this phenomenon: «If we accept that a valid argument for demolishing buildings or destroying a work of art is that they be identified as relics of “communism”, then we are allowing the Orwellian Ministry of Truth to function.» (Karous, P., 2019, s. 9).

4 Most notably, the book series *Zmizelá Praha* (Vanished Prague) published by Paseka press and the film series *Hledání ztraceného času* (In Search of Lost Time) and *Z metropole* (About the Metropolis) by Czech Television.

5 In his book Yuval Harari argues that the greatest weakness of artificial intelligence that is otherwise perfect and pragmatic is the absence of the negative emotions and experiences that impact our human lives and shape our actions. Irrational feelings build our spirit/psyche and our awareness. (Harari, Y., 2018.).

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Fig. 9) Demolition of the transformer electrical substation at Klárov in Prague, located very close to Prague Castle. Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 11) Excursion to Špork Palace organised as part of the EAAE Workshop. The photo shows an opening cut into the floor of the former bank hall leading down to where the bank vaults used to be located. Today this is the passage that leads from the restaurant to the beer tanks downstairs. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 10) Excursion organised as part of the EAAE Workshop in Holešovice. The former fire-station wooden halls that can be seen in the background no longer exist today. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 12) The EAAE Workshop held at Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)

Towards the Contemporary Hybrid City and Cultural Complexity

Demolition is a minor element in conservation of buildings and urban areas, but a major element in urban regeneration. Demolitions bring great emotions of sadness or happiness to residents. Conservation and demolition relate to social and physical fabric and ethical considerations apply to both.

Urban spaces and processes should be supportive of civic society.

Do contemporary cities need a mixture of history and modernity? Has the city always been hybrid, or is hybridization an intentional process of the 21st century? What is the architects' role in decisions on conservation/demolition processes at urban scale and in relationship to other stakeholders?

Cities are palimpsests where over time new and old architecture coexist. Hybridity can act as an antidote to urban monoculture. Hybridization, in relation to not only architectural and urban processes, but also the social and cultural, is a compromise between conservation and demolition when it comes to city redevelopment.



Architecture and city between decommissioning and amazing reuse: the legacy of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

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Introduction

The complexity and diversification of the superstructures that form our cities' various historical, economic and social components are the result of continual re-readings in the light of historical, political and cultural realities.

The hybridisation process peculiar to cities of the 21st century is not actually so very different from the stratigraphic palimpsest of historical cities, especially in Europe, including their 19th and 20th century expansion.

Buildings and urban areas that developed, in particular, during the 19th and early decades of the 20th centuries, have been subject to various significant types of demolition in the contexts of transformation, rehabilitation and gentrification that have affected contemporary towns. Demolition and reconstruction of urban areas have been a constant in the development process of cities under the influence of more recent technologies and of cultures in which modernity and modernisation have always had a predominant role – such as in American cities.

A substantial difference may be found in the speed and geographical dimension of the city transformation process over the past three decades, in particular where favoured by planned economies on a global capitalistic market. Such a transformation has been facilitated by deindustrialisation and the development of the service sector which, starting from the United States, has spread to every country with an advanced economy. In Western Europe, in the post-Socialist era, towns and capital cities with a consolidated urban tradition have, at times, entrusted entire service sectors to private capital, from trade to tourism, with considerable consequences for the planning and "regeneration" of vast central historically consolidated zones, as well as outlying and industrial areas, whether partially or totally abandoned. The aim of this paper is to compare requalification events that appear subject to a marked desire for the exteriorisation and representation of architecture. Such interventions are characterised by an iconography that, in an overall heterogeneous urban reality, tends to utilise the perception of pre-existent architecture, its partial or total demolition and reconstruction as an economic value, in the context of planned interventions linked to a consumeristic model.

In some cases, demolition and reconstruction may represent, or have already determined, a radical transformation of the social and cultural identity of the sites, with the construction of scenarios that parade innovation as a distinctive trait: venues for events and performances, aimed at tourists, investors or foreign residents, and also hipsters, students or provisional Airbnbs.

Holešovice

During the course of history, the demolition of buildings or town districts has been sometimes perceived by contemporaries – inhabitants, but also administrators, technicians and intellectuals – as liberating events, often against despotic power, oriented toward progress and good living, and at times, as a form of ethnic or social expulsion, deportation, or persecution. In both interpretations, one need only consider the "liberation" of monumental sites and buildings, the destruction of town walls, fortresses and – more recently – of slums, industrial and even religious buildings.

At the VI workshop of the EAAE Thematic Network on Conservation, held at Prague in September 2019, the chronological context for reflection and discussion of the theme Conservation/Demolition was the transformation over the past few decades of the district of Holešovice, an addition to the north of the city, close to the port, belonging to the municipal district of Prague 7. The area comprises a wide loop in the Vltava River (Moldau), and a district built in the last two decades of the 19th century as an industrial suburb, largely for working class families. During the 'twenties and 'thirties of the 20th century numerous public housing blocks arose, as well as commercial or service buildings of a functionalist nature (i.e. Prague Electricity Company Building, 1927–1935). Over the past two decades, this area has undergone a rapid metamorphosis, with partial or total demolitions, replacements and reconversions of buildings and spaces, destined for functions and beneficiaries of a different socio-cultural profile. Radical change, a result of the general phenomenon of gentrification and/or rehabilitation of the district has been facilitated by its location close to the city centre and easy accessibility, thanks to an excellent public transport network, including trams, connecting two underground stations (Vltavská and Nádraží) and the second international railway station.

Visits and meetings with the various stakeholders, owners or tenants, carried out as part of the workshop, were substantially concentrated in the eastern end of the Holešovice area, surrounded by the river and largely regulated by an orthogonal road system. In this grid, Komunardů Street acts as the north-south axis, intersected at right angles by Dělnická which crosses Libeň Bridge, the longest bridge in Prague, built in Cubist style in 1928. Beyond the Vltava it reaches the district of Libeň. Komunardů Street is the backbone of the area's rapid transformation: the shops that have opened all along it not only satisfy the daily requirements of residents, but include showrooms for high quality furniture, like the Italian Kartell or the Czech Ton, and shops and cafés, catering to "hipsters", passers-by or tourists (Kairjaka 2019: 149). Tourism is facilitated by speedy transport and the presentation of Holešovice as one of coolest neighbourhoods in Europe, advertised on major travel sites as a trendy district, candidate for a new arts centre in Prague.

The itineraries and surveys carried out during the workshop focused on the district's sudden upheaval: symbolic venues that appear to show diversifying ways of regenerating the area. The diverse forms of reconversion notwithstanding, the whole process bears the traits of gentrification – in the original sense of the term, meaning a substantial change in the physical and social structure, sometimes even transnational – strictly linked to tourism, in a city where tourism plays an important economic role overall and in capital investments in real estate. This trend, where the choice between demolition and conservation appears to be circumscribed to specific situations, whatever the scale of the intervention, is part of a general transformation guided on the whole by purely economic interests, in which social and cultural instances and forces appear to be swallowed up or subjugated.

Examples of these different forms of intervention on the urban fabric and pre-existing architecture are to be found in the Vnitroblok Multifunctional Space (Fig. 1) and the Fabrika, both on streets and blocks that are at right angles to Komunardů Street: two industrial complexes built during the early decades of the 20th century, with steel bearing structures and masonry infills, re-used for cultural and recreational activities. Both have been largely requalified with minimal interventions, the former including multi-functional spaces, a cultural centre, a cinema-theatre, café, restaurant and shops – mostly addressing the younger generations; the latter, perhaps with a greater extent of internal design in the solutions adopted, comprises two inter-connecting factories provided with new functions, including the theatrical activities and musical events of independent productions.

The two requalification projects were carried out by private initiative: forms of gradual re-appropriation and self-recovery, by very young “improvised” volunteers, often through a self-construction practice. The structural and architectural interventions, in both cases, are minimal, thus eliminating any idea of intentional conservation, and are rather the fruit of pragmatism and the ability to exploit the shortages (more or less designed) of the real estate market.

In some ways, such interventions appear complementary to the more incisive redesign of the block forming the DOX – Centre of Contemporary Art, a museum of contemporary art which, from the outset of the second millennium, has filled both a space in Prague's wide range of museums and a delay in the Czech Republic's provision in this sector, potentially giving Holešovice the connotation of “avant-garde”.

The DOX is also a block located on Komunardu Street, at its top end, originally occupied by the Rossemann and Kühnemann car factory. The factory was built starting in 1901 by the architect Antonín Žižka, and its features, production and structural and architectural typology were several times extended and modified, until 2002, when it was purchased for reconversion as a museum devoted exclusively to contemporary art. The museum, designed by the architect Ivan Kroupa and opened in 2008, was extended in 2011 with the creation of the DOX+ (a multifunctional space, planned as a full-scale theatre, or dance space, a movie theatre and conference hall) and, in 2016, with the realisation of an “airship”; an aerial structure on the terrace, almost covering the three main blocks, destined mainly for literary events. (Fig. 2)

The three complexes mentioned constitute the largest components and, in the case of the DOX, the architecturally most distinctive, of a wider collection of spaces and buildings (A7 Office Center, Jatka 78, Mercuria laser game, Cross Club, Trafo Gallery, Architecture AP Atelier and Gallery), earmarked for commercial, sportive-recreational and artistic activities, thus fulfilling the aim of providing the district with a specificity and exclusivity, increasing the market for medium/high-class housing and for international investors. (Fig. 3)

Parallelisms

The contemporary nature of the various types of architectural expression – from the proto-industrial complex converted into a cultural, social or commercial centre, to the restored and extended museum, the religious building converted into a concert hall, and the rehabilitation of working class areas to suit the requirements of gentrification – has changed and continues to transform deeply the 19th–20th century city and its relations with the more stratified historical centre, the latter often the object of more attentive interventions of densification and technological and functional modernisation.

In an economy aimed at satisfying a propensity for the consumption of goods and services, urban and outlying areas, whether already or soon-to-be an integral part of the historical fabric, and including contexts and paradigmatic architecture of 19th century culture (such as museums, warehouses, stations, etc.), have become pivotal to urban restructuring plans directed at rendering the cityscape attractive to inhabitants, investors and tourists. Within this context, the ongoing transformation of the Holešovice district and the single urban buildings and spaces replacing or partially recovering pre-existing ones find a wide field of comparison on an international scale, and also with regard to the very widespread advertising dedicated to it.

We find a wide range of reconversion processes, amongst which the author recently recognized «the needs of comfort and consumption (food and not only) of Contemporaneity. A binomial in which the visibility of architecture assumes an important role, becomes both headlight and observation point overview» (Ciranna 2018: 77). In this sense, exemplary and effective is the recovery of decommissioned areas connected to “towers”, acting simultaneously as guiding lights and viewpoints. An example of this is the Beetham or Hilton Tower in Manchester, a 47-floor landmark completed in 2006 to the design of the English studio Ian Simpson Architects, the first half containing the Hilton Hotel (ending with the Cloud 23 Bar, which provides an exceptional view over the city) and the top half luxury apartments. (Fig. 4) Like a narrow blade with reflecting panes, this skyscraper dominates Deansgate, a historical highway noted for its low dark-red brick 19th century architecture, requalifying a decommissioned railway viaduct close to the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) in the former railway station, built in 1830 as part of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.¹

Publications have for decades monitored, analysed and in different ways tackled and read the process generally identified as gentrification, more recently dwelling – and not only in post-Socialist countries – on the various meanings of such a definition,



Fig. 1) Vnitroblok Multifunctional Space in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 3) The renovated medium-high class housing of Holešovice district, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 2) The airship on the roof of DOX Centre of Contemporary Art in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 4) Beetham or Hilton Tower in Manchester, UK. (photo Simonetta Ciranna 2008)

and hence on cases of displacement and social injustices, as well as on projects aimed at certain urban communities integrated with the areas where they dwell (i.e. Kovacs, Wiessner, Zischner 2013).

Such cases and readings allow us to compare Holešovice with situations in which the transformation of the urban and architectural fabric, besides its social side, is closely connected with the touristic potential of the area and city to which it belongs, as well as its geographical features, cases such as Seville, Salerno, together with Genoa or Bordeaux and even Rome, amongst many others.

The first three cities face the Mediterranean and their regeneration has inevitably concerned the maritime-harbour waterfronts, or river-front in the case of Bordeaux, places with strong symbolic values, closely connected to the city centre, whose image potential and economic value has been amplified in various ways. Rome, on the other hand, is noteworthy for several episodes of densification and even for the specialisation of some urban areas.

Seville has been developed as a city specialising in cultural tourism since 1929 through the Ibero-American Exhibition, continuing with the considerable transformations linked to the International Exhibition of 1992, as is also the case for Genoa with the Columbus Expo, again in 1992.²

At Seville, the transformations included in the 1987 master plan, the main objective of which was «to adapt the city to the Universal Exhibition requirements, implement a slum clearance policy in the historic district's northern area, demolishing many buildings on the grounds of extreme urban and social degradation» (Jover, Díaz-Parra 2019: 6). This approach was pursued by the subsequent development plans of the new millennium, with further interventions in the degraded areas of the old city centre, also investing in the restoration of monumental buildings as elements of attraction to enhance the urban context. In this complex and articulated social and spatial transformation, historic districts like the Alameda were absorbed in tourist itineraries, necessitating restructuring projects for seasonal rentals, with an increase in holiday homes or high-income dwellings. The same phenomenon can be found in Venice and can more correctly be defined as touristification than historical gentrification.

The case of Seville is also reflected by Salerno, whose seafront has become the focus of major rehabilitation as part of the new town planning. This project was awarded in the mid-nineteen-nineties to the Spanish architectural studio Oriol Bohigas (MBM = Martorell, Bohigas and Mackay), whose fame was further enhanced by the Master Plan for Barcelona for the 1992 Olympic Games, the stimulus for the "urban rebirth" of the Catalan city.

The municipal aim was to make Salerno «a city of tourism, hospitality, a seaside resort; a city of trade and services» (Salerno City Council 1994, quoted by Iovino 2016: 44). The project's guidelines were to create a functional and social mix, achieving densification through the re-use and improvement of existing buildings and urban spaces, the quality of public space reflecting cultural and identity values. The project included the requalification of the pre-existing seafront, merging it with the surrounding lower-lying areas. In 2003 Bohigas stepped down from the project, since the variation

approved in 2006 and even more so in its 2013 version revealed a decided about-turn in the Council's decisions. To the detriment of public functions and in favour of buildable volumes to tackle the drastic drop in the city's residents, the Council decided to convert industrial buildings into luxury dwellings and the overbuilding of hillside areas destined for public housing, engaging the Archistars to legitimise incongruous, oversized and elitist operations of demolition and reconstruction.

In accordance with this "new interpretation", the waterfront represents this contrived enhancement, the emblem of which is the Santa Teresa area and, in particular, the project for Piazza della Libertà with its Crescent by the architect Ricardo Bofill: a top-end luxury condominium, out-of-scale, which blocks and negates the city and steals all views of the sea.³

The Bohigas project laid great emphasis on public spaces and the transport system, elements that have some points in common with the vast ongoing plan for the city of Bordeaux and, in particular, on the close relationship between historical fabric and the two banks of the Garonne river, with public green spaces and a carefully planned tram system, as well as the creation of "spectacular" vantage points, including the Wine Museum and the vertically-rising Jacques Chaban-Delmas draw-bridge (Zieler 2014). (Fig. 5, 6)

The dedication of several urban areas, mostly born as industrial developments of the early 19th and 20th century expansion, to culture and art, or commerce, or even to residential systems with marked technological features, also finds various examples in Rome. While differing in scale, history and time of realisation, examples that are significant when considered as a whole and for the relationship with Tiber river, include the transformation of the former barracks in Via Guido Reni in the Flaminio district, the key achievement being the realisation of the Centre for Contemporary Art MAXXI, (Fig. 7) and those along the Via Ostiense in the Marconi-Ostiense-Testaccio areas, starting from the former Slaughterhouse, the former General Markets, the ENI-Italgas gasometers, the Montemartini power station, etc. These operations are reiterated on other major urban arterial roads, which bore witness to the city's expansion and industrialisation in the early 20th century, with specific interventions tending toward a commercial vocation of the decommissioned buildings and spaces.⁴

The examples cited above and briefly described for their similarities to Holešovice – concerning the urban context (large towns favoured by international tourism), orography (area constituted by a loop in the river), the enhancement of cultural poles (museums, theatres, markets and spaces dedicated to performances) – testify to the extent of the phenomenon and identify the need and importance of planning and reorganising tools, rules and responsibilities in deleting/conserving and redefining the significance of the urban context. In such a process, choosing to demolish must be the result of collaboration between the various protagonists of the history and future of the city.

Notes

1 Exclusive hotels with spectacular restaurants on the top floor, built in tower tanks, include the Mövenpick Hotel in the middle of the Sternschanze public park. It is located on the hill and provides spectacular views of Hamburg, as also the Hotel im Wasserturm at Cologne. See bibliography quoted in Ciranna 2018.

2 The celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the discovery of America was followed by the G8 Summit in July 2001 and the Genoa Capital of Culture in 2004: see Gastaldi 2013.

3 For the bibliography and critical positions, as well as legal judgement, see Iovino 2016, and also Russo 2018.

4 Two examples: the almost completed demolition of the former depot of the Società Tramvie e Ferrovie Elettriche di Roma (STEFER), in the Appio-Latino district and its re-use as a shopping centre (Montuori 2017); the so-called "City of Sun", luxury residential towers next to the Via Tiburtina, replacing the demolished depot of the urban public transport society ATAC (Lega Lombarda).

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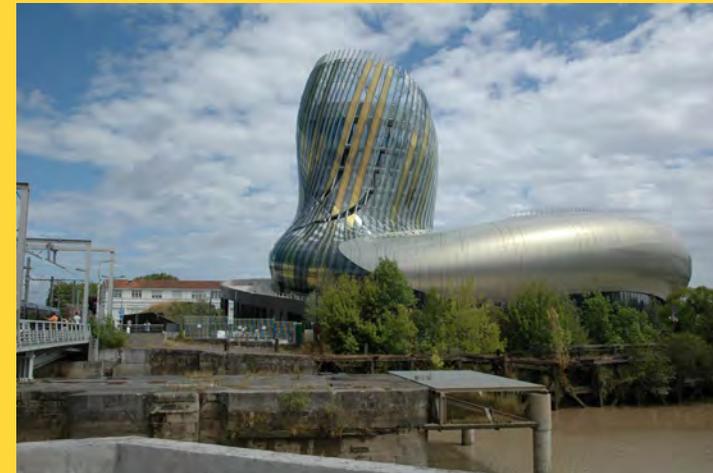


Fig. 5) The Wine Museum and the vertically-rising Jacques Chaban-Delmas draw-bridge in Bordeaux, France. (photo Simonetta Ciranna 2018)



Fig. 6) The Jacques Chaban-Delmas draw-bridge and the two banks on Garonne river seen by the Wine. Bordeaux, France. (photo Simonetta Ciranna 2018)



Fig. 7) The Centre for Contemporary Art MAXXI built on the area occupied by military barracks and workshops. Rome, Italy. (photo Federico De Matteis)

Urban Metamorphoses at the beginning of the third millennium: Holešovice, a twentieth-century district and its transitional landscape

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Hybrids and Hybridization: some interpretations

Each era uses its own language to interpret – and make sense of – contemporary phenomena of long duration. The history of urban development, for example, makes use of various terms, some of ancient origin, to discuss the age-old processes of growth, abandonment, reconstruction, expansion, contraction and destruction (due both to natural and human causes) that play a part in such development over the course of time. In recent decades, when discussions have been dominated by the increasing importance of issues relating to climate change and the indiscriminate use of resources, the need to adopt a new approach in urban development has been reflected in the adoption of such terms as “re-use”, “recycling”, “reconversion” and “regeneration” – all of which feature widely both in accounts of development projects and programmes concerned with the fate of existing urban fabric and run-down/disadvantaged areas. Recent additions to this terminology include the adjective “hybrid” and the noun “hybridization”.

As examples of their use one might cite: the title “Linked Hybrid” for a project concerning what has been called “a new twenty-first-century porous urban space”, an outlying area of Beijing designed by Steven Holl Architects to be characterized by environmental sustainability and the use of advanced energy-saving technologies (Steven Holl Architects 2009);¹ the title “Hybrid Planning Application” given to a plan of redevelopment for an urban area in London, which was to be opened up and linked to the rest of the city through selected demolition work intended to safeguard buildings and areas that might be considered as part of the architectural heritage (City of Westminster 2020).² In the new millennium, a “hybrid landscape” might be described as one «designed to meet the needs of communities», stimulating and overseeing «deliberate collisions of differing points of view» (Green 2013);³ it is a landscape that «merge[s] urban, nature and agricultural grounds» (Holmes 2019).⁴ In this sense, “hybrid architecture” moulds the urban landscape, if one understands such hybrids as «all architectural intervention that is at once object, landscape and infrastructure». This is the interpretation proposed by Rita Pinto de Freitas, who stresses the relation between man-made objects and context and sees planning

in terms of the essential characteristics of any landscape: spatial limits, ground features, scale and mobility (Freitas 2011).⁵ The term “hybrid” is seen as reflecting the possibilities of guiding and directing the process of transformation and change within a city, with a particular focus on local communities in order to obtain social justice, economic diversity and care for the environment: «The hybrid city attempts to combine the best qualities of cities – diversity, density, innovation, economic mobility, and access to means for human development – with the best qualities of villages or small towns – cultural wisdom, frugality, conservation, resource efficiency, a sense of scale and place, self-reliance, and a sense of community and connectedness» (Pradhan and Padhan 2002: 96).⁶

However, the notions of hybrid architecture/landscape are also used to discuss a situation that continues over time. Taking as a premise that «hybridity may be considered an analogue of ambiguity, multivalence, fusion and interbreeding», Mirka Beneš proposes courses of study that cover both the historical and modern: «works of architecture and of landscape design can be artistic works that have ambiguity at the centre of their conceptualisation, for example the Falling Water House of 1935 by Frank Lloyd Wright, which is all-in-one a rocky cliff, a waterfall, technologically-advanced cantilever terraces, and a shelter». Beneš has no doubt that landscapes «may be reinterpreted in contemporary forms, mingling industrial relics, pathways, and new planting, as in Peter Latz’s Landscape Park Duisburg Nord of 1994, in Germany [...] Ambiguity and hybridity were particularly favored by the ancient Romans in Italy and the wider Roman Empire, by Islamic garden designers and Italian Renaissance garden designers, all of whom mingled architecture, water features, garden and landscape elements in complex hybridic structures.»⁷

When used in combination with the noun “city” (which itself conjures up a multiplicity of meanings and functions – economic, social, cultural, religious, administrative and so on), the notion of hybrid inevitably brings one up against the spatial-temporal aspect of the urban context. New, contemporary components are necessarily grafted onto a context that is by itself heterogeneous and stratified. One of the themes discussed by the *Conservation/Demolition Workshop* (Prague 2019) was *Towards the contemporary hybrid city and cultural complexity*. It was a particularly fitting topic given that the city of Prague itself and the specific case of the redevelopment of Holešovice are a source of thoughts upon this issue.

Marwan M. Kraidy, an expert of global communications, warned: «Hybridity is a risky notion». Observing how interpretations of this concept can diverge or even appear to contradict each other, he gives the following examples of its range of use: «the offspring of hybridity has proven a useful concept to describe multipurpose electronic gadgets, designer agricultural seeds, environment-friendly cars with dual combustion and electrical engines, companies that blend American and Japanese management practises, multiracial people, dual citizens, and postcolonial cultures». However, he also acknowledges that: «Hybridity is one of the emblematic notions of our era. It captures the spirit of the times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion.» (Kraidy 2005: 6).⁸

From the Latin *hybrida*, meaning “crossbreed”, the initial use of the term “hybrid” was in the field of biology – and then genetics.⁹ However, the concept was employed and developed in a number of fields; by the end of the last century it had made its way into the social sciences, starting with the research of Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak – the so-called «Holy Trinity of Post-Colonial Theory» (Young 1995: 163)¹⁰ – who focused on deconstructing historical ideas regarding modern colonialism.

In a new Introduction (2005) to his most famous and quoted work,¹¹ the anthropologist Néstor García Canclini stresses that processes of hybridization are the very object of his research and asks: «How does one know when a discipline or field of knowledge changes? One way of responding: when some concepts irrupt with force, displacing others or requiring their reformulation. This is what has happened with the “dictionary” of cultural studies. [...] hybridization is one of these detonating terms» (García Canclini 2005: xxiii).¹² He then goes on to wonder: «Why does the issue of hybridity take on such importance of late if it is a long-standing characteristic of historical development?». In fact, the term can even be found in the literature of the classical world – Pliny the Elder uses it when talking about the migrants who came to Rome in the first century A. D. – and over the centuries it would often be used when discussing exchanges between different societies and nations (often with the negative racist connotation associated with colonialism).

In linguistics, Michail Bakhtin explained the concept of hybridity in terms of the co-existence (from the days of Early Modern history onwards) of an elite and a popular language, demonstrating that the terms a speaker uses can never be described as pure – that is, entirely independent of context – given that each and every dialogue or verbal exchange takes place within a specific time (chronos) and place (topos), which he defines as its “chronotope” (Bakhtin 1982).¹³ A migrant, therefore, would have to work simultaneously within three such chronotopes (that of his place of origin, that of his point of destination, that of the context through which he travels).

The late twentieth century and early decades of the twenty-first have seen migration on an enormous scale. This has resulted in previously unseen levels of global exchange and interaction (so-called globalization), which has in turn brought out the conflicts and trends within modernity. It is no coincidence that in the 1990s the concept of hybridization was used extensively in discussing cultural processes, nor that there was intense debate regarding the results of the intermixing of ethnic groups, languages, customs and patterns of behaviour, particularly within the field of cultural anthropology (Petrosino 2004).¹⁴ Though often criticised, the various “hybridist” positions and theories had the merit of moving beyond the usual diatribes relating to identity, authenticity and genetic “purity”, recognising that «at no place and time has there ever been an original, that is, authentic, culture. Each culture is already the fruit of cultural interactions and crossovers, which may have been forgotten or repressed but are still present.» (Petrosino 2004: 13). When analysing the effects of modernity in Latin America, García Canclini stressed that all traditions exist in interaction with other models and products (especially those from North America), showing how processes of hybridisation could

take on economic significance thanks to the reconversion of capital and labour from areas of production that had fallen into decline. «One seeks to reconvert a heritage or resource (a factory, a professional skill, a set of techniques and knowledge) in order to reintegrate it to new conditions of production and distribution. [...] One also encounters economic and symbolic reconversion strategies in the popular sectors: rural migrants who adapt their knowledge in order to work and consume in the city, or who connect their traditional craftwork with modern uses in order to interest urban buyers; workers who reformulate their culture on the job in the face of new technologies of production. [...] hybridization is of interest both to hegemonic groups and to popular sectors that wish to take possession of the benefits of modernity.» (García Canclini 2005: xxviii).

Within the context of Prague

While the Czech language presents difficulties for non-native speakers, knowledge of the city has been nurtured not only by translations of original works and works by Czechs writing in languages that are more familiar to us, but also by numerous scholarly studies, including a book by the Italian Angelo Maria Ripellino (1973) which has been described as «both a celebration of and requiem for an oppressed culture». In 1987, twenty years after leaving a city invaded by Soviet tanks, Petr Kral wrote: «Située à la chernière de l’Est e de l’Ouest, du monde germanique et du monde slave – et aujourd’hui entre deux systems politiques – la ville a su se forger un “genie” spécifique à partir d’influences mêmes qu’elle a subies et qui, multiples et contradictoires, s’y donnaient naturellement rendez-vous.» (Kral 1987: 625).¹⁵ Whilst interest in Czech culture had recently been reawoken by the political commitment of Vaclav Havel, the films of Miloš Forman and the novels of Milan Kundera, Kral stresses that Prague had long played a central role in European culture, reminding us that the Czech capital was «une des premières villes universitaires du Vieux Continent, un des foyers les plus actives de la Reforme, un centre de la vie musicale que Mozart allait jusqu’à préférer à Vienne, un haut lieu de l’architecture et de l’art gothiques et baroques, voire même de cette *secession* où s’est incarnée la modernité de la fin du siècle dernier. La ville a aussi grandement contribué à la richesse de la culture contemporaine.» (Kral 1987: 626). Such a contribution, observes Kral, was possible thanks to the great authors and poets who had depicted, or transfigured, the city within their work – the likes of Kafka, Hašek, Karel Čapek, Nezval, Holan, Seifert and, more recently, Hrabal and Kolář – as well as through the research of the scholars associated with the legendary “Prague Circle” of linguistics, and the work of such artists as Zrzavý and Šíma.

To this list one might add numerous avant-garde architects of the early twentieth century – for example, Jan Kotěra, who was a pupil of Otto Wagner, a key figure in a period of artistic renewal, and a teacher to the generation that included numerous architects and such Cubist artists as Gočár, Chochol, Janák and Hofman (Burckhardt, Lamarová 1982).¹⁶

Karel Čapek describes Czechoslovakia as the centre of Europe itself, which for centuries has been the scene of political and religious disputes: «Throughout the course of history, this country has been a sort of island where all the great movements

of Europe encounter each other» (Burckhardt, Lamarová 1982: 8) – an island, however, without a coastline. Its capital itself has been described as a frontier – a place that divides and unites; acts as both barrier and bridge; is home to a kaleidoscope of different communities, peoples and cultures. Separated by walls and moats, Hradčany, Malá Strana, the Old City and the New City were inhabited by different social groups and were proclaimed as a single city only in 1784; the Jewish Quarter – known as Josefov or Josefstadt, in honour of Joseph II of Habsburg, who had lifted some of the racial discrimination to which the Jews had been subject – was then added as a fifth area of the city in 1850.

«The magic charm of Prague arose largely from its character as a city of three different peoples – a *Dreivölkerstadt* of Czechs, Germans and Jews. The intermixture and friction between the three cultures gave the Bohemian capital a particular character, an extraordinary wealth of resources and energy.» (Ripellino 1991: 25).¹⁷ The long period of Habsburg rule had encouraged mutual influences between the languages spoken there, with the exception of the French spoken by the Austrian aristocracy of Malá Strana. Thus Czech acquired a wealth of German terms, *Prager Deutsch* was rich in Bohemian idioms, and the city had a wealth of dialects associated with the different districts, as well as its own Prague version of Yiddish. «I have never lived amongst German people; German is my mother's language, and therefore comes naturally to me, but Czech is closer to my heart», Kafka would write to Milena Jesenská in May 1920, at a time when he was also studying Hebrew (Kafka 1988: 15).¹⁸

More than any other European capital, Prague is an example of a historically hybrid city.

Just as in other Europe cities, however, history has moulded the identity of the urban fabric and landscape through a long process of construction and demolition. Among the more significant examples of this one might cite the scale and range of development within Prague after the Battle of White Mountain (1620) and the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which put an end to the devastating Thirty Years' War whilst also crushing all hopes of a rebirth of an independent Kingdom of Bohemia. Thereafter, the Habsburgs granted to their own faithful functionaries and military figures the properties stripped from the Protestant Czech aristocracy. «Across the subjugated country swarmed Carmelites, Jesuits, Servites, Spanish Benedictines and clerics of the order of the *Crociferi*. ... Religious buildings changed appearance. ... Initially, the Baroque intruded as an outsider into the cultural life of the Czech people, as the art of propaganda and relentless pacification, an aggressive symbol of the Counter-Reformation.» (Ripellino 1991: 235). Amongst the nobility, a figure such as General Valdštejn «did not hesitate to demolish 26 homes, to plough up three vegetable gardens and a brick-field», when building his large residence in Malá Strana. And «the Jesuits razed to the ground thirty-two homes, three churches, two vegetable gardens and a Dominican monastery to build their Collegio Klementinum ... a veritable embodiment of domination and harsh indoctrination» (Ripellino 1991: 236). However, by the end of the seventeenth century «the Baroque was gradually blending into Bohemian culture, [becoming] its very lifeblood, [constituting] the genius and fabric of a nation that was once again Catholic. ... As in

the Age of International Gothic, Bohemia rediscovered its inherent talents and took its place once more within a European context, to which it brought its own resources and interpretations.» (Ripellino 1991: 237). In effect, Late Baroque changed the landscape of Prague. More than elsewhere, «it made determined efforts to establish its own links with the world of Gothic, like a Present in desperate search for its own Past. ... Thanks to various scholars we now talk in terms of a "česká barokní gotika" – that is, "the Gothic of Bohemian Baroque".» (Ripellino 1991: 239).

At various periods work was subsequently carried out on a number of Baroque buildings in Prague and Bohemia – not always with the intention of restoration. As an example one might mention the Cubist frame (1913) in Spálená Street designed by Antonín Pfeifer (Burckhardt, Lamarová 1982: 115), which surrounds the eighteenth-century statue of St. John Nepomuk and links the nearby Diamant House (1912) and the Baroque Church of the Holy Trinity.

On the other hand, we could remark on the cubist facade (1922) Rudolf Stockar added to the body of the Materna Paint factory in Holešovice, which since the demolition of that old building has been incorporated within a massive new residential complex (2019).

Gustav Janouch, the son of someone Kafka worked with during his employment in an insurance office, comments on the deep knowledge the author had of his native city, on his ability to identify not only palaces and churches but also the most out-of-the-way houses in the old city (even if their name boards had long been removed). Prague's past seemed greater to Kafka than its present, but even in the present the city's monuments formed so many bridges between the "now" and the "then" (Janouch 1951).¹⁹ Like all his fellow citizens, Kafka had been witness to the changes in Josefstadt. Compressed between the river and the Old City, this Jewish quarter had maintained its medieval layout right up to the years in which development tore through it. Within the inviolable limits of its walls – which in the early nineteenth century had been demolished and replaced with rope and wire – the Ghetto had been crammed with people who lived within a maze of streets where housing density had constantly increased over the centuries. By the end of the nineteenth century, many of the Jews had left the Ghetto to live in other parts of the city, and Josefov had largely become home to the disinherited; unserved by social facilities, it had a high death rate and it was not only health engineers and the building developers who were preparing to descend upon the place who considered it one of the unhealthiest districts in the city. Ultimately, a plan of urban redevelopment was approved in 1893, with the work envisaging the clearing away of 288 homes, 31 streets and 2 small squares in Josefov, all of which were demolished within a few years. Of the public buildings in the Ghetto, the only survivors are the district Town Hall, six of the nine synagogues and the cemetery – which for a long time had ceased to be a place of burial (Rybar 1991: 93–99);²⁰ as is well-known, these are the monuments that now represent Jewish Prague. The new quarter, built around radial streets that converge on the main square of the Old City, was designed by technicians and architects who looked to the example of Haussmann's Paris. In fact, the name Pařížská was given to the new street (formerly Mikulášská) opened up

through the area of the Ghetto; lined with Historicist and Secessionist buildings rich in architectural details inspired by tradition, this is now a fashionable shopping street.

The most important remains saved from the rubble of Josefov are now to be found in the Lapidarium in *Výstaviště* (the Trade Fair Area) within Holešovice, Praha 7, which also houses various statue groups that were originally laid out along the sides of the famous Charles Bridge.

The Hybridization of the city in the twentieth century: Holešovice

In walking through the streets of Josefov he had known as a child, Kafka had seen half-demolished buildings, rooms torn open and the piles of rubble produced by redevelopment work. But the world that had existed there, with its «dark recesses, its mysterious passageways, its bricked-up windows, dirty courtyards and poverty-stricken alleyways» was still alive within him, and seemed more real than the hygienic new city around him. Such acts of violence against the city work against those who live within it, if their world is thus transformed into a technical ghetto that is a combination of the indestructible, the salubrious and the invisible (Villani 1987: 636).²¹ The Prague that continues to live within Kafka's work is the city of the old districts; it was within the outlying neighbourhoods that he felt «a feeling that brought together fear, a sense of abandonment, pity, curiosity, pride, the joy of travelling and returning, as well as a sense of grave and calm well-being, especially where the district of Žižkov was concerned» (Villani 1987: 630).

Years later the artists of Group 42, poets and painters interested in depicting «the world we live in», would choose to focus on the streets and life of the industrial districts and «those suburban areas around the city, where housing fades away amidst marsh and scrubland: Holešovice, Dejvice, Košíře, Nusle, Podbaba» (Ripellino 1991: 73). Their works show gasometers and smoking factory chimneys. Kamil Lhoták, born in Holešovice, revisualised this world (Fig. 1) as it had been during his childhood, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Perhaps it was his pictures, their skies filled with planes, hot-air balloons and dirigibles suspended over the sparse landscape of outlying urban areas, which provided the inspiration for 'Gulliver', the wood zeppelin which in 2016 was raised above DOX, the reconverted factory (Fig. 2) that now provides a multifunctional space for the exhibition of contemporary art.

The progress of urban development in the area enclosed by the bend in the river Vltava can be charted in works of urban cartography produced in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century, many of which are now in Prague City Library.

At the end of the nineteenth century, a gridwork pattern of streets, most of which have survived to this day, was imposed upon the old farm-estate layout of fields. The small old village that would give its name to the district of Holešovice is easily identifiable in contemporary maps to the north of the Railway Station of Bubny. (Fig. 3) And along the bank of the river opposite the Karlín district, the word *Viehhof* identifies what would be the site of the city's new Central Slaughterhouse (Fig. 4) and Livestock Market (the latter the meaning of the term *viehhof*); the large parallel structures visible in the map of 1895²² form the large city block which is occupied by *Pražská tržnice*, Prague's largest

marketplace and now home to shops, warehouses, a farmers' market, exhibition spaces, a theatre space (hall 7 and 8), galleries (hall 14), cafés and artist studios; the small individual "poorhouses" along Dělnická Street [Labour Street], which would soon be demolished, and then areas of working-class housing.

Early-twentieth-century maps show the area of the gasometers, which in 1953 would become the site of the *Stadion na Plynárně* (Stadium by the Gasometers), later known as *Lokomotiva Praha*, with the area of the Central Power Station a little to the north. It also outlines the site of the Modern City Brewery (reconverted in 2008 as housing and offices), as well as showing a sawmill near the livestock market, plus schools and other service facilities in the district.

A map of Zone 7 – Holešovice, dated 1906,²³ indicates with the owners' names the lots occupied by the numerous manufacturing facilities in the district. These included the Kühnemann & Roesemann Machine Works in Poupětova Street, which after many extensions and changes of use and ownership would in 2008 become home to the DOX, a contemporary arts centre. Amongst the public buildings, to the west of the large brewery there is the *Divadlo Uranie* (Urania Theatre 1902–1946), not far from the busy cargo port: once the largest in the city, this is now the site of a luxury residential development and a restaurant. In the east, to the other side of the rail tracks, is the trade fair area of *Výstaviště*, which was laid out for the Prague Jubilee Exhibition in 1891. To the south would later stand the large Trade Fair Building (*Veletržní palác*); built in the years 1925–1928, this was the first example of functionalist architecture in Prague, with an extraordinary interior. The structure would subsequently have a rather grim history, being used by the Nazis as a collection-point for Jews being sent to the death camps; after serious damage in a fire (1974), it would undergo long restoration before opening, in 1995, as an important exhibition venue of the Prague National Gallery.

Development in the Holešovice district would become more intense after the final troubled period of Habsburg rule, particularly in the area to the west of Jeronýmova Street, later Argentinská Street. The city blocks close to the bend in the river would be completed in the years of the Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938), when a large quantity of low-cost housing was created. Pierre George, author in 1947 of *Géographie industrielle du monde*, gives that very year a description of "Greater Prague" and its industrial areas, commenting: «Le quartier d'Holešovice s'est bien prêtée à la construction d'établissements industriels, dominés par les grandes cheminées de la thermocentrale urbaine, et à l'aménagement d'une gare de marchandises. Le long de la Vltava ce sont les grands abattoirs de Prague, et, dans l'intervalle des usines, des rues se recoupant en équerre, bordées de maisons ouvrières [...]. Holešovice-Bubeneč passe de 59.000 hab. en 1930 à 67.000 en 1937, pour retomber à 60.000 en 1947» (George, Desvignes 1947: 253).²⁴

A post-industrial district in transition

Post-communist Prague is no longer the mysterious, fog-bound city in decline whose obscure magic was so sharply captured by Angelo Maria Ripellino. After the Velvet Revolution a veritable metamorphosis took place: the economy was opened up to trade with the West; the property market gained momentum; buildings and land

were returned to private ownership; tourism, which had already been encouraged by the Communist regime, received a powerful stimulus. Prague, too, became part of the circuit of a globalized world, and its identity has thus undergone further change.

As in all the major cities of Western Europe, Prague's city centre – which in 1992 was recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site – has seen profound changes in both its social fabric and the use of its building stock, in the use and redevelopment projects at times involving demolition or resort to mere “façadism” (CMCT 2008: 21).²⁵ As some authors has observed: «After 1989 the neglected historical core of Prague became a prime location for progressive economic activities (consultancy, real estate, law and financial services, luxury boutiques), a prestige residential address for high-income households, and a popular tourist destination. The influx of international visitors to the historic city of Prague brought both positively and negatively perceived changes, including a cosmopolitan atmosphere, transformation of the built environment, pressure on land-use, erosion of the place identity, street congestion. [...] The high property prices, spatial stress, and dense traffic in the commercially overloaded city centre prompted the revitalization of some inner city neighbourhoods. New office, shopping, and residential projects developed on brown field sites in former industrial neighbourhoods, led to the formation of new secondary centres in Prague» (Ouředníček, Temelová 2009: 16).²⁶

As part of Prague's “Inner City” – the new extended city centre – Holešovice is, a century after the creation of the first industrial establishments and workers' housing here, seeing wide-ranging changes in both urban characteristics (Fig. 5) and population. The process of demolition, redevelopment and conversion has made itself felt extensively in the building stocks of the twentieth-century city. And this is particularly true of prematurely aged modern buildings that date from after 1945, including the “Brutalist” structures that have, in part, already disappeared or are in serious danger (Voda 2020).²⁷

Not all the former industrial sites have enjoyed the same fate, though «many have been renovated, finding new lives as apartments, offices, and studios for young creatives, designers, and architects», says the official Prague website (Prague.eu), adding: «Holešovice offers delightful surprises with its plethora of quirky cafés and bistros, alternative cultural spaces, and design shops. In short, it's an area where creativity and innovation await you around every corner».²⁸ And a popular English tourist site comments: «Spurred on by a mix of artists, young families and even a gaggle of cyberpunks, the area's recent revival comes thanks to a big package of support from the progressive local government, and its rebranding as the Czech capital's official “art district”.» (Manning 2020)²⁹. The success of this operation can be seen from the enthusiastic comments by bloggers and the foreigner visitors who choose to stay in the area, adding to its cultural mix: «gritty but not grotty; up-and-coming but not yet gentrified beyond all recognition» (Allen 2016).³⁰ It is no coincidence that Holešovice was named as one of Europe's 10 coolest neighbourhoods by *The Guardian* in 2020.

The social makeup of Holešovice's population reflects various forms of hybridization and evolution. However, the transformation of sites through more or less radical intervention by architects of national and international standing has created condi-

tions whose on-going vitality it is difficult to forecast. Nevertheless, it is clear that the now-abandoned area alongside the rail tracks which divided east and west Holešovice «will undoubtedly soon become one of the largest building sites in the centre of Prague. Before that happens, however, one can still enjoy here an incredible sense of a post-industrial environment (Fig. 6) miraculously preserved within the heart of a dynamic metropolis» (Avantgarde Prague 2005–2019).³¹

Will the new cultural role of the district be more long-lasting than the working-class industrial role it performed last century? And will the area continue to attract those who enjoy greater social and economic advantages? How long will the old factories continue to be used as multifunctional spaces; as buildings where low-cost conversions have resulted, as at *Vnitroblok* (inner courtyard), in the coexistence of past and present, with old materials mixed together with new fittings and modern facilities? So far, the survival of both the structure and external appearance of old factories and markets, the presence of early-twentieth-century housing and large-scale public buildings spared by redevelopment work, defines the character and historical “depth” of the district. For the moment, therefore, the remaining signs of the city's recent history continue to bear witness to the hybridization it has gone through – and will continue to do so until they fall victim to the standardization promoted by intensive redevelopment and an all-pervasive global culture.

Notes

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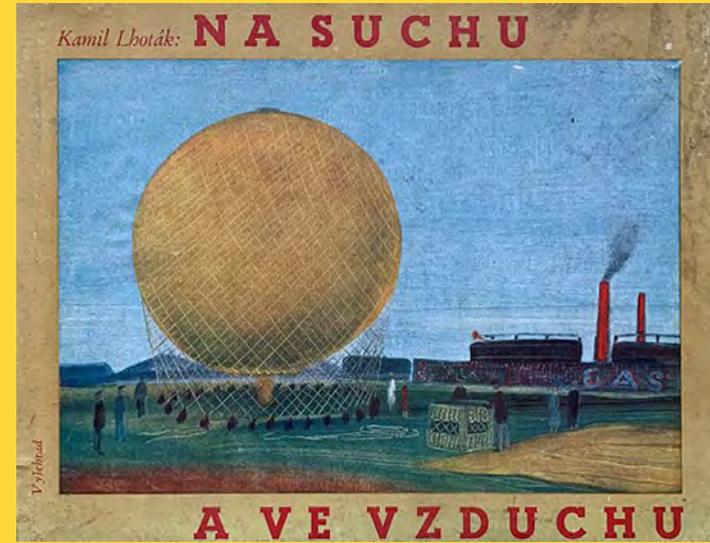


Fig. 1) Cover of the book "Na suchu a ve vzduchu" ("On Earth and in the Air", Vyšehrad, Praha, 1940) by Kamil Lhoták. (repro)



Fig. 2) "Gulliver", the wood zeppelin placed above roof of DOX Centre of Contemporary Art in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 3) Surroundings of Prague, Plan of Prague, 1896. Detail of the site of Holešovice district.
 (<catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb40714397w>, Umgebung von Prag, 1896, Bibliothèque nationale de France, GED-2641)

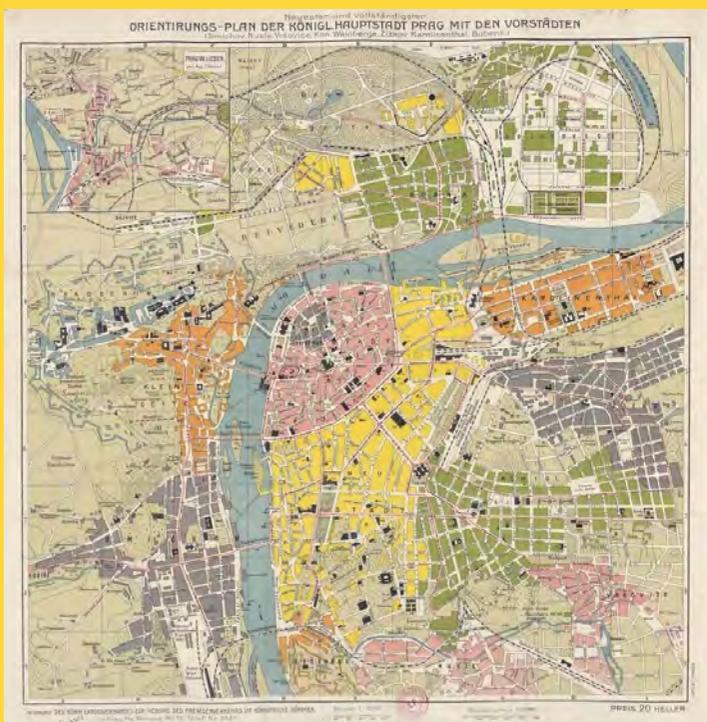


Fig. 4) Plan of Prague and its surroundings, 1910.
 (<catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb407143836> Neuester und vollständigster Orientierungs-Plan de Königl. Hauptstadt Prag mit den Vorständen "Smichov, Nusle, Vrsovice. Kön. Weinberge Zizkov, Karolinenthal, Bubenc, 1910, Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Cartes et plans, GE D-9391)



Fig. 5) Buildable areas in Holešovice, Prague. (photo Carolina Di Biase 2019)



Fig. 6) From the factory's old window in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Carolina Di Biase 2019)

Adaptive reuse; potentials and compromises between demolition & conservation with some reflections from Pakistan

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Introduction

The paper is based on the EAAE workshop held between 25th-28th September 2019 in Prague which discussed practices, theories and ideas on Demolition/Conservation in the field of cultural heritage. It brought together a wide range of people including architects, artists, engineers, conservators and other officials related to the field of heritage and conservation who observed and discussed practises related to heritage in general and modern heritage of Prague specifically. This paper surveys the sites visited during the workshop, how they were handled and reintegrated in the localities through different approaches. Moreover, the projects are also compared with industrial sites in Pakistan which have lost their original function and are confronted with questions of demolition or conservation. Our study on the potentials of industrial heritage in Pakistan is integrated in a broader Ph.D. research addressing discourses on adaptive reuse for industrial heritage in Pakistan.

Demolition and conservation

Demolition is usually considered the opposite of the practices of construction as most of the activities occurs exactly in reverse order to that of construction. Demolition has evolved into a complex system of different tasks; surveying and disposing hazardous material, dumping waste material and salvaging materials are the significant factors of the final net cost and determining factors in selecting demolition methods (Diven, Shaurette 2010). Demolition is often considered as an environment-unfriendly process (Itard, Klunder 2007) and is selected when the life expectancy of the building is estimated to be less than the suggested alternative, even considering any improvements an adaptive reuse injection can offer (Bullen, Love 2010). Decisions on tabula rasa demolition are often motivated by developers who tend to prefer new constructions over the more expensive and complicated process of adaptive reuse. The reason is that it is not always viable to keep the existing because of poor building condition and meeting building regulations (Plimmer 2008). On the other hand, demolition abrogates certain benefits of building retention such as embodied energy, the value of the building within the surroundings, the local, national or global context (Baker et al. 2017). Every building

has a certain character in the locality, the genius loci and spirit of the space (Norberg-Schulz 1980) and this may vanish when a building is demolished. From a building stock point of view, demolition can be seen both as a loss and as an opportunity to create something new, a moment of creative destruction: to intervene in a building or urban space and cut some of its parts (like a surgical intervention) to give life and longevity to the building or space (Thomsen et al. 2011).

Conservation, on the other hand, aims to secure the built heritage for present and future generations. John Ruskin (1819-1900), one of the protagonists of conservation theory maintained «... a historic building, painting or sculpture is a unique creation by an artistic in a specific historic context and it should age by itself which is a part of its beauty» (as expressed in Jokilehto 2002: 8). Ruskin, together with his adherent William Morris, believed that historic buildings should be taken well care of in order to prevent them from degrading. Moreover, they boldly equalled the act of restoration with destruction: «Neither by the public, not by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word restoration understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed.» (Ruskin 1849: 18).

Viollet-le-Duc on the other hand defined restoration as reinstating a building in a condition of completeness which might never have existed at any given time. These theories were formulated during the time when buildings were already centuries old (Prudon 2017a). But most of the building stock which we have right now is constructed in the last hundred years and mostly after 1945 and it is impossible to conserve or preserve everything that we have, as stated by Rem Koolhaas recently that «we are living in an incredibly exciting and slightly absurd moment, namely that preservation is overtaking us» (Rem Koolhaas 2009).

Adaptive reuse and hybridisation

Converting a disused or ineffective building into a new one which can be used for a different purpose is referred to as adaptive reuse (Royal Australian Institute of Architects et al., 2004): the process of adjusting a building to make it fit for a new function. For conservation of cultural heritage, adaptive reuse is considered an important strategy in contemporary conservation theories and practices (Plevoets, Van Cleempoel 2011). The idea of adaptive reuse for buildings is not new: since ancient times buildings have been altered to host new functions, but this was mostly done in pragmatic ways. Other terms used for adaptive reuse are adaptation, remodelling, conversion, refurbishment, retrofitting, reworking (Plevoets et al. 2019) The most important change in the process of adaptive reuse is primarily the change of functions, followed by adaptations to the building itself; addition, demolition, change in orientation and developing relationships between spaces (Brooker, Stone 2004). Adaptive reuse is inevitable if the building lasts longer than its function. Adding a contemporary layer to the existing heritage without destroying the building's character, respecting its historic context and heritage value rather than destroying it is a successful adaptation (Mısırlısoy and Günçe 2016).

Hybridisation, one of the themes of the workshop in antinomy to both conservation and demolition can be related to the concept of adaptive reuse. The term “hybridisation” is mostly used in chemistry and biology; in chemistry it is the idea that «atomic orbitals fuse to form newly hybridized orbitals, which in turn influences molecular geometry and bonding properties». (“Hybridization” as referenced in Chem.LibreTexts? 2013) while in biology it means the act or process of mating organism of different varieties or species to create a hybrid. (“Hybridization – Biology Online Dictionary”). Somehow in the process of hybridisation the new outcome loses purity and originality but at the same time it gives space to advancement while to some extent preserving the parent source or species. On other hand the outcome of hybridisation can be stronger than the parent source. Adaptive reuse can be seen in a similar way as hybridization – an abandoned or underused building/ urban area is hybridized in such a way as to create a new arrangement of functions, spaces and materiality and so to strengthen the usage of the parent source. This creates the opportunity for modern day advancement without compromising the fact that we have a responsibility to preserve past and current day architecture for our future generations. Instead of totally conserving a building as a monument which becomes difficult in some cases, or demolishing it to create a tabula rasa for new construction, adaptive reuse or hybridization can be a common ground between the two concepts. Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings has several benefits. Firstly, it has environmental benefits; one of the main important environmental benefits is the retention of its “embodied energy”, the energy involved in all the construction, production and transportation process for erecting a building. Secondly, it has a social benefit: heritage buildings can be appreciated and used through empathically reusing it rather than generating despair by abandonment or drastic reconstruction beyond recognition. If done well adaptive reuse can save and prolong the heritage value of a building. Thirdly, it has an economic benefit: adaptive reusing a building can provide a return in saving the embodied energy at the same time saving the energy used for demolition and dumping of materials. Fourthly, it has a technological benefit: reusing a heritage building meticulously can retain heritage values and at the same time promoting innovation and novelty (Royal Australian Institute of Architects et al. 2004).

The workshop cases & observation

Several sites visit in Prague were made during the workshop; some of these can be considered good examples of adaptive reuse and can be compared to cases in Pakistan which I studied in the context of my Ph.D. research. One of them was of Vnitroblok, an abandoned industrial building, reused by two young entrepreneurs as an art and entertainment multifunctional space. A wide range of functions are introduced into the former industrial space; a gallery space for young designers and a showroom for European fashion brands, signature store and cafe, a dance studio where you can choose different range of movement classes (Prague City Tourism 2020). Integrated into the locality once again, it is now an attractive and intensively used space for different age groups, with a focus on the younger generation. The reuse of the space is done in a very minimalistic way keeping the integrity, originality, totality, and spirit

of the space. Most of the interventions are reversible with attention to minor details. Tectonics and materiality of the existing structure mostly retains its original form with exposed bricks, beams and columns and rigid flooring. Warmth and novelty are given to the interior by thoughtful artificial lighting and reused furniture. The wall-hung paintings, bookshelves and indoor plants softens the newly intervened functions. There is a new staircase and a mezzanine platform which is created on the former channels in the steel beams of the industrial building which gives a glimpse of the past how the channels were used. (Figg. 1, 2, 3)

In Pakistan, there are many abandoned industrial buildings like Vnitroblok which have the potential to be reused and integrated into the life of the local community instead of demolishing the site or leaving it to decay. But there are no specific policies and legislation related to modern and industrial heritage to preserve and reuse them (Akbar, Iqbal, Cleempoel 2020). One of the cities in Pakistan with most potential for the reuse of such abandoned industrial sites is Lahore – the cultural capital with a strong artistic community, and many educational institutes and entrepreneurs who have the potential to bring life into such abandoned sites. One of the most important abandoned sites is that of PECO Industry. The industry is in the centre of densely populated Lahore. It was once considered the leading engineering industry of Pakistan and employed 3300 workers, but is now lying abandoned and on the verge of decay (Siddiqui 2016). The area of this site is almost 0.83 km². The complex consists of large halls with concrete and brick masonry structures under a pitched roof with steel structure which could accommodate a different range of functions when reused, comparable to what we have seen in Vnitroblok (Iqbal, Cleempoel 2020). (Fig. 4)

Other sites that were visited in Prague included a factory which formerly produced water meters and that has been converted into a design atelier. The integrity of the building exterior is well kept with some intervention in the interior to accommodate the new function. (Fig. 5) This can be compared to a food factory in Swabi Pakistan which has the same kind of brick masonry structure with front and back lawn. (Fig. 6) It has a potential to be reused for new function to be integrated into the locality to preserve its past and benefit the future instead of lying abandoned in the process of decay.

Another site which we visited was Materna Factory on Dělnická road. (Fig. 7) It can be seen as a case of façadeism (Plevoets et al. 2019; Richards 2002) as only the façade of the building is retained and a whole new modern construction is built behind and on both sides of it. The originality of the building is compromised in this case, the façade only shows a glimpse and fragment of the past and the spirit and totality of the space has vanished because of the reconstruction. Dox museum in Prague is also a case of reconstruction where a former industrial site is converted into a modern art Museum. The reconstruction of the site is done in a way that the new interventions and materiality have overshadowed the original genius loci of the space. (Fig. 8)

Discussion and conclusion

The redevelopment and regeneration of a city always leads to various options between conservation, demolition, and hybridization. The fate of the existing building



Fig. 1) Interior of Vnitroblok, an industry in Holešovice district converted into an art and entertainment centre by a bottom-up process. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Naveed Iqbal 2019)



Fig. 3) Interior of Vnitroblok, an industry in Holešovice district converted into an art and entertainment centre by a bottom-up process. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Naveed Iqbal 2019)



Fig. 2) Interior of Vnitroblok, an industry in Holešovice district converted into an art and entertainment centre by a bottom-up process. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Naveed Iqbal 2019)



Fig. 4) PECO, an abandoned industry in Lahore, Pakistan, with similar reuse potential like Vnitroblok in Prague, Czech Republic. (Google Earth image edited by Naveed Iqbal)



Fig. 5) Factory of water meters in Holešovice converted into Architecture AP Atelier and gallery. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 7) Materna Factory, a façade retention project in Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2021)



Fig. 6) Abandoned Food factory in Jehangira, Pakistan, with similar reuse potential like Factory of water meters in Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Naveed Iqbal)



Fig. 8) DOX Centre of Contemporary Art, the industrial heritage adaptive reuse project in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Viktor Mácha 2013)

depends upon the values attributed to it or the context in which it exists. The values which are related to a building are increasingly complicated, nowadays also dealing with stricter regulations related to hazards, safety, sustainability and environmental impact. Depending on the scale of the demolition it has different impacts including social, cultural, environmental, and economic. Demolition can be a small element involving minor removal in the conservation process of buildings and urban areas, or it can be major or whole element removal in urban regeneration. The buildings are more vulnerable to demolition if they are considered valueless to the people of the past and the present. Sometime age is a criterion for demolition, but this should not be the only criterion, as we also have responsibility to preserve our modern-day heritage for coming generations.

As we strive for environmental sustainability recycling is increasingly considered as an important strategy: aiming to reduce, reuse and recycle waste we find life in everything. This concept can also be applied to historic and modern heritage buildings to hybridize them in a way which has minimal impact on their heritage values and significance. The hybrid can be an antidote to urban monoculture, individual elements can lose their purity but the whole can be stronger than before. In fact, it is a compromise between conservation and demolition to give space for technological improvement. The bottom up practices as we saw in Vnitroblok are welcomed in such processes and could possibly inspire projects in Lahore Pakistan.

Cities are palimpsests with layers after layers of traces and memories and the modern and old architecture coexist. Sometimes the defects we perceive in a locality, a specific space or city today may not be something we need to solve now but may offer opportunity for potential in the future if reused in a sustainable way. In other fields hybridisation is opening up new possibilities for advancement, and this can also be the case in architecture and heritage preservation; Adaptive reuse/ hybridization as an emerging field can contribute to the complex discussion on the demolition-or-conservation process regarding buildings as it offers a common ground to protect the legacy and history of the buildings and offers, at the same time, usability and functionality to those buildings.

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Living with fractures.

A conservation paradox

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Could one be able to choose which past is of more significance within the urban milieu? It is commonly accepted that the city is made up of overlapping layers, each with its historical significance. The older ones emerge here and there, traces of lastingness and substance, while the newer ones are evidences of the modernity and progress of the community.

Large boulevards and other systematization insertions made during the communist redefinition of society, scarred their way through the urban texture. They wall-in scattered microcosms of architecture, in which part of their current identity is the odd relationship they have with their enclosures. Obscured, they come to evolve within themselves, and the scraps of architectural past, disconnected from the wider context, are overlooked, and potentially misplaced.

Context

The eastern part of Europe experienced, during the second part of 20th century, the socialist influence and the communist doctrine that transformed its entire social structure. Soviet-originating Constructivism applied successfully, from the 1950^s, the French functionalist principles of rationalizing the city in order to achieve judicious, inclusive urban structures. From the urban point of view, the fresh communist beliefs were to confront the previous orders overlaid in the complex structure and fabric of the traditional cities. These were to soon suffer ideological defeat, an industrial boom, steep urbanization, programmatic national development, the 5 years plans, and the multilateral development of the society, in all the ‘Golden Age’ of the Communist Renaissance.

In terms of “renaissance”, there is a notable cyclical resemblance throughout history between various currents. You can even say that there is an unstable equilibrium that, from time to time, is disturbed by the need for change only to be consolidated again in a different instance by opposing stabilizing forces. The succession of revolution, reform and stabilisation affects all facets of social life and, alongside these, their material expression – the urban environment. Human settlements are often stressed by anthropic crisis, and thus encounter opportunities for change. Past political regimes, economic systems, conflicts of various natures, even subjective or circumstantial instances such as artistic movements and technological convergence, all demonstrate the fragility of the urban environment’s balance.

Romania, like several states in the region, entered its socialist period as a predominantly agrarian nation, with the majority of its population living in rural areas. The promise of accelerated emancipation along with the inherent leveling of the individuals’ status, got many people on board regarding the ceding of property rights in favor of the state as the sole provider of the means of existence. Thus, the industrialization process that soon followed was widely regarded as a chance of getting the most out of the country’s resources and an opportunity for development for both the nation and the individual. Shortly afterwards, the effect of the centralized economy brought the need for urban development, in a manner that would resonate with the state ideology.

Following the adoption of the new constitution in 1952, there was a relatively general enthusiasm accompanying the plans to urbanize and develop the country. Although there was a shortage of certain products, it was accompanied by a tacit acceptance of the fact that sacrifices had to be made in order to boost the transformation of the country. The early 1970^s could even be considered prosperous. Large scale projects such as new collective housing districts, big industrial facilities and the electrification of the more remote villages were met with popular enthusiasm.

The taste for “grands ensembles”, was present throughout the entire Eastern Block, with various displays. While in most counties they carried the formal name of micro-district, derived from the Russian *mikrorajon*, they were also named for what they were called in Germany (*Großwohnsiedlung*) and Poland (*Wielki zespół mieszkaniowy*), or simply housing estates, such as the Hungarian *lakótelep*, or the Czech *sídlišťe*. Also, their adoption was particular, fitting the needs of developing industrial nations, and in most cases was justified by the need to accommodate the necessary workforce within the industrial towns.

Porthos’ belt

«D’Artagnan ... on recovering his power of vision he found his nose jammed between the shoulders of Porthos; that is, exactly on the belt. Like the majority of the fine things of this world, which are only made for outward show, the belt was of gold in front, and of simple leather behind. In fact, proud as he was, being unable to afford a belt entirely of gold, had procured one of which the half at least was of that metal.»
(Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*)

The act of transforming the city into an instrument of representation, whether as a display of power or to create an image to resonate with the ideological promises of positive change, appears to be ever-present with dictatorial regimes – grand projects to endorse the emerging society with built landmarks. From Haussmann’s Paris, 20th century Europe has witnessed power and ideology continually changing the face of cities into an instrument of propaganda. Berlin’s *Hall of Glory*, Rome’s *Via dei Fori Imperiali*, Moscow’s *Palace of the Soviets* and its envisioned grand avenue, Belgrade’s *Federal Executive Council*, and last, but definitely not least, Bucharest’s *People’s House*, rated the second-biggest administrative building in the world at its completion, and its complementing *Victory of Socialism Boulevard*, all similarly tried to stamp on ongoing changes in ideology a proof of righteousness of new paths. However, just like Porthos’

belt, shortages prevented the completion of most of them. Apart from Mussolini's *Via dell'Impero*, opened in 1932, only Ceaușescu was able to fulfill his vision of a representative landmark for the communist regime.

In 1989, as the communist regimes crashed throughout Eastern Europe, many cities were left with structural aberrations in terms of contiguity. The once seamless urban fabric, built-up over a long period of time was carved by unfriendly belts. Yes, they solved perhaps more than one urban development issue. Aside from being representative of the equalitarian regime, they answered, along with the collective housing districts, a growing need for housing within the city, and similarly, the emerging need for efficient urban transportation which historically had been lacking. Nevertheless, they created also a dilemma – how to approach the contemporary obvious divide that arose between the newly constructed boulevard fronts and the remaining urban milieu, screened by the first. Disregarded in many aspects of the cities' life, these patches of past layers of urban development, in their peculiar relation with their “guardians”, remained protected in a state of quasi-complete conservation, disturbed perhaps only by reversible domestic adaptations, most of them unregulated – few people besides locals ventured behind the boulevard front.

The most radical expression of Nicolae Ceaușescu's systematization in Romania occurred under the pretext of necessity, after a major earthquake in 1977 (Zahariade 2011: 83), that damaged or leveled about 33,000 buildings, many of them in the city center of Bucharest. In 1978, his intention to restructure the Romanian capital became public and was followed by the demolition of the *Uranus* and *Izvor* historic districts. From 1982, about 7 sq km of historic tissue was demolished, with the relocation of 40,000 people. The envisioned political-administrative center was little debated, and then only in the positive sense, in the state own media, while the evictions were carried on in quiet disapproval. (Fig. 1)

The erasing of the past in such a brutal way was present throughout Eastern Europe. Similarly to Bucharest, in Tirana the baths and bazaar of the Turkish quarters, or the Jewish quarters in Lvov, were demolished to make way for government buildings and new estate developments. Even if most commonly, the communist building, out of scale as it may have been in urban terms, the act was politically justified to illustrate the force of the ideology in all aspects of public life. In the case of Prague, the historical buildings were held in high regard by the local community, as well as the political regime. Although, when re-evaluating the communist past, buildings as such of those present in other communist capitals were generally constructed in Prague in different areas of the city, even in the central areas one can find such buildings as the former *Assembly* building, the *Komerční Banka*, the department store *Kotva*, the *Nová scéna* of the National Theater. (Fig. 2)

The inspiration for the new *Civic Center* of Bucharest allegedly comes from the Asian model of monumental architecture,¹ though this is contested by some theoreticians (Ioan 2009; Popa 2004) who relate it to the more familiar European Roman-inspired Fascist architecture. The only opposition to the remodeling of Bucharest's center came from abroad (Dempsey 1985; Heller 1988; Deletant 1989). This culminated in 1987 with

UNESCO's inquiry about the demolitions (Giurescu 1989: 63), but even the international organization could not investigate the situation without the consent of Romanian authorities.

With considerable moral and economic support from the West,² due to his previous distancing from the Soviet Union in 1968, at that time, Ceaușescu carried on with the plan of building the *Civic Center*, which he oversaw to its near completion³ until the fall of the Iron Curtain. The newly created monumental urban axis, a true Porthos' belt, along with other boulevards, practically walled-in patches of urban historic fabric in-between these boulevards, thus creating a perfect conservation paradox. Hidden from plain view and from development interests, not in peril of further demolitions anymore, they carried on undisturbed, at least for a period of time. (Fig. 3)

Where there are fractures, there's fracking

In 1999, Miles Lewis observed a phenomenon in the case of Melbourne's development, which he called “urban fracking” (Lewis 1999: 220). He noticed that many of the city's redeveloped middle-ring suburban neighborhoods were not adding to the existing amenities, but kept a parasitic relation to the existing ones. This overdevelopment, arising out of a deregulated local planning period in the state of Victoria throughout the 1990s, was exploiting new means of blasting through accumulated layers of material and symbolic value, in order to extract profit (Goodman 2018).

Urban fracking takes many forms, and usually it is identified and accepted as an opportunity for developing what is less developed, overlooked, or in distress. Certain buildings were regarded as objects or traces of the past, no longer of any lucrative use. The rehabilitation of old-fashioned or non-operational buildings and even the gentrification of entire neighborhoods are commonly accepted by contemporary society as a compromise in conservation. But, where should the limit lie beyond which modern interventions transcend the state of conservation, and where the point of no return is reached for the context in which the original substance of the built environment is recognized as belonging?

There is also the dilemma posed by “up-and-coming” development. When identifying the stages of urban development, Champion (2000) expanded on previous theories (Klaassen et al. 1981, Berg et al. 1982), to point out that in relation to the inherent loss in population in urban cores as a result of counter-urbanization trends would lead to a future reurbanization through migration reversal, due mainly to financial opportunities. We might assume that if a neighborhood finds itself in a context of relative neglect for a sufficient long amount of time, it would also experience the later stage of reurbanization.

In the case of Bucharest, as well as in other cities subjected to the 20th century systematization projects during the communist regime, the leftover patches of urban tissue in-between the new boulevards, masked by high-rise blocks of flats (Cinà 2010: 234), experienced a peaceful lack of attention and of development. Though during past regimes the potential of future urban development hung over their heads, the abrupt end of the regimes left them as they were – as apparent unfinished urban redevelopment, not perceivable from the main street, but a present reality once you ventured behind the screens of boulevard frontages.

Prague would have been situated on the exact opposite pole: the historical buildings erected prior to the communist times were preserved almost entirely and the socialist architecture appeared mostly as a rare expression of the new regime. Nevertheless, the brutalist and socialist architecture was powerful and present in the urban fabric on account of its impressive size and aesthetic in contrast with Prague's previous atmosphere. Prague's historical context was rarely touched by communist development before the Velvet Revolution. Nowadays the communist brutalist heritage and socialist architecture are questioned and in some cases considered obsolete. The building of the former *Federal Assembly* now the *National Museum* in Prague was subjected to an analysis by Prague's administration a few years back, "driven by aesthetic indignation" (Studynka 2011). Hotel *Praha* was demolished in 2014. *Transgas* building faced demolition since 2018 and it could not be saved despite various attempts and protests of the local community and NGOs. Is brutalism less relevant for Prague, especially since this particular architectural manner of building was well represented by valuable and innovative designs?

The early years, following the fall of communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe, were equally non-disturbing for these neighborhoods, as the transformation of the economy produced its first well-off urbanites. These were more interested in escaping the stacked-up collective buildings as the first true suburbs emerged on cities' outskirts. However, many cities lacked the infrastructure for expansion and soon attended the demand for higher quality dwellings. In the 2000's, many of the large Romanian cities updated their Urban General Plans, no longer bound by the regulations of a centralized administration and the state as the sole urban developer. The reformed construction industry and the private local and foreign developers, generated enough pressure to force the administrations to overlook potential conflicting outcomes of new insertions throughout the existing urban tissue. Much of the historic fabric was caught in-between the network of high-rise axes overlaid during the urban systematizations of the 1980's, with no visual relation with the rest of the city, their potential for the real-estate market was soon to be discovered. Again, the abrupt change to capitalism did not cover all the bases of urban development. Bucharest had its first *Zonal Urban Plan for Protected Areas* in 2000. Lacking prospective vision with regard to the size of the real-estate interest, it did little to protect the already compromised fragments of historically built substance. Prior to its update, achieved in 2009, the new insertions literally bargained their way in amongst historic buildings.

Applied Condorcet paradox

Marquis de Condorcet noted in the 18th century, regarding the voting process, that the collective preferences can be cyclic, even if the individual preferences are not. Politically speaking, during the communist regime in Eastern Europe there was a lack of diversity, and therefore the individual preferences were irrelevant. The single-party state was ensuring its endurance through an aggressive exclusion of political choices, while the equalitarian ideology forced out the distinctiveness by

limiting the consumer options. The state was superimposing itself over the production of goods, market behavior, and even individual preferences, by dictating the amount, variety, quality and value of goods. The dwellings, as with any other available merchandise, were tailored to suit the equalitarian ideology on the one hand, and the needs of the individual on the other hand, regardless of his preferences.

When the 1989 collapse of the communist regime occurred, individuals were at last free to express their preferences, in order to set themselves apart, in this respect, to achieve a household that better expressed their self-perceived image of their own status. However, this was not the case for all individuals since they were not all able to boost their wealth, and so were not able to escape the "boxes" of collective living. Aside maybe some barrio subculture groups, the desire to uplift oneself to better living conditions is still present in the collective mindset. Suburbanization was a trend of the decades of the 1990's and 2000's, but failed due to lack of competent urban infrastructure. As a result, the existing built heritage was reconsidered as a viable alternative for those able to effect their "escape". In a way similar to that in which as several decades ago the blocks of flats were in high demand and a badge of rural emancipation, the new, updated, apartments within the city's physical limits were sought after by those that never identified themselves with the limitations of equalitarian living. Therefore, they created the need for urban fracking.

Most of the built heritage with a residential function, minor architecture from the late 19th or the beginning of 20th century, was considered less valuable. Unfortunately, this new focus meant large amounts of transformations and adaptations to contemporary requirements and taste by the new owners and tenants. The disconnection between the community and the built heritage only grew larger and central urban areas in Bucharest are now facing substantial identity and authenticity loss. Dangerous precedents of adaptation to the extent they are unrecognizable were accepted by the administration for the last two decades and poorly opposed by the local community. The misinterpretation of the concept of conservation threatens the character and identity of the city since « Conservation consists of actions taken to prevent decay, and within this objective it also includes management of change and presentation of the object so that objects' messages are made comprehensible without distortion.» (Feilden 2007)

Transforming the historical substance in a contemporary manner disrupts the spirit of the place and changes the perception of the building's identity and integrity. While office and commercial buildings seemed to make use of more sizeable plots, such as the ones formerly belonging to industrial sites, the construction of new dwellings can fit into any nook or cranny of the residential fabric. First to go were the unfinished projects and leftovers of the 1980's urban systematizations. As soon as they were gone, the developers' attention soon shifted towards the weaker links – underdeveloped plots, retrocession and inheritance disputes, derelict buildings. For the latter, some of the cases fall under the suspicion of deliberate depreciation of buildings, beyond justifiable measures of conservation. (Fig. 4)

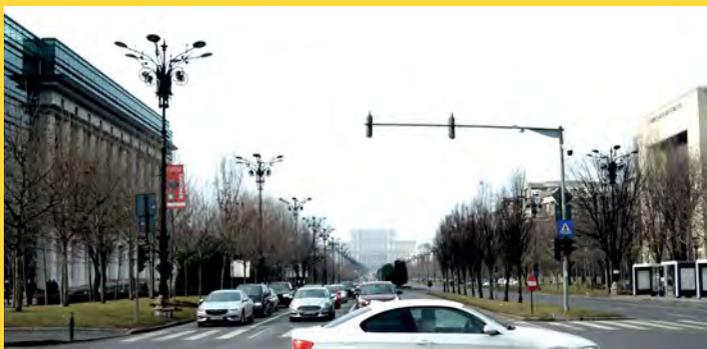


Fig. 1) Overview of the Union Boulevard (Bulevardul Unirii, formerly Victoria Socialismului), the projected central axis of Bucharest, leading towards the People's House, now the Romanian Parliament (in the background). These single two projects were responsible for the major part of built heritage erasing of Bucharest, Romania. (photo Florin Mureşanu 2020)

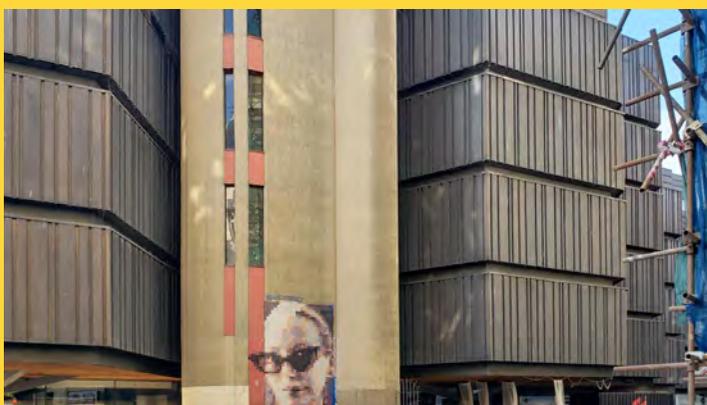


Fig. 2) Department Store Kotva in Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Monica Mureşanu 2019)

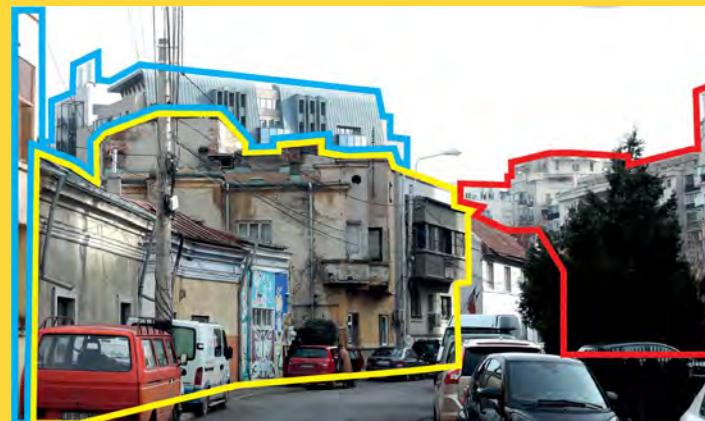


Fig. 3) Layers of urban transformation: late 19th – early 20th century residences (in yellow), the back side of 1980s communist boulevard fronts (in red), and 21st century contemporary development (in blue). Bucharest, Romania. (photo Florin Mureşanu 2020)



Fig. 4) 1930s International Style dwellings on Wilhelm Filderman St., just behind Union Boulevard's front. They escaped the 1980s demolitions, but find themselves now in a derelict state. Bucharest, Romania. (photo Florin Mureşanu 2020)

Conclusions

Previously protected and conserved through mere neglect, the historic areas of Bucharest find themselves once again in the spotlight, unluckily not for the protection and display of heritage, but as resources for real-estate consumption. During the communist regime they would have been demolished eventually if impacted by the need to make way for a growing population. Still, they survived that crisis only to meet a contemporary one. The need for housing is present once again and is not met by the city's ability to sprawl outwards. The lack of competent infrastructure and the reduced mobility for its citizens forces the over-densification of the inner neighborhoods, with direct consequences for what is already built, whether of value or not.

Not unique in this phenomenon, Bucharest is still representative for Romania's growing cities, as an example of the lack of prospective vision in regard to built heritage conservation. (Fig. 5) Extreme transformation of historic buildings, and even demolitions are often overlooked and explained by the "need". The separation of the Romanian people from its past seems to be indiscriminate. The years of the communist regime not assumed, and even refuted by the citizens, and with them, curiously, most of what was before, a separated past that they lost the connection with. Thus, lacking the power of negotiation and advocacy from the urban communities, the built heritage is still in peril of expiry.



Fig. 5) Aerial view showing the past two decades of mid and high-rise densification carried upon the historic urban tissue (yellow for residential and red for office) between the Eastern end of Bulevardul Unirii (right, formerly Victoria Socialismului Boulevard) and Calea Călărași (left). Bucharest, Romania. (photo Florin Mureșanu 2020)

Notes

1 "Raport cu privire la vizita de documentare tehnică a delegației de arhitecți, ingineri și artiști plastici, efectuată în perioada 20 august – 5 septembrie a.c. în Republica Populară Democrată Coreeană și Republica Populară Chineză" [Report on the technical documentation visit of the delegation of architects, engineers and plastic artists, conducted between August 20th and September 5th, current year, in the Democratic Republic of Korea

and the People's Republic of China], ANR, SANIC, PCR's CC fond, Secția Propagandă și Agitație [Propaganda and Agitation Department, file no. 15/1978, 2.]

2 Since 1975 Romania was U.S.s foremost East European allied under the Most Favored Nation status, during Reagan's administration.

3 The inauguration of People's House, today Palace of the Parliament, was due for August 1990.

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Between destruction and conservation: new strategies of reappropriation of the urban spaces in Paris

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Introduction

«Demolitions and replacement of buildings occur in the course of the most peaceful development of a city»: this assumption by Freud can be applied to all past cultures and civilizations (Freud 1930: 8) as it is undeniable that societies were formed and developed by demolishing. Demolition was a "historical necessity" as well as an instrument intentionally used by peoples to annihilate each other, through the profanation «of the founding value of the art of building» (Choay 1996: 13) and the deletion of the (collective) memory or identity, related to these edifices or ensembles (Bevan 2006). At the same time, but for other reasons – such as carelessness, displeasure, abandonment, obsolescence, lack of planning or incompetence –, nations destroyed their architectural heritage, both ordinary and monumental, even going so far as to assign a specific creative value to the demolition act.

If there are numerous examples in antiquity, it is with the advent of the industrial age that this process becomes more recurrent, in response to the new pressing requirements dictated by growth and technological improvement. In France, "modern" urban planning turned out to be essentially "destructive": the city inherited from the past was considered «too dense to be healthy, too opaque to be able to move around easily, too irregular to be beautiful» (Pinon 2002: 45). Paris, in particular, appeared degraded, disordered and globally inadequate. For Voltaire, its obscure and shapeless historical centre was the portrayal of the «most shameful barbarism»; a radical rethinking of the *forma urbis* was then necessary as no longer delayable (Voltaire 1749). Analogously, in 1765, the abbot Laugier, by comparing the city to a forest, suggested the opening of new roads and the regularization of the existing ones, the establishment of squares and the demolition of old houses to beautify the urban landscape: a great "reparation" work aimed at both increasing the well-being of the community and the supremacy of the capital (Laugier 1765).

Starting from 18th century, Paris was then engaged in the laying out of new routes, the alignment of existing roads and the isolation of architectural monuments by demolishing built structures added to them over time, as well as the surrounding minor architecture. In the second half of the 19th century, the well-known urban reorganization commissioned by Napoleon III and the prefect Georges Eugène Haussmann was considered the symbol of a modernization aimed at making Paris

the first and most prestigious example of a European capital. Destructions, aimed at the regularization of the urban fabric, were partial and selective but no less painful for this (Choay 1969). The numerous protests of the citizens were however more tied to the destruction of some medieval monuments than to the ancient urban fabric; even the most nostalgic admirers of *Vieux Paris* stated that to build, it was first of all appropriate to destroy (Fournier 1853).

The greatest and the most traumatic changes occurred in the 20th century (Fumagalli 2008). In its early decades, as part of a process of improving hygiene in Paris, the oldest, densest and overpopulated urban areas were declared *Îlots insalubres* (unhealthy blocks). Of these, six were demolished in 1906 and 17 in 1920, while a significative part of the *Îlot* no. 1 was set to be destroyed in the early 1930s while remaining empty for over forty years until the building of *Centre Pompidou*. The Great depression of the 1930s and the Second World War prevented further clearance. (Fig. 1)

Systematic demolitions reached a peak in the years 1960–1970 and, together with both the routine demolition/replacement activities of the years 1980–1990 related to the ordinary architectural heritage and the phenomenon of *façadisme*, that still affect the oldest quarters of the city.¹

Today, both the rhetoric of obsolescence and urban requalification prevail, so legitimizing, the numerous demolitions/reconstructions that we can observe along the streets of the French capital. Even showy operations which, unlike in the past, now seem less attractive to the city minds; the wounds and lacerations that each act of demolition inevitably impresses on the human soul seem less potent.

These activities lead us to question the relationship between demolition and conservation, no longer seen as the two sides of the same coin or the two ridges of the same mountain, but rather as an intricate combined action of deconstruction of existing spatial geometries and new creative reconfigurations. A combination – often "in tension" while not contradictory – that asks to be explored carefully as of crucial importance for a more sustainable, and mindful of their many characters and values, future our cities, nowadays more and more under the pressure of (re)development.

In this sense, the 7th Workshop of the EAAE Thematic Network on Conservation, which was held in Prague, Czech Republic, from 25–28 September 2019, offered the opportunity to make in-depth reflection over these two basic pillars of architecture for the future of architectural heritage and to discuss the main issues currently facing their controversial relationship. In the light of the numerous local case studies described and visited, some uneasy interrogations were addressed: do contemporary cities need a blended mix of history and modernity? Does it seem legitimate to consider demolition as a founding element of a congruent urban transformation that also includes conservative assumptions in itself? Is it possible to accept and make meaningful use of small-scale historic heritage in a contemporary city? Essential questions that were debated also in the light of shared experience and research – simultaneously focused on this multifaced topic while from different views – to introduce new strategies and enhance the whole field.

To this end, Paris was proposed as an interesting case study, able to show, in an emblematic way, the contested evolution of heritage conservation and its tense relationship with urban redevelopment.

Urban metamorphosis in Paris: stages, evolutions and contradictions

As already mentioned, Paris is testimony to a continuous process of adaptation and transformation – obviously not free from contradictions – regulated by debates, challenges, negotiations and crossed by a contextual and progressive change in the conceptions and forms of planning. The latter has been first understood as a general instrument, then as a strategic tool, based on long-term choices and applied through timely interventions.

In the thirty years that followed the end of the Second World War,² French territories were affected by countless operations centred on the merciless praxis of the *rénovation urbaine*. A concept with a vague and unclear meaning that was essentially translated into demolition/replacement operations and, especially in Paris, in major construction projects. Several exemplary initiatives, aimed at “revisiting” the city, were developed and concerned the building of extensive new transport infrastructure, offices, universities and housing.

Although already in 1962, the Malraux law introduced provisions concerning the safeguarding of historic centres, the first decade of application of this instrument – innovative and courageous but extremely rigid and problematic – was still essentially based on renewal. This led to the erection of towers – such as the 210-metre Tour Montparnasse which was constructed between 1969 and 1973 following the demolition of the old homonymous *gare* –, flats and other rationalist buildings in the core of the cities. (Fig. 2)

However, some concern related to the conservation and recovery of the existing urban and building heritage gradually started to emerge. By showing all its limitations and contradictions, the practice of renewal, therefore, opened the door to the formulation of new urban theories more attentive to the quality of the city and the life of its inhabitants. With the election to the presidency of the Republic of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the thinking of the institutions on the urban transformations hitherto accomplished, changed. The excesses of a certain “quantitative urbanism” were criticized, also on the impetus of a vehement debate conducted by both the intellectuals and a population more sensitive to the fate of their cities (Pinon 2011).

In 1977, the appointment of Jacques Chirac as the mayor of Paris, initiated a substantial review of the ongoing renovation operations, thus helping to define the guidelines of a new French urban planning more prone to the requalification of built heritage and conceived to respond to the deep aspirations of the community and to foster social relations. In 1978, the *Paris Project* magazine focused on the description of the objectives of this new policy, which proposed a return to volumes coherent with the peculiarities of the context, greater respect for the urban fabric, the protection and improvement of some elements of the existing habitat, the maintenance of traditional craft and industrial activities, the development of gardens and public spaces. In those years, France thus

discovered the “urban form”, long denied by a technical approach to development. An attempt was, thus, made to achieve the “active” preservation of the architectural and urban heritage of Paris – carried out through new constructions in the historic centre (APUR 1985) – however not free from demolition activities and as many disputes.

Architectural heritage protection that in Paris took on the forms of the urban project and which was expressed by important operations, such as the remaking of the old central food market *Les Halles* – by that time emptied of the original commercial function (Fig. 3) – that opened in 1979 – a big mistake that Paris will never forget without ever stopping “reinventing” itself, often at the expense of the Paris skyline.

Today, Paris presents a succession of modern additions that help to define its well-known image of charm, appreciated all over the world. Architecture, which nevertheless at the time of their creation created doubts and malaise: from Beaubourg (1977) to the Grande Arche in the La Défense district (1989) via the Arab World Institute (1987) and the Pei's Pyramid at the Louvre (1988).

Still, in the last decade, numerous experiences of transformation of the urban space have been planned in the French metropolis. Many of them are summarized in iconic projects – often huge skyscrapers – unfortunately inevitably associated with the negative image of a liberal and globalized economy that seems to contradict sustainable and lasting choices regarding plans, materials and construction techniques used (Mercuriali 2018).

Paris, today: new demolitions to build a new metropolis

One of the most recent and eloquent examples is that related to the project for the new Forum des Halles (2018): a clumsy attempt to make amends for a past mistake through architectural nonsense which recalls to mind the famous sentence uttered by Tancredi Falconeri in the novel *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) by Tomasi di Lampedusa: «Everything must change so that everything can stay the same». Always based on the same *modus operandi*, the new project has again been motivated by some specific needs of political and/or speculative nature, aimed at suppressing an architecture judged unsuitable for the organic urban development and then at replacing it, according to integral demolition-reconstruction operations. It has been the answer to explicit requests for “modification” of the built reality and entrained important changes in the values and main aspects of the place.

Without taking any definitive judgment, the new project for Les Halles looks, especially in the built component, almost detached, not necessarily grounded in that sense of place that, on the contrary, should have been the most determining source of inspiration. A pleasing example of present-day architecture, the Canopy fits into the historic context hitting the observer for its sinuosity and majesty. It, however, appears as the aseptic fruit of experimentation, a research set on the use of new technologies and principles of immateriality that automatically stimulate inquiries both about the high construction costs and the maintenance difficulties as well as on its sustainability, its ability to take place in the historical continuity, the chance to have a – and be – future. (Figd. 4, 5)



Fig. 1) The Halles by Victor Baltard, 1863. Paris, France. (Huguet et Outhwaite, Gravr., Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA)



Fig. 3) View of the Forum des Halles in 2009. Paris, France. (iStockphoto LP 2021).



Fig. 2) Perspective view on the garden by Louis Arretche. Paris, France. (Fonds Arretche. Académie d'architecture/ Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/ Archives d'architecture du XXe. siècle)



Fig. 4. 5) Views of the Canopy project by Patrick Berger and Jacques Anziutti in Paris, France. (photo Antonella Versaci 2020)



Fig. 6. 7) The refurbishment of the Paris-Montparnasse train station: demolitions. France. (photo Antonella Versaci 2020)



But in our days, Paris is rich in modernization and conversion programs. Since 2007, in fact, following the announcement by former president Nicolas Sarkozy, through the Grand Paris regional development project, Paris' metropolitan area is undergoing urban renewal and revitalization. Besides, after multiple unsuccessful French mega-event bids, Paris was chosen as the host city of the 2024 Summer Olympics and consequently, many urban development projects were launched to transform it into a sustainable metropolis that innovates both in the ways of developing the city and experiencing its uses.

Projects are mainly guided by transit-oriented development and, of course, include vast refurbishment activities of train stations and likewise attacks to cultural heritage: like that related to the Austerlitz station which caused in 2012 the demolition of the *buffet* dating from 1867 (Figg. 6, 7) or that of the *Gare du Nord*, whose design was denounced by a group of leading French architects as "indecent, absurd and unacceptable" as aimed at turning the station into a glassy, mammoth, restaurant-filled shopping mall, based on deplorable demolitions. Again, the project related to the Maine-Montparnasse district currently underway which seems paradoxically to replicate – as if the lessons of the past had been completely forgotten (or it is the new generations that have completely changed) – what already happened in the 1960s when the tragedy felt by the population was not only related to the «elimination of a nineteenth-century railway station but – also to – the loss of resistance to abstract spaces, and the replacing of a monument with a shopping centre and office tower» (Paskins 2015: 145).

Last but not least, the project concerning the Samaritaine – one of the most important historical department stores of early 20th-century architecture – is representative of a commerce-oriented rekindling. The complex has for some years been affected by a vast campaign of works aimed at its renovation, based on an innovative project conceived by the architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa of the Japanese studio SANAA. The program aimed to increase and relaunch the image of Paris as the capital of luxury. The redevelopment of the facades and interior spaces, inspired by the original idea of the architects Frantz Jourdain and Henri Sauvage, involved the modernization of the commercial spaces and the construction of offices, an 80-room luxury hotel, a restaurant with terrace, a nursery for 60 children and 7,000 sq.m of social housing.

Even though a conservation approach has been followed for the historic façades of *magasin* No. 2, the multicoloured glazed tiles of the interiors, the glass roof, the monumental staircase and the furnishings, a demolition/reconstruction project has been foreseen for the *magasin* No. 4 in Quai du Louvre and Rue de Rivoli.

Today almost accomplished, the metamorphosis of *magasin* No. 4 has however caused controversial debates, which have opposed national associations concerned with the protection of cultural heritage and intellectuals. (Figg. 8, 9)

While the old edifices have been demolished and replaced by a new one characterized by a very long and high undulating glass façade with serigraphies, so destroying the rhythm established by the parcel breaks (Pinon & Loyer 2015), the design proposal was finally accepted.³ Choices on «what must be maintained, what could evolve and what must change» was based on an in-depth historical and patrimonial analyses. The

logic of the conversion of the Samaritaine and the idea that its rebirth could be based on a contemporary contribution to the image of the old department store in the Parisian public space appeared more than legitimate. It was also added that the transformations were an integral part of the history of this building, as well as the "transparent" solutions, already widely adopted in the recent architectural history of Paris, even in the historic centre (Cabestan 2011: 121).

Conclusions

From the Parisian case, important points of reflection seem to emerge on the binomial conservation/demolition. This can no longer be reduced to a simple antinomic relationship. The examples here presented – not very far from those seen in Prague or other European cities – show a tendency to demolish, more or less reasonably, everything that meets the criteria of age, inadequacy, lack of security, uselessness, etc. At the same time, a vision of a city no longer simply stratified but a hybrid, changeable, in constant evolution seems to be pursued. A town, in which the new architecture (especially that of replacement) aims at a limited life span over time and is purely functional to the needs of the contemporaneity.

As agreed by all participant in the workshop, demolition remains, in any case, a violent act, even when it is cleverly disguised: the sign of an architectural, technological, cultural failure; sometimes even the symptom of cultural regression. However, once the first moment of bewilderment has been overcome, indignation and nostalgia seem to be quickly replaced by new promises of comfort, efficiency and sustainability. Besides, conservation seems to have lost its authenticity, goals and purposes. Often, it also lacks vision and appears to be limited to actions of pure visibility, hiding, in reality, serious compromises in the methods and producing architectural fakes without cultural significance.

In this sense, the two terms appear no longer conflicting but almost sympathetic: the demolition is made legitimate by (alas false) conservation activities denouncing the existence of a partnership spoiled by purposes that have nothing to do with both the respect of memory and the improvement of human life.

It is therefore essential to re-establish the act of building, to revisit the concept of metamorphosis in which demolition and conservation can put themselves at the service of a new strategic vision, not limited to the achievement of economic well-being only but also aimed at strengthening the cultural dimension of development.

Notes

1 As stated by Pierre Pinon, Haussmannian works have very often been perceived as the archetypical of a mechanism where private speculation and urban policy combine, but in reality, both aspects still coexist in destructions, today as in the classical age. Observed over a long time, the arguments do not vary too much and the historic city often fades behind the transformations required by its contemporary use (Pinon 2011).

2 The *trente glorieuses* as the French economist Jean Fourastié called the years from 1945 to 1975.

3 The so-called "shower curtain" was the cause of a long procedural battle. As a consequence, in May 2014, the building permit for this project was annulled. However, while legalities proceeded, the work continued, and the original four buildings were torn down. The annulment went then to appeal and in June 2015 was finally approved.

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Fig. 8, 9) The new Saana's project for Magasin No. 4 in Paris, France. (photo Antonella Versaci 2020)

What future for the past?

Contemporary issues in urban heritage preservation

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Preamble

Although the importance of the built heritage is universally acknowledged due to its multiple benefits, in many European cities there seems to be an open conflict between the desire to preserve the historic architecture and the necessity to transform the urban fabric. Consequently, a large number of heritage buildings undergo irreversible transformations or are completely demolished in order to make place for new developments, without taking into consideration the irreplaceable losses resulting from these aggressive actions. Demolition is causing serious damage to historic cities, as the destruction of built heritage often leads to social disturbance, economic loss and cultural identity. Certainly, there are some exceptions, as a considerable number of European cities have used the built heritage as an asset in the process of urban regeneration, protecting and enhancing the architectural richness of the past.

This paper tries to provide a series of answers regarding the two concepts that seem antagonistic: the preservation of built heritage and the urban development. The political factor is also questioned, as the relation of the authorities with the inheritance of the past has proved to be a defining element regarding the fate of the built heritage. The research is based on a comparative analysis of the built heritage situation in two European capital cities, Prague and Bucharest.

Searching for an urban identity in the contemporary city

In an attempt to strengthen the character of a place or to redefine it, the built heritage seems to have been the favorite subject of spatial planning policies over the last century. Even today, the controversy surrounding the historical architecture is far from ending, particularly due to the role that this type of heritage plays in creating a specific identity.

Kevin Lynch noted that the identity of a built object relies on a «workable image» that requires the identification of that object, implies «its distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity» (Lynch 1990: 9) and must have some meaning for the observer, whether practical or emotional. Historical cities are, in this sense, fundamental examples that illustrate the concept of identity, as defined by Lynch. The human need to relate to certain places with intrinsic value is essential for the contemporary society, as the urban framework is capable of ensuring a sense of familiarity and belonging, despite major

changes in the cityscape and potential social uncertainties. As Edward Relph observes, people need places they can identify with, significant areas that have a strong *sense of place* (Relph 1976: 147). The built heritage can meet precisely these human needs and is often perceived as a driver of identity, due to its qualities: the particular visual appearance and strong image, easily recognizable by any given observer, the intricate path structure and topographical feature which ensure a specific coherence of all urban fabric elements, but also its appealing, strong character, generated by meanings and associations, which exceed the physical qualities of centuries-old architecture.

The various successive ideologies in particular in post-war Europe have massively influenced the way of perceiving and relating to the built heritage. This aspect is even more obvious in the former socialist countries, where the political power tried to impress a new identity based on different cultural values, significance and representations. If some European states have understood that heritage can be used as an asset in this approach, others chose to play the heritage card in a very different way, sacrificing the legacy of the past at the expense of a new type of architecture, more pleasant to the authoritarian regime. The transition to capitalism failed to fully protect the architectural heritage, as market liberalization and the accelerated development of historic cities often favored the demolition of heritage buildings.

A paragraph written more than four decades ago makes a perfect summary of the challenges still faced by the built heritage: «In the conditions of modern urbanization, which leads to a considerable increase in the scale and density of buildings, apart from the danger of direct destruction of historic areas, there is a real danger that newly developed areas can ruin the environment and character of adjoining historic areas. [...] The preservation of historic areas can make an outstanding contribution to maintaining and developing the cultural and social values of each nation» (UNESCO 1976).

However, the attitude of local governments regarding the built heritage faces a certain resistance: while some undertook significant measures in order to preserve and enhance their architectural legacy, other European states are critical of this heritage component and fail to take appropriate actions to safeguard it. In this regard, two significant examples can be considered and further analyzed – Prague and Bucharest. Both capitals of former socialist countries underwent a difficult process of redefining their identity. In this attempt, the built heritage played an essential role, though the two mentioned cities had a very different attitude towards it, during and after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Prague – a good practice model?

Prague is one of the most charming urban centres in Europe. The built framework, marked by the presence of outstanding works of architecture erected in different historical eras and varied styles, harmoniously complements the natural landscape of the city. These unique characteristics have been exploited by the local authorities starting with the second half of the 20th century, when, with substantial efforts, a complex conservation and restoration program was undertaken. It should be mentioned that such policies were largely due to the socialist ideology, particularly after the “Prague

Spring”, when the political leaders acknowledged the representation value of the built heritage and often used it in their own interest. Heritage was seen as a connecting element of the new power with the past, ensuring its continuity and therefore, providing its legitimacy (Light et al. 2009: 230). On the other hand, the Czechoslovak authorities were more interested in large scale projects, such as housing, social infrastructure or retail, which were seen as unsuitable for the historic centre with its narrow streets and extremely dense built fabric (Hammersley, Westlake 2013: 189). As a result, the historic centre of Prague escaped almost unscathed from communist interventions and underwent extensive restoration operations (Light et al. 2009: 233).

Except for some questionable interventions made in the last decades of the 20th century, Prague knew how to highlight the qualities of its architectural heritage and has constantly made efforts to valorize it (even if many restoration interventions were made in order to support the political power). As a direct consequence, in 1992 the historic centre of Prague was listed as a Cultural World Heritage Site by UNESCO (ICOMOS, 1992). This distinction attracted a large number of visitors, mainly former emigrants and Western Europeans (Holešinská, Šauer 2018: 504). In addition, due to its designation as a “European City of Culture” in 2000, Prague has gained an even greater visibility on the world tourism stage. This helped increase awareness and funding for Prague’s cultural scene and architectural heritage, the renovations made during the preparation for the 2000’s event representing an important legacy (Palmer 2004: 215). The efforts made to preserve the historic architecture are still ongoing; as a result, Prague became one of the most visited European cities in recent years. (Fig. 1)

Nevertheless, the historic area of the Czech capital is under pressure, in part due to the huge influx of tourists. The numbers have increased gradually over the last decade, starting from 1,460,601 visitors in 2012 to 4,802,203 visitors in 2018 (Prague City Tourism 2018). Although tourism remains an important part of Prague’s economy and a determinant factor in urban regeneration, the negative effects of the mass-tourism has begun to constrain the quality of life of local residents. These shortcomings include, among others, the emergence of the gentrification phenomenon, change in function, the increased prices for services or housing, the loss of local traders and the impossibility for the city’s inhabitants to enjoy the picturesque areas, now overcrowded (Ouředníček, Temelová 2009; Cooper, Morpeth 1998; Simpson 1999).

According to Gregory Ashworth, mass tourism is also a major threat to the cultural identity, as the diversity of visitors can facilitate an expansion of the value field, which sometimes is not specific to the history of a place (Ashworth 1995: 70). This argument is supported by the residents of Prague’s historical areas, most affected by mass tourism, who sense this «invasion» as «a competition for identity» (Hoffman, Musil 2009). Therefore, in the context of *touristification*, the character and identity of Prague are at risk of being eroded, as an uncontrolled increase in the number of tourists can lead to «a shift away from “true” history towards a more sanitized and popularized identity» (Simpson 1999).

This menace is completed by real estate speculators, who seize the benefits offered by the magnificent urban setting of the historic centre. Some of these threats

are identified by UNESCO’s experts, who claim that the increasing degree of land use inside the protected area and the constriction of oversized new buildings are affecting the cultural value of Prague (UNESCO 2014). Due to the compactness of Prague’s built framework, part of the historical architecture must be sacrificed in order to allow for new development projects. Consequently, the recent heritage, represented by constructions built during the post-war period, is the most affected. Fortunately, such cases are limited in the city centre and the new developments are slowly moving towards the limit of the protected area, frequently on the site of former industrial facilities, until recently abandoned or improperly used.

As a result, the dusty districts of Karlín or Holešovice gained a new lease of life thanks to targeted adaptive-reuse interventions and urban renewal operations. Therefore, an increased number of former industrial sites received new uses (offices, commerce, housing or culture), among these being “Corso Karlín”, “Vnitroblok”, “La Fabrika” or “DOX – Centre of Contemporary Art”. (Fig. 2, 3) Although the strategy adopted requires a series of improvements and strategic long term planning, the measures undertaken over the last three decades in relation to the built heritage made the Czech capital one of the most desirable cities in Europe.

The built heritage of Bucharest: a series of unfortunate events

From the perspective of its relation to the built heritage, Romania can be considered a less positive example. The built heritage, everyone’s and at the same time nobody’s property, had to face over the last half century the brutal decisions of policymakers, as the massive demolitions carried out during the communist regime irretrievably affected the community’s life, the urban character and identity.

Compared to the attitude adopted by Prague’s authorities regarding the built heritage, the situation in Bucharest was dramatically different. Starting from the late 1970’s entire historic neighborhoods were razed as part of a grand urban renewal plan (Grama 2019: 118), in order to erase its former identity and to make way for a more “appealing” architecture, a new “communist heritage” (Light 2000). Despite this state of affairs, Bucharest remained one of the European capitals benefiting from an exceptional diversity of architectural styles and typologies. (Fig. 4) Thus, on the eve of the newly restored democracy of the 1990’s, the first solid measures were taken by the specialists in the field of historic monument conservation and restoration. Currently, a total of 14.4 % (2853 ha) of the surface of Bucharest (Marin 1997) is represented by the 98 built protected areas, whose limits and regulations were established in 1999.

Nevertheless, a widespread phenomenon of deterioration is affecting the historical areas of Bucharest, this condition being encouraged by the authorities’ lack of reaction and complicity. Unfortunately, the systematic demolitions started by the communist regime did not end with its downfall, such actions being carried out in recent years. The abandonment of valuable buildings and the increased number of demolitions, the umpteen examples of aggressive renovations or intentional mutilation of the historic fabric (especially due to the much blamed *façadism* practice, but also the uncontrolled development which seems to elude the current legislation), have

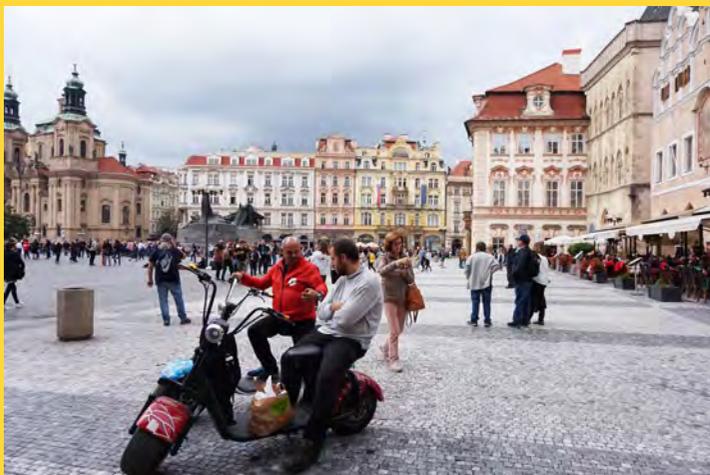


Fig. 1) Historical centre of Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Raluca-Maria Trifa 2019)

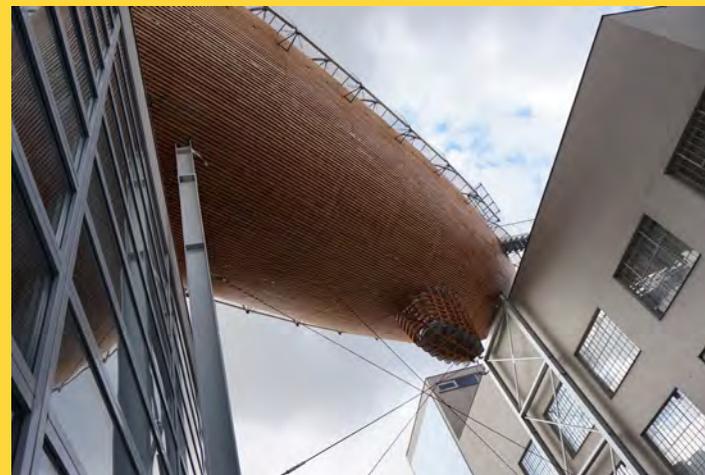


Fig. 3) DOX Centre of Contemporary Art, the industrial heritage adaptive reuse project in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Raluca-Maria Trifa 2019)



Fig. 2) Corso Karlín, former factory Breitfeld Daněk re-designed by Taller Arquitectura, early example of conversion in Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2002)



Fig. 4) One view over the diverse cityscape of Bucharest, Romania. (photo Alberto Grosescu)

a massive impact on the quality of Bucharest' historical urban landscape. A number of national and international organizations concerned with the fate of the architectural heritage, ICOMOS and World Monuments Fund included, raised an alarm signal and called on the Romanian authorities, urging them to stop the destruction of historic areas and to take the necessary measures in order to protect the built heritage (ICOMOS 2014).

Yet, the generalized phenomenon of historic buildings mutilation still continues, the only difference consisting in the *modus operandi*. Currently, the aggressive interventions to the built heritage are punctual, but they are spread throughout the city, affecting the entire urban landscape. (Figg. 5, 6, 7) More than that, an impressive number of buildings with significant cultural value are doomed to extinction: traditional houses, modernist buildings or, as expected, large industrial heritage sites. In the case of the latter, these large urban areas represent the perfect pretext for new development projects. The approach is completely opposite to the one in Prague, as the industrial sites are either abandoned or subject to a *tabula rasa* process, most of the buildings being completely demolished, despite their certified values. This is the case of the former Match Factory, "Bragadiru" Brewery, "Assan" Mill, "Wolff" Industrial Halls and "Malaxa" Factory – now left in ruins or of the former "Luther-Grivita" Brewery, "Lemaitre" Ironworks and "Ford" Car Factory – now subject to new urban renewal projects that ignored the heritage buildings. (Figg. 8, 9)

So, does the past have a future?

The two analyzed cities, Prague and Bucharest, present a series of similarities and differences in terms of their relationship with the built heritage. Despite their common past, dominated by the influence of Soviet ideology, the two cities managed to preserve (at least in part) their valuable historical architecture. Prague's built heritage was more privileged from this point of view, benefiting over the years from the attention of the authorities. Bucharest sits at the opposite pole, the systematic destruction made before and after 1989 depriving the Romanian capital of a significant number of valuable buildings.

Even today, the situation of the built heritage in the two cities can be discussed in parallel – if the historical architecture of Prague is threatened by the exaggerated interest (especially from tourists), in Bucharest is precisely the lack of interest (of the authorities, community and tourists) that weakens this legacy. In this context, the fate of the built heritage of Bucharest seems to be compromised. The inadequate interventions to historical buildings or the new architecture, whose emplacement, size, height and appearance do not respect the character of the traditional urban fabric, are far from being restricted by the actors involved in the process of city management and urban development. The future of the built heritage depends entirely on the human factor, more precisely, on a change in the collective mentality of Romanian society.

More than that, the sustainable development of a city cannot be done in the absence of the built heritage, as the historic architecture «is of vital importance for humanity and for nations who find in it both the expression of their way of life and one of the corner-stones of their identity» (UNESCO 1976).

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Fig. 5) Contemporary interventions in historic areas: a new apartment building on the site of a partially demolished house at 38, Maria Rossetti St. Bucharest, Romania. (photo Raluca-Maria Trifa)



Fig. 6) Contemporary interventions in historic areas: an example of façadism at 59, Vasile Lascar St. Bucharest, Romania. (photo Raluca-Maria Trifa)



Fig. 7) Contemporary interventions in historic areas: a new office building at Calea Griviței, among the ruins of a large area demolished between 2011–2013. Bucharest, Romania. (photo Alberto Grosescu)

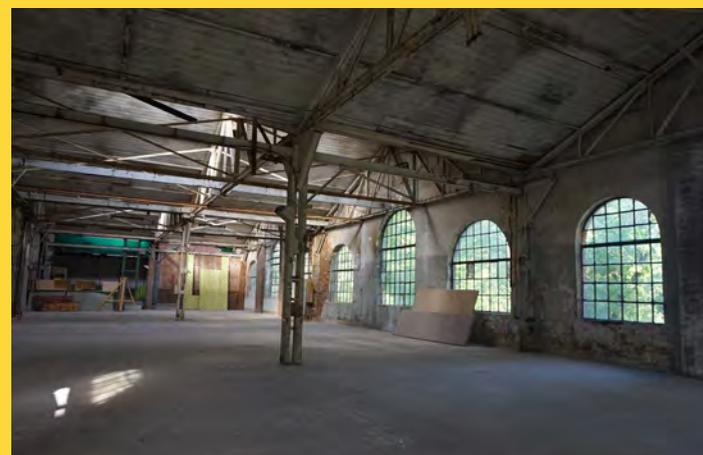


Fig. 8) Former “Wolff” Industrial site in Bucharest, currently unused. Romania. (photo Raluca-Maria Trifa)

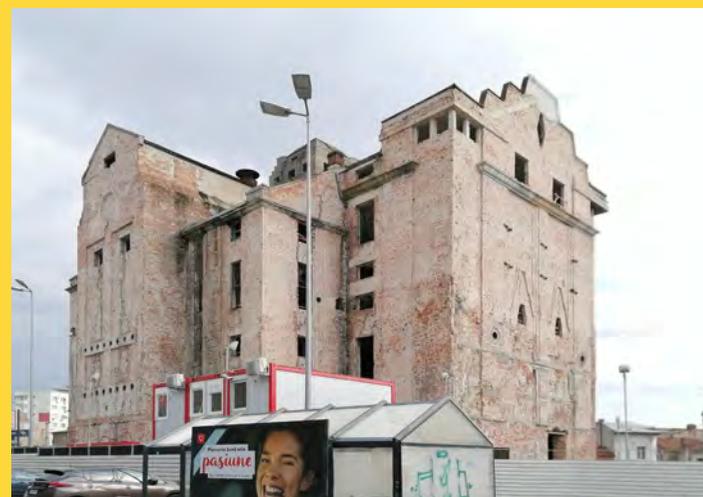


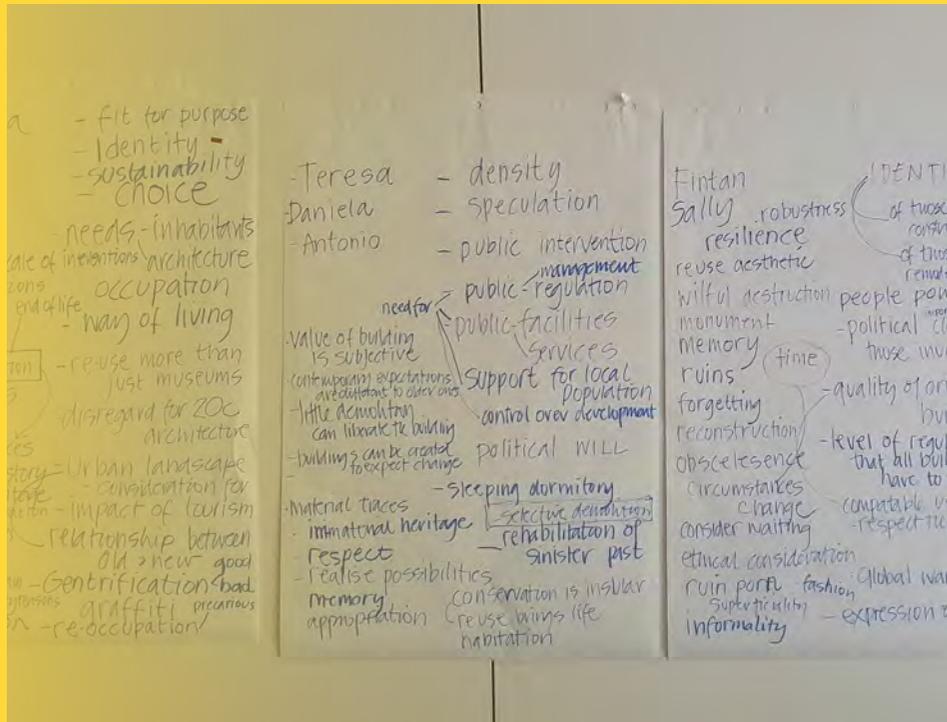
Fig. 9) Former “Luther-Grivita” Brewery, partially demolished and subject to a new real estate project. Romania. (photo Raluca-Maria Trifa)

The Force of Everyday Life

Demolition is a force of everyday life. It is part of the actions we must take in the shaping of our environment and as such can be a creative act as much as a destructive one. It is both transformative and irreversible, and therefore represents the end of an historical process and a break with continuity.

Demolition can range from a total removal of all fabric of a place with its corresponding loss of setting in the most extreme cases to relatively minor changes. It is a process of dematerialisation that can equally impact on the place's fabric and meaning, or each independently of the other. The loss of meaning of a place can be as destructive as the loss of its fabric. Demolition should be a managed process as a collaboration between the conservation professional and the community.

Sustainability is increased by necessary and responsible maintenance, of both fabric and function.



Discerning modern heritage management from building speculation within historical urban landscapes

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Introduction

The contemporary debate on historical urban centres, moving from the idea of the historic centre as «the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes», has highlighted that their twofold nature, material and immaterial, has to be examined.¹ The first dimension is expressed by its physical structure and the second by social and anthropological contexts (activities, behaviours etc.).

The physical dimension may be significantly understood through the concept of organism, constituted of a structure whose elements exist in a strict correlation and mutual dependence, attaining value and function only from the relation that ties them together;² and finally resulting in a whole more valuable and complex than the sum of the parts. These parts, the urban components, have been rightfully referred to “*longue durée* phenomena”,³ whose sense proves to be particularly appropriate to describe their complex nature which might otherwise be overlooked if reduced to specific events. Particularly, this perspective highlights how “continuity” proves to be a characteristic element of the historic city that is to be tackled from either the historical or the formal point of view.⁴ Both dimensions make explicit the idea of structure applied to the study of urban fabric and prove to be fruitful lenses through which urban historical fabric can be analysed from the perspective of its conservation. Further focussing on the conception of the urban historical fabric as an organism, shaped through a long-lasting process that necessarily engages contemporaneity, it suggests that the analysis could be incomplete without considering the present moment and consequently the impact it has on the community. As a matter of fact, such a concern was especially addressed by the international debate within Landscape European Convention of Paris that considered the issue, proposing a definition of landscape as the result of people’s current perception.⁵ Consequently, landscape is not conceived as separate from individuals, but intrinsically linked to them, thus necessarily implying the social and cultural dimension. This broadening of perspective, implemented by the insertion of perception as a formative element, has made it possible to refer to historical centres as historic urban landscapes⁶ and consider their material and immaterial nature as intertwined *per se*.

Moreover, such a connection is significantly founded on several studies developed in the second half of the last century. The research was focussed on the role of architecture in man’s life starting from the assessment that urban design does not

tackle urban form in itself but urban form as perceived and used by the population.⁷ The general intention was to propose an architectural and urban take on to a phenomenon that had been mostly addressed through a philosophical approach.⁸ Actually, use discloses people’s attention to and awareness of the living environment, particularly the urban one. In such a scenario, care of architectural heritage has proved to be a sensible indicator of local knowledge and culture. Another interpretation, further making explicit the relation between people and landscape, comes from Salvatore Settis who points out how the living environment constitutes a form of social capital from a cognitive point of view. In addition, it is possible to highlight a direct relationship between “local knowledge” and protection of the living (urban) environment and individual and collective identity of the communities. Urban landscape care may occur only if local perception does not act as a factor of deconstruction and disintegration, reducing protection to a cloud of point-like and inconsistent choices. As a matter of fact, people’s uses and practices are to be considered as part of the whole that constitutes the city, and the urban landscape acts as a threshold between the individual and the collective sphere revealing the relationship, balanced or unbalanced, existing between them.⁹

In conclusion, such a perspective fosters the need for the interaction between urbanistic and architectural concern with political, social and cultural choices and, above all, highlights the role of people’s perception (and knowledge) of the city within conservation process and more generally within cultural heritage protection and safeguarding, eliciting the question of shared values.

This quick glance through the recent research, developed generally on landscape and more specifically on historical urban landscape, shows that as the contemporary debate has reached a thorough overturning of the traditional opposition between a phenomenological vision and functionalist reductions, it has achieved a new comprehensive vision. Unfortunately, that theoretical awareness has not already become embedded in protection and planning instruments nor architectural and urban practice within historical centres, and only few examples show that kind of sensitivity. Furthermore, this gap between theoretical consciousness and urban tissue management practices is more frequently made explicit by demolitions that occur even within historical cities.

Comparing far away historic urban tissues: a possible take on historic centres protection

To tackle the theme by means of concrete examples, a parallel reading of some interventions that occurred in Rome and in Prague, is proposed. In both cases, to verify conservation attitude outside of the more shared and consolidated track reserved to the listed buildings, the urban fabric considered is not belonging to the monumental urban centre but to the “historic city” in Rome and in Prague mainly built during the 20th century.

The demolition of *Villino Naselli* in Rome has become emblematic of a way of intervening in the historic city disregarding the importance of urban fabric and more generally of urban landscape. The edifice was built in the early nineteenth hundreds in the *Coppedè* district, an area designed by Gino Coppedè within the Rome urban plan

presented in 1909 by Edmondo Sanjust di Teulada. This plan was developed merging the usual quantitative parameters and indexes with a typological criterion. To ensure a balanced distribution of constructions, avoiding too intensive an urban expansion, the plan foresaw three main residential typologies: buildings, *villini* (small edifices designed for one or maximum two housing units) and villas, whose features were specifically described. Particularly, the *villini* had two floors above the ground floor and were surrounded by a garden, therefore being distanced from the roadside. Normally, a small portico or a forecourt preceded the entrance. Unfortunately, their construction was limited to a very short period, ending in 1920, because they were soon considered not to be sufficiently economically profitable, and a royal law allowed their substitution with five-story buildings. As a consequence, many districts of the 1920's, as for example the so called *Città Giardino* in Rome, were completely transformed and most of the *villini* were replaced, obtaining twice the number of residential units. *Villino Naselli* was one of the buildings still existing with this typology and being part of an already recognizable urban tissue of the first 20th century expansion at the north-east of the city. The building that has replaced it is a five-storey reinforced concrete construction consisting of an uninterrupted monolithic central nucleus punctuated by the deep overhang of the floors that form large terraces. The whole building is covered with white plaster, only the core block is partially covered with traditional bricks. (Fig. 1)

The other two demolitions considered occurred not too far from the *Coppedè* district in *Via Spallanzani* e *Via Cornelio Celso*, also in the area of the historic city. Here, the urban fabric was also planned within the urban plan of 1908 but was not completely realised, leaving some free lots that were built later. In both cases the demolition does not affect historic architecture but buildings built around 1970 although they are part of a fabric mainly made of *villini*. The demolitions have been followed by the reconstruction of two similar modern buildings that intend to provide contemporary and comfortable housing. (Fig. 2) The realization of the construction designed in *Via Spallanzani* is still ongoing. The design envisages a six-storey concrete block surrounded by wide terraces. The second building, already realized in *Via Cornelio Celso*, is also a six floors reinforced concrete building covered with white plaster. The façades are rather compact and marked by a very regular disposition of the windows. Only the main façade is characterized by a projecting element that constitutes a system of large balconies for the apartments.

These case studies allow us to focus on the manifold issues that demolition and reconstruction arouse within an historic urban tissue. On the one hand, the demolition is raising a twofold issue either on the project itself, not recognizing any architectural value, historical or aesthetical, to the demolished building, or on the effectiveness of the protection instruments.¹⁰ On the other hand, the kind of reconstruction confirms this attitude and highlights the inadequacy of the planning instruments. All the three buildings show a kind of discontinuity with respect to the existing urban tissue that cannot be misunderstood as a claim to expressive authenticity, but it is rather to be referred to the weak ability to read the architectural structure the urban tissue reveals. It is not a concern of architectural or urban conservation, but most of all of the quality

of design.¹¹ The existing street scenes in which the new constructions take place show, in the three cases, defined characteristics such as the rhythms suggested by the alternation of solids and voids, the regulating layouts of frames and openings, the profiles towards the sky and towards the urban public space. These characteristics, effectively synthesized by Vitruvius *eurythmia* concept, embed the formal and historical identity of the urban landscape but are completely ignored by the new buildings. Leaving aside their intrinsic architectural quality (which is not discussed in this paper), they present specific features that ignore the context. Their materials stand out from the context, their frontages protrude from the street level in which they are located and their typology is alien to the environment. The idea of the building being part of a system of historical and physical relationships has been abandoned. The "processuality" of the urban tissue is entirely ignored and the "longue durée" process completely by-passed. Moreover, the inter-relationship, between the part and the whole appears to be read as one-sided and unbalanced in favour of the new buildings. The latter derive considerable value, also economic, from the surrounding urban landscape, made exclusive by the beautiful early nineteenth century *villini*, and from the nearby Villa Torlonia, clearly visible from the wide new terraces. Conversely, showing a kind of unconscious parasitic attitude, they distort the nature of the "longue durée" process of the urban landscape by depriving it of its continuity, either formal or historical. The new additions indicate a weak local knowledge and a heavily unbalanced attention towards private interest affecting the historical identity of the whole community.

To further address this issue it is interesting to compare these situations with other two Roman interventions that show a completely reversed approach, grounding the design directly on the relationship with the existing building. The *Fondazione Alda Fendi*, within *Foro Boario*, has been recently realized by Jean Nouvel, and is the result of the recasting of three pre-existing buildings. The design makes the physical and environmental condition the driving force behind the intervention. The project moves precisely from the special condition produced by the modifications undergone by the building through time, and aims to reveal its stratification. Thus, the resulting new building proves to be a kind of rereading of the old one, carried out with philological attention, proposing a new layer, that of contemporaneity, which juxtaposes the historical sedimentation but without interrupting its sequence. (Fig. 3) A similar process, although expressing an open contrast to the pre-existing traditional architecture may be observed in an historical intervention that brought about the elevation of the *villino Alatri* in *Pinciano district*. (Fig. 4) The building was originally designed in 1924 by Giovanni Morpurgo, an architect close to the fascist regime. In 1948 it was transformed and elevated by Mario Ridolfi and Mario Fiorentino with a project that showed no dialogue with the previous building, but rather a thorough critique. The new addition was actually conceived as an outrage against academicism, a kind of architectural provocation that was part of the debate on post-war architecture, in open contrast to the traditional monumentalism that prevailed in the last years of the fascist regime. The common character of the two situations, and which reveals the cultured approach of the designers, although distant in time and with respect to



Fig. 1) Coppedè district. The building that replaced Villino Naselli after its demolition. Rome, Italy. (photo Marta Acierno 2019)



Fig. 3) Alda Fendi Foundation building in 2019. Rome, Italy. (Fondazione Alda Fendi Esperimenti, Architecte Jean Nouvel, photo Roland Halbe)



Fig. 2) Via Cornelio Celso. The new building realized within the urban historic tissue. Rome, Italy. (photo Marta Acierno 2020)



Fig. 4) Villino Alatri. The transformation, although conceived as an architectural provocation, hinges on the relation with the former building. Rome, Italy. (photo Marta Acierno 2020)

their objectives, is the relation with the pre-existing context and more generally with history. They both involve the new realization in the historical transformation process without risking the creation of a situation of estrangement for the local community. Moreover, in both cases, the new intervention looks for a relationship with the existing organism, taking account of its structural system and keeping the balance between individual and collective interest.

As a completion of the discourse, it is interesting to address another Roman situation concerning a completely different intervention realized in the southern suburb of the *Quadraro*. This is a district built at the end of the 1920^s to host people moved forcibly from the historic centre of Rome during the *sventramenti*, the huge demolitions carried out during the fascist era to simplify the circulation in Rome, and to create wider and “more adequate” urban spaces around the main monuments and archaeological areas.¹² The *Quadraro* buildings are not of great architectural quality although the district has developed a highly defined identity mostly developed during the *Resistenza*, a period when local people worked out a strong opposition to Nazi occupation. The intervention concerns an artistic project, developed by the means of street art, called MuRO. The designer David Diavù Vecchiato involved several street artists, from Italy and abroad and conceived the project as “in site” and “in community” with the intention of telling through the paintings the *Quadraro* history, and making it possible for people to retrieve the link with it. People were involved during the realization of the artwork and the result was of great interest as it has requalified an area and disseminated its historical and social value. (Figg. 5, 6) As a matter of fact, the new intervention has become part of the existing context, adding to it an historical and social dimension that had not existed beforehand. The result completely reverses the situation with respect to the *villini* reconstructions. Intending to improve the quality of public space, the intervention makes private buildings benefit from it and increases their economic value.¹³ Moreover, the project has proved to be a very effective safeguarding instrument, enhancing the sharing of the cultural value of the district.

The presented Prague examples, that serve to represent the whole history of a 20th century urban tissue, are all in the *Holešovice* district. The main reason that has suggested their consideration leans on the fact that they all belong to a general reuse process the whole district has undergone. Such a process is interesting, fragmentary and partially uneven. On the one hand the phenomenon, triggered by the intention of returning to people a heritage that is mostly unknown and unperceived, reactivates or strengthens the connection with local history and enhances the local knowledge of visitors and inhabitants. Industrial buildings display themselves, switching their status from closed and private activities to open ones, involving the observer and turning the constructions into a common cultural heritage. On the other hand, some interventions show a kind of ambiguity from the cultural point of view. The historicity of the buildings becomes a marketing and communication tool and the renewal of the ancient structures disregards the character of the site and somehow introduces a sort of estrangement immediately perceptible to the observer, thus failing the objective of revealing the connection with the historical identity of the local community.

As examples of the first group of interventions, we analyse two buildings: *La Fabrika* and the *Vnitroblok*; while a third one, the *Materna* factory, actually produces an ambiguous result from the cultural point of view. *La Fabrika* is a building refurbished through different interventions that extended from 2004 to 2012 by Atelier KAVA (Tomáš Novotný, Lukáš Ježek, Tomáš Zmek). The earlier fitting workshops of František Richter and the Foundry were readapted into a multicultural centre. The project has renewed all the facilities but has conserved the structure, the materials and the space configuration through the installation of movable walls that allow a flexible internal distribution. (Fig. 7)

The *Vnitroblok* is a multifunctional space that has been readapted from its former industrial function. Here, particularly, the project has maintained, not only the former structure and materials, but also all those traces of time and decay which can still be appreciated. (Fig. 8) This particular choice is strikingly different from other examples in the same district. It is not only an aesthetical solution but it copes with the historical sense of the building that is immediately perceived. Walking around the *Vnitroblok* is a very pleasant experience that involves the observer rather than making him feel a stranger.

Finally, the last example examined is the *Materna* Paint Factory. This building was realized in 1911 and designed by Rudolf Stockar. It was probably one of the most important buildings of the district, being one of the few examples of cubist architecture then existing in Europe and indeed a Prague specificity.¹⁴ For its architectural relevance, it may not fit our discourse which is mainly developed upon historic but not monumental architectures, nevertheless the result of its conservation well explains the crucial points the discourse is addressing. Unfortunately, the building was completely demolished except from its façade. Differently from many of the neighbouring buildings, either at the architectural or urban scale, the building’s space-time connections with the context have been completely overlooked. The façade has been isolated from its structure as is the building with regard to the urban fabric. The adjacent buildings were demolished and rebuilt with no attention to the compositional rules suggested by the urban backdrop they belonged to. As a result, the building has completely lost its role and probably its sense. The delicate outline of the façade is decaying and its weak figurative presence is completely lost. Its conservation even worsens its condition as it completely alienates it from the urban fabric, made of formal features and proportional ratios between buildings.

What is happening is that new use and adaptive intervention overcome the historical sense, erasing the physical connections that materially exists within the building and built fabric, consequently the sense of belonging that the inhabitants can feel attending the place, as it is within these connections that the historical sense is to be mostly found.

The study cases analysis allowed a comparison between them that addressed three main elements of historical urban fabric: the intrinsic organism feature constituted by a structure, the extrinsic dimension of their perception and finally their threshold nature, standing between the public and private spheres and an indicator of their relationship. The first element of analysis was assessed focussing on the one hand on the relation between new Roman buildings created to replace the *villini* and their urban context and on the other hand, the conservation intervention of *Materna* paint factory. Both



Fig. 5) Quadraro district. Il nido di vespe (The wasp nest) by Lucamaleonte. The painting refers to the name that German soldiers gave to the district during Nazi occupation. Rome, Italy. (photo Marta Acierno 2019)



Fig. 6) Quadraro district. Senza titolo by Nicola Alessandrini. The artwork intends to represent building speculation due to gentrification. Rome, Italy. (photo Marta Acierno 2019)



Fig. 7) La Fabrika. The conservation of the architectural identity was assured by designing a flexible layout. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Gabriel Fragner 2014)



Fig. 8) Vnitroblok. The original space has been readapted to a new use without losing its former architectural features. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Marta Acierno 2019)

situations have shown a very weak awareness of the structural relationship system they belong to. This was particularly highlighted also by the comparison with the *Fondazione Alda Fendi* or the *villino Alatri* where the transformations that occurred were particularly focussed on the existing context. The second element of comparison referred to the attention showed to revealing local history so that a wider shared local knowledge could be developed. This is quite evident referring either to the *Fondazione Alda Fendi* or the *Quadraro* project in Rome and to the *Holešovice* interventions that have enhanced the narrative of the 19th century industrial period. The third element of comparison that helps to tackle the theme of historic urban tissue conservation is the return of several places of the city to community. This particular outlook is well highlighted if we compare the Czech cases with the “villini” demolition in Rome. In the Prague industrial district the idea of converting private spaces used for productive activities into public areas available for everyone, shows a diametrically opposed attitude with regard to the 19th century building substitution to facilitate speculation. Particularly in *Holešovice*, in the Roman district of *Quadraro* and at the *Fondazione Alda Fendi* the interventions hint at creating gathering points that can relate to the context, generating not an impressionistic curiosity but rather a dialectic perception of a common social past.¹⁵ As a matter of facts, such a reconnection can involve the visitor or the inhabitant in a process of retrieving individual and collective memory and identity from the environment.

Conclusion

The outlined discussion has attempted to focus on the issue of historical urban fabric protection, analysing, through the comparison between different geographical areas different perspectives that have proven to be particularly significant in the light of the current cultural debate. These perspectives, looking at different urban redevelopment projects, range from the inner insight of historical urban tissues (the structure) to the reading of the relationships with individuals and the community. Attention to these different issues actually could form the basis for the individual and collective sensitivity that should feed professional practice as well as political and administrative approaches.

The analysis has shown that most appreciated interventions prove to be the ones driven by architectural designs, aimed either at a new addition or at conservation, that are able to reconnect with the historical and formal texture of the contexts they deal with. Moreover the comparison between two cultural areas – Rome and Prague – has proved to be very effective as it allowed one to compare similar behaviours in different contexts. It has made possible to draw out the theoretical and cultural framework that is behind the architectural and urban interventions, giving the opportunity to identify some kinds of benchmarks to assess cultural heritage protection behaviour. Particularly, focussing on the relation between historical urban landscape and its inhabitants’ behaviours it was possible to observe that architecture itself may take on an active role in urban heritage safeguarding and protection thereby enhancing the sharing of the local historical and aesthetic values.

Notes

- 1 This definition has been proposed by the Unesco Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (WHC Recommendations). To have a focus on HUL, the interested reader may refer to Jokilehto 2007; Van Oers 2006 and 2010; Veldpaus 2019; WHC *Vienna Memorandum* 2005, to further address the duality between “material” and “immaterial” nature of cultural heritage an interesting reference is Fiorani 2014 and Fiorani *et al.* 2019.
- 2 The nature of the historic centres described as complex organisms developed upon a structure has been addressed to by a wide literature that spread from the studies developed at the end of the nineteenth century. The interested reader may see, among others, Sitte 1889; Stubben 1890; Buls 1893; Giovannoni 1932; Cederna 1956. Among the most recent studies, it is worthy to refer to Spagnesi 2002, Sette 2004, Fiorani 2019.
- 3 The theoretical framework suggested by Maria Piera Sette (Sette 2004: 127) refers to the studies on historical approaches introduced firstly by March Bloch and Lucien Febvre and successively by Fernand Braudel (Braudel 1958).
- 4 This perspective has been widely addressed in the last century by both conservation and new buildings architects and was significantly explained by Antonino Terranova: «the interesting, in a city, is not for small houses, in itself, or for the single monument taken out of its context [...] but for its amalgam, the cocktail made of monuments, more or less small houses. That is to say for the game of contrast and counterpoint that houses and monuments play together, actually “tissue” and “emergencies”, as I like to call them, even if in many cases “emergencies” are lower and smaller than the buildings making up the tissue» (translated by the author from Terranova 1985: 142).
- 5 «Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and the interaction of natural and/ or human factors» (European Landscape Convention 2000).
- 6 The current wide vision of the urban historical centres is clearly expressed by the definitions proposed by the Historic Urban Landscape Unesco Recommendations. In particular “urban conservation” definition, focuses on the nature of the historic centre as a whole that involves both the urban fabric and its social context and uses.

Recently the debate on the effect of the different uses has been mostly addressed focussing on the gentrification phenomenon, it has pointed out its dangerous effect on social balancing and particularly the separation it triggers between people and their history and above all with the respect to popular social classes (Montanari 2019: 143). It is worthy to highlight how actually the debate on the role of social issues within historic centres management is rather dated. Particularly the interested reader may refer to the Gubbio Charter and the debate it triggered in Italy: «The overall character, the overall unity, the continuous and composite configuration of the whole environment of the cities must therefore be considered including – as a substantial part of them – even the uses.» (The sentence has been translated by the author from Cederna 1960: 69).

7 The expressed concepts are the result of several researches developed in the second half of the 20th century. Among the others it is worthy here to refer to Kevin Lynch (Lynch 1968) or Richard Neutra (Neutra 1954) who, in particular, considers landscape as permeating the individuals, highlighting the absence of a real separation between them and the environment

8 In particular, Walter Benjamin, analysing art perception and the relationship of the masses to art, has focussed on architecture and on its claim to being a living force. Starting from the fact that architecture is received by the collectivity in a state of distraction, he argues how, thanks to this condition, a deeper attention, coming from subconscious awareness, takes over. This kind of attention actually reflects on people habits and particularly on the use, they make of architecture (Benjamin 2010: 16).

9 The surrounding context proves to provide its inhabitants with life, behaviour and memory coordinates. These coordinates are actually determined by the balance between the material stratification and the stability of the whole. Conversely, territorial fragmentation, violent and quick landscape transformation trigger individual and social pathologies (Settis 2012: 300–302). Moreover, the scholar referring to Massimo Quaini’s definition of landscape as an «*entre deux* between the individual and collective dimension» considers landscape as an indicator to assess the relationship between people and their

life community. (Settis 2012: 284). Another interesting interpretation comes from Christopher Larsh who is very clearly explaining the relationship between the urban management, above all of public spaces, and the level of democracy of a certain society (Larsh 1995: 18–20).

10 What is hard to believe is that demolition was actually allowed by the roman urban planning instrument (Storto 2018).

11 Although the Roman urban planning instrument (Piano Regolatore Generale) contains a document ('Carta della Qualità) that identifies the specific architectural and urban planning qualities of the fabric, the reconstructions don't take into account its contents. An accurate description of this document is published by Piero Ostilio Rossi (Rossi 2003: 256–261). Another interesting text on Roman urban planning instrument has been

written by Maurizio Marcelloni (Marcelloni 2003).

12 A wide literature has focussed the fascist urban politics. The interested reader may see, among several studies, the texts by Antonio Cederna (Cederna, 1956), Ludovico Quaroni (Quaroni 1969), Italo Insolera (Insolera 1985) or the interesting reconstruction by Spiro Kostof (Kostof 1973).

13 An interesting turn on the relation of individuals to public spaces is given by Christopher Larsh (Larsh 1995), already referred to in the footnote 9, who focusses on the political dimension of public space.

14 The interested reader to Czech cubism may see Vlčková 2015.

15 The effect of these urban interventions have been attended to at the light of the observations proposed by Walter Benjamin addressing the alienating effect of the modern city (Benjamin 2010: 379–383).

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Life, death and life after death for built environment

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Abstract

The demolition of a building is like the death, or rather the murder of a living creature. We can a priori assume as a fundamental moral principle that all murder is wrong, and the notions of death and murder lead to sadness almost without exception. Similarly, the term demolition recalls more of a feeling of negation to many people rather than affirmativeness. However, there are cases when the demolition is intended or favored just as there are times when the demolition is inevitable although not desired. In all cases, both the demolition and the murder are irreversible acts, and as for all irreversible acts and processes, the rational mind would concentrate on what to do afterwards and not only on lamenting the loss. Historical cities all around the world unfortunately have witnessed countless sad stories of demolitions, just as like a slaughterhouse has witnessed the extensive murder of livestock. On the other hand, there are also many stories illustrating the possibility of having praiseworthy returns out of losses, as with the current state of the old slaughterhouse (abattoirs) in the historical city of Prague where obsolete and once-forgotten buildings and the neighborhood are being gradually transformed into a cultural and artistic center of attraction over the last decade. This paper asserts, by referring to the specific example cited above that such developments enabling recovery and flourishing of almost lost heritage are more likely to be achieved and be kept sustainable when they make appropriate use of the past and present forces of the everyday life and the memories and experiences of the ordinary people, whereas success comes less often when the interventions are carried out with profit oriented, large scale, authoritarian investment initiatives.

Everyday life, ordinary people and the built environment

"Documents" was a surrealist art magazine edited by Georges Bataille published in Paris from 1929 to 1930, a regular section of which was called the "Critical Dictionary" offering short essays on different subjects. The term "abattoir" was the first word and the caption of the first essay of the dictionary arranged in alphabetical order. According to Catsaros (2020), architects are more familiar with Bataille's essay captioned "architecture", whereas "abattoirs" as a place symbolizing the transformation of the living places into consumer goods is not less related with the urban and architectural questions of our time. The essay on abattoirs was accompanied by Elie Lotar's agonizing photographs of La Vilette, a place that once harbored the abattoirs in Paris, now mostly famous for its Parc de la Vilette, a project designed by architect Bernard Tschumi.

By making reference to this coincidence, several hints of the parallelism between the architectural theory adopted by Tschumi and the philosophy of Bataille were highlighted by Hollier (1989). Architect Bernard Tschumi whose intellectual position is known to be widely influenced by the work of Georges Bataille, together with the theories of other post-structuralist philosophers and critics such as Henri Lefebvre, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, expressed his critical stance against Modernist architecture through his writings and projects during the 1970s (Hejduk: 393). On the other hand, the expression of his feelings when he visited Villa Savoye of Le Corbusier which is one of the Modernism's cult buildings, reveals how immaterial values ascribed to an edifice are important to all. Tschumi (2014: 10) describes his feelings when telling about his visit to the Villa in the late 1960's, which was been threatened with demolition at that time, in the following terms: «When I visited it something incredible happened; the building was amazing, it was quite astonishing in its state of decay – in its state of complete dereliction from many years of neglect. It occurred to me then that perhaps architecture is not only about perfection and the realization of an abstract concept; it is also about the sensations of the occupant, including making room for an interaction between building and feelings/body. The building stank; it was full of graffiti; it embodied a very different presence than that conceived by Le Corbusier, and more emotional charge than contemporary design could achieve.»

Villa Savoye came to be the first modernist building to be added to French register of historical monuments, it was completely restored and refurbished in the 1990s, although Tschumi desired its preservation in the state it was in at the time of his visit. Tschumi uses this example to make the point that architecture is not absolute but relative: it is related to other things that happen in it and there is no architecture unless something happens in it. It is therefore possible to conclude that the resilience of architecture and spaces, their resistance to demolition and extinction, are related to and supported by the events, actions, memories and everyday life experiences of the people.

The notion of everyday life is generally considered to be pioneered, and brought to the attention of social thought by Lefebvre, who with his book *Critique of Everyday Life* first published in 1947, claimed that «everyday life is defined by contradictions: illusion and truth, power and helplessness, the intersection of the sector man controls and the sector he does not control» (Lefebvre 1991: 21). According to Lefebvre, the city is the locus in which the concept of everyday life is realized to the full and he approached the notion of everyday life mainly as an urban phenomenon, by referring to the city as the site of «people's victimization by capitalism, the realization of inescapable alienation» (Kalekin-Fishman 2013: 716). Attempting to illustrate the notion of everyday life, Lefebvre (1971: 3) cited the novel of James Joyce; *Ulysses* in which he reads «with all the trappings of an epic – masks, costumes, scenery – the quotidian steals the show». The novel *Ulysses*, which is the Latin name of Odysseus, chronicles one ordinary single day of one ordinary person living in the city of Dublin in Ireland in the beginning of 20th Century by establishing parallelism between the characters and experiences of Homer's epic poem, *Odyssey*. Through this parallelism, the dichotomy between the ordinary and elite is quite well emphasized. *This dichotomy makes visible*

the repetitive and banal character of the everyday life of ordinary people, which has a major impact on world history nonetheless. In that it allows us to measure change it establishes the importance of ordinary people, the masses, the non-elites (Bratsis 2007: 2).

The study of everyday life and ordinary people in order to understand the past opens a gate through which we see how ordinary men and women spent their day, their occupations, labors or leisure. It is these revelations that might enable us to understand the “future of the past”, a concept which Lefebvre (1971: 1) implies by referring to the events that have not yet occurred but are about to take place; «silently developing in the hidden depths of time which a reasonably perceptive person living in those days could have foretold».

As Žižek (2000: 89) asserts; «the past is not simply past, but bears within it, its proper utopian promise of a future redemption». In order to understand a past epoch properly, it is not sufficient to take into account the historical conditions out of which it grew; but one shall also take into account the utopian hopes of a future, that which was “negated” and that which “did not happen”.

Through the concept of *aktualität* introduced by Walter Benjamin, reference is made to everyday life as the basis of understanding historical events. Benjamin (1940) who describes the world of everyday as not only the arena of human action but also the heart of human thought, states that «history is not based on a progressive flow of time but on disruptive constellations of the present and the past». Therefore, the past is never fully gone; the present is connected to all lost causes and struggles of those who literally and metaphorically lost their histories as he calls the “tradition of the oppressed”. Against the continuous temporality of the humanist idea of cultural heritage, “the tradition of the oppressed” forms a fractured medium, through whose dialectics Benjamin discussed the question of how the “struggling, oppressed class” relates to its oppressed past and how this past is constitutive or destitute of tradition.

These approaches indicate that our reading of the past should consider the “future inherent in the past” through the eyes of the ordinary people in their routine everyday life. We are more convinced of the accuracy of the narration of the past when it is told through real stories by ordinary people in a frank and sincere manner. These memories enable us to understand and empathize with the struggle of people and present to us a much clearer image of the social and physical ambiance and milieu of those past times. Ordinary people in their everyday lives are those who feel and reflect best the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time; the oppressions, difficulties and struggles as well as the joy and hope for better times to come, sometimes turning into frustration and despair.

Everyday life in the history of Holešovice, Prague

Hints towards this understanding are present in the recent history of Czech Republic and the urban evolution of the Prague city. The Prague Spring of 1968 lasted a relatively short time but one full of enrichment for hopes and expectations. The life of the political and cultural liberalization achieved at that time only endured around

seven months, but the young people experiencing these times had a taste of freedom which gave them the power to resist and not quietly acquiesce in the repression and restrictions brought about with the Soviet-Warsaw Pact invasion in August of the same year.

«*On a snowy day in March 1976, the phone rang in our flat in Prague. “Ahoy” said a familiar voice, a friend I’ve known since I first arrived in Prague back in 1967. Like everyone else in the past couple of years, he didn’t announce his name. It was a simple precaution in a time of paranoia.*

Ahoy I replied. What’s happening?

They arrested the Plastic People and the whole Underground, he whispered.

When?

Last night, this morning. It’s still going on.

Are you at home?

I’ll be soon. I’m calling from a phone booth.

I’ll be right over.

I grabbed my coat and rushed down the wide staircase of the turn-of-the-century tenement house and into the street. As a former Plastic People band member and still an occasional participant, I had reason to fear I might also be rounded up. Thick, heavy snowflakes were drifting down, covering the ancient paving stones and the orange tiled roofs of Prague’s Old Town. On the corner, boys were slapping a tennis ball against the wall of a Baroque church with hockey sticks. Here and there, forlorn graffiti stared out at me from the crumbling, rough-cast plaster that covers most buildings in the city: JETHRO TULL, BLACK SABBATH, a hammer and sickle joined to a swastika with an equal sign. I walked across the Charles Bridge, a medieval make-work project built six hundred years ago to span the Vltava River winding northward through the heart of Prague.»

The above-quoted story is told by Canadian vocalist Paul Wilson (2018: 39), who joined the rock band named *The Plastic People of the Universe* in Prague in 1970. The expression of his state of mind, together with detailed descriptions of everything around him; the ordinary people, buildings, roads, political atmosphere captured on walls through graffiti provides us with a complete picture of his time.

By taking everyday life as an object of the past he enables us to examine a particular time-space modality within which we find ourselves. This makes sense as Lefebvre points out (1971: 72); everything stems from everyday life, which in turn reveals everything. In other words the critical analysis of everyday life reveals everything because it takes everything into account (Bratsis, 2007:3). Paul Wilson (2018: 46) further continues the story:

«*In the fall of 1971, we finally found a place to rehearse that was not in someone’s lap. It was an old brick vaulted cellar in condemned tenement house in Holešovice, just a shift away from the Prague abattoirs. The dirt floor was littered with butts, broken glass and wires. There was no heat and when winter set in, we practiced in our coats and kept warm with bottled beer and rum. The only concession to beauty in the place was a Mothers of Invention poster stolen from a hoarding in Berlin.»*

The mentioned quarter of Holešovice, was once the industrial district of Prague. Located on the left bank of Vltava River, the site was entered via two gates decorated with statues of men and bulls. A representative trade hall, a tavern, an administrative building and a lodge were built in the center of the area; the tallest structure was the water tower and the largest area was taken up by the cattle sheds, the market and the slaughterhouse. The abattoirs were extended in 1929 with the addition of a hall with iron roof structure. The Mint Market, occupying a hall in the Pražská tržnice (market of Prague) served for over a century as the meat market for whole city.

Prague, which became the capital of the newly independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, escaped damage during the 1914–1918 War and compared to other European countries, it received minor damage in the 1939–1945 War. In 1948, Czechoslovakia was included in the Communist Bloc of Eastern Europe. The Communist system ended in 1989 and in 1993, the country was divided into the Czech and Slovak Republics and Prague was retained as the capital of the Czech Republic. From the late 1940s to the early 1960s, there were few new developments in the city. However in the late 1950^s a major program of high-density, high-rise residential development began. Large scale demolition took place in the Holešovice quartier in 1959. In response to these demolitions, some journalists of that time wrote about the end of poverty. They saw the beginning of hope in the provision of modern housing for Prague inhabitants, and they praised the admirable speed and efficiency of the slum clearance. An article praising the demolitions is quoted as follows (Spurný: 300): *«I hope for their sake that they meet with this good fortune as soon as possible and I think that nothing would happen if even the rest of old Holešovice were soon demolished. The housing here is not good and we are not worried about the old image of this remarkable district. Film-makers have filmed it for us and our grandchildren will thus not have lost anything.»*

In Prague, modernization of the older building stock, mainly in the historic core, through demolition of old structures and the building of apartment blocks in some areas, or through refurbishment of buildings in other areas. This continued until end of the 1980^s. Demolitions and damage to the old city were only controlled to an extent in the 1990^s, but became constrained after December 1992 when the historical core of the city was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The meat market and the site of abattoirs in the Holešovice district of Prague, ceased to serve its intended function when two new meatpacking plants were opened in 1983. The abattoirs that were first opened in 1895 remained obsolete for a long period. However, during the last decade a gradual evolution of the neighborhood was experienced, with involvement of young entrepreneurs with new visions of how to reinvent this once-forgotten area. In 2014 some halls were converted into a multifunctional experimental space containing a theatre hall, a small scale theatre space, a training hall, a rehearsal space, a gallery and a bar.

Holešovice is now one of the special and exciting districts of Prague, the majority of the former industrial buildings have been adapted as apartment buildings, offices, studios for young artists, designers, architects or cultural institutions. This area is a special example demonstrating the valorization and the sustainability of the

built environment when demolition, transformation and adaptation stems not from the large scale, market driven neoliberal initiatives, but from the initiatives of the public who embrace, adopt and indigenize the space. (Figg. 1, 2)

People sustain or resurrect the built environment

Architectural theory and the paradigm of conservation cannot reject, exclude or ignore the act of demolition. As part of a series of actions to achieve betterment of buildings and physical environment or due to the attempts to adapt the “creative destruction” concept to urban movements of renewal, regeneration, transformation or gentrification in the capitalist era, the demolition of buildings and neighborhoods is a possible destiny of the buildings and the built physical environment. This destiny is described as a «memento mori for architecture» by Cairns and Jacobs (2014) and “building deaths” are characterised to be planned or unintended, lamented or celebrated.

Accordingly, the risk of a building being demolished is lowest when it is newly built and steadily increases during the efficient economic life of the building. Whenever the economic life of the building starts to expire, arguments as to the necessity of keeping it, or plans for replacing it with a more economically and functionally efficient alternative emerge. An intended but lamented / regretted end can be expected when despite all architectonic qualities of the building, the initiatives of the profit seeking market forces prevail. Alternatively there are numerous examples of intended and celebrated / legitimized demolitions especially due to the outdated and/or disgraced values that such buildings used to symbolize in their time. However, once this threshold of intended demolition is overcome, the building, depending on various conditions, is either destined to a slow death by decay or to a much longer life through conservation.

The forces enabling a building or built environment to withstand demolition and ensure sustenance are closely related to their use value and appreciation in the eyes of the public, in the eyes of the ordinary people of today and of the past whose memories of daily life entwine the material form and value of the building. In such cases, it is not surprising for edifices valued in that way to resurrect, rise from the ashes even when demolished, destroyed and left to its fate as actively demonstrated through the recent developments in Holešovice district in Prague.

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Fig. 1) Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Mehmet Gökhan Berk 2019)



Fig. 2) Prague Market, former Abattoirs, Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Mehmet Gökhan Berk 2019)

Unplanned conservation: from Prague to Europe

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A premise

This essay focusses on a particular approach of architectural conservation that derives from a spontaneous attitude to protect existing buildings otherwise condemned to destruction through new ways of living with them. This praxis is normally considered “outside” of theoretical-academic interests regarding conservation. However, this intuitive appreciation of existing buildings influences social activities and has important consequences for architecture. In other words, this appreciation actually is able to “produce” architectural preservation, meanwhile representing one of the more evident ways of social participation in the culture of conservation – two good reasons for analysing the phenomenon more deeply.

The absence of established conservation programs – clearly defined by the elaboration of architectural projects and management plans – or, from the opposite perspective, the contraposition to precise demolition schedules allows us to define this phenomenon as “unplanned conservation”.¹ As a matter of fact, it essentially represents the result of the people’s special appreciation for the existing architecture – either arising from its being “ancient” and from its particular aesthetic qualities – that can inspire low cost maintenance while oriented to functional purposes.

Above all this unplanned conservation concerns industrial or commercial complexes from the 20th century or the last decades of the 19th century. These complexes comprise big spaces specifically designed for a precise productive purpose, built with masonry walls and iron or concrete floors or entirely in concrete or metal structures, using the “new technologies” of that period. Sometimes, they still conserve inside the furniture and machinery used for the industrial production.

These edifices are not strictly considered as landmarks in themselves, so they are generally not really regarded as objects of conservation. They are rather considered as subjects for technological recovery or rehabilitation design, without paying special attention to their identity as historical buildings, safeguarding of material and structural authenticity, or the possibility of maintaining the evidence of the original spaces and functions with their mutual associations.²

Precisely because of its spontaneous and free character, normally the “unplanned conservation” phenomenon can be transitional, subject to later more stable final adaptations.

These definitive solutions can be also different, involving building demolition – pursued to reconstruct entirely new architectures – or its restyling – radically trans-

forming the existing edifice. Both of these solutions, in our opinion, represent the destruction of the original architectures. They may be legitimate choices – whenever no real values are identified in the buildings – which however has to be declared as such, while a form of ambiguity is sometimes present in the choice to maintain a building with no special value.³

At the same time, in many cases we can also observe unplanned conservation becoming the trigger for a project where the building’s existing values are recognised and promoted. Indeed, this is the more interesting situation, because, as we can observe in some cases, it combines two different factors, the emotional/intuitive and the rational/intellectual one, which together can be followed when dealing with this kind of edifice. Both of these apply in the identification of the human contemporary needs along with the building’s own values; they normally propose to act via different strategies while frequently driving towards similar solutions.

De-industrialisation, empty architectures, researchers and people’s interests

The disposal of industrial buildings started in the 1970^s with the shifting of the Western economy from the industrial production to the service-based and knowledge resource industries; this phenomenon has become especially relevant during the last decades, transforming many European landscapes into “industrial deserts”.⁴

The study and the functional conversion of industrial buildings started in the more industrialised areas of the old continent – United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium⁵ – encouraging the development of the so-called “industrial archaeology”⁶ and the realisation of very interesting activities, as for the Ruhr landscape and environmental transformation. The phenomenon has progressively involved the biggest European towns, whose urban expansions had grown up around the locations of the factories in the suburbs.⁷

The new economic and urban conditions in these towns have particularly stressed the alternative between demolition and conservation of existing industrial buildings and this contraposition has been often mirrored in the opposition between private speculation and the public interest in defence of existing heritage.

The general growth in the appeal of industrial heritage has fostered at the same time the development of research on historical and technical topics, the realisation of the first recovery interventions on the factories – most of them initially transformed in museums – and people’s involvement in the future of the buildings. The scientific studies and the design proposals initially prioritised the appreciation of industrial machines as the historic evidence of the technological development of an era over the architectural aspects. In addition, the monumental features of the buildings were considered more important than their being a part of an urban context. Conversely, the communities’ participation soon begun – especially in the case of “minor” urban industrial buildings – to examine the availability of the empty existing spaces for new possible functions, so to explore how to give back life to these spaces through their compatible use.⁸

At the beginning of this millennium, specific urban plans were finally launched to re-vitalise the industrial suburbs of principal towns, for example in Barcelona, Spain, precisely focusing on the possibility of reusing the abandoned factories.⁹

Case-studies

We can begin our overview of European cases-studies of unplanned conservation starting from the Vnitroblok complex in Prague, Check Republic.¹⁰ (Fig. 1) This factory was built in 1932 to produce beer cooling systems and it was composed of various buildings, most of them still existing. Brick walls enclose internal rooms covered by metallic or concrete structures; a wider space is divided by slim iron pillars and lit by skylights. After the machinery production ended, the factory, one of the many built in the industrial Holešovice district, North of Prague, was occupied by homeless people. Since 2014–2015, thanks to the contribution of young creative people, the place has been completely cleaned and repaired and new activities were hosted inside since 2016, the first among them being a motorbike exposition. Simple painting to protect the iron structures from rust, adaptations of water and electrical systems, the addition of air conditioning, and provision of toilets have left intact the rough physical features of the industrial site without modifying the image of the original building. This “soft” intervention has allowed the organisation of different spaces, used as a cafeteria, dance studio, theatre, conference hall, galleries and shops, also with spaces rentable for special events. Every use is calculated on the precise features of the existing building, as we can see for instance in the “mini-kino”, a small cinema installed in a narrow room simply through the placing of a screen and some informal seating. External electric plants and air conditioning pipes are visible on the naked or partly plastered walls. A few contemporary insertions are clearly recognisable and are well adapted to the spirit of the site, such as the iron and wood stair and upper gallery or the iron and glass showcases in the cafeteria. (Fig. 2)

Vnitroblok in Prague is – until now – an example of bottom-up conservation of an existing building that does not boast of any special architectural values but shows a clear historical identity and an undeniable aesthetic appeal. The success of its respectful reuse seems to lean on the widespread reuse of many surrounding similar buildings, which have contributed to change the industrial district into a locality for shops, restaurants and artistic spaces for young creative people, and on the fluidity of the functions hosted within the buildings, well managed and with minimal and well-studied additions.

Precisely because of the minimal approach, Vnitroblok is very different from other designed examples in the Czech Republic, such as the nearby Centre of Contemporary Art DOX in Prague, the Coal Mill in Libčice (Joint-Stock Ironworks) or the Děčín Brewery Centre in Podmokly.¹¹ In these cases, the intervention choices derive from projects that play with the taste for the contrast between old and new structures, or that want to give a new shape and a new face to the old wall envelopes. These projects seem mainly to derive from an abstract aesthetic assessment and are not the product of a real “listening” to the material, constructive and formal nature of the original buildings. They are “planned” and lacking in conservation intent.

Of course, in the Vnitroblok the conservative solutions are also the most compatible with the low budget available, but can we assert that the special nature of the architectural choices is only the product of lower economic possibilities, or is it

rather possible to consider that it can also testify to a specific sensibility toward the pre-existing?

To give an answer to this question we have to enlarge our scenario. Specifically, we have to consider some past “bottom-up” experiences of unplanned conservation, applied to some buildings in the reunified Berlin after the fall of the Wall, at the beginning of the 1990¹⁵.

The political component of the German situation of thirty years ago was more evident than is the case today in Prague, where we can rather recognise a kind of “pacified” application of an architectural conservation intent, which have however produced quite similar results from figurative and social viewpoints.

The widespread availability of abandoned buildings and the many priority requirements of the reunified German nation delivered many of these edifices into the hands of self-proposed “users”, who offered a new life to the architectures while completely preserving their spatial and material features. This trend prevailed especially in the new capital, where it has been mainly connected with the so-called “technological revolution” of techno-music. The aim of finding locations for people to enjoy concerts and dance was strictly associated with a strong political and urban vision of a town that was recovering with optimism its full history and was looking at a future of big expectations.¹² One of the first locations of this kind was in the remains of a building near Potsdamer Platz, formerly in East Berlin, that lacking any clear ownership after the collapse of the communist system. Here the club *Tresor*, maybe the most successful techno-club in Berlin, was located and its story can be considered representative of the strong relationship established between the spirit of the historical building and its new “transgressive” use. (Fig. 3)

The basement of the former department store Wertheim, built in 1926, was opened in 1991 to host the club after a deep cleaning of the abandoned structures. The discovery of this location is well described by the “inventors” of the club who found it by accident. They narrate how they descended the stairs at the ground floor of an abandoned edifice which had been damaged during the World War II and been demolished in the 1950¹⁶. Going underground they could breathe the air “of forty-fifty years ago” rising up from the basement, and at the end they discovered the old rooms full of rust and ancient furniture, which immediately they loved. Their enthusiasm at this discovery was so great that they ran to the national library to research the history of the place. At that time the town was so different, both from its past and its present. After 14 years of “temporary usage” as place of dance and concerts, during which the organisers perfectly maintained the rooms with their decayed bricks walls and concrete ceilings, new development evicted the occupiers and realised a modern anonymous building for offices, destroying the old structures.

The Tresor club found a new location in 2007 in a thermoelectric power station in Köpenicker Strasse, disused since 1997. The managers adopted the same criteria for choosing the site and pursued the maintenance of the existing structures with all the traces of their history, even if the atmosphere of the city is today completely changed due to the pervading actions of real estate investments.



Fig. 1) Vnitroblok complex. Main hall. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Donatella Fiorani 2019)



Fig. 2) Vnitroblok complex. The new upper gallery. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Donatella Fiorani 2019)



Fig. 3) Entrance to the Tresor Club in the remains of the former Wertheim Department Store. Berlin, Germany. (<parkettchannel.it/tresor-club-storia-techno-europea/>).



Fig. 4) Bunker Berlin, Germany. (photo Donatella Fiorani 2019)

The appreciation of decayed and incomplete buildings of the 1990^s as seen in the Berlin example is also evident in the case of some public cultural places, such as the Hörsaalruine, the remains of the former Rudolf Virchow Lecture hall, within the Berlin Museum of Medical History¹³ or the Hitler's Bunker, which today hosts an exhibition about the dictator's life. (Fig. 4)

However, most of these complexes can be still used today only thanks to the substitution of the initial social commitment and management with a new kind of economic involvement of private enterprises. This is the case of *Motorwerk*, a big industrial building built in 1921 for the production of electric engines for Zeppelin airships (Halle Weißensee), listed as a protected monument. It was used from 1991 to 1993 as the location for very famous concerts but the continuity of use and its preservation is currently guaranteed only by its being rented for many different kinds of company events.

The survival of buildings like this is today above all fostered by the aesthetic appreciation of the unusual location for official commercial events, while the perception of their historical value and of the specific architectural identity of the site (quite clear in the first functional adaptations of *Motorwerk*) seems to have become weaker in the current commercial perspectives, as we can deduce from looking at the last displays.

The case of *Alte Münze*, near Alexanderplatz, is quite expressive of the possible conflicts between "bottom-up" participation and centralised public intervention on this kind of buildings. *Alte Münze* is a former mint built in 1935-1942, partly reconstructed after the war and dismantled in 2005-2006; after its disposal, it has soon become a participative centre for artists supported by the narrative of a dedicated website.¹⁴ Here too, the informal occupation of the complex has favoured the maximum respect for the existing spaces; the functional fluidity has been the key in the selection of compatible use for the building and oriented a project that is very careful towards the features of the complex. The lack of substantial budget is the apparent reason behind this proposal but it goes in parallel with the appreciation of the character of the old mint in the very core of the historic centre. The spontaneous conservation attitude of the first users is now faced with the proposal of intervention sponsored by the Federal State and the State of Berlin aiming to create a jazz centre: citizens and the young creative group working there have proposed a masterplan asking explicitly to ensure a respectful approach to the building.¹⁵

Likewise, there are many cases where private small investors interested in industrial buildings as the headquarters of new commercial activities or restaurants, fancy the proposal of "fluid" spaces and functions allowing the original features of the rooms to be maintained.

Particularly, the trend of using industrial spaces for restaurants is now very common in Europe: we can remember, among the many others, the forge in Friedrichshains in Berlin, the Turbinehallen in Aarhus, Denmark, the beer factory Moritz in Barcelona, Spain, or the ammunition factory (*Pocisk*) in the industrial district *Praga*, on the right riverbank of Warsaw, Poland. This last example is quite representative also of the spin-off effect produced on the urban surroundings. Built in 1920 for the production of weapons and motorbikes, damaged by the bombs of the World War II and used for a long time

as a dumping ground for cars, the building hosted since 2008-2010 a restaurant and other activities (*Soho Factory*). (Fig. 5) Interestingly, the new function as a restaurant was launched leaving intact the evidence of decay on the brick walls and using simple plastic doors; only after some years, new works involved the substitution of the ruined bricks and the replacement of windows and doors with metal components. Recently a new Masterplan related to an Integrated Revitalisation Program (2014-2022) has been approved, foreseeing new buildings in the area, with a more evident business intent.¹⁶

Of course, sensibilities are different between the various European countries: the participative model seem to work better in northern and central Europe, while it seems to be less widespread in the Mediterranean area, such as in Spain or even in France.¹⁷ Anyway, this phenomenon is more and more widely shared and even in Russia a spontaneous and brief people's occupation has attempted to defend one of the famous Marsakov bakeries in Moscow from building speculation and conversion to new and not respectful uses.¹⁸ Furthermore, we can observe that the initial "alternative culture" that inspired this approach has merged in a larger spread sensibility for the conservation of the places' features.

The established conservation Italian model can rely either on the planning of public authorities or on the unplanned conservation. In both cases, low-budget interventions have produced architectural results similar to the previously described ones: in Rome, the Mira Lanza complex at the Ostiense district has been used as the location – together with the eighteen-century Argentina Theatre – for the first Roman theatrical company thanks to the initiative of the Municipality. (Fig. 6) At the same time, the pasta manufacturing plant Cerere in the San Lorenzo district changed the original productive use to one hosting artists and their works thanks to the involvement of the building owners and to the subsequent constitution of a foundation dedicated to the management of the artistic activities.¹⁹ (Fig. 7)

The role played by the artists in the soft recovery of industrial buildings in Italy is particularly important: as building owners (see the case of the Arkad Foundation, hosted within the former forge *della Magona* in Serravezza, Lucca),²⁰ as members of collective Foundations or groups (as in the Headquarters in Daste street at Spalenga, Bergamo)²¹ many artists have promoted very interesting and respectful uses of the buildings thanks to temporary or fixed installations and minimal works. The original interest inspired by the suitability of the industrial sites for creative work and the low cost rentals has been, since the beginning,²² accompanied by a strong appreciation of the aesthetic values of these places. In many cases, spontaneous occupation and artistic activities coincided, as for Les Frigos in Paris or Rote Fabrik in Zurich.

As a matter of fact, the historic and aesthetic sensibility are merged in a single perception in the spontaneous approach of unplanned conservation.

Conclusions

From the various examples illustrated above, we can infer some useful considerations. First of all, dealing with industrial heritage means to combine architectural appraisals with the knowledge of the past and future activities to be carried out. This

represents a peculiarity of the topic compared to what happens with “traditional” heritage, because the shared application of such different perspectives to the same object of interest introduces a much stronger “tension” between cultural and economic implications.²³ The unplanned conservation – as the product of a spontaneous activity of re-functionalisation that involves industrial and productive but not listed historical buildings – offers interesting answers to this problem. The undeniable functional trigger that drives the initial attentiveness of people to this kind of buildings is soon followed by a deeper interest because of their being a part of the urban contest and of the history of the town. The commitment made by the artists themselves in many interventions on industrial heritage also demonstrates the importance of the aesthetic perception on some decisions to conserve.

This interest represents the best guarantee of avoiding the demolition of this kind of heritage and could be more actively promoted in countries such as Italy, which are commonly used to historical heritage preservation.

Surprisingly, also if – starting at least from the collapse of the San Marco bell tower in Venice – we are particularly aware of the people’s insistence on reconstruction “where it was, as it was”, which becomes evident mainly after a traumatic destruction, we do not pay attention to the strong desire for building conservation anyway expressed by common people. This is really strange, because while the former attitude does not care about safeguarding the value of architectural authenticity, the latter is absolutely focused on the material persistence of the places. As a matter of fact, we could modify the tenses of the familiar slogan to properly express this opposite feeling through the statement “where it is, as it is”.

Therefore, this attitude can be considered an important resource for conservation, mainly in dealing with “minor” architectures. Today spaces and structures – generally softly restored due to the lack of budget – of this kind of industrial buildings are deeply appreciated as material legacy of the past. Moreover, this acknowledgment is often sublimated in an aesthetic appreciation for the wide volumes, strong structures, rough material surfaces. In the last decades the so defined aesthetic appreciation created a sort of “trend” that generally influenced the way of treating these architectures, also when higher budget is available.

The imbalance between social participation and strength of the building investors (see the case of Berlin) let us believe that the efficacy of unplanned conservation is transitional and that the architects have to make an effort to support immediately this popular commitment with their projects.

By complying with this spontaneous trend – adverse to the demolitions and favourable to respecting the existing buildings, the selection of compatible functions, the sustainability of the maintenance also referred to in the global urban contest – architects can strengthen their choices derived from the deep study of these buildings, (Fig. 8) getting at the same time a more stable success for their restoration projects.

Notes

- 1 This definition evokes the well-known theoretical refer to the “planned conservation” (see, among the latest contributions, Della Torre 2020) focusing on different aspects of the conservation attitude.
- 2 Among the others, see the approach followed in Sposito 2012.
- 3 There are a lot of well-known examples of radical transformation of this kind of buildings, such as the Caixa Forum in Madrid, the Lingotto plant in Turin or the Tate Modern in London. The interest of these cases as “new” architectures is not in discussion here, but these experiences has nothing in common with the phenomenon of the unplanned conservation we are analysing, because it mainly derives from an architectural research by design, oriented to create new buildings embedding existing structures.
- 4 Real 2015.
- 5 Buchanan 1989.
- 6 Many studies of different productive sites are gathered under the umbrella of the so called “industrial archaeology”: they deal with mines, rural factories, quarries, power stations and also the more ancient historical structures, such as mills, tanneries, furnaces, lighthouses etc.
- 7 For a general overview of the study and the praxis on heritage conservation in Europe, with special attention to Spain, see Del Pozo, Alonso González 2012.
- 8 It is interesting to note that the English-language scientific literature has been the first to show interest in the historical importance of industrial heritage and also the first to underline, at the beginning of this century, the importance of the everyday-life presence for the survival of these structures (see among others Leary, Sholes 2000).
- 9 Duarte, Sabaté 2013.
- 10 This focus on Vnitroblok in Dělnická street derives by the experience of the EAAE workshop in Prague (25–28 September 2019) about *Conservation/Demolition*. See also <<https://vnitroblok.cz/>; <https://www.novinky.cz/domaci/clanek/z-polorozpadlych-budov-v-praze-7-se-stala-utociste-umelcu-40016395> > [Accessed 22 July 2020].
- 11 Fagner, B., et. al., 2014: 54–59; 188–113.
- 12 <<https://www.redbull.com/de-de/berliner-clubs-geschichte>> [Accessed 22 July 2020]. See also the documentary: *Sub Berlin – The Story of Tresor*. [online] Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGGA3a_8CrS> [Accessed 22 July 2020].
- 13 The building in the Mitte district was bombed during the World War Two and not integrated, since the middle of last Nineties it hosts a cultural centre.
- 14 <<https://alte-muenze-berlin.de/>> [Accessed 24 July 2020].
- 15 <<https://www.rbb24.de/kultur/beitrag/2020/01/berlin-alte-muenze-molkenmarkt-jazz-konzept.html>> [Accessed 28 July 2020].
- 16 <<https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,22164634,soho-bez-plotow-i-aut.html>> [Accessed 22 July 2020].
- 17 Del Pozo, Alonso, González 2012; Real 2015.
- 18 Shikhatova 2018. About the strong difficulties for defencing the industrial heritage from the economic interests of private speculators see also Shtiglits, Vallye 2008.
- 19 The Mira Lanza complex was built at the beginning of Twentieth century for the soap production and it was restored in 1999–2000, maintaining the existing structures with few new additions (a new roof, doors, a stage and a wooden structure for seats). It is today used as a covered theatre and an open air site of entertainment. The Cecere pasta factory, built in 1905, worked till 1960 and became an art centre since 1973; recently the building has had new restoration. See <<http://www.archidiap.com/opera/fabbriche-mira-lanza/>; <https://www.pastificiocerere.it/>> [Accessed 11 August 2020].
- 20 Giusti 2018.
- 21 <<http://beyondindustrialarchoe.altervista.org/la-storia-dellex-centrale-tornata-vitalarte/>> [Accessed 22 July 2020].
- 22 The phenomenon already occurred in New York in the last Fifties (Real 2015).
- 23 See Forgan 1992 and the contraposition between the aim of the “target markets” and “legitimate public”.

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Fig. 5) Soho Factory in Warsaw, Poland. (photo Stefano Francesco Musso 2013)



Fig. 6) A performance played in front of some empty industrial buildings next to the India Theater. Rome, Italy. (photo Donatella Fiorani 2018)



Fig. 7) Pasta manufacturing plant Cerere. Rome, Italy. (<pastificiocerere.it/>)

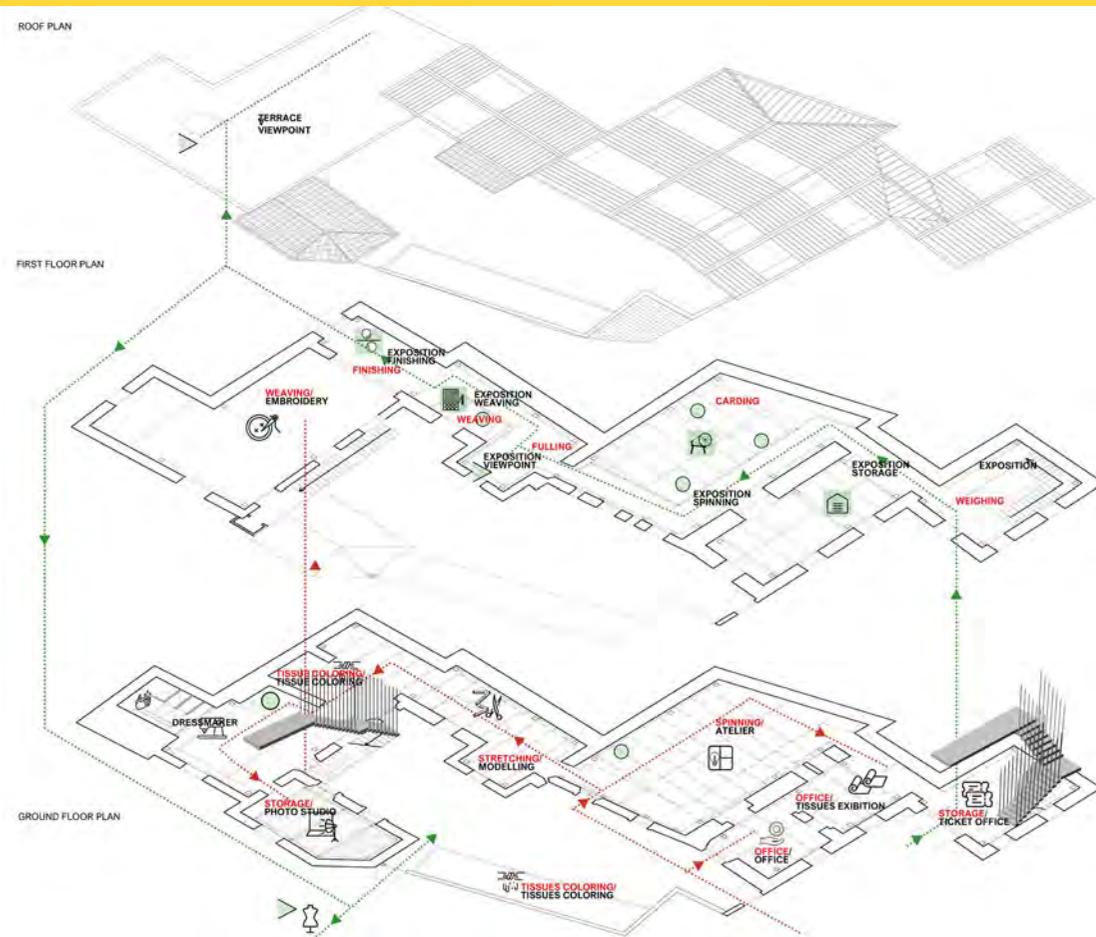


Fig. 8) Plans of the restoration project of the woollen mill Florindo Martino. The choice and the distribution of the foreseen function (as laboratory for dress makers and exhibition halls) derive from the understanding of the ancient functioning of the building and the will to conserve as much of possible of the existing edifice. Sepino, Campobasso, Italy. (drawing by Giorgia Ioana Simion, Roberta Vecchio, Carmine Vincelli, Luciaconcetta Vincelli, Carmine Vincelli).

Industrial heritage and urban development: the Dutch experience

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Introduction

Among the heritage sites, industrial complexes are some of the most vulnerable in the context of urban development. Starting from their now decades-long acknowledgement, such “young” and usually abandoned heritage has raised new preservation issues – related to the innovative materials, construction techniques and architectural solutions put in place – which have inevitably determined the need to rethink the concepts of authenticity and integrity by virtue of such specificity (Rubino 2004; Croset 2008; Prescia 2016). Without weakening the arguments for preserving their material fabrics, this condition, however, becomes more critical when contextualized in the transformation processes of the contemporary city (Clark 2005; TICCIH 2012). In this frame, the preservation aims have to frequently face the colliding interests arising from the wide range of different actors involved. Although embracing participatory and bottom-up reuse initiatives often represent the only viable way for assuring a future life, they do not necessarily prevent smaller-scale demolitions still affecting the testimonial value of such heritage.

In this sense, the 2019 EAAE workshop, held in Prague, has represented a crucial opportunity for a reflection on this topic. Specific reference is made to the field trips – and related discussions – in the *Holešovice* district, a mid-19th-century industrial area which has been turned, in the context of the more recent Prague’s urban redevelopment, into a lively cultural district. The *Vnitroblok* and the *DOX* Centre for Contemporary Art are just two examples of the several industrial complexes which, within this process, have been given a new life through their reuse for cultural and recreational functions. However, their comparison highlights a varied range of social and societal values attached to the industrial heritage by different stakeholders and, consequently, different is the way in which the preservation of the material fabrics has been addressed.¹

Starting from such stimuli, the Dutch experience with the reuse of industrial complexes is taken as a mirror case for further developing the workshop themes. In particular, the projects carried out within the *Belvedere* governmental program (1999–2009) are analysed. Shortly after the full acknowledgement of the industrial heritage in the Netherlands, this program – aimed at combining conservation and development needs – has given a boost to a number of reuse projects on abandoned industrial sites. Following the analysis of the theoretical and institutional evolution undergone in the Netherlands within the field of industrial heritage protection and

preservation, the paper investigates the role that different stakeholders can play in the reuse of industrial heritage sites and, more specifically, the effects of their different aspirations and goals on the material preservation strategies. Through a selection of *Belvedere* projects, it highlights the need for a better dialogue between expert and non-expert knowledge.

The rise of attention on industrial heritage in the Netherlands

In spite of the *damnatio memoriae* associated by some retrospective interpretations to the community experience of the industrial working conditions (Loeff 2013: 23), the first initiatives for the protection of the industrial heritage in the Netherlands can be found, starting from the 1970s,² in the activities of local associations (Dalen, Boon, SIER 1986: 58–61). Indeed, at the time of the heritage year (1975) the efforts of scholars and the government were mainly focused on the preservation of historical city centres; additionally, the rise of such a new heritage category was seen, at this early stage, as a competing factor in the allocation of governmental financial supports (Loeff 2013: 24). As the case of the *van Nelle fabriek* shows,³ some advancements were achieved, during the 1980s, because of the parallel path with the acknowledgment of modern architecture, but they were not sufficient to rise a full awareness on the specificities of the industrial heritage (Loeff 2013: 29–31).

Following the 1980s economic crisis – which marked the end of the production activities in many industrial assets (Janssen et al. 2017: 1662) – a turning point was determined by the establishment, in 1992, of the *Projectbureau Industrieel Erfgoed* (PIE – Industrial Heritage Project Office), a governmental initiative aimed at primarily deepening the knowledge about the remnants of the national industrial past (Loeff 2013: 34–35). In it, a new inventory approach was tested, focusing on eight typologies of industrial sites.⁴ Such a knowledge phase was thus conceived as a steering tool for the necessary “selective protection”. Indeed, even if the value of such an heritage was now recognized and the attempts for its protection had been institutionalized, demolition was still contemplated.⁵ However, such an experience, concluded in 1994, led to the recognition of more than 600 industrial complexes as national monuments, to an increased level of academic knowledge and societal attention – as the year of Industrial Heritage (1996) shows – and to the setting up of a national society (BOEi)⁶ for bridging the gap between preservation issues and the development needs arising from the private market (Loeff 2013: 36–37).

Indeed, the following period was marked by a shift in the Dutch debate on industrial heritage. Beyond its acknowledged value, the rising awareness that preserving also involves giving a future function led the reflection on the theme of reuse: from “what” to preserve on “how” to preserve (Nijhof, Schulte, Bemelmans 1994). All these advancements converged in a period in which a better integration of heritage preservation in spatial planning was discussed, which resulted in the *Belvedere Memorandum* (1999). Within this governmental program, the motto “preservation through development” was given substance by offering technical and financial support to local projects (*Belvedere Nota* 1999; Janssen et al. 2014). Among the experiences implemented in the ten-year

span of the program (1999–2009), a number of projects involved industrial complexes, making the Belvedere experience an application ground for the recent reflections and, thus, a relevant observatory on this topic.

Industrial heritage and urban development: case studies from the Belvedere experience

Within the Belvedere reuse experiences – which represent one of the categories through which the program’s projects have been classified⁷ – a number of cases involve industrial heritage sites. Despite several differences related to both their intrinsic qualities and the reuse choices put in place, the analysis of such experiences highlights some common traits: firstly, the perception of such sites as “enclaves” or “islands” in the contemporary city, which is exacerbated by their abandonment; consequently, assuming that reuse is the only antidote against decay or demolition, the need to instil a new life through the acknowledgment of new social and societal values is central, thus, overcoming their historical insulation. Starting from this common ground, a varied scenario of reuse strategies arises as function of the stakeholders that, in different ways, have played a role in the revitalization process.

As the case of *Sugarcity* shows, private investors can have a significant impact on the reuse choices, in which the industrial past is, however, often used as a branding tool for a successful exploitation. This former industrial area for sugar production was located in the second half of the 19th century in the Haarlemmermeer’s village of Halfweg (Witsen *et al.* 2009: 92). Shortly after the dismantling of the industrial function (1992), the area has been sold (2000) through a public tender to a private investor. The aim behind the ensuing redevelopment was to make use of the industrial atmosphere for establishing an appealing commercial venue, in which even the claimed public utility – consisting in the site’s restored accessibility (Witsen *et al.* 2009: 93) – sounds like an instrumental use of the operation’s social implications. The starting and most iconic intervention⁸ consisted in the transformation (2007) of two sugar storage silos in office spaces for companies; (Fig. 1) the overall aim has, here, been translated in a “spectacular” cladding solution: an aluminium layer with a rhythmic pattern of diamond-shaped openings, the visibility of which is even more enhanced by an eye-catching lighting system at night time (Witsen *et al.* 2009: 93–94). The related improvement of the former energy balance has surely given new environmental qualities to the pre-existing buildings (Soeters van Eldonk Architects 2007). However, this solution – and the profound alteration of the interiors – does not show any interest in preserving the historical and cultural values associated to the material fabrics, which – in this case – barely survive in the peculiar architectural shapes.

Although economic feasibility represents an essential aspect, other actors can play a mitigating role in the reuse strategies. In particular, local communities can trigger protection measures and socially-useful reuse solutions. In this sense, of relevance is the bottom-up process put in place for the *Wagenwerkplaats* in Amersfoort. The early-20th-century site of the Dutch Railway Company (NS, *Nederlandse Spoorwegen*) has been actively in use for the repair of train wagons and equipments until 2000 (WVW

2007: 1; Vries, Kuenen 2008: 8). Subsequently, the end of this former function has triggered a local reaction to prevent the loss of this industrial asset through decay or demolition. Indeed, the residents of the adjoining *Soesterkwartier*, joining forces with the new-born *Stichting Industrieel Erfgoed in de Stad Amersfoort* (SIESTA – Industrial Heritage Foundation in the City of Amersfoort), managed to achieve some important results. Firstly, they succeeded in having the *Wagenwerkplaats* recognized as a listed national monument in 2007 (Vries, Kuenen 2008: 10–11). Additionally, thanks to the attention that arose regarding this industrial heritage, the Amersfoort municipality gave its support in the institution of the *Werkgroep Verkenningen Wagenwerkplaats* (Wagenwerkplaats Exploratory Workgroup), through which the local authority, the community and the owner (NS) could cooperate in defining the area’s development possibilities. This process resulted in a vision (WVW 2007) for a cultural and educational hub in which the preservation and reuse of the site’s industrial buildings is crucial. The latter have been restored and refurbished for hosting temporary mixed functions,⁹ the choice of which is inspired by the core concept of “social return”. (Fig. 2) Indeed, the goal has been to create a community meeting place¹⁰ in which the strong economic functions¹¹ can support start-up initiatives¹² and cultural/educational associations,¹³ not just as economic supports but also transferring their expertise and knowledge. Finally, the industrial ensemble is kept as the core of the further developments envisaged in the proximate future.¹⁴

Together with local communities, cultural associations can also stimulate useful reflections prior to the reuse of valuable industrial assets, such as in the case of the *Oostenburgereiland* in Amsterdam. This site – where, starting from the mid-17th century, the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC, Dutch East India Company) was located – is considered as a “significant example of Amsterdam’s industrial revolution” (Gemeente Amsterdam 2016: 13). In the 19th century, the area was, indeed, transformed in an industrial complex for the *Werkspoor* steam engines company which, by the end of the century, shifted its production to railway equipment and marine diesel engines and, finally, merged with the Stork company after WWII (Gemeente Amsterdam 2016: 13–18). In 1998, the industrial activities were stopped and the site was purchased by a private developer. This event triggered the action of a group of artists and researchers which – reunited in the *Stichting Werkspoor* (*Werkspoor* Association) – aimed at highlighting the role that art and science can play in shaping the future of this industrial asset (Wilkins 2002: 6–7). In order to offer a clear image of the site’s potentials, a group of nine experts from different disciplines outlined, in the so-called “scans”, an overview of the area from their specific perspective (Wilkins 2002). Subsequently, the scans have been shared and discussed with the stakeholders and the general public in a number of workshops (Wilkins 2002: 187). Considering its current favourable location,¹⁵ the vision fostered by the *Stichting Werkspoor* for revitalizing the site and its historical buildings was to give space to small-scale cultural and recreational activities, as a valid alternative to offices or residential settlements in terms of contributing to the liveliness of the city (Wilkins, 2002: 6–7). Indeed, the *Van Gendt hallen* (Van Gendt halls, from the name of their architect) host different cultural business activities, the *Werkspoorhallen* have been

used for theatre performances, while restaurants are settled in the *Koudgasgebouw* (cold-gas building) and in the *Poortgebouw* (gatehouse) (Gemeente Amsterdam 2016: 19). The only new addition has been the Init complex (Bakker, Jolles, Provoost 2006), resulting from the agreement made by the municipality with the developer at the time of the sale to realize a building for the municipal sanitation department.¹⁶ (Fig. 3) Despite the starting intentions, according to the more recent plans from the municipality of Amsterdam, new housing constructions and a hotel are, however, envisaged in the near future (Gemeente Amsterdam 2016: 39–40).

Finally, among the actors involved in the experiences analysed, the role that the local authorities can play is crucial in actively mediating between preservation and development needs. This is the case of *Hart van Zuid* (Heart of the South), a 50-hectares industrial enclave located south of the city centre of Hengelo, which was the focus of a public-private revitalization process (Gemeente Hengelo 2001: 32–47). The municipality of Hengelo and the *Van Wijnen* Group started, in 2001, a public-private partnership which has led to the drafting of a masterplan (Gemeente Hengelo 2001). Following the cultural-historic assessment of the area and its built heritage, an *Industrieel Erfgoed Convenant* (Industrial Heritage Pact) has been outlined for identifying the minimum values to be retained for preserving its industrial character. In order to guarantee the compliance to the *Convenant* in the 15-year time span envisaged for the plan's implementation, a supervisory team has been established. Moreover, the foundation *Hart voor Zuid* – composed of local residents from the neighbourhoods adjoining the planning area – was also involved in the choices made (Witsen et al. 2009: 40–41). While some industrial activities are still in place, a number of reuse interventions on the former industrial buildings have been implemented: a fire station has been realized in the *Stork's mallenmakerij* (model shop), reusing the preserved water tower as an extinguishing water reservoir (Fig. 4) (LKSVD Architecten n.d.); an educational centre for the secondary-education institution ROC Tweente has been located in the *ijzergieterij* (foundry building) (IAA Architecten n.d.); finally, an old warehouse and a former fur weaving mill have been transformed into housing blocks (Witsen et al. 2009: 41). With these interventions, the retention of the historical industrial buildings is associated with socially-useful future functions for the local community and the municipal urban development. However, when looking at the impact on the industrial buildings, in this case smaller-scale demolitions (e.g. internal structures, architectural surfaces) can also be observed.

Conclusions

At a broader glance, industrial heritage preservation has come to terms with some of the topical issues currently impacting on the heritage field at large. Within the Dutch context, the cultural heritage future-oriented vision triggered by the Belvedere program – with both its starting intentions and the experience matured through the implemented projects – has surely contributed to giving a central role to heritage matters in the national agenda (Janssen, Luiten, Renes 2014), which has proved to be particularly beneficial for those categories – including the industrial heritage, but

also the post-war heritage – with no long-standing tradition for both protection and preservation. As for the Czech case studies observed during the workshop, this phenomenon went through a significant “democratization” of the heritage discourse, in which – with an emphasis on public participation – expert and non-expert knowledge have assumed equal importance «in determining what qualifies as heritage and how it should be dealt with» (Janssen et al. 2014: 12). Accordingly, the preservation of the material fabric is strongly linked to a broader range of social and societal values, which are dynamic in time and can differ between individual and groups.

If a better inclusion of such values in the heritage discourse is a topical issue (UN 2015) – and, often, the only viable way of preventing decay or demolition – the analysed cases, however, highlight the need to carefully assess the varied range of approaches and related outcomes in the field of industrial heritage reuse, arising from the different actors involved and their role in the revitalization process. On the one hand, pure market-based strategies pay little attention to finding a compromise with the traditional interpretative and operational tools of heritage preservation, which are overridden as relics of an outdated conservative tradition. On the other hand, the emergence of civic-based evaluation methods opens the way for new perspectives, not necessarily inspired towards preservation aims. When this is the case, local authorities and groups still rely on the traditional instruments of the so-called “sectorial” heritage tradition.¹⁷ Evidently, even this second approach can exacerbate – rather than harmonize – the dialogue between old and new challenges, thus, fuelling what Mason (2018) defines as the current “double life”¹⁸ of the preservation field. Additionally, the cultural or recreational functions usually adopted in the locally-driven reuse choices do not necessarily represent, by themselves, a preservation guarantee for the material fabric; conversely, they can lead to smaller-scale demolitions (e.g. architectural surfaces, fixtures, interiors) still worthy of being evaluated beforehand.

In conclusion, the still unsolved overlap between well-established and more-recent preservation instances turns out to be critical for the safeguarding of industrial heritage sites in the context of urban development. The specific preservation demands of such heritage, acknowledged through the lens of the conservative tradition, can only be given a realistic answer if rephrased to include, from an early stage, a broader spectrum of contemporary – social and societal – needs. Going beyond both defensive or simplistic positions, the expert and non-expert interpretative tools need to find a better and more inclusive balance. Only by prioritizing such a goal in the academic agenda, a renovated and more efficient role of the experts in the preservation field can be encouraged: that of “mediators” – more than “educators” – in our contemporary society.



*Fig. 1) Sugarcity.
The two sugar silos
after the conversion
into an office complex.
Haarlemmermeer,
Netherlands.
([commons.wikimedia.
org/wiki/File:Halfweg,_
SugarCity_
industri%C3%A8le_
evenementenlocatie_
IMG_0282_2019-
06-30_09.49.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Halfweg,_SugarCity_industri%C3%A8le_evenementenlocatie_IMG_0282_2019-06-30_09.49.jpg)),
4.0 International
Public Licence
Michielverbeek 2019)*



*Fig. 3)
Oostenburgereiland.
The Init complex
realized as an addition
in the former industrial
site. Amsterdam,
Netherlands. (photo
Federica Marulo 2021)*



*Fig. 2) Wagenwerkplaats.
The hoofgebouw
reused for flexible
mixed functions, and
now resiliently adapted
to the community
needs as temporary
COVID-19 testing
station. Amersfoort,
Netherlands. (photo
Federica Marulo 2021)*



*Fig. 4) Hart van Zuid.
The mallenmakerij
after the conversion
in fire station. Hengelo,
Netherlands. (photo
Federica Marulo 2021)*

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Notes

1 In the case of the *Vnitroblok* – the Czech word for “courtyard” – an industrial warehouse has been turned into a multifunctional (cultural and recreational) space for social exchange. In it, the industrial atmosphere has been left almost unchanged, but as an accidental result – more than a preservation choice – since its “marketability” stems from its nostalgic “touch of history” (Fragner, Valchářová 2014: 19). On the other hand, in the *DOX* centre for contemporary art, a societal value – namely, the need for art in our goal-oriented contemporary world – is the leading element in the revitalization of the former industrial complex (Fragner, Valchářová 2014: 146–149); the result is an intervention in which the different buildings are uniformed under a layer of white plaster, and even put on the background by the more recent addition of the “Gulliver” pavilion (HAMR 2017).

2 The first Dutch “industrial monument” to be turned into a museum – the Cruquius pumping station – dates back to 1930s; however, a discussion about this topic really got started only after four decades (Loeff 2013: 23).

3 The van Nelle fabriek has been recognized as a national monument in 1985 (Loeff 2013: 24), followed by the nomination for the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014 (RCE 2013).

4 Instead of the inventory procedures applied, until that moment, by the National Service for the Protection of Monuments – which focused on area analysis and regional selections – the PIE did research per industry typologies, covering eight sectors: mineral extraction; food; textile and leather; wood, paper and graphics; building materials, pottery and glass; metal products, electrical engineering and transport equipments; others (e.g. utilities and communications) (Buiten et al. 1993: X4–X18).

5 The title of the introductory report – *De kunst van het vernietigen* (The art of destruction) (Nijhof, CIE 1990) – through which, in 1989, the PIE was presented to the Dutch government is a clear statement of such a position. Moreover, the idea of “selective protection” was further expressed in the *Handboek branche-onderzoeker* (Sector-researcher’s handbook), in which the need for selection

criteria, aimed at defining whether an industrial asset is eligible for national protection or not, is expressed as one of the main goals of the PIE (Buiten et al. 1993: 1).

6 BOEi is the acronym for the *Nationale Maatschappij tot Behoud, Ontwikkeling en Exploitatie van Klein Industrieel Erfgoed* (National Society for the Preservation, Development and Exploitation of Industrial Heritage), established in 2000 – with the support of the National Service for the Protection of Monuments and the approval of the PIE Advisory Board – for taking care of the whole process going from the purchase, to the restoration and final exploitation of industrial assets (Loeff 2013: 36–37).

7 The results achieved with the Belvedere program have been synthetically outlined in a final publication (Witsen et al. 2009), in which the implemented and on-going projects have been classified according to the following thematic categories: infrastructure, landscape and nature, village development, urban development, area development, reuse, recreation, administrative tools, research methods, local initiative and identity, archaeology.

8 Other interventions are in construction or planned for settling other commercial and recreational facilities (i.e. a big outlet, a supermarket, a restaurant and a hotel) (SugarCity n.d.).

9 In the vision, reference is made to activities or projects for a period going from one day to five years (WVW 2007: 2).

10 The main target is the Amersfoort local community; but, thanks to the favourable location of the site next to the station, also a regional and national echo is foreseen (WVW 2007: 2).

11 A shed, the *oude magazijn* (old warehouse), the *veerensmederij* (forge building) and part of the *hoofdgebouw* (main building) are used as rentable event locations; moreover, design and architectural firms are hosted in both the main building and in the *gebouw medische dienst* (medical service building); finally, a restaurant has been settled in the *centraal ketelhuis* (central boiler building) (Wagenwerkplaats n.d.).

12 Artists’ workspaces are offered in the main building and in the former garage, as well as creative workshops can be found in the old warehouse (traditional stained glass production) and in the porter’s lodge (printing workshop) (Wagenwerkplaats n.d.).

13 Different educational or cultural associations – for disabled children, or involved in different activities for young people – are housed in the main building, in the *nieuwe magazijn* (new warehouse) and in the *trafgebouw* (transformer building) (Wagenwerkplaats n.d.).

14 In the more recent master plan, the municipality stated that «investing on identity means going beyond keeping the remains of the Wagenwerkplaats» (author’s translation) (Gemeente Amersfoort 2019: 40). Indeed, plans have been made to turn the introvert character of this *pauze landschap* (free-time landscape) into an inner-city inviting area. In order to achieve this goal, improvements are needed for the existing road connections (Gemeente Amersfoort 2019: 36); additionally, the area’s functions mix will be increased with the construction of new residential buildings, to be positioned at an appropriate distance from the monumental ensemble and respecting specific high limitations (Gemeente Amersfoort 2019: 55–56).

15 «The Storkterrein is a valuable treasure: 11 hectares of land in the middle of the eastern part of the city centre, located between the old city and the new eastern residential area» (Author’s translation) (Wilkins, 2002: 6).

16 The sanitation facilities are hosted in the two lower levels of the building, while the two upper floors have been designed for business premises and collective facilities (Bakker, Jolles, Provoost 2006).

17 «The traditional approach, which we label “heritage as sector”, is based on the notion that socio-economic and spatial dynamics pose a constant threat to the cultural heritage» (Janssen et al. 2017: 1160).

18 «History provides essential context for the sense that preservation leads a double life – one devoted to the material condition and integrity of buildings, the other devoted to the social dynamics that bring them to life» (Mason 2018: 201).

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Understanding, respect, maintenance and development versus demolition: basic elements of conservation education / pedagogy

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In this article we deal with the issue of demolition. We cogitate about the reasons for accession to demolitions, consider the demolition consequences, inquire whether demolitions could be avoided. In conclusion we offer evidence that there often is a possibility to avoid both small and large-scale demolitions by means of a serious conservation education / pedagogy.¹

Conservation – demolition: two contradictory notions?

Conservation and demolition: these are two contradictory notions, often understood as two different alternatives, however, sometimes going side by side. In small historical towns, abundant with buildings remaining from various historical layers and bearing tracks of various epochs (although often not belonging under monument care administration), the conservation of such buildings is “inevitably” connected with partial demolition for various reasons: “improving accessibility”, “increasing safety” etc., which is sometimes declared by authorities and their representatives. So, shall we knock down in order to preserve the building?

It is necessary to include, besides the above-mentioned, the “amateur, dilettante” interventions, performed quite independently by those who inhabit those small historical towns: knocking a part of a wall down and subsequently rebuilding it, replacing an old buttress by a more modern one, knocking an old staircase space down to reach a more comfortable and “standard” entrance (e.g. a built-in elevator, partial volume demolition, roof replacement...).

Even the maintenance as such can sometimes mask a systematic gradual demolition of some parts of a building. The extension and fragmentation of these minor interventions (which sometimes are not by far so minor, but often destructive for both tangible and intangible heritage) cannot be prevented only by one single “control”. These processes often overstep the competency of authorities. On the other hand, local authorities miss tools and powers necessary for such detailed control performance.

Prague: large and small-scale demolitions

Prague nowadays: from a certain point of view, this big European capital shows profound contradictions. On the one hand, strong economic and tourism impulse of the recent thirty years has brought radical changes to some of Prague quarters, while in others the changes are still in progress. In some cases demolitions have stigmatized the city even in large areas and left deep wounds there: e.g. the demolitions of railway workshops and the telephone central office, which are both evidence of this situation. On the other hand, in other places demolitions seem to be totally excluded, e.g. in the quarter where Vnitroblok is situated. (Fig. 1)

Why is demolition practised systematically?

It is correct to ask ourselves a question: why has it been knocked down? Why are small and large-scale demolitions carried out? What are the reasons leading to destruction of what has been preserved? Only if we think about the reasons for demolition acts, we can find methods how to face this approach. It looks like a paradox, but it is right: to consider and think about demolition in order to reach conservation. In this sense I participated in the research carried out in Prague.²

While examining the decisions on demolitions (of considerably extensive urban wholes, quarters, villages, but also parts of buildings and architectural elements in the case of small-scale demolitions), we can find various reasons: those related to city development, or solely economic reasons and mere speculation, or social and political reasons as well. Demolitions can be performed on behalf of sustainable development and tourism. There can be demolitions emerging from disagreement between two or more rivals. From time to time, although not too often, demolitions are performed to erase a negative memory related to a particular place. However, quite frequent are demolitions caused by stupidity, underestimation of a place, by insufficient knowledge or excessive fears (e.g. demolitions of load-bearing walls because of an unmotivated fear that they wouldn't carry heavy loads or don't completely meet the requirements of current regulations). The legislation context in which we move can help demolitions (or, on the contrary, discourage them), and also economic, chronological and ideological contexts can play a certain role (either stimulate a demolition, or not).

How do we carry out demolition?

And when is demolition carried out? There are various ways how to reach demolition. At first we should ask ourselves another question: what is the demolition purpose? Therefore, it is possible to speak about demolition of a tangible value, but concurrently about erasure of an intangible³ value (Fiorani 2014). And this implies various methods and procedures how to achieve various demolitions / deletion, erasure. The demolition / erasure can be performed in several ways: it is not only removal of items (landscapes, infrastructures, monuments, structures, facades, decorations, technical equipment...), but there are also destructive activities aimed at the message, tradition or elements of intangible heritage. That is to say that there can also exist a “demolition” carried out by means of remodelling the context or adding new elements to it.⁴

In less developed societies with a low education level and a low life quality index there is quite a high level of conservation, which usually decreases significantly in medium developed societies. However, the conservation level significantly rises in highly developed societies with a high level of education, life quality and knowledge.

What is acceptable demolition? Is small-scale demolition always acceptable?

How much heritage should be knocked down in interventions? A little, or a lot? Is there any quantitative value which can be considered acceptable?

Simple answers to these questions don't exist, it is impossible to find generalized answers that can be used in every context. From the viewpoint of reconstruction as a discipline, every demolition is a loss (Doglioni 2002, Pittaluga 2009); during demolition both testimony and knowledge are lost (Torsello 2006). It is true that sometimes, after a partial demolition, we happen to discover a part of the building that was concealed; paradoxically, in this case, the demolition would bring an increase in knowledge. However, such cases are rare.

Concerning the question whether there are demolitions that are quantitatively less ruthless than others, the answer is yes, there are. It is clear that the demolition of a whole quarter or a whole village (see examples of some interventions performed in Prague quarters and its surroundings) takes away a considerable volume of information and means deletion of an immense tangible heritage (and very often, also the intangible heritage). But here it should be reminded that sometimes even a demolition of a small fragment can mean the loss of a whole structural phase, a whole period in the structure life (archaeologists focused on architecture know it very well!) (Pittaluga 2009). (Figg. 2, 3)

Vnitroblok: inspiring experience

Vnitroblok is situated in the Prague quarter of Holešovice; concerning the conservation of material substance, structures and genius loci, Vnitroblok is a unique and successful experience. Here we can see several restored elements, which would be knocked down without hesitation in many other contexts and situations. Vnitroblok combines unique industrial spaces with a wide spectrum of cultural and artistic activities. It is a place where you can find a café, dancing studio, atypical cinema, hall for various events, theatre, art gallery, multimedia space and cult sports (sneaker) shoe shop under one roof.

How is Vnitroblok defined?

Here are a few definitions, found in bibliography, on websites and in general reviews by people who visited this area and spent some time there; we also include an interview with a promoter of this project. In this part we intended to make an attempt to understand the motivations which are the base for such extensive conservation of an entire mass of a structure.

«Vnitroblok in Prague is a project which is considerably popular among youth, it is multifunctional. It offers a café, design shops and lots of others. Vasky pays a monthly

rent 3000,- CZK for the possibility of placing its products and invests 25% from sale into it. The Place Store in Brno is a project based on the idea that people can buy and sell at the same time, but here – much more is on offer.» (Vasky 2017+ interview).

«Vnitroblok connects beyond-comparison industrial spaces with a wide spectrum of cultural and artistic experiences...When I tried to find Vnitroblok for the first time, I felt as if I occurred myself in a wrong place. I could not believe that there could be something unusual in this old building. Then I entered into a fresh modern interior and immediately fell in love with this place. What I love about this industrial space is that it always surprises me. When I was there for the first time, I admired the large space made of brick and vintage furniture in harmony with modern style. For the second time I discovered a small cinema and an art gallery... This place has an enormous potential to keep surprising you! The authors of this project said that there already existed a famous "Kavárna co hledá jméno", called "Café which is looking for a name". It is a really multifunctional place...you can also organize your own event there. This centre or space for meeting is free of the flirt typical for ordinary commercial centres, these spiritless temples of consumption. Authentic experiences go on sale here ... in this hall we can find everything which makes us happy. – Where was this small, beyond – comparison space born? In one old factory in Holešovice, determined for demolition. A few structural adjustments, so that rain could not get inside and the construction would not collapse even if the building were full as an egg. An unaccomplished and devastated side of this place, these factory relics, these all instill an inimitable elegance in Vnitroblok.»⁵

So, what are the most frequently used expressions in the commentaries? The most frequently occurring words are: "astonished", "surprised", "find something unexpected", "discover", but also "culture", "elegance", "history" and "memory". In the project authors' statements we can most often find such words as "movement", "transformation", "grafting", and "life", "growth", "modification", "love for the city of Prague", "love for the urban history", "love for the quarter history", "feeling of doing something useful", "opportunity for a change", "freedom of deed", "enterprising drive", "openness towards change", "absence of regularities", "respect for the home city", "help towards love for our own city", "feeling of belonging somewhere".⁶

Can we deduce from these commentaries that the level of conservation goes hand in hand with the level of development? Does the increase in conservation level of our heritage increase other levels of development as well? And what are those levels of development which are so closely related to the conservation of our architectural history heritage? We can, of course, speak about economic development (and not only in the sense of tourist attractivity), but also about social development (about social coherence, about collective participation in "public issues", about the feeling of coexistence with our own quarter and about cultural identity), and also about the development of quality and sustainability of our historical centres and our territory.

The experience implemented in a few Prague quarters, such as the one where Vnitroblok is situated, seem to be coherent with the principle of knowledge economy, which is precisely described in the document Horizon 2020 (Horizon 2020 Expert Group 2015 Getting Cultural Heritage to Work for Europe, Publications Office of the European

Union, Luxembourg 2015). This document raises the question if cultural heritage is an ordinary commodity, whose maintenance is at the expense of the public budget and motivated by a moral obligation. It concludes that it is not, conversely, and that cultural heritage is a strategic economic component of European economy (Della Torre 2017). Experiences from various European regions, and also regions in North Africa (Pittaluga, Fratini 2019) testify that these principles begin to be adopted.

Higher levels of conservation bring many benefits, but it is not easy to prove their value in an objective way. In fact, they are not just immediate economic repercussions, which can be measured with indicators such as GDP. In fact, there are also other types of positive effects, such as the cultural growth of a population and its degree of awareness; and some of these are only visible after a long time, which makes it more difficult to measure them. If we understand the impact and importance of these deeds in the field of conservation, protection and maintenance, another question arises: how to achieve this objective? In my opinion the results of this Prague workshop can help to answer this question, particularly the interviews with the Vnitroblok protagonists. In Vnitroblok we can apparently perceive the idea of conservation, which arises from below, an idea which was not enforced, but wanted. A deed wanted by people who live and have always lived in this territorial context.

Conservation Pedagogy⁷

New strategies have been present for some time in the experimental phase of some "praiseworthy" contexts (Pittaluga, Nanni 2016, Pittaluga 2019, 2020, Pittaluga, Fratini 2019).⁸ The "upward" awareness in the sense of "self-regulation", "self-control" or "self-respect" starts to increase (Luppi, Pretelli, Ugolini 2012).⁹

A certain kind of "education to conservation" (Musso 2009, Musso 2016): the citizen is more and more perceiving the real cultural value of the cultural heritage he belongs to, which leads him to respect this value (independent of conservation institutions and taxes). This process is essential to overcome the limits of the logic usually used by architects, and it is easy and uneasy at the same time; to be able to aim at this direction we also need to get inspired by other disciplines and lead a dialogue by other means, but in my opinion this is the only way and the university can play the leading role in this transformation. This is a long-term impact on the territory; it is an educational impact, which exceeds the walls of cultural institutions. To "understand", i.e. "respect", "maintain" and "preserve" stands against the "ideology of demolition" (Petraroia 2014).

Conclusion

Heritage concerns the relation established by the community with its own history. The effort for conservation and optimum capitalization of cultural sources is the indicator of how much a society is interested in its own culture and how much it acknowledges its value (Pittaluga 2017). Modern cities are facing complex challenges, but also offer an environment where various organizations can cooperate on finding solutions and opportunities. Numerous cities began to realize that a new utilization of historical buildings offers new opportunities and spaces for intelligent urban activities

and is an important part of any program of regeneration. «A complete involvement of citizens requires their participation; the more interested they are, the more efficient their participation will be in the phase of the monuments reconstruction and in the phase of subsequent restoration. An aspect which deserves to be emphasized is the involvement of citizens on local level and the importance of this involvement for the purposes of conservation. As Eugenia Albats wrote about the devastated Russian environment..., the apathy of citizens is the best ally of those who destroy the environment» (Settis 2010).

A quarter, city, landscape are then something "between the sphere of an individual and that of a collective life (Quaini 2009), and so they work as a special litmus paper, a test on the basis of which it is possible to realize how a citizen lives in relation to the environment surrounding him and the community he lives in. How important they are for his physical and mental health, what role he attributes to history, culture, identity of his places and his country, how he interprets the hierarchy between an immediate benefit and public interest of the community, between the short-term horizon of greedy economic plans of scruple-less businesspeople and the long-term, foresight horizon of the Constitution.

The experience from Prague with its large demolitions, but also successful conservation projects, shows how important it is to act from below, to start from the territory and its inhabitants, to be able to realize successful conservationist interventions. Every citizen must undergo a mentality change in relation to the categories of demolition and conservation. These notions cannot fall from the sky, or even worse, be forced. This is a kind of awareness, which everybody must create for himself. This is a long-term task, which will probably require a considerable effort, but the only guarantee is that only in this way we can prevent from slight destruction, which "cleverly" (and shiftily) destroys our tangible and intangible heritage. It means long-term work, but this newly acquired awareness will also help us to avoid speculations and demolitions of large areas and quarters; they will be avoided not because of the prevailing competing economic interests, but thanks to a higher social interest arising from below.

Someone could object that these ideas are Utopian, but the best endeavors to transform Utopia into reality shall be a duty for us (and also for the university as a significant place of personality formation).

Notes

- 1 Research into these issues was carried out within the project PRA 2019 (Progetto di Ricerca d'Ateneo), Department of Architecture and Design, University of Genova. *Conservation and Restoration: methodologies of analyses and strategies for tangible and intangible estates maintenance*, Daniela Pittaluga being responsible for the scientific aspects.
- 2 Workshop VII Conservation/Demolition Prague, Czech Republic, 25–28 September 2019, EAAE Thematic Network on Conservation, Faculty of Architecture CTU Prague.
- 3 The question of tangible and intangible heritage is considerably complicated. A significant discussion on this issue is included here: Fiorani 2014.
- 4 The conservation of a small paint factory building Materna by the architect Rudolf Stockar in Prague can serve as an example; in this case the building itself originating in 1911 was retained, but the additions around it completely changed its perception and meaning.
- 5 <<https://it.foursquare.com/v/vnitroblok/57b1dde1cd-1074be521bc4c9>>; <<https://www.avantgarde-prague.it/dove-mangiare-bere/vnitroblok/detail>>; <<https://www.disagian.it/praga-7-da-holesovice-a-letna/>>; <<https://www.prague.eu/it/oggetto/luoghi/2753/vnitroblok>>; <<https://www.visitczechrepublic.com/it-IT/834ca8be-d163-4703-8b53-a64efee3623a/article/n-slightly-different-culture-prague>> [Accessed 13 April 2021].
- 6 Here we refer to the interview with one of the Vnitroblok authors during the EAAE workshop (September 2019).

- 7 Pedagogy: a discipline studying the processes of bringing up and education of people (see "Pedagogia" in the dictionary Treccani www.treccani.it).
- 8 E.g. according to the writer's experience, in recent years, in some places in Liguria including the small town of Cogoleto an increased interest in conservation issues among local inhabitants has been noticed. This helped the usage of more sensitive restoration methods by individuals and institutions as well; these interventions also caused an increase in activities related to tourism, but predominantly in the feeling of cultural identity of these territories. Similar facts were described at the Ripam7 conference and documented in the volume Pittaluga, Fratini 2019. Another experience was described by Antonello Sanna, Giuseppina Monni and Adriano Dessi: the whole area with abandoned mines was maintained and a number of valuable activities developed here (Pittaluga and Fratini 2019, 549–565). In some Algerian regions there are various initiatives focused on the territory conservation and tourism development, which understand these two notions (conservation and development) as closely connected (Pittaluga, Fratini 2019, 1749–1763, 1907–1920, 1933–1947).
- 9 This growing and expanding awareness of a certain locality values in some cases have even led to the maintenance of places connected with unpleasant memories. In this context we can mention the experience from the conservation of the concentration camp in Fossoli (Luppi, Pretelli, Ugolini 2012).

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Fig. 1) Discussion with the promoters of the Vnitroblok project. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)

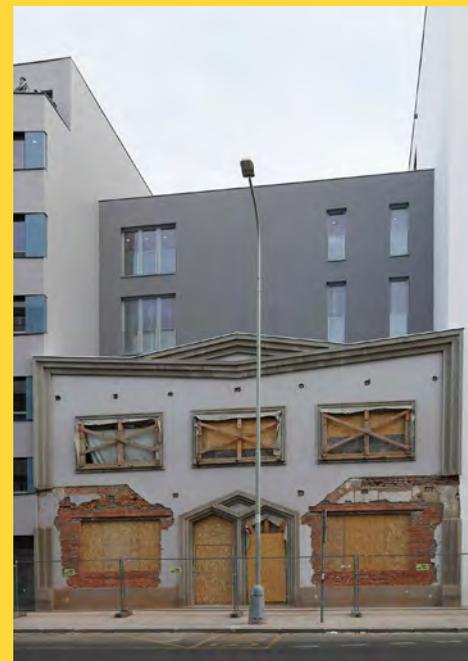


Fig. 2) How is a such conservation approach possible? Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 3) Materna paint factory. The drastic changes of the urban landscape hinder correct perception of the building's architectural features. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2021)

The need for identification and definition of the values of sixties and seventies architecture

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Our towns and cities have recently experienced a growing number of demolitions of both the individual buildings and the smaller sets of buildings constructed in the 1970s and 1980s. The opinion on the protection of these contemporary monuments is inconsistent and full of contradiction even amongst the professional public. It is therefore necessary not only to systematically map the buildings, but also to set clear evaluation and protection criteria (at both the scientific and practical level) for these structures which in many respects differ quite significantly from ordinary historical buildings. The results of this professional debate and research should help to avoid the mentioned demolitions in Czech Republic and, on the contrary, to support coexistence of this young heritage resource with contemporary life's demands and expectations.

The text deals with the state of this issue in the Czech Republic and presents an ongoing discussion on the formulation of evaluation criteria for the protection of monuments from the second half of the 20th century, which was the focus of the research project *Analysis and Presentation of the Values of the 1960s and 1970s Modern Architecture as Part of the National and Cultural Identity of the Czech Republic*¹ funded from the applied research and development of the national and cultural identity, NAKI II (hereinafter the NAKI II project) programme of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, and administered by the National Heritage Institute. The project runs from 2016 through 2020, with the Faculty of Civil Engineering, CTU in Prague being one of the co-investigators.

The main output of the NAKI II project is therefore an inventory of especially 1960s and 1970s architectural heritage, formulation of methodology and elaboration of four detailed case studies (which will be also briefly discussed in this text).

We have to emphasize that the construction effort at that time was enormous in Czech Republic and only a small percentage of this heritage is at the moment protected and many of them are currently threatened. The state (the Communist party) wanted to present itself through the extent of construction not only of residential but also of civil buildings, which in their amount have no comparison at that time before. The architectural quality of representative civic buildings reached very quickly a contemporary international level (many buildings very also directly designed for the "export" abroad – e.g. the award-winning Czechoslovakian pavilions at EXPO 58 in Brussels² and other contemporary EXPO pavilions or many of recognized Czech embassies all around the world).

Value – non-value

The biggest issue in evaluating and protecting this specific heritage is that we do not have a completely clear view of the scope and treatment of the buildings constructed in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This is related to the fact that science has been dealing with this historical period for a relatively short time, and experts lack a sufficient knowledge base, in contrast with, for example, Baroque architecture.³

The key and basic argument in any discussion on this topic is the recognition and necessity to perceive this "historical layer" as equivalent to other historical eras (the classical value of age, as defined by monument care, is relativized here, however – in the "accelerating pace" of the 20th century, the required interval of 50 years can no longer be defended. Nowadays, it is obvious that we need to work with an approximately 30-year interval, in some cases even less).

We can see that the situation has improved in recent years, but the gap between "mainstream" conservationists and "alternativists" (as they would be called also) persists. Some experts dealing with "real historical architecture" will find this architecture heritage still unsuitable for protection (after all, it's a common practice that we protect castles and chateaux, not boiler rooms and/or housing estates). Unfortunately, we have encountered a refusal to recognize this historical layer by historians who themselves deal with this period, which is a strange paradox (in the Czech environment perhaps caused by the fact that many of these buildings still have a vivid "communist" subtext for them).

What is really interesting is that this area of expertise often attracts very young people – for them this heritage is even something like an alternative to the mainstream, consumer lifestyle (some of them even do not remember socialism and their view tends to be a bit naive) and they do perceive that protection or re-use would be part of ecological or sustainable vision of a world.

If we recognize this layer as worthy of research and protection, then follows another, already outlined issue, which are the prejudices against this architecture. This state of affairs is supported by the mentioned lack of clarity of the monument conservation opinions in this area.

Below is listed a summary of the most common reasons for demolition, which can also be commonly seen in professional monument evaluations of buildings and discussions with developers:

- A particular building is *ugly* and too young to be protected (e.g. former administrative and logistic Transgas Complex in Prague), has no quality at all (very general argumentation, see Strakoš 2011). (Figg. 1, 2)
- The building did not receive *publicity in international press* or professional books (e.g. Ostrava-Vítkovice Railway Station or Havířov Railway Station). (Fig. 3)
- It is a "*socialist monument*" (e.g. former huge Hotel Praha in Prague, former communist resort at Orlik Dam with a presidential villa and also a number of cultural facilities around Czech Republic).
- It is in a *state of disrepair or ruin* (but as a result of neglect /dilapidation/ in fact). This is a very common argument for demolition (e.g. Karlín boiler house in Prague, Frýdek-Místek sports stadium or a popular EXPO 58 restaurant in Prague).

- It *lost its function* – many buildings deal really poorly with contemporary social and technological changes (sometimes we see a total loss of function); some telephone exchange stations at Prague-Dejvice and Prague-Žižkov could serve as examples (but we can also see the same example in Hradec Králové). (Fig. 4, 5, 6) But all these arguments are false (e.g. the Hotel Praha was generating profit before it was bought by a new owner, as was the case with the sports stadium in Frýdek; we can also use an example of Hotel Černigov in Hradec Kralové that supposedly offered rooms that were too small and with low comfort standards). (Fig. 7) But sometimes we have to admit some degree of changes (regarding for example contemporary culture buildings – e. g. in Neratovice). (Fig. 8)

- The frequent argument is *non-sustainability* (e.g. Omnipol administrative building in Prague changed its facade; this example shows a general problem of curtain walls).

So intensive research activities in this area of monument protection have long lagged behind the pace of destruction, and the current emotional debate is just driven by ongoing demolitions and destruction of prominent buildings – each such case gives rise to a wave of protests and signing of petitions and open letters (of small groups of experts or young people), but also to uncomfortable attacks on these supporters.

Research and first inventories

Another problem is ignorance of the extent of the cultural heritage of the given era. The research, although beneficial, has thus far been incomplete and the outputs have been directed more to the area of general art history. The first inventory, unfortunately selective but otherwise a very beneficial publication by Assoc. Prof. Ševčík (Ševčík-Beneš 2009) on the 1960s architecture, paradoxically helps the destruction of buildings – what is not mentioned in it (certain areas the book did not deal with at all) is determined by officials to be cases for demolition (see, for example, the case study of Vítkovice Railway Station, which did not appear in this publication). Other publications cover some of the best-known examples, while some complex typologies such as health care buildings, I believe, are not entered to this day. The complete inventory is therefore a primary task, because the range of valuable buildings from the post-war period is large in the Czech Republic.

Contemporary inventory

The National Heritage Institute completed last year the inventory of Buildings from the 1960s and 1970s, which was published in the Monument Catalogue (Památkový katalog [online]). At the same time, the Monument Catalogue with 40,000 registered Czech cultural monuments (national cultural monuments, conservation zones...) is being digitized. Entries are compulsory for listed buildings, however the database also contains buildings with varying levels of value (also buildings which are only rated as interesting). The listing of potentially interesting buildings leads to a discussion as to whether they belong to this database at all. In my opinion, they should be on the list (maybe they could be better separated), but this inventory systematizes data in at least one place, can be filtered, analyzed and used for argumentation. Again, however,

it probably won't show everything (to cover all the buildings in more detail is an unreachable goal). The inventory captures mostly civil and selected residential buildings. For no obvious reasons industrial buildings were excluded (which is again an issue and a question if we are dealing with this heritage well).

When typing in entries, it turned out that traditional descriptive categories are, logically, insufficient. The database was therefore modified. In post-war architecture, for example, the typological categories (in the period of socialism these were designed by typologically specialized design institutes – Vodní stavby /Water Structures/, Hutní projekt /Metallurgical Project/, Scénografická laboratoř /Stage design Laboratory/), constructional and material solutions (curtain walls – e.g. famous Czech product “Boletice panel” is not understood by all as something to protect) as well as new directions and styles were emerging.

Also for personnel reasons, the inventory has been under development for a long time. The need for an inventory and an effort to be well-informed in this issue resulted in publishing of a list of registered and designed buildings and premises (as well as those considered for registration or listing), devastating reconstructions and demolition of buildings and premises, paradoxically in the professional journal of the National Heritage Institute entitled *Reports of the Conservation of Monuments*. This list was published in late 2017 by the Working Group for Post-War Architecture at Czech National Committee run under International Council of Monuments and Sites (CNC ICOMOS) and led by Prof. Petr Vorlík from Faculty of Architecture CTU in Prague (Vorlík at al. 2017). This list was also arranged by typological affiliation, and could be interpreted in relation to individual architectural forms.

The list showed how weak and uneven protection of post-war buildings and sites in the Czech Republic has been: «The list is mostly predominated by structures from the 1950s... The works of the peak 1960s and 1970s (much less 1980s), i.e. of the international style, new brutalism, structuralism, technology line or humanized late modernism and postmodernism, are represented by only a few structures (hotel and communications tower on the Ještěd Mountain, Federal Assembly, Department Store Máj and an engineering company ČKD's headquarters). What is alarming is especially the absence of key typological categories (houses, sacral buildings and ceremonial halls, medical care buildings, public buildings, theatres), but also percentage stratification of preservation, which meets neither high ambitions of that era put into a given typological category, nor usually architectural quality (cf. renowned shop windows of socialism – department stores, foreign trade companies, international hotels).» (Vorlík at al. 2017).

This list was groundbreaking and its analysis was also reflected in the upcoming methodology for building and site protection from the second half of the 20th century (Vrabelova, Goryczkova at al. 2020), which is another output of the NAKI II project.

Definition of values and evaluation methodology

I share the view that the general evaluation criteria should be the same as for all previous periods, i.e. under *Act no. 20/1987 Coll. on Heritage Care*, cultural monuments are considered buildings that constitute «significant evidence of the historical devel-



Fig. 1) Former administrative and logistic Transgas Complex before demolition. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2019)

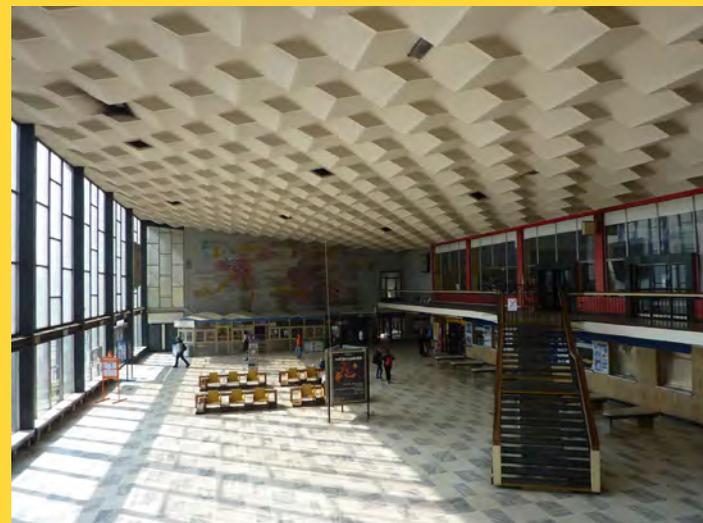


Fig. 3) Havířov Railway Station with a large endangered mosaic by Vladimír Kopecký. Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2017)



Fig. 2) Administrative and logistic Transgas Complex under construction. Prague, Czech Republic. (private archive of Lucie Loosová)



Fig. 4) Telephone exchange stations in Dejvice before demolition. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2019)



Fig. 5) Telephone exchange stations in Hradec Králové. Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2019)



Fig. 7) Hotel Černigov in Hradec Králové. Now under demolition. Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2019)



Fig. 6) Telephone exchange stations in Hradec Králové. Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2019)



Fig. 8) Civic house and cinema in Neratovice, Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2018)

opment, way of life and social environment from ancient times to the present day, as manifestations of the creativity and work of man from various areas of human activity, for their revolutionary, historical, artistic, scientific and technical values» (Section 1(1a)) or the buildings «which are directly related to important personalities and historical events» (Section 1(1b)). In addition to the *Act on Heritage Care*, it is also possible to apply protection of urban planning values within the territorial documents. Currently, an amendment to the *Heritage Care Act* is under preparation (discussion), but it has not been reflected in this research, so we will not deal with it.

However, the general criteria are insufficient, because post-war architecture (no matter how “devastating” it is) is different (we mean in relation to historical castles, gardens, pillories and rural architecture). It has some special features that even some members of the professional community (it is the case with industrial buildings as well) do not perceive as part of common values associated with historical architecture. At the same time, modernistic architecture logically belongs to historical development, and along with it its specifics.

Therefore, *the Evaluation methodology of cultural and historical, architectural, typological and constructional qualities of buildings constructed in the second half of the 20th century with regard to their (potential) monument protection*, is now being written: «It aims to create a methodological procedure to use, on the basis of which it is possible to proceed in the research, identification, registration and assessment of the architecture of buildings and building units, designed and implemented in a particular period...it is intended primarily for professionals working in the National Heritage Institute who, under the Act on Heritage Care, perform the care of the building fund.» (Vrabelova, Goryczkova at al 2020). This methodology has been published recently, in 2020.

Discussions about this evaluation methodology were quite interesting. As a result, it formulates in particular the specifics of the architecture of the particular period: the development of a form that should have been inconsistent with the historical environment (therefore we must perceive international style or new brutalism as relevant to historical styles). New constructions and materials, which are also often associated with aesthetics of the given style (curtain walls – e.g. “Boletice panel” aluminium, Béton brut, etc.), new typologies (which have their socialist specifics in the Czech Republic, for example, today a disintegrated network of cultural facilities, starting from community meeting rooms to gigantic cultural houses, regional secretariats of the Communist Party). The socialist state also supported construction of the buildings providing health care making sure an easy access to health care and services to all citizens. It also supported construction of schools, research institutes, industrial buildings, etc. The ignorance of the typological chains for a given typology is obvious (which is not usually dealt with in art history, nor does it have the necessary knowledge for it; see, for example, our research on theatre architecture). My colleagues and I published a comprehensive text on the topic of the specifics of socialist typology in the Czech the National Heritage Institute journal *Reports of the Conservation of Monuments* (Popelová, Sedláková, Šenberger 2018). Of course this way of interpreting architecture is quite difficult and must at times involve an interdisciplinary research. For example, in research on theatres

of that time and extraordinary works of architect Ivo Klimeš co-operated with stage designers, theatre historians and even directors (Popelová, Špačková, 2014).

The methodology also assesses the importance of the high incidence of works of art in architecture (they are also severely damaged or destroyed) (Fig. 3) and also outlines the problematic ideological perception of architecture. Issues related to authenticity and integrity of evaluation are still under discussion.

The aim was to describe the issue in general, also for “legal” reasons, because binding proclamations could only hurt the conservation by possible multiplicity of their legal interpretations (e.g. we faced arguments such as that the building was not listed in the international press, so we can demolish it, etc.).

Selected case studies

Four books have been published as part of the NAKI II project. Three of them address current cases:

Vítkovice Railway Station in Ostrava (Strakoš at al. 2017) (Figg. 9, 10) – this elegant and functional building in a late international style aesthetic (architect Josef Danda, 1964) was repeatedly listed and delisted as a cultural monument and its conservation was revoked (the argument against listing was its absence in the aforementioned early publication on 1960s architecture). Its future had been uncertain for a long time, as it no longer fulfilled its function as a transport junction to the former enormous complex of Vítkovice Ironworks, which were closed during recent decades and partly reused. The building is interesting also for its interior decor in a main passenger hall (especially Brussels style glass works).

The proposed conversion of a railway station to a museum was not supported (it seemed too large etc.), despite knowledge of such examples from abroad. In 2020, the station was finally entered as a monument, and the question is now what future function of this huge object will be (an office e.g.?).

This book helped to indicate that «*the heritage potential of the station is so strong that the building undoubtedly merits the status of a cultural monument. In addition to his historic value, the station is also of great significance as a part of the wider urban fabric, as its forms a focal point for the surrounding area...*» (Strakoš at al. 2017: 255). It is clear how important is this building for its context.

We can add that also a nearby Havířov Railway Station had been originally sentenced to demolition, but it is now undergoing a hopefully sensible rebuild and is still in use. (Fig. 3)

Kotva Department Store at Náměstí Republiky in Prague (Urlich at al. 2018) – which was first opened in 1975 (architects Vladimír a Věra Machoninovi, 1969–1975). It was the largest department store in Central Europe in its time, which offered many different lines of products. The book deals in deep detail with the development of this typology and the history of the project. The building was submitted to an architectural competition – it was typical, that these competitions were organized under the communist regime to support the quality of a design. So this late modernistic – new brutalist building had to be a prominent symbol of prosperity build by the Swedish civil

engineering company SIAB to get the best quality (we can add that the architects of a building were persecuted at the same time).

Proceedings for listing it as a cultural monument had been suspended due to a purposeful procedural discrepancy. Efforts to list this building thus have been ongoing for a number of years – but now it is also protected. The debate was really emotional also because of its hexagonal structure – a very contrasting form which occupies a prominent location in the historical centre of Prague.

There is an ongoing threat of major reconstruction, similar to the already listed department store Máj, which was the second largest department store in Prague, from the architectonic studio SIAL, and was one of the few buildings, which at that time had received international acclaim (it is interesting that in case of Máj the new design is proposed by the creators themselves).

Transgas complex (Goryczkova at al. 2019) (Figg. 1, 2) – the book is on the complex of buildings of the former control centre of the Soviet oil pipeline, and the buildings located behind the National Museum in the immediate city centre, which was to form part of a larger reconstruction of the surrounding area. For the sake of building a highway and the impossibility of redevelopment, it was implemented in its “altered and denser form” referring to the ideas of early High-tech and New Brutalism.

Efforts to list this building have been ongoing for the last few years, and were also supported by young enthusiasts and supporters of modernistic architecture. However, listing as a cultural monument failed due to an absurd reason of this building’s unsuitability to the traditional block housing development in Vinohrady, and some other absurd prejudices. Demolition was in progress in 2019, even though there were some plans to place a Center Pompidou branch here. Thus this complex is being altered with a conventional shopping mall. «It is an irony of fate that while this monography was under preparation, the structural skeleton of a building was dismantled floor by floor... Let us only hope that the example of Transgas building is not repeated in case of other important building...» (Goryczkova at al. 2019: 242)

The last book, on *Intercontinental Hotel* (Houšková at al. 2019), reflects the only positive example. It describes the history of a luxury Prague hotel finished in 1970s in a New Brutalism style, which was at the level of world-class hotels in its time and which is still fully functional.

In general, the research was very detailed in particular cases – what is interesting, despite the fact that we deal with the near past, the plans and information is often not at all known (e.g. in the case of strategic Transgas building in Prague the information has not been published anywhere, the archives have disappeared as the building was part of a state infrastructure, etc. in the case of Kotva, the owner of the building did not support the research at all).

Conclusion

As researchers and lecturers the scope of our competence is limited – we can become involved in the preparation of conservation legislation to a limited degree, and we cannot influence developers who try to profit from the valuable land on which many important buildings of the second half of the 20th century are situated. In the discussion process, developers usually try to find any gap possible that could undermine the value of the particular development, which is supported by the lack of clarity of the monument conservation opinions in this area, and weak argumentation. Intensive research activities in the area of monument protection have long lagged behind the pace of destruction, and the current emotional debate is more or less “driven by ongoing demolitions” and destruction of prominent buildings – each such case gives rise to a wave of protests (of small groups of experts, but often of the general public), but also to attacks on these supporters.

My own practice shows that it is important to first compile detailed inventories, while not resorting to simplified adoption of pre-existing, older references, which were highly selective (some authors were for example, politically inconvenient) and knowing the developmental series of individual typologies so that excellent and characteristic examples of that era’s architecture are preserved. In addition, it is necessary to promote and defend a positive discussion of the relevant specifics of evaluation. The research is also detailed – although we deal with the near past, the facts are often not known at all.

Notes

1 This NAKI II project involves the exhibition *The Best of Architecture of the 1960s and 1970s in the Czech Republic* in 2020, which is accompanied by a catalogue, see <<https://www.ma6070.cz/cs/akce/67648-to-nejlepsi-z-architektury-60-and-70-years-in-the-czech-republic>> [Accessed 20 January 2020]. An expert conference will be organized in 2021.

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- 2 The Czech exposition "One Day in Czechoslovakia" designed by Jindřich Santar placed in a late modernistic pavillion designed František Cubr, Josef Hrubý and Zdeněk Pokorný was awarded the gold medal of the Expo 58.
- 3 This topic has not been discussed in the Czech Republic for long time – since the beginning of millennium and unfortunately still has not been perceived in an international context enough.



Fig. 9) Ostrava-Vítkovice Railway Station. Now a listed building. Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2017)



Fig. 10) Ostrava-Vítkovice Railway Station. Now a listed building. Dilapidated main hall of the station. Czech Republic. (photo Lenka Popelová 2017)

The force of everyday life

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Abstract

Italo Calvino in his searching recollection of cities discussed the many-layered relationship between the generation of a place and the manner in which it is occupied. A city, he said, consists of «... the relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past». He qualifies this «... the line strung from the lamppost to the railing opposite and the festoons that decorate the course of the queen's nuptial procession; the height of that railing and the leap of the adulterer who climbed over it at dawn; the tilt of a guttering and a cat's progress along it as he slips into the same window.» (Calvino 1979: 13).

This constant use and adjustment to that use and abuse creates an ever-evolving environment, somewhere that is never finished, not complete nor content. Yet as the city develops it leaves traces and marks of that evolution. It is ordered and reordered, and in doing so displays these uncertainties and patina of time within the very grain of the streets and buildings themselves. Calvino continues: «As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks up like a sponge and expands. ... The city does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the street, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.» (Calvino 1979: 13).

Connections

It is possible to draw a direct connection between a building and the society that constructed it – this includes the subsequent modifications of the structure. The evolving attitudes of a culture are present within the organisation and programmatic use of a building, thus each change and adaptation reflects the concerns of the residents of that environment. Buildings and places hold histories. They depict patterns of life, the preoccupations of the people that inhabit them, the obsessions and anxieties of the residents. Buildings store these passions, enthusiasms and neurosis seemingly within their very structure.

This sense of ownership is underlined by the outraged reaction of the public to the artwork; *House*, by Rachel Whiteread. *House* (1993) was a most extraordinary and highly controversial exposure of the insides of a somewhat unremarkable terraced house in London. The building was already due to be demolished; in fact, the whole street was to make way for an urban parkland, a ribbon of green corridor to connect the Isle of Dogs with Victoria Park. This was a non-controversial and visionary policy that allowed residents access to connected green space without banishment to busy roads. However, within

this enlightened scheme, *House* was condemned as an affront to the previous residents and an insult to the generations of Londoners who had once occupied the street. Simon Watney documented the reaction to the piece: «House is deemed obscene because it exposes an interior, because it shows us something that we are not supposed to see, because it fails to operate as a proper decent public sculpture in the interests of the moral and political claims of an administrative system ...» (Watney 1995: 108).

The interior of the building was filled with concrete, and then the exterior walls simply demolished. This exposed the interior not as uncontained space, but exactly the opposite, as a definite and tangible solid. The memory of its occupation was revealed in negative within the shape of the space, and the marks, inscriptions, scratches and impressions of daily life exposed in the casting process. The spaces appeared naked, exposed and vulnerable, and the loneliness of existence revealed in the disconnection with the loss of the rest of the houses in the street. It is somewhat ironic that in the end the council did bow to pressure from the local population, the press and other self-styled vigilantes, and house was demolished just 11 short weeks after it was constructed.

Worn floors, damaged surfaces, graffitied walls, these serve as records of the people who were there, for whom a particular building was a fundamental part of the infrastructure of daily life. In any given building exciting things have happened, terrible things have happened, but mostly, things have just happened, everyday life continued and for the most part, it wasn't notable, except to the person who lived it. Yet these buildings do contain a direct connection with the past, with the culture of those who constructed them and the culture of those who occupied them.

This link, which is characterised by a strong connection to place, to building capacity and contains resilience to external forces can be described as social sustainability (Smith et al. 2014: 1). This connection between context and sustainability focuses on the needs, aspirations and quality of human relationships; «Social sustainability is the ability of a society or an individual's lifestyle to continue in a way that suits their needs and those of subsequent generations. The values and spiritual aspirations of the people should be complimented in their interior environment, and in the processes and activities involved should respect their history, current needs and future potentials beliefs and rituals.» (Smith et al. 2014: 1). Thus strategies that do not raze the existing, that do not conduct indiscriminate demolition, that do not replace inadequate yet salvageable places and structures with new unrepresentative developments can have a direct and beneficial impact upon the quality of life.

But how would the residents feel this disconnection between the physical nature of the existing urban landscape and the memory of the past place? The sense of belonging to a place, to be part of the evolution, to feel connected to somewhere is highly important. Collective and cultural memories are tied up with community sustainability. Wholesale demolition of complete environments can create complete dislocation of the individual from the community. Wellbeing that is created when an individual is part of a community is something that evolves from the collective memory of the place, the community that that memory creates and the maintenance of this through constant interaction.

Demolition and partial demolition

So, what are the consequences for an existing building or place when it is renovated or redeveloped? Sometimes this is simply the necessary work to make a building useable. But redevelopment can also be a threat. It can herald gentrification, or the loss of the history attached to a specific building or area. Any significant redevelopment inevitably attracts criticism from people who are worried that they will lose something, whether that is the affordability to continue living in their home, or the historical value attached to a certain site. How then do architects manage the conflict between the needs of the present with the value of the past? What is lost once a building is gone for good? What is the relationship with the specific history, and how does future inhabitation respond to the present environment?

The EAAE *Conservation / Demolition* focus group, *The Force of Everyday Life* reached certain conclusions with regards to demolition. These mutual and informed statements expressed the concern that the group had for the destructive quality within the process of demolition, not just the loss of physical fabric, but also, and just as importantly, the accompanying loss of cultural memory.

Demolition was defined as «the removal in whole or in part of a place's fabric and can lead to the loss of cultural significance. Conversely the opposite is also true, for the loss of cultural significance can be the trigger for the loss of fabric leading to the destruction of the place through deterioration or demolition». The group also regarded demolition as a force of everyday life: «It is part of the actions that must be taken in the shaping of the environment and as such can be a creative act as much as a destructive one», and, although there are many degrees of demolition, «... almost all requirements for changes to a place that will require some degree of loss of historic fabric and by extension, loss of meaning» (The Force of Everyday Life). Thus the conclusions reached supposed that demolition affects both the material and immaterial qualities of place. It is a process of dematerialisation that can equally impact on the place's fabric and meaning, or each independently of the other. The loss of meaning of a place can be as destructive as the loss of its fabric and could be regarded as a non-material form of demolition.

Louis Aragon's 1926 Surrealist document of a threatened Parisian arcade, *Paris Peasant*, is an endless and meandering story of a man who constantly rediscovers his city. This allows him to appreciate the place, the lives of those within it and the relationship between the two (Aragon 1971). This description of the places and spaces of the soon to be demolished Passage de l'Opéra, could be described as a quotidian adventure, a celebration of the commonplace, sometimes banal lives of seemingly ordinary people. But it is also a heartrending description of a way of life soon to be lost, as the Haussmann Plan for Paris slowly and relentlessly drives its way through the neighbourhood. «The great American passion for city planning, imported into Paris by a prefect of police during the Second Empire and now being applied to the task of redrawing the map of our capital in straight lines, will soon spell the doom of these human aquariums. Although the life that originally quickened them has drained away, they deserve, nevertheless, to be regarded as the

secret repositories of several modern myths: it is only today, when the pickaxe menaces them, that they have at last become the true sanctuaries of a cult of the ephemeral, the ghostly landscape of damnable pleasures and profession. Places that were incomprehensible yesterday, and that tomorrow will never know.» (Aragon 1971: 14). He mourns this damage as though forces beyond the control of the everyday comprehension were overcoming the city: «Today the Boulevard Haussmann has reached the Rue Lafitte, remarked *L'Intransigeant* the other day. A few more paces forward by this giant rodent and, after it has devoured the block of houses separating it from the Rue Le Peletier, it will inexorably gash open the thicket whose twin arcades run through the Passage de l'Opéra before finally emerging diagonally on to the Boulevard des Italiens». The catalogue of destruction carries on, until it ends with a lament for the loss of the established way of life: «It seems possible, though, that a good part of the human river which carries incredible floods of dreamers and dawdlers from the Bastille to the Madeleine may divert itself through this new channel, and thus modify the ways of thought of a whole district, perhaps of a whole world.» (Aragon 1971: 14).

The future of the already built

As individuals and communities, deep significance is attached to familiar places, and complex relationships can develop between the residents and the place that they inhabit. Thus, places are defined by the people who live within them. This quality that is present in the nature of the buildings and the streets, is often generated by the ordinary actions of local people, many of who believe that their identity is essentially tied to the place that they inhabit. This local distinctiveness is characterised by the activities that occur within the specific environment. And so, significant markers are formed, in both the present and in the past, which will allow a society to relate to a particular environment.

«In the ex-industrial meatpacking district of Holešovice, Prague, a new wave of offbeat art galleries and cocktails in jam jars are stealing the show.» (Corinthia).

Holešovice is a diverse district to the north of Prague city-centre tucked into the bend of the river and stretching along the left bank of the Vltava to Letná Hill. It was once a great iron-making area, and its relationship with the city, the river and thus connections beyond the confines of the city made the perfect conditions for industrial development. This post-industrial area was, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a great centre of manufacturing and trade. The city slaughterhouses and associated market were based here, as were steam mills, a brewery, various factories, and a busy cargo port. The majority of these industrial buildings no longer serve their original purpose; many have been remodelled as apartment buildings, cultural centres, office complexes, studios, or even market buildings. (Figg. 1, 2, 3)

The Art Nouveau and Neo-Renaissance style slaughterhouse served the residents of the city for more than a hundred years. Until the advent of refrigeration including cold-transportation, abattoirs were generally positioned close to the centre of population; meat needed to be eaten as soon as possible after slaughter to avoid putrefaction. This great meat-packing building is in the process of conversion into 'MINT', an arts and crafts market. Next to this is a venue for contemporary performing arts – Játka 78,

a self-proclaimed “Temple of Creativity”. Close by, the reuse of an industrial warehouse to house Vnitroblok is a thoroughly 21st century concept: part coffee shop, part concept store, part multifunction gallery space. While in the same neighbourhood is DOX, the Centre for Contemporary Art. This is a mixture of old factory buildings and new structures created between 2003 and 2008 by Ivan Kroupa Architects (Van Uffelen and Golser 2013: 168). The original industrial buildings were extended and reused, while the new elements emulate the objectivity of the original factory buildings, and a cohesive unity created through the use of light grey render. A recent and extraordinary addition is the zeppelin-like structure that has seemingly just landed on the roof of the buildings. This 42-metre-long timber, steel and glass structure was designed by Martin Rajniš, Leoš Válka, David Kubík and opened in 2016. It is not just a visual delight, but also a venue for readings and public discussion. (Figg. 4, 5)

But still Holešovice has no shortage of vacant industrial buildings. It also has plenty of brownfield space. Construction within the dense urban environment, upon brownfield or the once-occupied sites is one of the most important issues within architecture at the moment and represents a considerable investment within the industry. These tarnished areas which would once have been overlooked, have become cradles of architectural enquiry. This undoubtedly leads to the creation of social sustainability within the area, and the liberation of a new future for the area. However Jan Richter of Radio Prague International is concerned about the loss of a distinct character. He writes that «much of the area around the old port is planned to turn into an area of modern high-rise office buildings and shopping malls. Some locals, including the writer Ludvík Vaculík, fear that this will be the end of old Holešovice and it will become just another indistinct part of the new Prague.» (Richter 2007)

Collective memory

The absence of cultural memories, that is the loss of the collective knowledge that is passed from one generation to the next to enable the construction of a collective identity, can lead to an unreliable interpretation of the past. The sense of the preceding era is based upon certain social and mental conditions, so for key elements of that past to be destroyed, demolished or forgotten, is to forgo key elements of community and social evolution. Such, of course was the impact of much that was constructed during that period of collective amnesia after the Second World War.

In the fourth and final section of W G Sebald’s *Vertigo*, the protagonist visits his childhood home in the Tyrol. It was thirty years since he had last been there, and the place had «... continually returned in my dreams and daydreams and had become more real to me than they had been then», yet upon arrival in the village he was shocked to discover that it «... was more remote from me than any other place I could conceive of» (Sebald 1999: 185–186). Sebald reflects upon the nature of the loss of association with this place from the past, with the sense of belonging that it would and could imbue. The book continues: «The house of the head forester, a small shingled villa with a pair of antlers and the inscription “1913” above the front door, together with its small orchard had made way for a holiday home; the fire station and its handsome slatted tower, where

the fire brigade’s hoses hung in silent anticipation of the next conflagration, were no longer there; the farmhouses had without exception been rebuilt, with added storeys; the vicarage, the curate’s lodge, the school, the town hall where Fürgut the one-armed clerk went in and out with a regularity that my grandfather could set his watch by, the cheese dairy, the poorhouse, Michael Meyer’s grocery and haberdashery – all had been thoroughly modernised or had disappeared altogether.» (Sebald 1999: 185–186).

Strangely the narrator felt a certain amount of relief at the total transformation of the village of W. The fact that everything had completely changed was somewhat reassuring. The authenticity of his recollection of the past would not be sullied by the reality of the present. The stories existed within their own reality, somewhere beyond the certainty of the everyday, outside the inevitability of the present and therefore acquired the qualities of myth or fable. This transformation enabled the past to become more real, more tangible and thus more physically present. But this placed the narrator outside the current events of the small town of W. It allowed him to become disconnected from the present incarnation of the village, and the memories of the place to take precedence over the present-day manifestation. This disconnection enabled the storyteller to leave the small town without the necessity to create a connection with the place. He did not feel the compulsion to stay, to become part of the present-day incarnation. He could leave without guilt or connection.

Memory and anticipation

«A city is made of buildings and streets. It is constructed from concrete and glass, steel and masonry. But a city is more than an itinerary of bricks and mortar, it is greater than the streets and alleyways, it is bigger than the rooms, squares and parks, and the funding needed to construct them. It is formed by the people who occupy it, by what they do, how they feel and the way that they interact with each other and with the environment around them.» (Stone, Sanderson 2019: 18). Buildings and spaces are engrained with the narrative of use over time. Walter Benjamin clarified this relationship between places and the people who occupy them: «To live is to leave traces.» (Benjamin 1986: 155).

Issues of collective memory and identity combined with ideas of tradition, history and culture mean that it is possible to retain a sense of continuity with the past as a way of creating the future. Questions related to heritage, smartness and sustainability are leading today’s architectural debate. Adaptation and reuse do contain elements of destruction, inevitably for a place not to become scarified, for it to develop and evolve these things must happen, but they can happen with grace and care. Meticulous readings of place combined with sensitive interpretation means that the health-giving sense of community is not necessarily lost, but retained and develops as those within the community evolve.



Fig. 1) Hall 22, former slaughterhouse, with the minimum of translation the buildings now house a vibrant traditional fruit and flower market. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sally Stone 2019)



Fig. 3) The Vnitroblok café – a miscellaneous assortment of furniture animates this postindustrial interior. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sally Stone 2019)



Fig. 2) Raw, robust and clean – the great exhibition and performance area of the Vnitroblok building is enlivened by the visiting group. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sally Stone 2019)



Fig. 4) The original industrial buildings have been extended and reused to accommodate the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sally Stone 2019)

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Fig. 5) A most extraordinary floating lecture theatre appears to hover over the DOX Centre for Contemporary Arts. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sally Stone 2019)

Demolition, a creative tool for heritage preservation?

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As our context accelerates and the economy changes, the time lapse between the creation of architecture and its demolition grows shorter (Easterling 2014: 2). The future might bring a change to an architect's repertoire to include recycling, abstinence and subtraction as the other half of building. The development of the architectural discourse might suggest as much (Burrichter 2015: 103). These approaches were always part of the building industry, but rarely taken into account by the official narrative of the history of architecture. What makes the current development unique is that these approaches are coming into consideration as creative tools by the "star" architects (Koolhaas 2016).

What is the significance of this process for heritage preservation? One of the key attributes considered in this field is the perceived, or better supposed, temporal stability (as opposed to a genuine stability in its own right) – an object perceived as a monument is not suddenly immune to the passage of time. More accurately its perceived time runs slower than the time of an ordinary object. This perceived stability is in fact a continuity, that only appears as a stability from the point of view of our narrow timeframe. Nevertheless, without it, there would be no continuity of culture through which the shared identity and collective memory is generated, which are among the key aspects of heritage preservation. The incorporation of demolition as an active, architectural tool would naturally lead to the enhanced importance and significance of the preserved. But the fundamental question remains: can subtraction be equally compelling, satisfying and constructive as the art of creating (Easterling 2014: 1)? Demolition is often considered the enemy of architecture, especially by those who strive to protect architectural heritage. It can be seen as the antithesis of preservation (Cairns, Jacobs 2014: 41). But can it have a place in heritage preservation, outside of the obvious realm of a necessary evil, from which an "active" monument (a monument that actively partakes in constituting our world-view) can be created? Demolition can be understood in multiple ways: it can intervene with the tangible and the intangible; it can be viewed as a loss of meaning, that has nothing to do with the loss of matter. Nevertheless for the purpose of this article let us consider demolition as a disappearance, a subtraction of substance. A complete loss of substance is clearly distinguishable from partly destroyed monuments whose ruins still embody former heritage values and whose impaired structure mediates new ones.

It is the importance of matter as a bearer of significance and possibly memory, that is crucial for considering demolition as a part of heritage preservation. In other words, can we remember without matter? The importance of substance, and authentic substance especially, has been the bedrock of the American-European heritage discourse,

mainly its Anti-Scrape tradition since Ruskin (Gledinning 2013: 120). This might have to do with the cult of catholic religious relics and its emphasis on the authentic substance (Tomaszewski In Rettig 2011). However, as the globalisation of heritage discourse progressed in the second half of the 20th century, its ideological base broadened through confrontation with values recognized by other cultures, for which authenticity has to do with other attributes such as form, function or tradition (Kalina 2015: 263). Matter starts to seem less important. The other factors that contribute to this development are undoubtedly the recognition of intangible heritage (Harrison 2012: 134) and also visuality, that starts to dominate our world-view and replaces reality with image (Bartholeyns 2019) which in turn leads to the diminished significance of tangibility. However, what is remarkable about the relationship between demolition and heritage preservation is not the existence (of either matter or image) but the absence, the "not-being", and whether absence can be an agent of memory.

The "not-being" can take on several forms. It might be an intentional non-existence, non-existence because there was not anything in the first place or the previously mentioned absence, because there is something missing.

While history has to do with events, memory attaches itself to a site (Nora 1989: 22). But can it be attached to an empty site? There is a debate taking place in Prague presently, about whether the Marian column should be reconstructed in the Old Town square. (Fig. 1) The column's construction was initiated by the emperor Ferdinand III. Styled according to the Marian column in Vienna, the Prague column was consecrated to the Virgin Mary, the holy saint of the emperor himself, his descendants, the people of the Austrian empire and its armies. The use of the Viennese column as a model and the placement of the structure in the Old Town square, the seat of the town hall, the symbol of the town's authority and the church of Our Lady before Týn, which housed the Utraquism church, turned the construction of a religious structure into a political and ideological declaration (Memorandum 2019). For some, the column symbolised victory over Swedish armies and the end of the Thirty Years' War, others saw it as a symbol of militant catholic Counter-Reformation (Memorandum 2019) which lasted almost another 300 years.

The column was demolished by a group of anarchists (Royt 2019) on 3rd November 1918 following the fall of the Austro-Hungarian empire, in contrast to the other Marian columns in Munich and Vienna, which remained untouched by the events of 1918 (Kalina 2015: 262). The society-wide discussion concerned with the reconstruction of the column in Prague started after 1989, approximately 70 years after its demolition (Nauman 2005). The pros and cons included the symbolic significance (be it of Habsburg Monarchy or the Catholic faith), the heritage aspect of the disputed authenticity of the reconstruction and also the absence of the dominant feature of the square (Kalina 2015: 264) and the vertical archetype in public space. (Fig. 2) It is the emphasis on the square's spatial syntax that draws attention to the fact that something is missing, that raises the question whether an absence, a not-being can be a monument in its own right: a monument that is undoubtedly missing some of the recognized heritage values, but definitely possesses the value of a historical document, since it represents the course of history that leads to

this absence. In this instance not-being embodies memory. Without previous knowledge it is evident that this absence can be recognized only in a material context. However, is there a difference here as against the monuments of the late heritage discourse which, in contrast to the beginnings of the discourse, broadens the definition of the monument to encompass objects whose significance is derived mainly from their context, albeit social or urban (Cairns, Jacobs 2014: 40)? Is there a difference between recognition of significance and the actual existence of a monument?

We should keep in mind that most of monuments that we are confronted with are mediated through the official and expert narrative (Harrison 2012: 14), as has been the case ever since the genesis of heritage preservation as a field. However, recently this fact has become the subject of ongoing discussion. One of the examples is the presentation of the Sissinghurst Castle Garden through the LGBT perspective, a decision of the English National Trust that has not been met only with positive reviews (Murray 2020). Is it really the case that the contemporary heritage discourse produced an industry with which a layperson can engage only passively (Smith 2006)? If yes, the absence of matter which instigates public discussion might embody certain values that we should not dismiss without consideration. In this instance an absence perhaps promotes participation and utilizes similar principles as does the Zweifel project by Lars Ramberg atop the Palast der Republik in Berlin. (Fig. 3) The monumental sign "doubt" on top of the building intended for demolition aimed to inspire passers-by to ponder the building's collective value and public significance and make it easier for the public to interact with the building (Otero-Pailos, Langdalen, Arrhenius 2016: 21). Participation, a process suddenly essential for heritage preservation. Unlike the first example of heritage preservation in Prague mentioned above, that is something that the following example does not fail to recognize.

The Holešovice district is an area with a unique evolution. What was still basically a rural area at the beginning of the 19th century, turned abruptly from 1823 onwards (Pudr 1945: 9) into an industrial hub full of factories, with a market place and a slaughter-house intended to serve the whole surrounding urban area. This development was motivated by several factors such as the area's easy access to water, mostly flat morphology (atypical of Prague) and a good transport connection via railroad and the newly constructed port. However, from the 1930s the industrial buildings started to slowly lose their original function. After WWII, and due to the nationalization of the majority of factories and other industrial buildings, there was almost no influx of residents to the area. After the Velvet Revolution, as the properties were returned to their former owners, they suddenly found themselves with empty factory halls in a state of dilapidation. Luckily, and similarly to other formerly industrial districts throughout Europe and USA redesigned in the last 30 years, the empty factories turned out to be ideal for accommodating offices, (Fig. 4) companies and more importantly art galleries, cultural institutions and even prominent architectural ateliers. Currently there are thirteen cultural institutions of national significance and thirty-nine cultural organizations of metropolitan significance located in this district (Havlíčková, Vohryzková 2016: 15). That factor, combined with the unique genius loci, local history and significant underdeveloped areas, created a unique opportunity for urban development, so much so that it has been recognized through

the Art District 7 project. This is the first initiative of its kind in the Czech Republic, one that aims to create a functional system for cooperation, development and support of cultural activities in public spaces with emphasis on preserving local authenticity and participation. Within the participative planning of this project four essential target groups were identified: cultural actors, residents, partners (meaning commercial partners) and visitors (cultural tourists) (Havlíčková, Vohryzková 2016: 21). (Fig. 5) The project is based on communication and cooperation of these four groups and in this matter is truly quite revolutionary in the Czech context. During the workshop we had the opportunity to visit and experience the work of these different actors first hand and truly appreciate the bottom-up process that created such a unique neighbourhood. First in Vnitroblok, a project invented by two friends who wanted to preserve unused, decaying buildings and in Dox as well, a centre for contemporary art, built by a private investor with the aim of creating a gallery comparable with the top cultural institutions in Europe. (Fig. 6) As an area with rich history and distinctive genius loci, that is at the same time locally underdeveloped with significant parts in need of redesign and good horizontal cooperation between public, private and local sector, Holešovice represents a unique opportunity for so many agents with heritage preservation being one of them. As was illustrated in the first case study from Prague, the Marian column which was ultimately reconstructed in its original form, heritage preservation tends to steer clear of trying new approaches. But then how are we to advance our knowledge if we are not allowed to experiment? (Otero-Pailos, Langdalen, Arrhenius 2016). Heritage preservation cannot exist without the collective subject of the relationship with monuments, and this relationship must be constantly fostered, among other means by the application of new approaches and thinking outside the established patterns. That is what, among others, enables us to create our value system, which although partly inherited and shared through culture must be constituted individually. Without recognition and a hierarchy of values there can be no heritage preservation. And it is spaces such as Holešovice that provide us with a unique opportunity to test new ideas without the restrictions inherent in the iconic monuments and sites (such as The Old Town square). Obviously there are numerous considerations to keep in mind, the absolute necessity of preserving the authentic identity of the place being one of them. That goes hand in hand with steering clear of the process of gentrification that has the unique power to destroy what enabled it in the first place (New York High line for instance). Nevertheless with Holešovice being somewhere in the middle of their (second) development process the site inspires creativity in so many aspects heritage preservation included. Perhaps here we might truly include experiment and possibly even „creative“ demolition in its vocabulary. Keeping in mind that demolition is and always will be first and foremost a reduction of matter, and even though it might have positive connotations (such as purification), it is always a loss of information and therefore a possibility of interpretation contrary to an object that is endlessly abundant. Nevertheless, in a present filled with vestiges of different pasts we should continue to explore the possibilities of their treatment in the spirit of Experimental preservation (Otero-Pailos, Langdalen, Arrhenius 2016) – maybe not to be used as a tool for day to day use but for a broadening of the heritage discourse.



Fig. 1) The Old Town square with the Marian column – a photograph called Alt-Prager Architektur-Detaile. Czech Republic. (published by Anton Scroll, Kunst Verlag Sien, around 1910, photo Fiedrich Kick)



Fig. 2) New Marian column at the Old Town square. Pavement is temporarily painted with 25,000 white crosses in the memory of Czech victims of COVID-19. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2021)



Fig. 3) Palast der Republik, Berlin, Germany. A project by the artist Lars Ø Ramberg in January 26. – May 15. 2005. (photo Lars Ø Ramberg 2005)



Fig. 4) Former constructivist Park Garage re-used as administrative building. Early example of conversion of industrial heritage in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2002)

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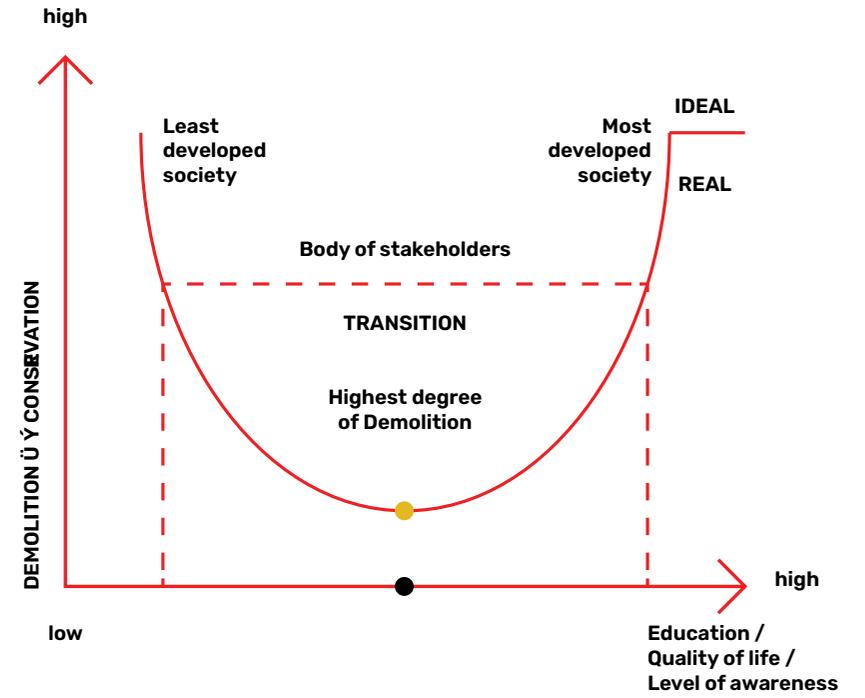
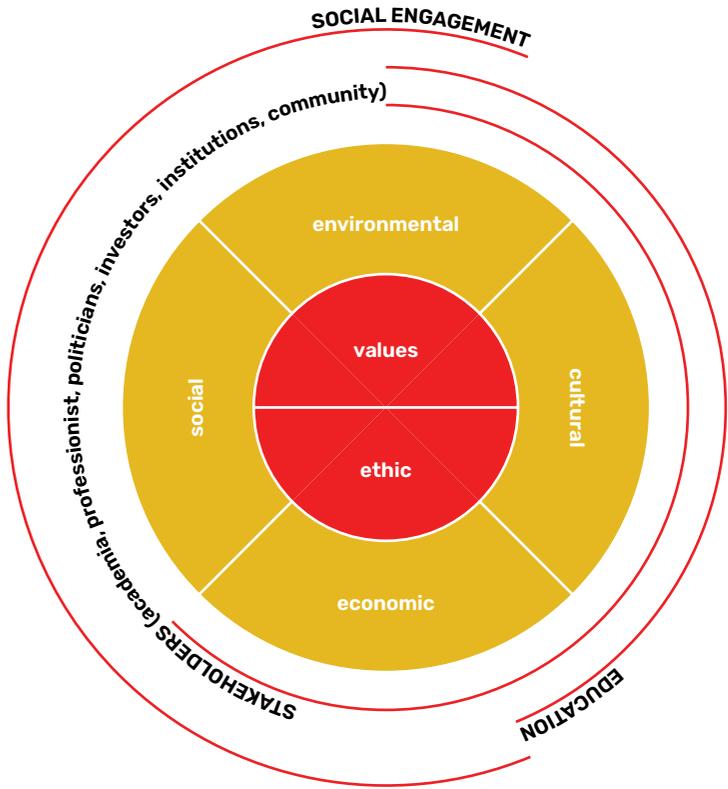
Fig. 5) Map of Art District 7, Holešovice, Prague. (Art District 7 2017)

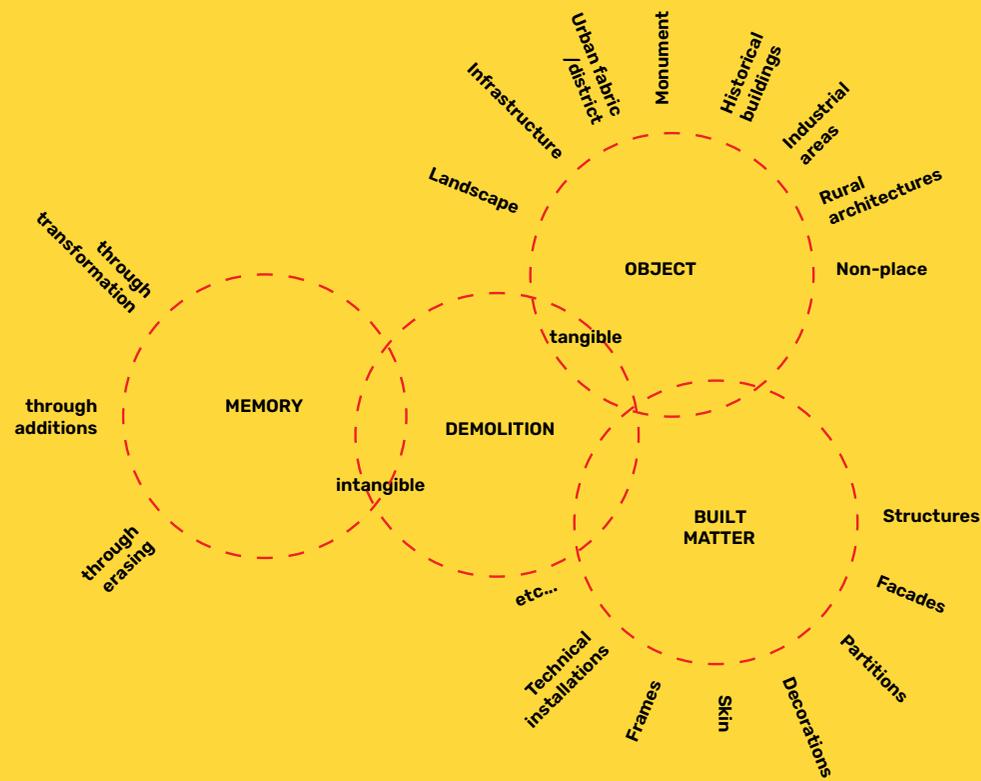
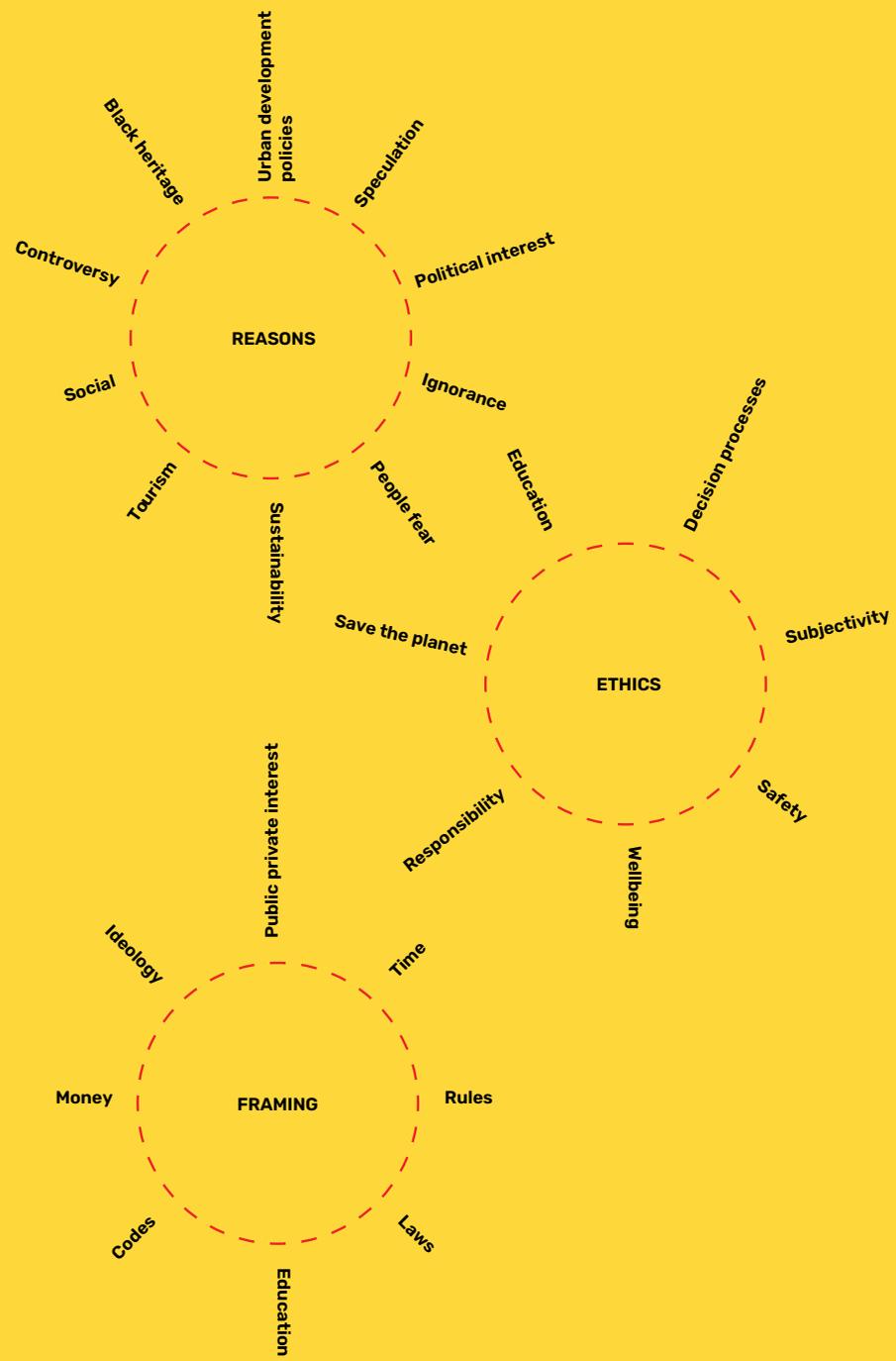


Fig. 6) DOX Centre for Contemporary Art set in 2008 by a private initiative in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)

Contemporary Versus Traditional Technologies and Approaches

Are traditional and modern technologies sufficiently accessible or culturally acceptable in a contemporary city? And what is the role of architects, conservators, municipalities, institutions, legislation, participation, and professional ethics?







Conservation vs Demolition: an ethical approach

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Introduction

In theory there is a net distinction between conservation and demolition. But in practice the cases are becoming increasingly common where parts of historic buildings, mainly façades, are embedded in new constructions, completely changing building scale and massively altering the historic urban context. The old building is not entirely destroyed in its physical substance, but its essential values are utterly lost. The messages of the historic heritage – building and neighbourhood – are radically distorted, so we could argue that such an intervention is equivalent to a demolition. But it is often presented as conservation!

So, it seems that a semantic confusion between conservation and demolition is widespread in current practice – or maybe cultivating this ambiguity is a deliberate stratagem? And what reasons are hidden behind this factual situation?

New and Old: happy cohabitation or conflict?

Continued evolution is the essence of life in a specific human settlement and this entails inherent changes in time. Transformations in historic areas have to be accepted as part of the heritage timeline, while conservation should mainly address the qualities which are fundamental in defining the character of the place.

New constructions may be required for the survival of a historic area, in order to complete it and to restore its cultural significance. Integrated conservation of the heritage often leads to the need for certain transformations to accommodate contemporary uses. Sometimes the new uses require new additions which «should reflect contemporary architecture» (ICOMOS 2000). Consequently, the cohabitation of new and old is a legitimate result of the evolution of a society and an inherent part of the integrated conservation of the built heritage.

It is generally accepted that the introduction of contemporary elements *in harmony with the context* can contribute to the enrichment of a traditional area, illustrating a new stage of its historic continuity. But the design of such contemporary interventions must respect one condition: the new should remain a secondary gesture subordinated to the character of the historic building and area.

This does not mean that the new constructions have to imitate the pre-existing historic styles. On the contrary, they must express the architecture of our time, but without altering the character of the historic context mainly defined by the existing spatial layout. «When it is necessary to construct new buildings or adapt existing ones,

the existing spatial layout should be respected, especially in terms of scale and lot size» (ICOMOS 1987: art. 2). The scale and proportion of the new building should be subservient to the historic layout of the area and the decisions of the designer should be based on his/her awareness to the historic surroundings. If the new building dominates the existing, the historic character might be altered, while a relatively neutral design might emphasise the historic qualities of the existing building. Moreover, the skills of the designer are, of course, very important. Even the most subservient design can ruin the perception of a beautiful old building, street or neighbourhood, if it does not show the hand of a gifted architect.

The practice reveals different scenarios regarding the manner in which the new relates to the old in historic areas. Those express various motivations, priorities, and attitudes, as well as different levels of sensitivity and skills of the architects, with very different consequences for the inherited built environment. On the one hand, there are examples of well-integrated contemporary interventions which can be considered expressions of the “management of change” within the conservation of a historic area. At the opposite extreme, there are cases when the new interventions practically kill the old by violently possessing it and giving birth to monsters that assault the historic city. The latter are obvious manifestations of financial greed and lack of ethical values, often associated with ignorance, contempt and poor architectural skills.

Leaving apart the architectural quality of the built result (sometimes questionable, but not always), a question arises: can the interventions where only a small part of the historic building is preserved and becomes subservient to a new construction, be considered as conservation?

Facadism

In its most commonly understood sense, facadism means «retaining the facade of a (usually historic) building that is deemed to have some architectural or other cultural value and building afresh behind it» (Bargery 2005), while the rest of the existing building is demolished, and a new building constructed behind the retained facade.

Facadism is nowadays an emerging and growing urban trend, observed and analysed by some alarmed professionals, which consider it a «creeping plague» and an «infection spreading» (Walsh 2019). This phenomenon is currently met all over the world (Figg. 1, 2, 3) and we have noticed it in Prague too. (Fig. 4) The visible results are more or less acceptable, largely depending on the designer's ability. But what are the motivations of such an extreme gesture?

There are, of course, certain situations when an approach of the kind would be not only justifiable but the only rational option: for instance, when the façade is all that still exists or really it is all that can stay for static reasons. In such cases, if the façade must be preserved for its artistic qualities and its contribution to the historic context, it is natural to build afresh behind it. But the new building should be properly related to the retained façade, as well as to the urban context. However, in most cases the facadism is just the expression of «the money-centric political and market forces shaping our cities» (Walsh 2019) and the decision is dictated only by the desire to make the most



Fig. 1) Façadism in Brussels, Belgium. (<commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fa%C3%A7adisme_01.JPG>, CC BY-SA 3.0 licence, photo Ben2 2006)



Fig. 3) Façadism in Toronto, Canada. (<[commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Facadism_NE_corner_of_Sherbourne_and_King,_2015_12_01_-_a_\(23473564745\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Facadism_NE_corner_of_Sherbourne_and_King,_2015_12_01_-_a_(23473564745).jpg)>, CC BY-SA 2.0 licence, photo booledozer 2015)



Fig. 2) Façadism in Croydon, South London, UK. (<[flickr.com/photos/57868312@N00/48715528837](https://www.flickr.com/photos/57868312@N00/48715528837/)>, CC BY 2.0 licence, photo Matt Brown 2019)



Fig. 4) Materna Paint Factory embedded in a new housing development. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2021)



Fig. 5, 6) Vertical extension of a 19th century traditional building in Bucharest, Romania. (photo Rodica Crișan 2019, 2020)

of the land. Preserving entire existing buildings and sympathetically adapting them to new uses requires much more sophisticated thinking from developers and architects, than the deplorable trend of facadism that abounds nowadays. «If walls could speak, these would tell tales of bad compromises and angry developers who, dissatisfied with the meagre notion of repair and reuse, are driven solely by remorseless greed» (The Gentle Author 2018).

The most shocking issues with facadism are the size of the new building, which is often out of the context scale, and, at least in some cases, the cheap, uninspiring, mediocre responses generated by architects who design the new building behind (and above) the retained façade. (Fig. 5, 6)

Form follows Finance¹

Driven solely by greed and exploiting legal loopholes, developers are ravaging our cities with the complicity of certain architects. These place profit above people, in a manner inadmissible on ethical grounds.

Facadism is often a tactic used by developers to increase their profits in central historic areas. With the price of land in cities soaring, they take advantage of the value of a plot occupied by a historic building, listed or set in a protected area, apparently avoiding its demolition. Ignoring the notion of authenticity, the developer embarks on a battle with the heritage protection authorities, too-often successfully, loftily proclaiming that they have preserved the historic façade, and sometimes even claiming the rehabilitation of the historic building! Meanwhile, the former constraint for the developer – more precisely the few remnants of the historic building – become arguments for the real estate agents promoting the prestige given by the “historic evidences” awaiting prospective buyers and tenants.

The built result often consists in bizarre hybrids, born from the marriage of developer greed and poor, obsequious architectural design. The historic inheritance clearly becomes a secondary issue, subservient to the new. The old façade is simply embedded in a new oversized building which completely ignores the scale and the spatial layout of the historic area. (Fig. 7, 8, 9)

At the same time, facadism provides aggressive commercial developments with a sheen of respectability and allows architects and planners to fool themselves into believing that they are preserving the built heritage. But, while the essential values of the historic building are annihilated, such an intervention is equivalent to a demolition followed by reconstruction. However, it is presented to the public as conservation and rehabilitation of the historic heritage! (Fig. 10)

You can almost feel the humiliation of the original historic building engulfed by the new and profitable construction oblivious to the context. «The ugliness of the outcome is a pertinent slap in the face, reminding us how blatantly any concern for architecture is being sacrificed in this approach. This disastrous hybrid is an unfortunate totem of where we are now, an object lesson for architectural students of what not to do, and we may be assured future generations will laugh in horror and derision at the folly of it» (The Gentle Author 2018).



Fig. 7) Neo-Romanian style building in Bucharest, Romania. (<simplybucharest.ro/?p=43461>, photo 2017)

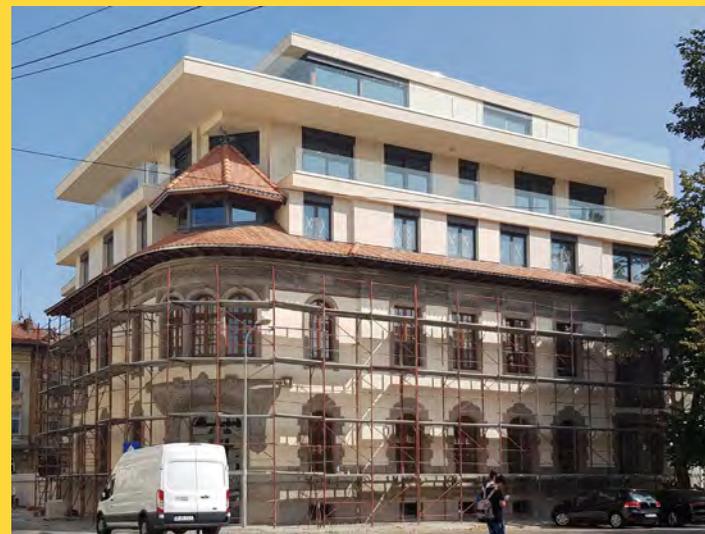


Fig. 9) The façade of the neo-Romanian style building embedded in new massive residential development. Bucharest, Romania. (photo Rodica Crişan 2020)



Fig. 8) Façades of the neo-Romanian building embedded in a new housing development. Bucharest, Romania. (photo Rodica Crişan 2019)



Fig. 10) Façades of the neo-Romanian building embedded in a new housing development. Bucharest, Romania. (photo Rodica Crişan 2019)

Such disastrous hybrids, where the new practically kills the old building and the historic context, are «totemic markers of a period in which real estate is the ultimate asset» (Wainwright 2019). This way, many beautiful historic buildings and neighbourhoods are destroyed by so claimed “conservation works”, where “form follows finance” ignoring any professional ethics.²

Conclusions: toward a new conservation ethic

The projects where only a small part of an old building is preserved and included in a much bigger new construction are more and more frequent. Can such interventions be considered “conservation” acts? We would say no. The loss of the original volume, scale and proportions radically alters the perception of the building and its participation in the historic context. Ultimately, this kind of approach means the disappearance of the original building as part of a traditional neighbourhood. Going further and considering those aspects which define the specific character of a historic town or area indicated by the Washington Charter (ICOMOS 1987), we may say that, if the new intervention completely changes the scale of the building, as well as the relationships between buildings and green and open spaces, the authenticity of the historic urban area is compromised. Thus, the so-called “conservation” is equivalent with a “demolition”.

But such interventions are often presented to the public as “conservation” and “rehabilitation”, in order to cover financially-driven private decisions, against the public interest. But is the public aware of it? There is no doubt that there is a certain degree of public (and professional) ignorance, especially under-valuing the minor historic buildings which mainly compose the traditional neighbourhoods, and this situation facilitates the speculative actions.

As teachers, it is our responsibility to educate future architects and, through them, ordinary people too, in order to enhance the awareness of the community and its engagement with the built environment. The current students are the future architects who should consciously assume the role of competent and honest advisor for decision-making in the interest of the community. It must be recalled here an extremely necessary ethical component of architectural education, not evident in curricula, but transmitted from master to apprentice.

In an article published in 2008, Steven W. Semes stated that «a new conservation ethic is emerging, drawing together traditional architecture, new urbanism and historic preservation in pursuit of a built environment that is beautiful, sustainable and just. In the new paradigm, the architecture of our time will be the result of a critical engagement with the architecture of place, seen as a continuously self-renewing field of character and civility» (Semes 2008). Semes’s text describes an ideal situation where the architecture of the present time would find its natural place in historic towns. But the path to there seems long and difficult, as the financial profit is a strong, addictive, drug and people’s mentalities are not easy to change. It is a long and difficult path, but the first step has to be made: to start with, a new ethic of the kind should be assumed, taught and encouraged by the schools of architecture and supported by the personal model of the academics’ professional practice.

Notes

¹ “Form Follows Finance” is the title of a book published by Carol Willis in 1995. Willis emphasizes the role of speculative development and the impact of real-estate cycles on the forms of buildings and on their spatial distribution.

² The architectural and urban heritage of the Romanian towns are currently endangered by phenomena attested to by the Amsterdam Charter more than 40 years ago: «It

is threatened by ignorance, obsolescence, deterioration of every kind and neglect. Urban planning can be destructive when authorities yield too readily to economic pressures and to the demands of motor traffic. ... Above all, land and property speculation feeds upon all errors and omissions and brings to nought the most carefully laid plans» (Council of Europe 1975). In 2016, the historical centre of Bucharest was listed as “endangered” by the World Monuments Watch.

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The false antagonism between matter and memory

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Introduction

Conservation and demolition are two opposite actions that usually refer to the materiality of architecture. But one could ask whether preserving the matter is always an unshakable guarantee for the sense of places and, vice versa, whether demolition actions are, sometimes, indispensable sacrifices for its transmission. But one could also ask if improper actions can be comparable, in many ways, to real demolition actions, denying the intangible values that each architecture implies. In other words, at a time when the reuse of pre-existing architectures becomes an obligatory step to guarantee their protection, the choice of inappropriate functions, as well as design solutions aimed at making spectacular buildings, are, for example, actions that are not necessarily destructive from a physical point of view, but with deleterious effects due to their intangible values, which are not always temporary.

Essential questions about the intervention on the historical heritage are involved, which theory and practice have been questioning for a long time: what are the values that we recognize today as constituting the architecture that we want to preserve; which of these, although not intrinsic to the “architecture”, represent a necessary condition for its conservation; finally, what effects do the incorrect evaluation of these demands have and how long do they apply.

As emerged during the Prague meeting, precisely in the session dedicated to *Contemporary versus traditional technologies and approaches*, the demolition objectives involve both the tangible sphere – defined both by the “object” (i.e. landscapes, infrastructures, urban fabric, monuments, historical buildings, industrial areas, rural architectures, but also non-places, ...), as well as by the “built matter” (i.e. structures, facades, partitions, decorations, skin, frames, technical installations, ...) – as much as the immaterial sphere, that is the memory values, often compromised by operations of transformation, addition or cancellation.

In fact, as is known, every architecture bears intangible characters: cultural, historical, symbolic meanings that, just like the physical ones, the project should interpret, preserve and enhance. Among other categories, the one including the places of pain seems to be of particular interest, because its memories are strongly linked to intangible elements which, through the stimulation of strong images and sensations, can prevail over the very concreteness of the architectural space. Places that are at the centre of opposing practices, oscillating between adaptive reuses aimed at neutralizing controversial memories and inverse practices of grotesque

exaltation of past traces, both of them dangerous attitudes that trivialize and offend the sense of places.

Starting from these assumptions, we intend to reflect on the large urban buildings created for hosting functions related to the theme of pain, such as prisons, hospitals, asylums, as well as on structures related to production and the mining industry, and to evaluate how to act on them, during the adaptation process, through actions mindful of the original “spirit” of the places.

«Only matter is restored»?

Conservation and design between material and immaterial values

The relationship between material and immaterial components is an issue that has always involved the theory of architecture, gaining a particularly relevant position in the specific reflection on architectural pre-existences.

The history of restoration thought develops with the identification of the values that buildings bear, meant as generic categories of meaning to which the single case can be attributed, whose recognition as a work of art (Brandi 2000: 5)¹ or historical object-context (Fancelli 2010: 44)² is the premise of the restoration itself. These values are by their very nature intangible: social products (Reichlin 2011: 13–15)³, abstractions that can or cannot be attributed to places and architectures, giving them the right to be protected.

But, if it is true that values are, by definition, intangible, it is also true that in architecture their relationship with matter has relevance, and their weight varies according to the reference cultural paradigms.

About this topic, two of the many perspectives can be identified as fundamental and recurrent. On the one hand, with the prevalence of the aesthetic-artistic nature, the matter is seen as a *medium* through which the image of the building is spread, according to a position that goes through the history of restoration thought, from Viollet-Le-Duc to Brandi (Brandi 2000: 6), with different results that justify, depending on the case, the stylistic or the critical substitution, and even the partial and premeditated loss of substance (Marconi 1990).⁴ On the other, the second perspective brings us back to the historical aspect, in which materiality is a concrete testimony handed down from the past to countless current days, as “fragment and accumulation of stratified memories” (Gregotti 2019: 61). If in the first stance, the matter was the ‘medium’, just as an accidental object of preservation care, in the second position it is the ‘goal’ (although not the only one) of conservation, an entity of interest in itself and of itself. This is a position of a prolific trend that moves from the age value of Riegl (Riegl 1990) to pure conservation.

Different operative experiences show, however, how these approaches do not always respond to the complexity of the relationship with architectural pre-existences. One can think, for example, of the construction of the World Trade Center Memorial in New York. Although it is hardly comparable to historical architecture, on the eve of the reconstruction, a spontaneous urge to preserve the collective memory quickly emerged, protecting the area from disrespectful functions and property speculation, as though

it was an architectural pre-existence; but in the desolate *tabula rasa* of Ground Zero, deprived of any residual historical materiality except for the background of the city, conservation could only mean preserving the lack of existing matter and commemorating its absence. In such a situation, respect for the memories decided the outcome: instead of freezing the void or realising nostalgic reconstructions, by maintaining volumes – left by the “decimated” towers – and through the power of a public park to bring the city back to life. This involvement recalls the intervention in Hiroshima, destroyed by the atomic bomb, as is well known, through the unusual choice, in the oriental context, of a pure conservation for the building known as “Dome” (Morezzi 2010).

These are extreme examples, but which attest how factors that are not obvious, not absolutely determinable from the physical characteristics of the places, can guide not only the project, but even the identification of what historical matter actually is.

At the same time, preserving the matter does not necessarily mean preserving the values it bears⁵ (Musso 2010: 28), and a building that remains frozen in its physical and formal dimension is far from what could be called architecture, if in that dimension it is not able to accept, through its modification, the dynamic flow of life⁶ (Moneo 1999: 154–155).

Pane, referring to the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw, already had put aside his «although valid theories»⁷ (Pane 1987: 171) on authenticity, to affirm that the re-making of its historic centre – stylistic and in the spirit of *façadisme* – could be understood as a trusted companion of a much more important internal reconstruction⁸ (Pane 1987: 137–138); a prefiguration of that concept of the psychological instance (Giannattasio 2010; Giannattasio 2017) which he further developed later, influenced through exchanges with the exponents of the Jungian school of Naples. Among these, the psychoanalyst and scholar Aldo Carotenuto explains that, according to Jung, the surrounding material is the first place on which the individual projects the psyche (Carotenuto 1978), to the extent that the quality of the environment determines the level of inner well-being of those who live there. For this reason mankind is led to look for vestiges of the past, because, by finding them, it finds itself, and by preserving them, preserving itself.

The matter that Carotenuto mentions perhaps corresponds with the “architect’s materials” defined by Gregotti (Gregotti 2019: 61),⁹ as a tangible and intangible patchwork that indirectly testifies to human presence, rather than with the physical substance per se. And, if the instinctive care that is committed for some buildings overlooks shared characteristics of artistry or objective gatherings of historical information, it is because a particular psychological bond with people prevails.

The in-depth study of the topic elevates the understanding of historical architectures, to protect them and impart their meanings. Furthermore, the lack of awareness of these aspects constitutes a potential risk to the heritage: confused interventions regarding the identification of the values of the building risk weakening the relationship between architecture and users, causing estrangement, disuse and, therefore, abandonment. In any case, it is a project failure, with dispersal of cultural and economic resources.

Critical places: the buildings of pain

These processes, generically mentioned, can acquire different features, depending on the values involved and, in some cases, the structure of the contexts of intervention, in such a way that one can speculatively posit a taxonomy of critical places in relation to the specific character of the intangible parts.

Some architectures become places of a common identity because they are silent witnesses of specific events or a prolonged piece of history of a community. In respect of the age value that they bear, these buildings are asked to always resemble themselves, to maintain a recognisable outline, showing an unchanging identity like that of the groups that recognise themselves in it.

This intent can result in restorative interventions, as in the well-known stylistic reconstruction of the Campanile di San Marco by Gaetano Moretti, or of pure conservation, as for the regeneration of the Castel Firmiano by Werner Tscholl. These are solutions which are very different from the operational point of view, but comparable in terms of the adhesion to a presumed authenticity with which people seem to be in a positive concert and harmony.

Non-linear dynamics between fruition and project on architectural pre-existence can then be created in places of which memories are in dissonance with the community of users that is particularly engaged with them because they are characterized by aspects perceived as negative. The identity of these contexts – for which the definition of “places of pain” is proposed – is strictly related to painful and traumatic events. These can be sudden and unexpected events, such as, for example, the contexts of conflicts or cataclysms, or at another level, unforeseen collateral discomforts, such as occurs in industrial heritage, or they can be circumstances already written in the fate of those architectures, because they are intrinsically linked to the functions they were called to play, as with hospitals, asylums, prisons, etc.

These latter cases are of exceptional interest for the argument that is presented here: those architectures are the translation into space of the specific forms of life (Ottolini 1993: 3)¹⁰ that were intended to host, as the reification of the desired characters of segregation, concealment, isolation and punishment in urban, typological and technical terms.

These are places born consciously and intentionally to accommodate different forms of deviant behaviour and which have been conceived for this purpose, so that for their efficiency peculiar strategies of urban insertion and typological and technical models have been idealised. In the end, places that have long performed that function within cities and whose toponyms have become, in colloquial language, synonymous with deviance.

Largely abandoned due to specific regulations or simple obsolescence, today these places offer themselves as articulated contexts, disconnected from urban relationships and yet central, encapsulated in the city with their burden of fascination.

The controversial memories concentrated in these areas overturn the usual perspectives on the relationship with the materiality of architecture, leading us to ask how many of the original intentions of use and meaning are now legible in the concreteness

of the building, in the typological elements, in the relationships with the city and, in contrast, how much the conservation of matter has protected the transmission of the intangible values. At the same time, reflecting on the increasingly frequent adaptive reuse tendencies, aimed at enhancing the macabre characters of these places, it is necessary to ask what are the right ways for intangible memories to be transferred into the contemporary city in functional and meaningful terms, through contemporary reworking and still respectful of some of the darkest pages of the collective history.

Asking these questions means looking at the knowledge of the heritage with new eyes, consequently modifying the research agendas that concern it, with the aim of creating effective and conscious tools for the project.

Indeed, if the places of pain have not failed to stimulate scientific investigations and design experimentations, there are few developed research lines: the works of the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche (Luciani et al. 1999) or the most recent Project of Relevant National Interest (PRIN) on mental asylum complexes (PRIN 2008), or the more concise survey of Scarcella and Di Croce on Italian prisons (Scarcella, Di Croce 2001), certainly had the extraordinary value of bringing about recognition of this kind of buildings in Italy, providing an in-depth report of the historical, geographical and taxonomic characteristics. But the limited number of studies, combined with the need to build a cognitive framework that is practically unprecedented, really have inevitably reduced the possibility to dig for the themes of design; for example, there are no studies which critically collect and analyse the reuse practices carried out, nor works investigating the relationship that these practices have forged with the pre-existing intangible values; and if there is an appropriate repertoire of practices and studies on single complexes or limited territorial systems, this constitutes a set of autonomous initiatives, uncoordinated in time and space.

In this scenario, however, it is comforting that some initiatives have tried to critically systematise the topic on the historical hospital type (Cherchi 2016), while others begin to reflect on the renewal of the prison type starting from an updated reading of the historical models.¹¹

Cases of reuse, between matter and memory

Just a few examples can suggest how, without physical demolitions, one can mortify intangible characters and, in contrast, favour the transmission of the meanings of places, while removing historical matter.

The reuse of asylums in Italy offers multiple causes for reflection: the continuity of sanitary use until the time of disposal¹² has favoured, in many cases, the constant maintenance of the complexes, protecting them from damaging forms of degradation. However, it built a mendacious continuity of meaning that subtly distorted the sense of places. Even the nineteenth-century Provincial Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Bergamo, among the many, was assigned to two local health companies after the disposal, and its spaces were fragmented into medical laboratories, clinics, residential structures for palliative care, executive and administrative offices: all different uses that require different spatial structures but all hosted in what were once the twin pavilions for in-

ternment. (Fig. 1) The insertion of functions that are not appropriate with the typological and organisational characteristics is a threat not only when it requires destructive adaptation interventions but, in general, when it also constitutes an alteration of the correct spatial interpretation, using settlement forms in contrast with the configuration of the architecture. The solution is an adaptive strategy determined by contingencies rather than a weighted design vision, and where it is not accompanied even by a deliberate “denial” of the characteristics of urban isolation, so that the complex does not seem to redeem itself, either in the mending with the city.

The reuse of the former Charles Street prison in Boston, now transformed into the luxury Liberty hotel,¹³ (Fig. 2) is representative, in its way. The prison, built-in 1851 based on the project by Gridley James Fox Bryant, operated for over a century, up to its disposal and acquisition by the Massachusetts General Hospital, which was in favour of a collaboration between the appointed designers and the experts from the local preservation bodies. At a first sight, the choices perhaps have the proper look of a respectful conservation, with the re-proposal of nineteenth-century solutions proposed by Bryant, some few demolitions and even the exaltation of the characteristics of the prison space (doors, bars, balconies). Everything had, moreover, the approval of the bodies in charge of heritage protection. But for those who frequent the Liberty hotel today, it appears as a product wrapped up in a bow to offer an exciting and glossy taste of detention to hotel guests. This condition does not fail to create discomfort in some people and in general, trivialises and mortifies the prison stories of suffragettes, civil rights leaders, more or less common criminals who in those places have consumed a piece of their lives.

The case of the former military prison of Metelkova in Ljubljana is quite different. (Fig. 3) Built during the administration of the Habsburg empire and then famous for the incarcerations of Tito's opponents, after the disposal, it was disputed between several entities, in particular a committee that arose for its enhancement and a part of the population that wanted to ‘cathartically’ demolish it, as a symbol of the dictatorship. The one that prevailed was the committee which, supported by local artists, promoted a bottom-up intervention, resulting in a multifunctional space with a hostel, a multi-cultural centre and some clubs. The current Youth Hostel Celica has twenty cells on the first floor, which are all different thanks to the involvement of eighty artists, and additional multiple rooms obtained from the building's attic. The historical matter has been partly sacrificed to adapt it to the accommodating functions, while the external facades and many interiors are completely altered by the presence of graffiti and other details. Yet, one can have the impression that this sacrifice gives back something precious in exchange: if in Bergamo, by avoiding the transformation, we also avoided any choice between acceptance and denial of the sense of place, in Ljubljana the choice to operate actively generates a meeting space that does not humiliate the prison history, but rather absorbs it in contemporary terms.

The Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford has been reused with less dramatic meanings and more careful design choices. The eighteenth-century main building, the first nucleus of a larger hospital complex active until 2006, was transformed in 2012 into the



Fig. 1) Building of the former padiglione dei Tranquilli, now headquarter of the socio-educational centre, the Local Health Company rehabilitation centre and the dialysis assistance centre of the Ospedali riuniti, seen from inside the courtyard. Bergamo, Italy. (Archivio fotografico ASST Papa Giovanni XXIII, 2021)



Fig. 2) Breakfast room in the Liberty Hotel in Boston, USA. (photo Caterina Giannattasio 2015)



Fig. 3) Interior of one of the rooms of the Youth Hostel Celica, created in the cells of the former prison. Ljubljana, Slovenia. (<[flickr.com/photos/46703063@N00/5313837616/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/46703063@N00/5313837616/)>, photo Mario T 2010)



Fig. 4) Main front of the Radcliffe Infirmary after the adaptation work. Oxford, UK. (<[flickr.com/photos/189660849@N06/50205003517/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/189660849@N06/50205003517/)>, photo Samuel Anon 2020)

new Radcliffe Humanities building, a university facility that now houses the faculty of philosophy, offices and a library. (Fig. 4) In over two centuries of nosocomial activity, the original architecture has been transfigured by juxtapositions and extensions. The project makes a radical selection of the elements worthy of conservation, choosing to bring out the eighteenth-century element in its rational purity, at the expense of almost all subsequent stratifications, the only exception being the chapel built-in 1865. Not only incongruous surfaces were demolished, but also additions which, although after the first configuration, had become part of the architectural palimpsest, and so becoming in turn, historical matter. Eliminating them was a bold choice, in many ways controversial, but with a clear spatial intent: to return the hospital architecture as originally conceived to fully restore its original sense. Such a radical approach was however accompanied by minimal modifications to the interiors, with the demolition of incongruous partitions, the re-organisation and the re-composition of the connections between the parts. In this way, the elimination of historical matter has favoured the recognition of the eighteenth-century hospital, paradoxically hindered by the interventions that took place over the centuries to improve its functions.

Concerning industrial buildings, the cases of reuse, as is known, are numerous, and follow practices substantially related to adaptive reuse. Concerning this typology, the studies carried out in the Czech context appear to be particularly significant (Fragner, B., Valchářová, V. 2014). Among these, it is interesting to recall the case of the Vnitroblok Multifunctional Space in Prague, object of a reuse project, following a minimal approach. Destined to be demolished, new uses have been provided in the factory, focused on art, culture and sociality. (Fig. 5) Definitely, it is an operation through which it has been possible to return the factory to the city, but at the same time not to lose track of its story, preserving all the layers and signs that time has left on it.

Annotations for a compresence of memory and matter

In the albeit solid tradition relating to the sense of historical matter, there are still partially unexplored tendencies, the contents of which are not without consequences on design.

The ability of historical architecture to become living matter in the contemporary world is not only a specific challenge, but it is also the very condition of their survival, both as a physical and formal substance, and as a deposit of social, cultural and ethical meanings.

The complexity of these contexts is a constant source of questions, which requires the review and verification, continuously and courageously, of the theoretical principles on which the disciplines of Architecture have been based.

The case of the buildings of pain emerges with particular evidence for different reasons: the load of fascination they bring interacts with the materiality of the places and the people who use them giving unexpected outcomes, in a mix of attraction and repulsion that is even more acute given the presence that these systems assume according to their position and size within the cities.

They need an unconventional reading, which does not derive from regulatory instructions that do not take into account the identity of places, nor fall under the allure of dark tourism and the commodification of pain, but that looks instead at these architectures with a view to their civil re-signification.

If physical demolition is an extreme ratio, it can perhaps be understood when it allows one to highlight appropriation practices by communities, for which architecture is born but which too often is a marginal player in reuse processes.

Notes

1 «Any behaviour towards the work of art, including the restoration project, depends on whether or not the work of art has been recognized as a work of art.»

2 «In short, the restoration itself means handing down to the future what, positive or negative - in its values or negative values - is considered significant from the past. At the same time, such an intervention represents the methodological moment of the potential, vivid recognition, *in mediam rem*, of the historical and possibly aesthetic object-context.»

3 The contribution proposes reflections on heritage and value attribution, through the work of the sociologist Nathalie Heinich.

4 Indeed, Paolo Marconi recognises that architecture has, in itself, the loss of a part of historical matter for its survival, that are the so-called sacrifice surfaces - such as mortars, plasters, paintings - which, due to periodic consumption and therefore renovation or replacement, protect the structural material by allowing it to be transmitted.

A position that stands in an explicit contrast with the approaches of «idealistic historical legacy» which want the acceptance of the work as consigned by the ageing, and which rather respects the «philosophy of the construction and maintenance of the buildings, from the ancient times to the present day», with the ultimate purpose of restoring the formal profile of the architecture, given that the upkeep of these surfaces preserves its «aesthetic configuration», its «charge of artistic significance» (Marconi 1990: XVI).

5 As suggested for example in Musso 2010: «Every conscious project is born from the knowledge of its object and, if it wants to "preserve", with the material, also the values that the architectural artefact holds, it must first of all be able to recognize, inventory and spread the data that describe its consistency and current conditions».

6 Moneo says: «Sometimes one can insist on the rigorous conservation of a building, but this, in a certain sense, means that the building is dead, that its life, perhaps because of right and recognizable reasons, has been violently stopped. I agree with the considerations that Ruskin makes in the Lamp of Memory, when he explains his ideas on restoration and the problems that derive from it. He says that a lifeless building ceases to be a building and turns into another type of object. ... The life of the buildings is based on their architecture, on the permanence of their most characteristic formal features, and although it may seem like a paradox, it is this permanence that allows one to appreciate its changes. Respect for the architectural identity of a building is what makes its change possible, what protects its life».

7 «... for reasons that went beyond our valid theories, it happened that the face of the ancient centre of Warsaw was recreated as it was before the Nazi destruction since the meaning it had for the Polish nation could not be replaced and compensated by what modern architecture would have been able to offer».

8 «... the passionate care that the Polish restorers, supported by the unanimous popular sentiment, have placed and are still putting in giving to the ruins of Warsaw, Poznań and Gdansk the look of the past, finds its full justification as a denial of the same infamous reasons for which the destruction had been meticulously perpetrated; and if anyone will object that these reasons are extraneous to those inherent in our work, I will answer him that he is wrong, and indeed I will say something more: that our current crisis of orientation arises precisely from passive obedience to exclusively economic and functional programs, that we, architects and scholars, have not contributed to determining ...».

9 «The whole materiality of the existing world, its items, beliefs, notions, ideologies, considered for human living as "being of mankind on earth"».

10 About this relationship, read in particular what retraced by Ottolini regarding form and meaning in architecture: «Architecture is the harmonious construction of the place where human life takes place and where human life, thanks to a particular translation in its material forms, becomes present. From this definition it is deduced that architecture is not a simple construction, a technical work guided by dominant functionality needs, which are indifferent, or contradictory, compared to its beauty; on the other hand, being a construction, it cannot even be seen as a metaphor for construction. Indeed, it does have a metaphorical content incorporated in its materials, as it is proper to every artistic product (also "conceptual" as we will see), but it concerns human life, its actions and emotions, and this alone makes it significant».

11 An interesting experience, in this sense, is the Carcerrario website (<https://carcerrario.wixsite.com>) that collects the results of Agati, Fiorentino, Olcuire 2013.

12 The fate of disused asylums in Italy was defined by the law of 13 May 1978, n. 180, rule of "voluntary and compulsory health checks and treatments", the so-called "Legge Basaglia Law", which established the demobilisation of the original uses and the subsequent transfer of the assets to the Local Health Units (USL) which would shortly be established; the USLs should have primarily assigned them to substitute forms of psychiatric assistance, even if not as a location, at least to obtain the necessary economies for the health service. Almost automatically the "second life" of the mental asylum complexes was thus determined, as a matter of fact, today they have become, for the most part, USLs' offices.

13 For the reuse of historical prisons, an interesting repertoire is available in Musanti 2018.



Fig. 5) Vnitroblok Multifunctional Space in Holešovice district after the reuse project. Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Caterina Giannattasio 2019)

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Demolishing a past we want to forget

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Owing to the large concentration of important structures in Prague's historical centre and its surrounding districts these areas have been declared protected cultural heritage reservations or zones. It is very difficult to build something new in these areas. There are almost no vacant lots and the demolition of historical buildings is difficult given their heritage status. Buildings that date from the second half of the twentieth century, however, are in many respects in an unfortunately special position. Private investors often manage to obtain permission from the relevant authorities to radically renovate or demolish post-war buildings, regardless of whether they are located in a protected heritage area, and thereby acquire a lucrative piece of land in the city centre. There are several reasons why this tends to happen. The buildings' maintenance has been neglected, gradual changes applied to them over time have deprived them of their former elegance and charm, the original interiors have gradually been replaced, the structures have aged, and the arrangement of the interiors and the design of the façades reflect the needs and taste of another era. The public and local politicians often come to see buildings that have been left empty for a long time or are used for some unsuitable purpose as an eyesore. Restoring a building while respecting its original appearance and internal and external form is technologically demanding and expensive and requires humility. The astronomical and, with some exceptions, continuously rising price of land increases the pressure to generate a large profit from any building and to get as much as possible financially out of a piece of land. Demolishing buildings that are neglected, seen by the public as out of date, and often perceived as wasteful of public space is therefore an attractive commercial option. These are moreover buildings from the state-socialist period and recall a time that a large part of society would rather forget.

On one side of society we have the voices of the opponents of 'communist buildings' while on the other side we have the defenders of 'post-war gems'. Even professional institutions are not united, and post-war architecture does not enjoy the kind of consensus about its protection that there is, for example, on baroque palaces and gothic churches, and this tends to obfuscate the situation surrounding potential protection. The sad outcome is that the list of buildings that have managed to secure protection despite the situation described here is shamefully short, in contrast to the broad scope and extensive number of publications showcasing this period in our architecture. The public's divided opinion and the pressure from investors to make more high-density use of lucrative plots is thus leading to the rapid and irreversible loss of one of the most recent layers of our history.

A new store in the place of an old one

In a time of a looming ecological crisis and accelerating climate change, the building industry seems to have adopted a distorted position. It is constantly making the argument that structures with high-energy costs were built in a time when heat loss was viewed in a different light than it is today. Nowadays, however, their heating costs seem unsustainable and the simple solution that presents itself is to install insulation with subsidies from the Ministry of the Environment or the European Union, or to replace the original building with a more energy-efficient new one. This raises a number of questions, however, that hardly anyone has yet sought to answer: Would the investment in insulation pay off in energy savings even without the "green subsidies"? How much energy is consumed to produce the insulation itself and what is its life span? How much waste is produced by a demolition and by the subsequent construction of a new structure? Can we really apply contemporary requirements to structures that already exist? Is it not possible to alter the internal systems and operations of a building without resorting to what is usually the architecturally inferior option of thermal insulation?

These questions apply perfectly to the case of post-war buildings that are demolished only to be immediately replaced by the construction of a new building with the same function. For example, a sports centre in Frýdek-Místek (1971–1985; Oskar Chmiel) was demolished in 2013 and a new, smaller sports centre "conforming more to contemporary standards" was built in its place, along with a shopping centre that is controversial in terms of its architectural and urban design or social impact. Similarly, in Hradec Králové a football stadium is currently being demolished (1959–1966; František Steiner, František Čížek) only for it to be replaced by a newer football stadium. In 2012 a department store called Prior in Teplice (1979–1984; Antonín Stibůrek) was demolished and a new shopping complex was built on its site. Similarly, in 2009 Ještěd department store in Liberec was taken down only for another department store with a "more modern" sales floor to be built in its place. Not even a recommendation from the Ministry of Culture's advisory committee that the store be declared a cultural monument, a petition supported with several thousand signatures, or protests from the professional community and the general public were enough to save this iconic structure designed by architects Karel Hubáček and Miroslav Masák from Sial in 1968–1979. The then Minister of Culture did not declare the building a cultural monument and instead accommodated the owner's wishes, thereby condemning the department store to death. But the loss of Ještěd department store was one of the first such affairs to become medialised and widely discussed and the effect was to awaken civil society to the existence of others. (Figg. 1, 2)

The demolition of a symbol of state oppression

Incidences of a minister of culture deciding not to declare a work of post-war architecture a monument despite being recommended to do so by his or her advisory committee are not rare. On the contrary. A similar end was met, for example, by Hotel Praha, which experts recommended be declared a monument, but the ministry decided otherwise. Hotel Praha was originally intended to provide accom-

modation for high-profile state visitors. It was notable for the superior quality of materials used in its construction and the level of attention devoted to refining its details. The architects, artists, and designers involved were given almost entirely free hands, no expense was to be spared anywhere. Hotel Praha's direct association with the communist regime and its representatives, however, later figured centrally among the arguments for its demolition. Originally owned by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, after 1989 the hotel became the property of the District of Prague 6, which early in the millennium then sold it to a Georgian businessman who neglected the maintenance of the hotel for years and ultimately took it to the edge of bankruptcy. In 2011 the hotel was bought by the company PPF, which soon began trying to get it demolished, arguing that the structure was disproportionate in size to the surrounding development and ideologically tied to the previous regime, and that it lacked potential profitability. As it later transpired, however, the real aim was to remove the building so that the owner of this company could build a park for his adjacent private villa. Experts again weighed in on this discussion and called on the Minister of Culture to have the building declared a cultural monument. The ministry's advisory committee was of the same opinion. The minister, however, decided against the advice of the committee, arguing that «on a symbolic level the structure is an unacceptable reminder of a time of oppression.» (Bartlová 2019: 51) The hotel was demolished in 2014. The interior furnishings and art works ended up in museum collections or did well in auction halls. (Fig. 4)

The planned demolition of the building of Transgas, located not far from Wenceslas Square (1966–1978; Ivo Loos, Jindřich Malátek, Václav Aulický, Jiří Eisenreich), sparked an unprecedentedly mass reaction from the general public and the professional community. Nothing worked to prevent the demolition of this dynamic and structurally innovative building, the architectural morphology of which was a reflection of the techno-optimism of its time. The minister decided against the recommendation of his advisory committee and against the advice of the committee for the protection of heritage from the second half of the twentieth century set up by the head office of the National Heritage Institute and did not grant the Transgas building monument heritage status (Karous 2017). The arguments were based on assessments commissioned by the owner of the property. Both the public and the very bodies designated by the state administration with the task of assessing the significance of a building were ignored. As a memento of their powerlessness, Czech Radio, which sits in a building next to Transgas, developed a project in which over the course of ten months cameras on the roof of the radio's building broadcast the demolition of the iconic structure and at the end made a short time-lapse documentary from the recorded materials. (Figg. 5, 6, 7, 8)

The tug-of-war over granting heritage status

Protected status is very rarely conferred on post-war buildings. It has become an unhappy practice that the professional community turns to the process of applying for protected status as the tool of last resort in efforts to save a building from an

impending demolition. Sometimes it is only when a building is at immanent risk of being demolished that the efforts emerge to secure it heritage status, which then paradoxically can become an argument used by the other side. This is what happened in the case of "Máj" department store, which was declared a cultural monument in 2006 and is now at risk of undergoing insensitive renovations. The city council's official statement on the renovation of Máj is: «However, a wave of protests from the professional community and the public arose in opposition to the demolition of this department store from a past era. As a result, this building was then declared a cultural monument. This therefore happened not because of a recognition of the building's value and qualities but primarily out of the need to immediately and effectively protect it from demolition.» (Binding opinion of the municipality on the reconstruction of Máj, 12) (Fig. 3)

This practice of nominating a building for heritage status in order to protect it often also founders on the Ministry of Culture's procedural deadlines or on the liabilities that could be incurred if heritage status is granted – the building's owner may have bought it with a clear investment purpose and if it were declared a cultural monument the state would be required to pay the investor compensation. However, it is also necessary to note that in the case of many buildings the applications for heritage status can lie for years on a desk at the ministry, which will only begin to process the application when the building is at risk of undergoing dramatic reconstruction or being demolished.

There is nevertheless no legal reason that should get in the way of declaring younger buildings cultural monuments. On the contrary, the current Heritage Conservation Act (No. 20/1987) states that heritage value is not determined by the age of an object but solely by its value as testimony to the time in which it originated or its value in connection with significant figures or those who used, commissioned, or built the object.

Proposals to declare a site a cultural monument in the Czech Republic are usually submitted by individuals or teams of experts. When a proposal is submitted, ministry officials initiate the process by which a site is considered for cultural heritage status. The relevant department at the ministry is however woefully understaffed. Moreover, the ministry is not subject to any legal time limit for assessing a proposal, and it repeatedly occurs that candidate applications can remain with the ministry for several years before the process even begins. For this reason alone, the parties interested in dramatically renovating or demolishing a site have a clear advantage. Even though the academic approach to post-war architecture is changing and is becoming the subject of numerous expert publications, nothing seems to have changed in how the ministry sees things. The opposition between public interest, which is equated with protecting a concrete example of cultural heritage, versus private interest, that is, the right of owners to do what they like with their property, comes to factor into the decision-making process. Here again an important role is played by historical experience, which since 1989 has led to private property being promoted as inviolable in the Czech Republic (Kruntorád 2019).

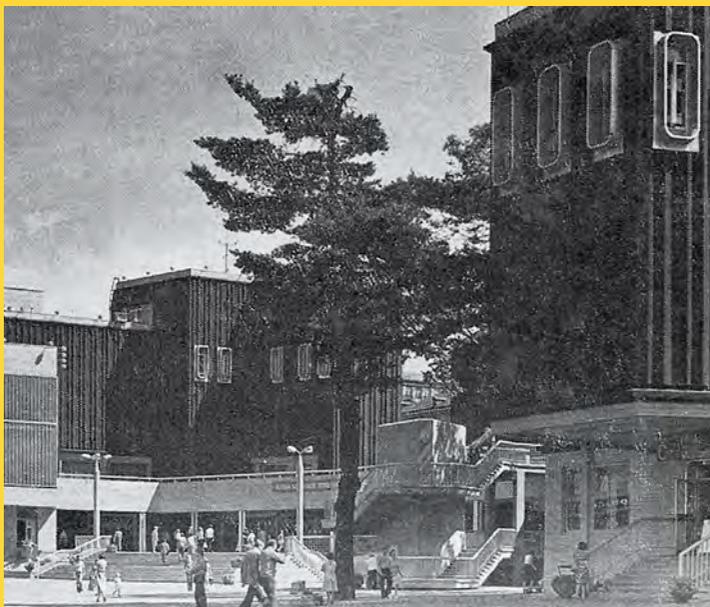


Fig. 1) Ještěd department store after completion. Liberec, Czech Republic. (Architektura ČSR, 1982)



Fig. 3) Máj department store after completion. Prague, Czech Republic. (private archive of Miroslav Masák)



Fig. 2) Demolition of the Ještěd department store in 2009. Liberec, Czech Republic. (private archive of Miroslav Masák)



Fig. 4) The north corner of the Hotel Praha in Prague, Czech Republic. (private archive of Arnošt Navrátil)

Trying to forget

Although the professional community has submitted dozens of applications for heritage protection to be granted to post-war architectural sites, the ministry is very disinclined to grant this status. Only just over seventy applications have been declared a cultural monument (more than fifty of which date from the period of Socialist Realism and only two dozen are from between the 1960s and the 1980s, and there is no cultural monument younger than that). When a site is not granted heritage status, often the decision has been made in opposition to arguments from experts and committees. This proves that experts' voices hold no real weight in the decision process. The opinions of experts are questioned, and one voice can simply be overridden by the voice of someone else. Even experts within the public administration do not possess enough authority and the public authorities or the ministry often listen more to assessments and comments coming from the other side of the barricade – paid for by the investor interested in renovating or demolishing the building. Political representatives again and again voice arguments in which they associate the architecture built between the 1960s and 1980s with the political regime of that time. But the people behind that work, whether it was art or architecture, were mainly trying to create quality work, and it was the propaganda disseminated when they were being built or often ex post that assigned them a political meaning.

In *Zbořte ty komunistické baráky! Socialismus a modernita mezi pamětí a zapomínáním* (Tear Down Those Communist Buildings! State Socialism and Modernism – between Memory and Forgetting), Milena Bartlová regards the political representatives asserting the rejection of architecture from the normalisation era as embodying an effort to take possession of the course of history and dismiss any critical reflections on the 1989 revolution (Bartlová 2019: 58). She considers the question of historical memory and deliberate forgetting and notes that in cities architecture is a source of historical memory and an archive of the events that unfolded in and around it (Bartlová 2019: 46). A historical building that survives thus anchors recollections and co-shapes the public's collective memory and, with it, society itself. The demolition of buildings, much like the destruction of monuments, can be a political message, a demonstration of the shift in the distribution of power.

There remains in society a certain aversion to post-war architecture and the structures are disappearing faster than public opinion can change. The structures that have not yet vanished but have not yet been granted protection either are moreover being altered before our eyes as layers of minor changes are added. We are thus losing our historical memory. But to forget a time that was in many ways dismal could have dire consequences. If we are to come to terms with the time before the Velvet Revolution, we cannot do away with the physical evidence of that time, because our memories, the imprints in our collective memory, would have nothing to rest on.

Just as functionalism and Socialist-Realist architecture which were once dismissed came to be appreciated over time, opinion normalisation-era architecture may now be slowly shifting. The general rejection of it throughout the decade after the Velvet Revolution seems to be on the wane. This has to do with a generational turnover and

the distance we are acquiring from the political and historical context of the time in which these buildings were built. For the younger generation the political meanings attached to the post-war architectural heritage are not the same burning presence they are for their parents' generation, which shows that these meanings do not have to be a part of these buildings forever. On the contrary, structures that endure over time acquire new meanings, as the old ones are overwritten and new events and new theoretical perspective are superimposed on them. In short, negative political connotations can become just one of a number of historical layers and memories that are attached to a building.

It is not just the countries of the former Eastern bloc that are forced to contend with ambivalent feelings about modern architectural heritage, as demonstrated, for example, by the international project *Iconic Ruins?* organised under the aegis of the Czech Centre (Moravčíková, Vorlík 2018–2020). The countries of western Europe (designingbuildings.co.uk) and around the world are also dealing with this. An exhibition titled *#SOSBRUTALISM* held in Frankfurt at the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in late 2017 and early 2018 was devoted to the rehabilitation of brutalist architecture worldwide (sosbrutalism.org). This exhibition led to the creation of a database in which it is possible to look up numerous interesting buildings around the world and their individual cases. A list of at-risk brutalist structures was even drawn up by *The Guardian*. In *Brutalist Buildings under Threat – In Pictures*, Nick Van Mead included Hotel Thermal in Karlovy Vary in west Bohemia on his "red list" of threatened masterpieces (theguardian.com). Similarly, many projects have emerged in the Czech Republic that are designed to popularise post-war architecture and inform people about it. They show that the way these structures are viewed is gradually changing. Among the many initiatives, we can mention, for example, the group A489, *Architektura kosmického věku* (Architecture of the Cosmic Age), and *Respekt Madam – za architekturu manželů Machoninových* (Madame Respect – The Architecture of Věra and Vladimír Machonin). Or sculptor Pavel Karous's project *Vetřelci a Volavky* (Aliens and Herons), in which he has created a large online community who share with each other information about about "treasured" normalisation-era artworks in the public space. (Vetřelci a volavky: facebook.com) A side effect of this has been that many sculptures from that period that were at risk of being removed have been saved (Bartlová 2019: 53).

In the current circumstances, when we are reassessing our approach, it would seem especially important to draw timely attention to the value of structures, their architectural qualities, and the wide possibilities for their use – and to do so even before an investor with a clear plan of acquiring the lucrative land beneath unused and often unacknowledged structures enters the picture. This role should be played by civic initiatives and the media hand in hand with systematic academic research conducted by professional institutions.

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Fig. 5) Transgas before demolition, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík, 2017)



Fig. 7) Demolition of Transgas, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík, 2019)



Fig. 6) Demolition of Transgas, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík, 2019)



Fig. 8) Demolition of Transgas, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík, 2020)

Conservation and demolition to the test of urban regeneration

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Introduction

Cities have always been in transformation and in continuous renovation in their activities and in their urban fabric; nowadays European contemporary cities, in particular, are going through the end of some productive processes with the result of a large number of abandoned or semi-abandoned areas. For this reason governments, administrations, and even communities of citizens all over Europe are implementing procedures of urban regeneration.

In this context, concepts such as conservation and demolition play an important role and it is up to the stakeholders to decide the future of these places; the result is determined by new buildings but also by the remains of the previous situations in terms of matter and memory.

From our point of view, as conservators, demolition is usually considered as a negative act because, compared to conservation, it is totally irreversible and bearer of loss of fabric and meaning. As we know, tangible aspects are strictly connected with intangible ones and it sometimes seems very difficult to keep the memory of something that does not exist anymore. Most of the time the reasons for demolition are largely unclear or not declared: this could be due to lack of awareness of value, a consensual hatred, obsolescence, energetic issues, speculation, change of functions, adaptations, political or economic reasons and trends.

However, according to the final report of the programme *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe* (CHCfE Consortium, Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe 2015), for the purposes of a sustainable development, the values to be considered for heritage are cultural, economic, social and environmental.

The aim of this paper is to firstly retrace the topics of the workshop held in Prague in September 2019, directing attention to the concepts of conservation, demolition, regeneration and hybridization. The starting point is represented by the fieldwork, which occurred on the second day of the three-day workshop, conducted in Holešovice, the post-industrial district of Prague.

This area of the city has a large number of old industrial buildings whose functions recently changed because of the dismantling of the original industrial production; the urban regeneration and the transformations that involved these sites have deeply modified their structures and shapes. Thus, this article aims to investigate the role of demolition and conservation in some of the case-studies we visited.

Secondly, this paper aims to propose a comparison with the process of urban regeneration that has been recently taking place in the city of Verona, situated in the north-east of Italy. Even though the two situations show some differences that will be further clarified, it could be interesting to focus on the role of demolition and conservation in the transformations that occurred in some selected typologies of architecture (industrial and fortified architectures) involved in this project of regeneration.

Urban regeneration between conservation and demolition

In the last decades the topic of urban regeneration, an expression which is quite recent and derives from a biological analogy, has become particularly dominant in the debate regarding the development of European cities. At the same time this concept has been shown not have well-defined boundaries and that it is not governed by clear juridical outlines (Passalacqua, Fioritto, Rusci 2018).

It can be defined as a «comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change» (Roberts, Sykes 2000: 17).

Urban regeneration does not necessarily involve the reconstruction of the urban fabric of the city; its main purpose deals with social, political, environmental, energetic aspects; in fact, an intervention of regeneration can change the social and economic condition of an area. The strength of urban regeneration is the ability to add new values to something that already exists, where time plays an important role because stakeholders need to have a long-term purpose in mind (Alcozer, Gabrielli, Gastaldi 2004).

Another aspect of urban regeneration concerns its field of action, which involves very different kinds of spaces: it can be applied in consolidated urban fabrics but also in different contexts, such as industrial areas, old military sites, residential areas, residual spaces; its trigger reasons could be various, from de-industrialization to new forms of living or to the creation of new centralities.

The expression *urban regeneration* is totally overused; although it sometimes coincides with a real intention of renovation, at other times the choice of this word is also caused by economic arguments and by the need for easy communication, through the creation of a brand.

At first sight the idea of urban regeneration seems very far from the concept of demolition, if the latter is only considered as the total destruction of a part of the city. However, demolition could be considered as part of regeneration because it can be also understood as a partial demolition; sometimes renovation, transformation and reuse can represent a kind of demolition too. In fact, every process of regeneration, hybridization and conversion to different functions also involves some modifications of structures which are already marked by the loss of their original uses. Demolition is nevertheless the worst choice, because it is totally irreversible and it implies removal of fabric and also the loss of values, significance and memory. Regeneration could also mean conservation, especially if the stakeholders demonstrate an approach of resilience towards the buildings: they can be adapted in a compatible way, they can host new

uses or updates, but also preserve their historical values, their identity, their material and documental substances and their functionality. The final purpose is to find a new balance, a new role within the urban fabric.

Regeneration, conservation and demolition in Prague: the case of Holešovice

The seventh district of Prague consists of Holešovice, Bubeneč, Letná and in the last twenty years it has become one of the most interesting and dynamic neighbourhoods in the city. This is due to the high concentration of galleries, ateliers, theatres, museums and cultural institutions. It is situated on the left bank of Vltava river within a wide meander, on the opposite side to the old city of Prague.

The district of Holešovice, which I focused my attention on, developed at the end of 19th century as a peripheral industrial district and it was integrated into Prague municipality in 1884 (Švacha 1995: 16); in 1850 it was merged with Bubny into the same urban district and the two parts transformed independently with different characteristics: Bubny became a mainly residential area, whilst Holešovice concentrated on building factories, hosting around thirty-two factories in 1881. Holešovice had a turning-point in its history when Karlín Rail Viaduct (also known as Negrelli Viaduct) was built in 1846-51 because this bridge brought the railway from the State Station (today Masaryk Station) onto the Prague-Dresden Line. The Holešovice and Bubny stations were built at the same time, and the railway was later connected up to the steamboat transport to Hamburg. The district of Holešovice, marked by breweries, abattoirs, a port and factories, maintained its commercial and production feature until the beginning of the new millennium; in fact around 2000 most of the factories stopped their production, losing their original purpose.

As a result, Holešovice started a second life, a real process of urban regeneration, switching from industrial functions to cultural ones. Around a hundred cultural institutions chose their locations there, creating new apartments, offices, studios of designers, architects and artists, mixing together creativity and talent. The development that occurred in the district of Holešovice represents a singular case of regeneration, where the reuse was not planned by an administrative power within a top-down process, but is the result of a large number of bottom-up activities, driven by small interventions and actions of people. After some years, in 2016, the Municipality of Prague put in place the *ART DISTRICT 7* project, creating a network of relations in order «to have a major impact on the region's development and, in addition to the opportunities for tourism, create an interesting environment for business people, entrepreneurs, investors and, last but not least, the city and neighbourhood» (Official website Praha 7). In this way the intervention of the administration formalized something that was already happening autonomously. (Fig. 1)

Demolition and conservation have been differently dealt with in Holešovice depending on case-studies.

The most conservative example is Vnitroblok Multifunctional Space which currently occupies the space of a lot and it is the result of the work of three young men; they recognized the value of the material substance of this place for which

there was not a fixed plan and whose owner did not intend to invest in. They put in place a provisional conservation, quite unintentionally, referring to other European experiences which had a big success, such as Matadero in Madrid.¹ Vnitroblok has become a place to stay, an art gallery, a place for workshops or conferences but also an innovative commercial centre; (Fig. 2) one of the strengths of this intervention is the creation of a brand strictly linked with the place. (Fig. 3) In this case demolition is not considered at all. On the contrary conservation is exhibited almost in an exaggerated way.

Another similar case-study is the abattoir of Holešovice, which was the most important in the city. It was built in 1895 and it worked for almost a century until 1983. After that date it started hosting markets, warehouses, shops, multifunctional spaces with theatres, galleries, restaurants and bars. Spaces among buildings have remained the same, so this example could be counted as a compatible reuse, because new uses fit well in the complex without modifying it too much. (Figg. 4, 5)

No demolitions occurred in Ogilvy, a bakery and a factory of non-alcoholic drinks, which in 2003 became the site of one of the most important advertising agencies. The only transformation concerned its skin, because a new white and red covering was applied to evoke the camouflages of warships, due to the proximity to the port.

A slightly different approach was applied to the complex which is now hosting the DOX Contemporary Art Centre, which was a machine factory, enlarged several times. The conversion is the result of an international contest at the beginning of 21st century and, at the same time, it was the first step for the subsequent regeneration of the entire district. The purpose of the project was to consolidate, recover and enlarge the complex, using old spaces but also adding a few units; due to the choice of preserving and demolishing as little as possible there is a great variety of levels and volumes (Rota 2017).

Another two sites, La Fabrika and Holport, are representative of a way of acting which could be classified as adaptive reuse: these buildings hosted industrial functions in the past and now they have been converted into bars and design shops; extensions were realized, fixtures were substituted; nevertheless they claim to keep their original atmosphere due to the presence of chimney stacks.

Oftentimes the word regeneration hides large demolitions: the first Prague Town Brewery was the most important in town from the end of 19th century until its closure. A complete renovation of the area was carried out in 2008, with big demolitions and the insertion of a modern administrative complex: nowadays what hints at the past is only the name, *A7 Brewery Campus*.

A drastic case of demolition is that of Materna's Paint Factory, which was a factory of varnishes until 1932 and was then transformed into an automobile showroom. It was composed by different buildings which included a storehouse, an office and a house. Recently the entire complex has been subject to major demolition, preserving the only façade whose value was recognized, the cubist one, in order to incorporate it in a new residential and administrative building.

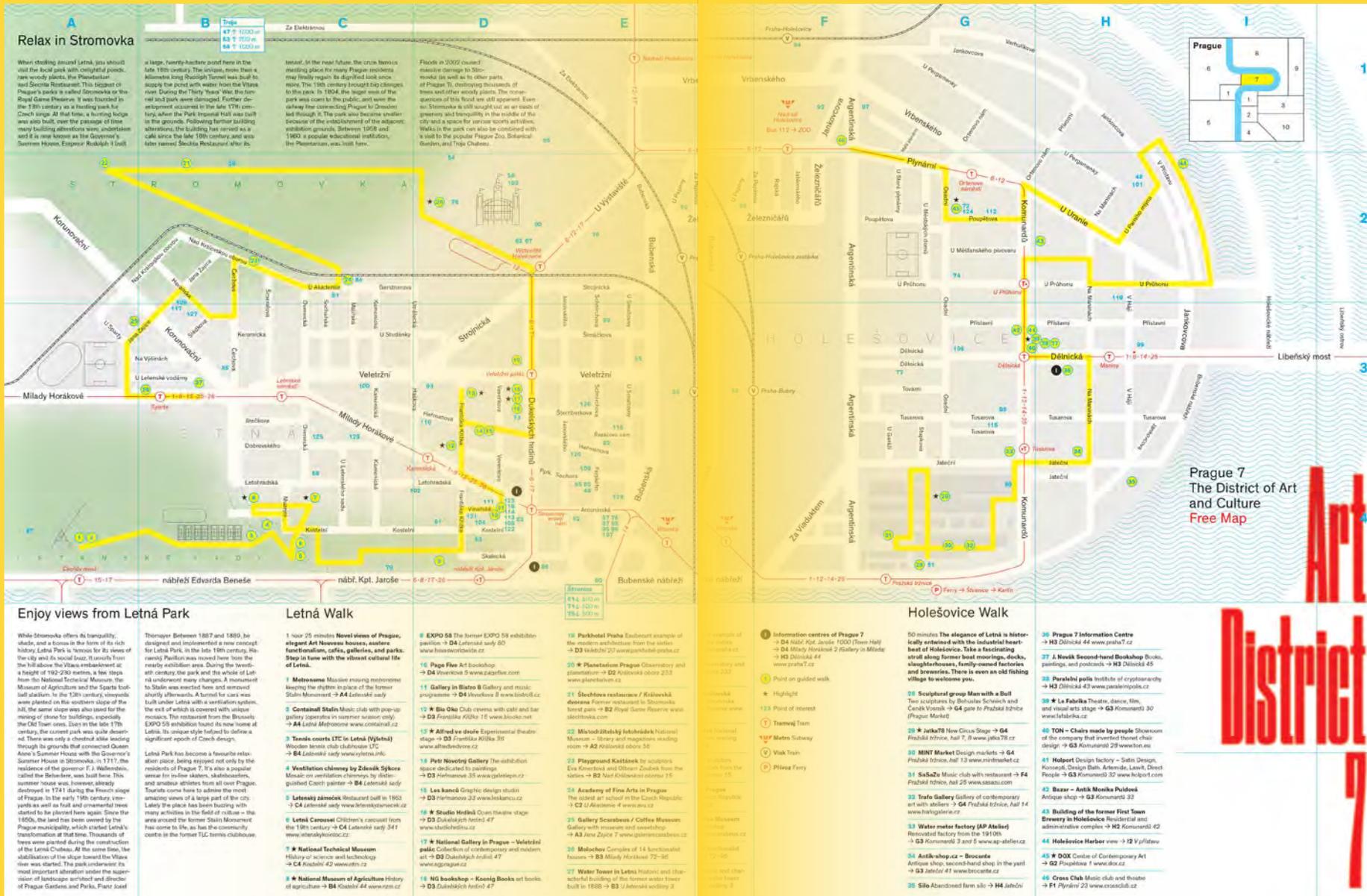


Fig. 1) The map of Art District 7 in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (<praha7.cz/wpcontent/uploads/2017/12/art_distinct_mapa.pdf>)



Fig. 2) The internal court in Vnitroblok Multifunctional Space in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sara Rocco 2019)



Fig. 3) The sign of the brand of Vnitroblok Multifunctional Space in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sara Rocco 2019)



Fig. 4, 5) Comparison between the situation of the abattoir in Holešovice in 1950 on the left and the current situation on the right. Prague, Czech Republic. (Historical orthophotomap CENIA 2010 and GEODIS Brno, spol. s r.o. 2010. Base aerial images provided by VGHMÚř Dobruška, MO ČR 2009; Immagini 2021 Google, Immagini CNES/Airbus, GEODIS Brno, GeoContent, Maxar Technologies, Dati Cartografici 2021)



Regeneration, conservation and demolition in Verona

Since the last mayoral election, which occurred in 2017 in Verona, the administration has been demonstrating and spreading a strong will to renovate and improve the city. One of the most important and current proposals is “Verona 22”, a project which involves twenty-two places in the city, whose role is considered crucial in the development of the city. This project is strictly connected with the candidacy of Verona as “Italian Capital of Culture 2022”, (Fig. 6) whose dossier has been submitted to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism (Mibact) in July 2020 (ultimately, in January 2021, the island of Procida was selected as the winner).

The administration promotes all these transformations under the name of urban regeneration, although the involved architectures show very different features and belong to various functional categories. For instance, some of the buildings are historical and they are situated in the centre of Verona, such as Palazzo del Capitanio, Castel San Pietro and Casa di Giulietta, but some others assets are situated in the outskirts, such as Palazzo Boccatrezza and the Silos di Levante. Different typologies of buildings are involved: factories and industrial spaces like Manifattura Tabacchi, Gallerie Mercatali, Magazzini Generali, ex Scalo Merci, ex Tiberghien, Dogana di San Fermo, but also fortifications such as Arsenale, Forte San Procolo, Forte Sofia, Castello di Montorio, Torri Massimiliane; some other objects are barely comparable with each other, like Bentegodi Stadium, Lazzaretto, Basso Acquar, Galtarossa Riverfront.

In order to establish a more incisive comparison with Holešovice, this paper considers only some of the typologies of architecture that are part of “Verona 22” project: to be precise it focuses on industrial archaeologies and on the system of fortifications which surround the city. The choice is linked to the similar treatments these sites underwent in analogy with the Prague case-study, although the surrounding context is completely different. In these projects of regeneration demolition plays a bigger role in terms of strength, intensity and amount of matter involved. So, conservation and demolition will be approached and analysed within this general urban regeneration project.

The case of Arsenale represents a good starting point in this dissertation and it is also the very first attempt related to urban regeneration for this administration. The project of regeneration of Arsenale represented one of their strong points during the political campaign against the proposal put forward by the previous major and it is the main reason why this new administration won the election.

In this case regeneration also means participation; in order to find new ideas for the future functions of Arsenale, a relevant participative process which involved professionals and citizens was organized.² As a result of this highly participatory process, a document was drafted with the headings for the future interventions related to conservation, demolition and reuse. Referring to it, some buildings have to be demolished due to the fact they do not belong to the original layout of Arsenale and, for this reason, their value is not recognized. Demolition is seen as a necessary act, in order to restore the order in a site which has been modified again and again during its lifetime while it was in use. The realisation of this project started in the last months of 2020 and is ongoing.

This effort in participation had as a consequence the creation of ArsLab, which represents the first step to establish an urban centre in the city of Verona. Currently its aim is limited to the search for new general ideas related to the city and to engage citizens in its development.

The Arsenale is intentionally situated in the central point of a huge system of fortifications that is entirely preserved (it represents one of the reasons why Verona is inserted in the World Heritage List), even though it is almost totally abandoned. Torri Massimiliane and some other forts belong to this system and are involved in “Verona 22” project. These places are still waiting for a reuse but demolition does not seem to be considered at all, probably because of the recognised historical significance. Some local associations will probably be the future owners and their approach could be compared to the one adopted in Vnitroblock, where the signs of the passing of time represent an additional value.

The other typology that the paper deals with is the industrial archaeologies which represent another substantial category involved in the regeneration project in Verona. Demolition appears as a natural solution in these sites, as happened in most of the analysed cases in Prague (the Brewery, La Fabrika and Materna’s Paint Factory). This is mainly caused by a lack of knowledge and recognition of the value, especially due to the fact that these buildings belong to a recent past.

Tobacco Factory was one of the big industrial assets in Verona. The construction started in 1930 but transformations occurred until 1960 and it closed in 2002, following its privatization, which happened a few years beforehand (De Mori, Olivieri, Poli 2019). At present some buildings of the factory are under demolition because the project of regeneration, according to the intentions of the owner society Ve.Re.Srl and to the project of the Norwegian firm Snøhetta, should include offices, shops, a luxury hotel, restaurants and a big parking lot for the fair. In particular, the building realized in 1940, which was the core of the production, is being demolished and, as portrayed in the visualizations, the oldest tobacco storehouses will be embedded in a new structure, losing part of their materiality, (Figg. 7, 8, 9) Thus we are not only losing matter but also the memory of one of the most important examples of factories in Verona.

The approach towards this site is comparable with the one applied on La Fabrika and Holport. In a general renovation and transformation of structures and finishes, they decided to maintain only the peculiar symbol of this place, the chimney stack, as if it would be sufficient to keep the memory of the past.

This project is the first step of a wider process concerning urban regeneration, called ZAI³ Life, which should address the entire district. Enclosed by this project there is also the transformation of the rail yard into a big park, called “Central Park”, that should connect the city centre with the southern outskirts.

A similar process happened in Tiberghien, a woolen mill with a very long story. In 1984, after the transfer of the property from the Tiberghien family to the administration of Verona and then again to another property holder, the site was divided in two parts by a concrete wall (De Mori, Olivieri, Poli 2018). A part of it was converted and remained in use as it is now, maintaining a good conservative state, the other part continued in



Fig. 6) Plastic model of the project "Verona 22" situated in ArsLab in Verona, Italy. (<comune.verona.it/>)



Fig. 8) Situation of Tobacco Factory in 2019. Verona, Italy. (Immagini 2021 Google, Immagini European Space Imaging, Maxar Technologies, Dati cartografici 2021)

Fig. 7) A building of Tobacco Factory under demolition. Verona, Italy. (photo Sara Rocco 2020)



Fig. 9) Rendering of the project designed by Heliopolis S.p.A. and Snøhetta. Verona, Italy. (copyrights Heliopolis 2021 - Rigenerazione Urbana Ex Manifattura Tabacchi Verona)



use until 2004 and then was abandoned. This condition, in addition to a lack of interest and of awareness of the value of buildings, has led to a partial demolition of the factory, completely changing the perception of the spatial relationships inside the neighbourhood. It is still in search of a new function. The choice of demolition was taken precisely because there were no ideas for the future of the area; it is a clear example of a general behaviour which considers demolition as a preventive and necessary action, without considering the development of an area in wider terms.

Fortunately, in Verona there are also positive examples of conservation, like Gallerie Mercatali which are totally preserved and host exhibitions on special occasions; even better, the Provianda Santa Marta, which was the bakery and storehouse of the Austrian and Italian army until 1989, has been transformed with a conservative approach into an university building (library, offices, classrooms) by the architect Massimo Carmassi.

Final remarks

In the last decades dictionaries of planning and architecture have been implemented with words characterised by the “re” morpheme, as used in the words requalification, renovation, reuse, reconversion (Losco 2015: 10). In fact, contemporary cities are being changed by the crisis which has involved the environment, the economy, the society and also the space. In this sense administrations are trying to avoid further land consumption, concentrating on those areas that can regenerate by themselves through public or private investments and that can become stronger thanks to new social and economic conditions.

Although there are two very different contexts, it is possible to conclude this essay with some observations about the two urban regenerations analysed, in Holešovice (Prague) and in Verona.

The district of Holešovice is built on medium-to-small factories which suffered a process of regeneration due to a general de-industrialization; the process is in a forward state and one of the most interesting aspects is the bottom-up activation and regeneration of these sites which were formalized around fifteen years later by the administration.

In Verona the situation is different because the regeneration involves different kinds of buildings (we analysed industrial archaeologies of large dimensions and some fortifications) and the process has recently started under the direction of the administration. The entire process is supervised and managed by the local government and it is strictly connected to the candidacy of Verona as Italian Capital of Culture 2022. Therefore, the process is totally top-down, although there are some attempts to involve the citizens.

The action of demolition is equally present in both cases; the reasons which determine demolitions are similarly connected with speculation, urban policies, economical interests, environmental sustainability and especially a lack of acknowledgement of values in those buildings set to be destroyed.

Notes

- 1 A research conducted by Politecnico di Milano intends to map similar cases: [online] Available at <<http://www.urban-reuse.eu/>> [Accessed 22 February 2020].
- 2 I also presented my master thesis work related to the Arsenal to the Commission in the Municipality of Verona on 10th November 2017.
- 3 ZAI means Zone Agricultural Industrial and was founded after World War II, in 1948.

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Beyond the demolition in conservation. DIY low-cost factory conversion as a phenomenon of *Bodenständigkeit*

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Can we accept demolition in the process of conservation?

To answer this question, primarily we should understand why and when demolition could be necessary. Analysing the Prague's urban planning, we could start asking if there is a link between abandonment and demolition.

In the Czech Republic, there are more than 47 thousand listed elements as cultural heritage, but only 65 from the postwar, socialist architecture (Vorlík et al. 2012). It could be relevant to quote that at this moment, there is a non-conservative approach towards this architecture.

Some of the places, there were mentioned in the EAAE workshop, like the Hotel Prague by J. Paroubek, A. Navrátil, R. Černý, J. Sedláček, demolished in 2014 or the Telephone Exchange by J. Malátek, J. Eisenreich, V. Aulický, J. Eismannová, 1975–1982, demolished in 2017, represent some of this attitude.

Also, it could be significant for the discussion, to observe that demolition could represent the final act of a process of abandonment that transforms urban places in relicts (Dal Borgo, Garda, Marini 2016). Although there are scientific studies that remark the economic sustainability of the adaptive reuse rather than demolition (Bulle, Love 2010: 9), it is relevant to consider if there is a cultural process that, beyond the economic ones, leads to demolition as a planning choice. Alternatively, if it could always be verifiable that «demolition is often selected when the life expectancy of an existing building is estimated to be less than a new alternative, despite any improvements that adaptive reuse may inject» (Bulle, Love 2010: 216).

Conflict emerges between the increase of “listed architectures” and sustainability of their conservation, although one of the preliminary goals for the conservation process is identifying and catalogue cultural heritage. This is particularly true after the economic crisis, the failure of the Welfare State model, and the simultaneous rise of abandoned and dismissed architectures (Zouen 2018: 17, 18).¹ Besides, if preservation actions occur in a public competence zone of the process of decision-making, adaptive reuse strategies often refer to Stakeholders that correspond to private actors (NARA +20 1994).²

A ambivalence exists between values that lead to a heritage designation (as a common cultural heritage) and values at the base of adaptive reuse strategies,³ that could be changed or, worse, destroyed in the process of realpolitik.

On the other hand, if adaptive reuse practices change or deprave values of heritage designation, economic values decreased too,⁴ and actions of preservation became a pure formality.

Vittorio Gregotti, in 1992, stated the urgency to create a «charter for demolition» as a planning tool for the city (Gregotti 1992).

The theoretical framework at the base is the existence of a «priority concerning demolition» (Gregotti 1992: 21) because, he says, that «a culture of destruction» implies a responsibility since it contains the value of the foresight, of the transformation, that is the planning activity at urban and landscape level.⁵ This preliminary frame, for the Author, means that in architectural reasoning, the conservation activities operate at the level of the *matter*, the culture of demolition act on the level of the *form*.

It could be argued that demolition is a necessity in the process of conservation since it defines a strategy for transmission, that is a design choice. In particular, the choice to address a cultural value and a heritage designation to preserve areas and architectures from urban development. The Nara +20 Charter highlights that communities are central actors in the process of acknowledgement of cultural heritage, but their awareness of a shared cultural value change in time, now very quickly, according to the relationship between identities and cultural heritage (sometimes in a very troubling way).⁶

This premise underlines the crucial role of “collective subject” since the process linked with the urban planning starts / insists “on” it, or we might say, “from” it. In particular, “new” methods to share cultural values overcome the traditional concept of “evaluation” for the cultural common good.

This social and cultural evolution change radically the idea that communities always acknowledge cultural heritage. While, on the contrary, a cultural good could become obsolete and detached from the public values; at the same time, an architecture considered meaningless in the present could be listed in the future. This condition generates a paradox: an action, like the preservation in the process of heritage designation, conceived as safeguarding policy, turns into an expression of contemporary values, that might be changed or lost in the future. This premise means that the link between the past and future is lost.

From this point of view, the collective process of acknowledgement of industrial heritage is significant (Douet ed. 2012), especially in the Czech Republic, place of numerous case of adaptive-reuse (Fragner, Valchářová 2014).

In the workshop experience, some of these case-studies were cited. In many of these emerge a close connection with a sense of communities and a contemporary attitude towards the industrial buildings as in the DEPO 2015, a Creative Zone in Pilsen, a former Bus Depot made in 1932–1934, reused in 2014–2015; La Fabrika, a former Richter Machine Works and Foundry established by A. Zázvorka in 1908 and reused as theatre and art space by T. Novotný, T. Zmek, L. Ježek in 2004–2012, or the Culture Hub Jatka 78, in the quartier of Holešovice, a former Abattoirs made in 1893–1895, redesigned around 1925–1929 and reused in 2014–2015.

In all these architectures, the adaptive-reuse claims a strong connection with communities and marks the evolution of society: the working class is overcome by new



Fig. 1) When and how the sight of torn things shifts into an aesthetic experience? Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 3) Un-finished condition as a reuse experience. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 2) Fragments as a "completed" artwork. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 4) Un-finished condition as a reuse experience. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 5) Ian Hemilton Finlay, Adorno's Hut, 1986–1987. Museum of contemporary and modern Art. Strasburg, France. (photo Emanuela Sorbo)



Fig. 6) "Ruin Value" through performance actions. Vnitroblok, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 7) Acknowledgement of the torn and degraded spaces, partly demolished, providing both aesthetic and "reuse" experience. Vnitroblok, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)

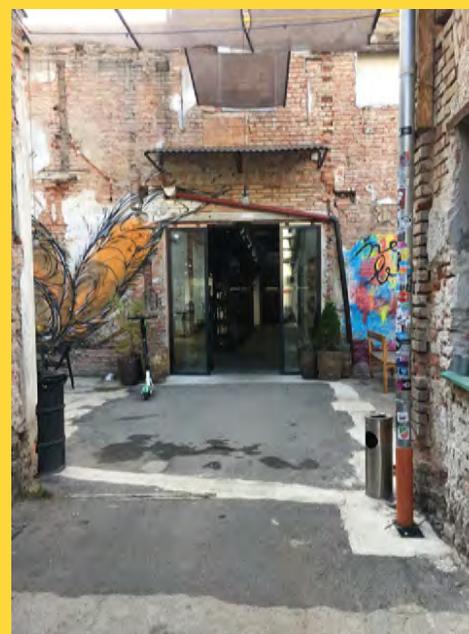


Fig. 8) Acceptance of the un-finished as a "Being in Time". Vnitroblok, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)

cultural communities, spaces act as containers of experiences. Near this experimental approaches towards spaces we may focus a diverse universe of strategies of reuse strictly linked with the private or public stakeholders involved, like in the former Thun Brewery from 19th Century reused and adapted in 2012–2014 in the “Děčín Brewery Shopping Center”; or in the former Pfister & Wüstel Hops Storehouse and Packing Plant in 1898–1900, now “Temple of Hops and Beer”, in Žatec, reused in 2009–2011 with educational, entertaining uses; or the former Coal Mill for the Boiler House, now “The Coal Mill in Libčice”, reused as a multifunctional place in 2010–2012 with spaces for coworking and polyfunctional facilities related to Art, Architecture and Design. A universe of approaches to the strategy of reuse where the experimental part of the project involves more close reasoning on social changes and attitudes than a “thought” on the form of the project in itself, like, as a reference, the very well known case-study of Corso Karlín by Ricardo Bofill.

This list testifies an attitude in architecture towards the simplification of forms, at a tangible level, versus broader reasoning and complexity, at intangible level, related to uses and linked with different kind of communities.

This premise identifies a process of recognition and enhancement of collective memory of industrial past, from the late nineteenth century until the 1930s,⁷ and a tendency for the abandonment of places from the post-war period until socialist past.

The analysis of this planning strategy has two different meanings. From one hand, the process of heritage designation fosters the adaptive reuse by private stakeholders. From the other hand, the absence of post-war and socialist architectures from heritage list is a measurement of will to forget as a sort of prologue for their demolition.

A crucial issue is the process of “collective acknowledgement” by the communities since, quoting Nietzsche, «the unhistorical and the historical are necessary for equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people, and a culture» (Nietzsche 1966: 214).⁸

A conflict arises between the increase of heritage designations and the spread of abandoned places (Zouen 2018: 4) and some questions emerge.⁹ How and how many of places and architectures abandoned or no longer acknowledged by communities -- so many in Europe after the economic crisis including ones with symbolic value (Fiorani, Kealy, Musso 2017) – can be still considered a cultural heritage? How could an abandoned place become a heritage for communities? A starting point to answer those questions could be to overcome a materialistic vision of the abandonment and investigate cultural reasons.

Could we consider a process of abandonment a starting point for a process of demolition?

Gelassenheit is a book by Martin Heidegger written in 1959.¹⁰ *Gelassenheit* means, at the same time, abandonment of things and releasement (to indulge in things). The Author identifies the post-war phenomena of migrations as a loss in the contemporary human being of *Bodenständigkeit* (groundedness/autochthony). The absence of *Bodenständigkeit*, for Heidegger, is the essence of contemporaneity

(Heidegger 1959: 26). It pushes human-being towards the calculative thinking – *das rechnende Denken* – than to the meditative thinking – *das besinnliche Nachdenken* (Heidegger 1959: 15).

Heidegger starts his reasoning using the image of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima as a metaphor. The most potent image of demolition, destruction, during the twenty-century, alongside the debate for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. This opposition is the essence of a new era in contemporaneity: the atomic Hera. A historical period, connoted by the faith in Technology (*die Technik*), in the «calculative thinking», that defines a new prophetic way for the human-being to approach the world: the domain of *Technik* on humanity. (Heidegger 1959: 22, 23).

The domain of *Technik*, in Heidegger, means the supremacy of data, of Materialism on speculative thinking. Human-being loses the capacity of being deeply involved with/by things, and this originates, as a consequence, the release, the abandonment of them. He speaks of *die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen* or abandonment of things and to things.

The Heidegger «discourse on thinking» linked with the metaphor by Bernardo Secchi (the territory as a repository)¹¹ could help us to interpret the increase of abandoned areas, architectures, places, cities as a sort of *Zeitgeist*, where the *Gelassenheit*, the abandonment, the releasement from and towards the things, is the new *Bodenständigkeit* (groundedness/autochthony) for contemporaneity.

This detachment from things alongside calculative thinking generates awareness for architectural relicts as a contemporary phenomenon, or, we might say, towards the *unfinished as being in Time* (Dillon 2011).¹² This *unfinished time-being* could be interpreted as a state of contemporary *Bodenständigkeit*.¹³

From this point of view is quite significant to analyse the phenomenon of Vnitroblock, a Multifunctional Space, former Bendelmayer and Červenka Foundry built between 1885–1895, and now reused by L. Žďárský, J. Zajíc since 2016, with a DIY low-cost factory conversion.

DIY low-cost factory conversion as a phenomenon of *Bodenständigkeit*.

Vnitroblock is a phenomenon of bottom-up reused strategy. In this process stakeholders and communities unify in the same actor the figure of “heritage professionals”. Nevertheless, when and how the characteristics of an abandoned place turn from degradation into a value? When and how the sight of torn things shift into an aesthetic experience?¹⁴

We may argue that it is possible when the degradation process turns into a performance, so when there is preliminarily an acknowledgement of a value. (Fig. 1)

A very well-known experience from this point of view is the performance by Lawrence Weiner «a 36×36 removal to the lathing or support wall of plaster or wallboard from a wall» in 1968, where the author “perform” demolition of a square of plaster from a masonry. That area (36×36) become the expression of the “nude matter” that contains the “act” of demolition (Sorbo 2016). This performance converts demolition into a creative act.

In architecture, the milestone reference about the topic demolition/creation is the work by Gordon Matta-Clark. The “building cuts” reveal the deep relation between demolition as a performative act in the transformation of empty/abandoned/dismissed spaces. This performative aspect concerning demolition is related to the acceptance of degradation as a phenomenon linked with the creative action of Time as a “Mighty Sculptor”, quoting Marguerite Yourcenar (Yourcenar 1984).

For the same reason, one of the fascinating works on the topic demolition/creation is Antivilla by Arno Brandlhuber, the refurbished former German Democratic Republic lingerie factory “Ernst Lück” at the Krampnitzsee, southwest of Berlin, where the unfinished conditions of walls, surfaces, installations are clearly a design choice (Brandlhuber 2018).

At the same time, adopt the unfinished/damaged condition of a place as a reuse experience (beyond the aesthetical one) has a starting point in processes linked with the occupation of spaces, since it is the first step to acknowledge an abandoned place as a collective one. (Figg. 2, 3, 4)

Architectural Project turns into the search of the myth of the Vitruvian primitive hut: architectural stability, technical elements, light, heating, ventilation, roofing. (Fig. 5)

The recognition of a “ruin value” that allow the use of abandoned places through performance actions, linked with the idea of *Bodenständigkeit* exposed before.

In a similar path, the foundational step in Vnitroblock is the acknowledgement of the torn and degraded spaces, partly demolished, of both aesthetically and “reused” (not recycled) experience. (Figg. 6, 7)

In architecture one of the first experimental case-study for an open approach to design with active involvement by community is the Palais de Tokyo reused by Anne Lacaton e Jean-Philippe Vassal since 1999 (Ruby I&A., Steiner, Goulet 2002).

The interview with the authors reveals a meaningful idea of design as an «exploration of an architectural concept» (Petzet, Heilmeyer eds., 2012: 13–26). A framework for thinking rather than a Thought on construction: architectural spaces entirely focused on the idea of the experience within. Two levels coexist in this attitude: an intangible idea of the experience and tangible actions in design. The Palais is the expression of planning, where the starting point is to create a community. Space comes after. It is a vessel. Every sign is a trace of Time. The conservative approach is explained by the sentence, intentionally easy: «we left everything just as we found it».¹⁵

When construction reveals an aesthetic value (like frame behind paintings) even if we are considering a bottom-up strategy, like in Vnitroblock, the planning purpose starts from an acceptance of the unfinished/degraded condition of the spaces as an experience linked with “being in Time”. (Fig. 8) It could be an involuntary or spontaneous approach. Still, it starts from the conservation or transformation of an unfinished condition in a contemporary *Bodenständigkeit*. The layered plasters, the traces of installations, the fragments of flooring, represent the “new” experience of contemporary space. (Fig. 9) A new horizon to approach the surfaces experiencing the same ambiguity of contemporary art, where degradation, evaluated as a form, a draw, a print, a Time action, is an Art-work and so an image to conserve. In this randomness, there is the essence of the process of community DIY (acronym of *Do It by Yourself*).

Without authorial dimensions and control on design activities, present in the Palais of Tokyo by Lacaton & Vassall, all the fragmented elements (surfaces, implants, lights, flooring) become the Space. In this purity, architecture returns a *Hut*, “reused” and not “adapted”. Architecture loses characters of the Abandonment, to become “Releasement” (*Gelassenheit*), a contemporary expression of “Being in Time”. (Fig. 10)

Notes

1 «The situation we are confronted with today is rooted in two factors: one is the inflation of the welfare state followed by a recession caused by financial crises that started in 199726; the other is the transformation of what we call today “cultural heritage” and of the inflation in listing and protecting. Both the managers of the welfare state and the managers of the heritage goods thought they could continue unchecked. Hard facts have proven them wrong. The Welfare State and, by extension, the public funding of culture, are based on taxation. If the economy shrinks or people’s willingness or capacity to pay taxes fall, the Welfare State will lose the ability to cater for some societal needs» (Zouen 2018: 17,18).

2 «3. Involvement of multiple stakeholders. The Nara Document assigns responsibility for cultural heritage to specific communities that generated or cared for it. The experience of the last 20 years has demonstrated that cultural heritage may be significant in different ways to a broader range of communities and interest groups that now include virtual global communities that did not exist in 1994. This situation is further complicated by the recognition that individuals can be simultaneously members of more than one community and by the imbalance of power among stakeholders, often determined by heritage legislation, decision-making mechanisms, and economic interests. Those with authority to establish or recognize the significance, value, authenticity, treatment and use of heritage resources have the responsibility to involve all stakeholders in these processes, not forgetting those communities with little or no voice. Heritage professionals should engage in community matters that may affect heritage. Further work is needed on methodologies to identify the rights, responsibilities, representatives, and levels of involvement of communities.» (NARA +20 2014)

3 «Any type of reuse, even adaptive reuse contributes to the destruction of the object being used. Since a heritage good is always unique and cannot be replaced by another, attention must be paid to avoid consuming it. This brings strict limits of reuse and hence to returns from heritage.» (Zouen 2018: 13)

4 «Then, after a plateau phase, the economic value will go down and will bring the heritage values to a fall.» (Zouen 2018: 16)

5 «Soprattutto, la cultura della distruzione implica ancora maggiori responsabilità rispetto a quella della conservazione, perché in essa deve essere presente il valore della “previsione”, la promessa di assetti migliori (cioè più ordinati e proprio per questo più aperti e disponibili all’uso sociale) della città e del territorio. La cultura della distruzione non implica ovviamente il ritorno allo stato di natura, ma la messa a disposizione del suolo, per mezzo del progetto, alla immaginazione necessaria» (Above all, the culture of demolition implies even greater responsibilities that conservation, because it contains the value of prevision, a promise of a better arrangement (that is more planned and because of this open and available to social uses) of the city and territory. The culture of demolition doesn’t imply to go back to nature, but the use of soil, though, the project, with the necessary imagination.» (Gregotti 1997: 22)

6 «Implications of the evolution of cultural values The Nara Document acknowledges that cultural heritage undergoes a continuous process of evolution. In the last 20 years, recognition of this evolution has created challenges for heritage management and has led practitioners to question the validity of universal conservation principles. In addition, during this period, fruitful engagement by communities in heritage processes has given rise to the acceptance of new values that had previously gone unrecognized. These changes require that the identification of values and the determination of authenticity be based on periodic reviews that accommodate changes over time in perceptions and attitudes, rather than on a single assessment.» (NARA +20 2014)

7 «The delegates assembled for the 2003 TICCIH Congress in Russia wish therefore to assert that the buildings and structures built for industrial activities, the processes and tools used within them and the towns and landscapes in which they are located, along with all their other tangible and intangible manifestations, are of fundamental importance. They should be studied, their history should be taught, their meaning and significance should be probed and made clear for everyone, and the most significant and characteristic examples should be identified, protected and maintained, in accordance with the spirit of the Venice Charter, for the use and benefit of today and of the future»; «2. Values of

industrial heritage. I. The industrial heritage is the evidence of activities which had and continue to have profound historical consequences. The motives for protecting the industrial heritage are based on the universal value of this evidence, rather than on the singularity of unique sites.» (NIZHNY 2003)

8 « Without forgetting it is quite impossible to live at all.» (Nietzsche 1966: 210)

9 «In Europe – and here in Italy, the resources available to public spending have been stalling or diminishing while the recovery remains slow to come. Social welfare has suffered and the arts and cultural heritage as well: though this trend has been with us for some time, we continue to behave as if nothing has changed. More and more relics of our past are now unused, abandoned, or in dire need of restoration and have lost all utility to society and the economy while the lists of protected goods continues to grow.» (Zouen 2018: 4)

10 We referred to the term “abbandono” in Italian which is the translation of the Italian edition of *Gelassenheit*. (Heidegger 1983; *L’abbandono*, Genova) In English context the word has been translated with the word “releasement”. The book was translated in English with the title: «Discourse On Thinking».

11 «... il territorio è un deposito, magazzino di oggetti e di segni per il tramite della memoria e dell’immaginario:

testimone delle tecniche produttive, dei costumi, delle tendenze all’integrazione o al conflitto, delle forme del passato e del potere. (The territory is a repository, a depot of things and signs through memory and imagination: the witness of productive techniques, habits, inclinations to integration or to conflict, forms of past and power).» (Secchi 1989: 99)

12 «... ruins are part of the long history of the fragment, but the ruin is a fragment with a future.» (Dillon 2011: 11)

13 «In un corso di lezioni sulla *Fenomenologia dello Spirito* di Hegel nel 1931 afferma che il pensiero, se intende porsi e comprendersi come soggetto deve presupporre non-finito, in altri termini deve lasciar cadere in oblio la differenza tra l’Essere e l’Essente. (During lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1931 Hegel states that the Thing, if it wants to be and to understand itself as a subject it must be thought as unfinished, in other words, it needs to forget the difference between Being and Existence.)» (Angelino 1983: 20)

14 For an overview on the relationship between contemporary art and conservation see Fiorani 2018.

15 «We know that if you give it enough thought, if you examine the situation closely, if you understand it fully and then act in a way that is consistent – that is to say, if you work with the existing material, you can create a truly beautiful city.» (Petzet, Heilmeyer eds., 2012: 26)

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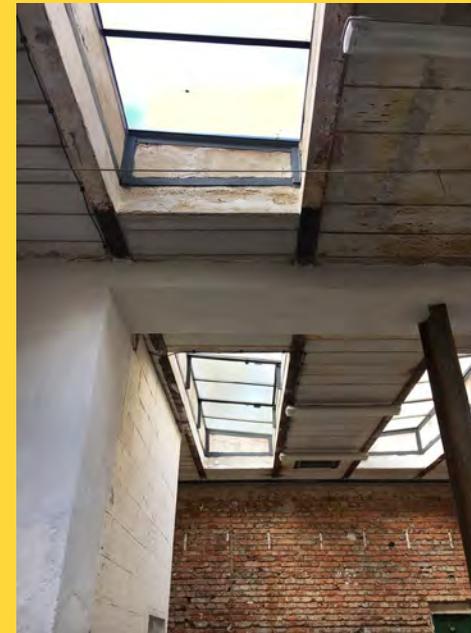


Fig. 9) The layered plasters, the traces of installations as a "new" experience of contemporary space. The new "Hut". Vnitroblok, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 10) Gelassenheit as Bodenständigkeit. Vnitroblok, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)

Conservation vs Demolition of architectural finishes. Issues and impacts on industrial heritage¹

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Managing changes between conservation and demolition

If we just consider the world around us, we unequivocally realize that objects, living beings and any scenario we observe are in continuous change. We also become aware that change is an integral part of every natural phenomenon and it is irreversible, meaning that no spontaneous process will ever bring a system back to its previous condition.

We also know that these changes are not only chemical-physical but also cultural, in that they are conditioned by utility, functionality, efficiency as well as ideological needs. If culture provides the forms, nature provides the materials and it is thanks to their overlapping that human beings create the artifacts surrounding us in ever greater numbers (Ingold 2013). The intimate link between production forms and social relations closely binds the development of technology in a co-evolutionary way, to changes in the built environment and mentalities.

When we talk about development, we also implicitly refer to abandonment and to the often-consequential practice of *demolition*. Many consider demolition a historical need, positing that all cultures and societies were sometimes created and later developed on the rubble of their built environment. At the same time, though, development also means *conservation*, not necessarily in the material sense, but as an attempt to preserve the founding values and identity of the object, through which we recognize the ability to legitimize our human condition and substantiate the necessary becoming of society (Choay 1996).

History teaches us that this type of transformation, which was slower in ancient times, has accelerated with Modernity; transformation can take a long time if we try to make the most of what exists, or it can sometimes be extremely quick if we decide to get rid of “the burden” of past disused buildings. More often, moreover, before affecting the structure, i.e. its “bones”, transformation is generally apparent on the “skin” of the building, i.e. on its finishes. Finishes have always been the most fragile parts of a building, the most wearable by natural and anthropic phenomena, the most prone to formal and technological ageing but they are also the ones that, more than any other

architectural feature, characterize the building and have an influence on its appreciation by the public. Historic cities are full of specialized buildings whose original function we can still recognize by observing the surviving structures, those that characterized their *firmitas*, although their “skin” has been removed because it was a precious material in itself, or to re-employ it as building material, or to give the building a new outlook and meaning. It is equally true, however, that, when the historical and testimonial value of a great deal of historical buildings was recognized, these assumptions were overturned and conservation also focused, more often than not, only on the buildings’ surfaces, on their “skin”. In the buildings’ transformation/demolition process, the historical facades have sometimes become the only element to be saved as the sole bearers of identity, of easily recognizable historical-artistic values only minimally limiting the technological-functional evolution of the city – an adaptation that, in our opinion, ends up avoiding the value-oriented comparison between traditional and contemporary technologies, not only in cultural, but also in economic terms.

The following notes aim therefore a reflection on the importance of both pre- and post-industrial technologies in the process of enhancing the built environment by focusing especially, in the aftermath of the *VII Workshop EAAE Thematic Network on Conservation* held in Prague, Czech Republic, on 25–28 September 2019, on the destiny of finishes in abandoned industrial heritage. Industrial heritage is closely linked to the “technological” theme and its history (Choay 1992): construction, production, transformation, conservation and demolition technologies.

The issue of finishes in architecture: *conservation vs demolition*

Architecture – and therefore restoration – has always gone hand in hand with technique, or rather technology, which translates a project into a building and knowledge into real products and productions, following a process so rich in human implications that these are sometimes hard to split. Architecture is thus a precious archive of technical culture, defined equally by both structures and finishes.

In architecture, when we refer to finishes, we mean everything that connotes a building both externally and internally, the more or less thin, opaque or transparent layers that act as an intermediary between the observer/user and the building, and between the building and the environment. Leaving aside for a while the infinite combinations that they can take, we would like to group finishes in macro-categories, that is plasters or other forms of wall covering, flooring, roof coverings and door and window frames. Their cladding role has often ended up making them accessory, when compared to the more necessary role of the structural components they rely on. And yet, finishes have always been entrusted with the fundamental task of technically and artistically portraying the building: they characterize it more than any other architectural element, they attribute to the skeleton the “appearance” of an era, they embody their aesthetic needs no less than materials and technology, they preserve the memory of a know-how and show-how from which arise tangible and intangible meanings and values that today we are called to spot and interpret, remember or forget, conserve or destroy. Suffice to think only of the difference in information (historical, material,

technological and aesthetic) conveyed by a brick vestment, sometimes featuring the “sagramatura” technique, sometimes covered with pierre-simili Terranova plaster, with the former linking the building to late Medieval and Renaissance architecture, and the latter to rationalist poetics.²

Mostly responsible for the *venustas* of architecture, finishes owe their subsistence and survival over time to the *firmitas* of the structures they cover as well as to their own material consistency – a seven-layer Roman plaster has a greater resistance to deterioration than a thin mortar/lime-based one (called “scialbo”) – but also to the *utilitas* they manage to satisfy – the survival of door and window frames depends strictly on their performance, that is if they can be still be effectively used in a building at any given time.

This leads us to the issue of obsolescence and therefore of the durability of architectural finishes. Historically, they are the parts most exposed to deterioration as they are usually external and in direct contact with mechanical, climatic and atmospheric stress, such as wear on floors or the action of rainwater on facades and roof coverings. Often referred to as “sacrificial surfaces”, finishes are invested with the no less important task of protection. This is why finishes are most subject to wearing and therefore to renewal and replacement, a much easier operation compared to renewal and replacement of structural elements. During restoration works, crumbling surfaces have frequently been replaced thoughtlessly; and it is the radical renewal of the finishes, especially the facades, that seems to allow one to immediately recognize if a building has been “restored” (Dezzi Bardeschi 2009).

Last but not least, a distinction should be made between traditional and modern technologies, between pre- and post-industrial finishes.³ The substantial change in the theoretical, methodological and above all technological references, of which the twenty-century heritage is an expression, has posed new problems, leaving us with a legacy of quickly built buildings with a short life cycle, with technical solutions unknown to most, difficult to reproduce despite their being standardized and serial in nature,⁴ and sometimes too close to us to be fully considered historical. The situation we find ourselves in is quite the opposite of what happens with the consolidated and reassuring pre-industrial tradition.

Assuming that the reproduction of finishes is culturally acceptable and technically possible with respect to the history of a building, the above consideration raises another key question: does the unchallenged distinction between traditional and modern technologies resurface even when we try to reproduce them? Or rather, are pre-industrial technologies really reproducible only because they have been the subject of in-depth research and a progressive accumulation of knowledge and verification? Consider, for example, lime-based plaster: today, calcareous stones are not quarried and processed as in the past, the water used for the hydration process is less pure and more polluted, and lime burning processes are influenced by the functioning of contemporary ovens. The same is true for terracotta flooring or other types of traditional finishes. It should also not be forgotten that using such methods today means that the empirical process from which those technologies originated is excluded *a priori*, and that the final

result will inevitably be different (Musso 2013). The answer to the question above has therefore to be a negative one.

This is rather a false problem that shows how naive and ambiguous the myth of the “recovery of ancient recipes” truly is, with the highest risk, in this respect, being that conservation becomes a demolition itself: «Has conservation become a dangerous epidemic? Is it destroying our cities?» (Ouroussoff 2011).⁵

This premise aims to frame and explain the angle used in this paper to approach the conservation/demolition issue. Talking about architectural finishes means that the discussion on *conservation vs demolition* of heritage evolves into a debate that can be defined as a very “subtle” one for several reasons: for their “physical subtlety”, almost two-dimensional, and for their “cultural subtlety” – which is nothing but cultural depth – that we sometimes find hard to recognize. That means that we transform a “surface” problem into a “superficial” problem, while, especially in disused industrial heritage, multiple needs come into play, determining, in the end, what is conserved or destroyed and why.

Why preserving/demolishing architectural finishes of industrial heritage **Background and scenarios**

Over the centuries, the reasons behind conservation/demolition of architectural finishes have been many, such as consolidation of structural parts, adjustment to a changed aesthetic taste, improvement of performances and therefore the reduction of consumption and costs, deterioration, historical-artistic revisions of the construction hypotheses, etc. If, in retrospect, it is difficult to establish when such interventions were necessary or just convenient, there is no doubt that they have produced undeniable effects. Since the built heritage is much more than the product of technology alone, every transformation – even of surfaces – generates multidimensional impacts that can be traced back to four main conceptually related domains: economic, social, cultural and environmental domains (Europa Nostra *et al.* 2015; ICOMOS 2019).⁶

It should also be pointed out that the reasons for conservation/demolition have found a fertile ground in relation to the types of heritage and the values attributed to them. In the case of the so-called “monuments” careful analysis and conservation concerns normally guide restorations even where finishes are not preserved, whereas for the so-called everyday heritage and even more so, the industrial heritage, the attitude seems more casual and utilitarian.

Let us consider, for example, disused factories. They bear witness to a manufacturing culture in which technology played a fundamental role, integrating architectural design, use requirements, structural needs, plant equipment; these large buildings or systems of buildings were cathedrals to work with an essential and functional language. As highlighted by the inspection of the *VII EAAE Workshop* in Prague, interventions on the finishes of many industrial buildings have often been influenced by the needs of the client, by economic, professional, entrepreneurial, technical and technological resources and, of course, by the comparison with the social and cultural environment of reference. This also happened in other European countries.

The destiny of these factories, poised between conservation and demolition, can today be divided into *three macro-categories*, understood as possible approaches to the finishes of the industrial heritage – but more generally to the architectural heritage –, differing in purposes and outcomes, although never rigidly distinguishable and mutually separable in a definitive way: *maintenance and repair, conservation and addition, conservation and demolition*.

Maintenance and repair

This first category is aimed at reopening and reusing the abandoned building. Economic factors such as the lack of funds limit or even rule out the possibility to intervene on surfaces, which are therefore preserved as they are, or repaired to be quickly re-used. The result is that the materials and the appearance of the factory are like frozen in time and in their deterioration. New uses are usually light and non-invasive, economically sustainable and socially inclusive. It is not unusual for these former industrial spaces to escape demolition and to come back to life as a result of bottom-up processes promoted by citizens that broaden participation and strengthen society's responsibility for the local cultural heritage. Such an approach was recently described as excellent also by the Leeuwarden Declaration focusing on the adaptive re-use of built heritage which states: «Participation of citizens: which heritage sites should be preserved, demolished or re-used has to be discussed in a democratic and participative way» (ACE *et al.* 2018).

This is the case of Prague's Vnitroblok, which escaped demolition thanks to a group of young citizens and reopened to the public as a social and inclusive space featuring a bar, a dance studio, a cinema, a small theatre and shops. The building surfaces have undergone very few changes: the plasters have maintained their roughness, the floors have been partially replaced with concrete castings, door and window frames repaired if necessary – a shining example of this are the metal frame windows (*ferrofinestra*) whose glass was repaired with adhesive tape. (Fig. 1, 2) Similar approaches can be found, for example, at the Matadero Centro de creación contemporánea in Madrid, transformed in 2006 into a creative urban laboratory: the worn-out finishes of the former public slaughterhouse serve as a backdrop for art performances and are integrated, where necessary, with industrial materials giving restoration almost the same value of the installation itself: plastic sheets, typical of department stores, were used to insulate doors without frames. (Fig. 3) The approach is now a widespread one in Europe, due to the rise of an «aesthetic of deterioration», resulting from the contamination between contemporary artistic and social practices and the world of restoration (Hernández Martínez 2013: 89). From this point of view, a prime example is that of the MUDE Museu do Design e da Moda in Lisbon, a former bank building of the second half of the 19th century, which was left as it is, that is in ruins, and used as a fascinating exhibition space. It is just another case of attraction – in this case a “fashion” – for imperfection, attesting a new aesthetic canon that is sometimes justified in the name of recycling and sustainability. (Fig. 4)

Conservation and addition

Some instance of *maintenance and repair* are examples of a more “learned” practice,⁷ combining respect for the use-value of the heritage, especially if industrial, and special attention to building conservation. Once again, technological solutions tend to stop or attenuate, rather than reverse, the process of degradation, preferring the simultaneous addition without any imitative ambition to substitution. Economic, cultural, social but also environmental reasons are behind such an attitude, such as cost savings – costs are much higher in the case of new buildings –, conservation of the building and of its values for the community, and finally reduction of waste products. Most of the new functions are in line with the building's original vocation or, if they deviate from it, significant transformations are kept very much within bounds.

This second category includes the conservation of finishes with a markedly iconic value, such as metal door and window frames (*ferrofinestra*). This is the case of the Carl Jerabek Metallwaren Fabrik in Prague – now known as Holport and used as a Design Shop – where frames have been maintained, cleaned and painted and, only where necessary, glasses replaced. (Fig. 5) Similar attention has been paid to the doors and windows of Officina Olivetti in Crema (Italy), which are only affected by the replacement of missing and/or deteriorated paneling. (Fig. 6, 7) It is not unusual to find new windows in conjunction with the existing ones, allowing for the preservation of the image of the building outside, but at the same time ensuring indoor comfort and containment of draughts: this is the case of the former Water Meter Factory in Prague, on the corner of Jateční and Komunardů streets, recently converted into atelier and offices. Here, functional adaptation seems to have oriented – at least in the spaces visited – to partial replacement of the existing plasters with new finishes made with traditional techniques that evoke worn-out surfaces. (Fig. 10, 9)

Conservation and demolition

Economic and performance requirements are more often behind replacement/demolition interventions associated with the re-proposal/conservation of a consolidated image. The building surface is considered the only element to be privileged and whose renovation is really justified: in a formalistic view of reality, it becomes instrumental to the conservation of recognized intangible values. These values are nevertheless strongly linked to the material of architectural finishes and cannot therefore be conserved by re-creating *ex novo* the old finishes' material. Plasters made with apparently traditional technologies and wooden or metal frames, at first sight similar to the original ones being replaced, renew the building appearance and improve its performance. This is what happened in several former Prague factories such as Central Abattoirs and Cattle Market and the First Prague Town Brewery, with the former being converted into a market and multifunctional experimental space called Jatka 78, and the latter becoming the A7 Arena Project, a multipurpose center featuring offices, restaurants, shops and residential apartments. (Fig. 8, 11, 12) A similar approach can be seen in disused industrial sites such as the Casa da Arquitectura in Porto, originally intended for the Real Companhia Vinícola, where plasters, door and window frames, and roof



Fig. 1, 2) Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)



Fig. 4) MUDE Museu do Design e da Moda, Lisbon, Portugal. (<archidaily.com>)



Fig. 3) Matadero Centro de creación contemporánea, Madrid, Spain. (photo Andrea Ugolini 2016)



Fig. 5) Former Carl Jerabek Metallwaren Fabrik, now Design shop in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)



Fig. 6, 7) Officina Olivetti, Crema, Italy. (Ermentini 2018: 13-14)



Fig. 9) Former Water Meter Factory, now AP Atelier and Gallery in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)



Fig. 8) First Prague Town Brewery – A7 Arena Project in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Andrea Ugolini 2019)



Fig. 10) Former Water Meter Factory, now AP Atelier and Gallery in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)



Fig. 11) Central Abattoirs and Cattle Market in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)



Fig. 13) Casa da Arquitectura, Porto, Portugal. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)



Fig. 12) Central Abattoirs and Cattle Market in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)



Figs. 14, 15) Casa da Arquitectura, Porto, Portugal. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)

coverings are re-created to look industrial but with modern technologies. (Figg. 13, 14, 15) Within this third category belong those cases where the modernization of finishes, in particular of the window frames, is totally unrelated to the original appearance of the building: metal frames become aluminum ones and their design is influenced by the size of the profile and the way it is laid. Clear examples of this approach are the already mentioned door and window frames at the Cattle Market in Prague and those at the former Eridania Sugar Refinery in Classe (Ravenna, Italy) today used as a local museum.

On the other hand, when the factory is conceived only as a simple building ground, its finishes are the first to be sacrificed. These seem to no longer hold any interest, just as the history of the building is forgotten, literally swallowed up by new architectures more fit for contemporary use. This is the case of the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague, which retains only parts of the facade of the pre-existing industrial building – walls marked by arched windows and brick half-pilasters – now raised, plastered and transformed so much that they get lost in the new volumetric design of the multifunctional center. (Figg. 16, 17)

In the event that a historical-testimonial value is recognized for the building, but its spatial and dimensional characteristics are inadequate for contemporary reuse strategies, we observe phenomena of conservation that could be qualified as “borderline”. In these cases, interventions are aimed more at restructuring than conserving, that is, they only maintain the “shell” of the building, or, more often, only its most significant facades. This is a practice known in architecture as «facadism» (Richards 1994): facades are fragmented and, so to speak, turned into museums, documenting only the “appearance” that are considered most significant in the history of that building. This is the logic behind the intervention at the Materna’s Paint Factory in Prague. When the factory was completely demolished, only the cubist facade of the office and residence building, designed by architect Rudolf Stockar, was conserved. Renewed in the finishes with the help of historical pictures and images, that fragmented facade marks today the entrance to a new architectural complex, although losing any physical and cultural depth.

Conclusions

In the cases mentioned above, it seems that the strategic choices and the operational solutions of conservation/demolition are mostly driven by economic and profit reasons, guiding works towards partial or total replacement/demolition, despite the well-known impact that construction, and in particular demolition, has on the community and especially on the environment (Monsù Scolaro, Marchi 2019).⁸

It should also not be forgotten that in EU countries about half of the built heritage dates back to before the 1970s, that is before the coming into force of regulations on energy efficiency and seismic safety (European Commission 2014). This leaves us to deal with heritage of undeniable technical and functional obsolescence, further accelerated by the pressing need to comply with high-performance standards imposed by current regulations. Studies show, however, that it is possible to achieve energy and general cost savings if the residual performance of the existing building and the objectives of

the reused building are carefully analyzed (Filippi 2015). Research and experimentation on Le Lignon Satellite Precinct in Geneva (Switzerland), built in the 1960s, have shown that it is possible, and indeed welcomed by users themselves, to reduce costs while complying with energy standards thanks to maintenance strategies, partial integration and timely replacement of old parts (Graf, Marino 2012).⁹

This proves that the issue of conservation/demolition cannot be boiled down only to problems of obsolescence and/or technological inadequacy but has to face the difficult coexistence of factors related to economy, culture, society and environment through the development of complex strategies (Europa Nostra *et al.* 2015).

It will therefore not be a matter of practicing a “passive” and “museum-like” conservation of the finishes or of the entire building, freezing only parts of the whole,¹⁰ but of identifying strategies of intervention recognizing a building as a product of human endeavors (Della Torre 2010). This approach to renovation will pursue an “active” and “dynamic” conservation, that looks at the building with different eyes without stopping at its appearance, considering at the same time materials, structures, technologies and values, and promoting strategies to restrain destructive actions and support heritage conservation, forcing us to act in a more aware and ethically responsible way.

All this must be done without getting lost in the presumed identification of the best technology, traditional or contemporary, but rather by searching for compatible materials and technologies of similar strength and comparable effectiveness and durability. *How* to achieve such objectives opens a much wider debate in the history of the conservation of architectural finishes, which most certainly cannot be exhaustively examined here.

Notes

- 1 Authorship of the paper: *Managing changes between conservation and demolition* (Andrea Ugolini_AU); *The issue of finishes in architecture: conservation vs demolition* (Chiara Mariotti_CM); *Why preserving/demolishing architectural finishes of industrial heritage* (AU&CM), in particular *Background and scenarios* (AU), *Maintenance and repair* (CM), *Conservation and addition* (CM); *Conservation and demolition* (AU); *Conclusions* (AU&CM).
- 2 Significant differences are also likely to be found on the brick facing; however, these tend to be less obvious in the eyes for non-experts.
- 3 During the VII EAAE Workshop in Prague, the authors took part in the working table on the topic *Contemporary versus traditional technologies and approaches*. The distinction between pre- and post-industrial technologies was the focus of the debate.
- 4 The difficulty/impossibility of reproducing products that are the result of obsolete or even disappeared industrial processes, perhaps containing materials that were innovative for the time but that today are dangerous for human health, such as asbestos, has been well established for some time now.
- 5 The expression, by architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff, refers to the provocative exhibition *CronoCaos*, curated by Rem Koolhaas and Shohei Shigematsu and presented for the first time at the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennale. The exhibition was conceived to denounce the restoration works uncritically carried out on the built heritage of our cities: apparent forms of conservation that actually turn out to be forms of destruction. [online] Available at <<https://oma.eu/projects/venice-biennale-2010-cronoCaos>> [Accessed 05 February 2020].
- 6 The identification of these domains is the result of the

- Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe* project, carried out with the EU support between 2013 and 2015. The project aimed at highlighting the quantitative and qualitative contribution of cultural heritage to the implementation of the *Europe 2020 strategy – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. These domains have been confirmed by the research carried out during the *European Year of Cultural Heritage*, in particular by the *Cherishing Heritage* initiative and the *European quality principles for EU-funded interventions with potential impact upon cultural heritage*, which associated them with their respective values: «Quality in relation to cultural heritage can in any case be seen as multi-dimensional, bearing environmental, cultural, social, and economic values» (ICOMOS 2019: 17).
- 7 The essay deliberately omits cases of factories such as the thermoelectric power plant of Montemartini, in Rome, where the conservation of the finishes (floors, plaster, door and window frames), plant and machinery became part of the museum itself, and the background for the exhibition of sculptures and archaeological finds of the Capitoline Museums.
 - 8 For obvious reasons, the paper did not consider the many cases of demolition of entire structures that are not useful for the purposes of this discussion on finishes, a case in point is that of the Holešovice-Bubny Railway Grounds in Prague.
 - 9 The research carried out by the Swiss team was based on a diagnostic evaluation of the building envelope components and on an analysis of its thermal behavior, which led to identify four types of intervention (repair, maintenance, integration and replacement). The cost-benefit analysis almost always led users to exclude the demolition/replacement of the technological element.
 - 10 Parts that are often artistically easier to understand.



Fig. 16) Former machine works Rossemann & Kühnemann, now DOX Centre for Contemporary Art in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Vladislava Valchářová 2004)



Fig. 17) Former machine works Rossemann & Kühnemann, now DOX Centre for Contemporary Art in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Chiara Mariotti 2019)

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From Industrial Revolution to contemporary preservation.

Reflection on historical systems.

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Cultural framing

From the Industrial Revolution onwards, the building industry has been taking on board – at different speeds – all the proposed (or imposed?) technological innovations.

Because of the plethora of new materials (among which, of course, structural iron played a pioneering role, bringing significant innovations to architecture conception) and their specialized but standardized production processes, the management of the construction site also gradually started to reflect a new building thought. The architecture was no longer an organic object, the product of an articulated but unique idea. It turned to be the sum of different designs, the superimposition of many professional skills – architects, structural engineers, services engineers – each one elaborating its proposal, according to their proper precepts.

Technical systems are among the most remarkable outcomes of this process, by virtue of their widespread adoption they became a significant achievement of the Industrial Revolution. Almost utterly alien to pre-modern constructions, they undoubtedly improved the quality of our lives. However, at the same time, they were (and still are) considered elements “in their own right”, subjected to particular rules of design and execution, in an ancillary (instead of conditioning) relationship with the other architectural features.

As modern elements dealing both with ancient buildings and new constructions, they were used to being hidden in the interstices, filling in voids created ex-post. However, as new functional systems, they have been shown to age very fast, generating unprecedented preservation problems. Even today, when trying to handle these technological elements, the “use-value” theorized by Riegl seems to be preeminent. They are first and foremost considered as mere utilitarian components, and thus as obsolete equipment are unhesitatingly removed and supplanted with more performative ones in order to meet regulatory requirements.

Still, this is not an attitude devoid of consequences. The higher the level of compliance to norms and rules required, the vaster is the potential for change, demolition, and destruction. Despite all the conservation theories emphasizing the importance of the matter, their systematic replacement seemed to be part of well-established practices justified by the urge to keep architecture efficient. Changing and removing obsolete systems was considered the lone option.

Nevertheless, recently considerable attention has begun to focus on this segment, and inevitably the question arises: are installations also worthy of being preserved?

Even if it is easier to provide an affirmative answer when they are the result of the work of famous designers – as happened for the Victor Horta's House in Bruxelles or Mies Van Der Rohe's Villa Tugendhat in Brno, both presenting the signatures of the masters (Pretelli, Fabbri, Signorelli 2017) – how to cope with the rest of the architectural heritage, with those serial elements, devoid of exceptional characteristics yet individually constituting the veins and arteries of buildings: demolish or preserve?

Demolition – as argued by all the groups taking part in the workshop experience from which this work is derived – affects several levels of reality. It concerns both the tangible and intangible spheres, substance and memory. It means loss of matter, but it could also involve oblivion. Thus, being aware that forgetting the past could mine the future, is it appropriate to continue to dismantle out-of-date installations without assessing other opportunities? Is it convenient? Is it worthwhile?

As the holistic approach is a renewed goal to pursue in the field of preservation, an invigorated consciousness should progressively acknowledge these components too as herald of values.

First of all, they are the direct expression and testament of the technical culture that produced them. Several can be considered as real design products such as certain ceramic light switches, or – more specifically – the electric dashboard of the former Casa del Fascio in Predappio (Italy) or the control room in the Red Star NATO Base in Affi (Italy), just to mention a few examples. Furthermore, because of their quick fabrication and replacement some of them are now very rare, thus acquiring an integral historical value.

But it is more than that. Learning about them could provide a better understanding of the behaviour of the building over time, improving our familiarity with the concept of Historical Indoor Microclimate (HIM). This factor is relevant and not only for the sake of knowledge. If related to the Original Indoor Microclimate (OIM) and investigated in a diachronic way, it can provide a significant contribution to grasp the current optimal conditions for preserving historic buildings (Pretelli, Fabbri 2018). From that perspective, a group of scholars has recently pointed out possible procedures that could help restorers to move toward a more conservation-related approach (Pretelli, Fabbri, Signorelli 2017). The solutions range from the recommended total reuse of terminals and pipelines, to partial and adaptive reuse by exploiting the residual potential, even to the musealization of the whole systems.

Evidences from Prague

In these terms, the case studies presented and visited during the Bohemian experience offered some remarkable food for thought. They provided a broad panorama of implementations while introducing one significant variable not to be overlooked: the relationship between preservation and industrial archaeology.

Specialistic buildings do not require a distinct method of approach, but this legacy introduces some of its specific features to the reflection. As remarked by Hugh Hardy,

the shapes of these buildings «were dictated by function, not conventional architectural forms. It was the machines and processes they housed that determined their configurations, moulded to purposes known only to those who used them» (Hardy 2005: 32).

Here there is a role reversal. It is precisely the equipment that generates the space and determines the identity of the building. Because of that, the consequences could be sometimes extreme. When the automated processes evolved, with their pressing rhythms, and the machines were no longer fit for the purpose, not just a part, not only the installations themselves, but the whole building lost its meaning and perceived value, paving the way for the wrecking ball.

It happened to the Osram a.s./Tesla building, a lightbulb factory designed by the architect Max Spielmann in 1921–1922. It underwent several transformations adapting to the Tesla operations but at the end, in 2007, it was demolished.

The Holešovice–Bubny Railway Station shared the same fate. Built according to the “Normalien”, a building manual drafted by the StEG architectural studio, it was composed of a dispatch building, waterworks, two heating plants, a turntable and a repair-shop. Progressively, the Prague main station – which was more central – supplanted it in the dynamics of the city. When a development company acquired the ground, this dramatically led to its razing. Having it inscribed into the cultural monuments list of the city was not enough to save it and real estate logic prevailed. Only a part was kept and turned into a holocaust memorial¹.

Even the Transgas complex and other special buildings like the Hotel Praha and the Frýdek Místek Stadium were demolished, the citizens' complaints notwithstanding.

The Materna's Paint Factory endured extensive demolition as well. In 1881 the first Czech company trading in varnishes built its factory, and in 1922 some Cubist modifications were done to the main façade. But as soon as the production moved in Hostivař everything changed and the facade was the only part left. Following facadism, it was encapsulated in a new house block. (Figg. 1, 2)

The practice of musealization is a radical alternative. The mining museum in Kladno (Mayrau), for example, expresses an endeavour to arrest the passage of time. Each aspect is involved here: architecture, spaces, people, daily-life objects. And obviously also installations. (Fig. 3) In these terms, a parallel with the Italian experience can be found in the Serbariu Carbon Museum in Carbonia, recently inserted in the European Route of Industrial Heritage. Nevertheless, the meritorious impulse behind these operations will rarely constitute a replicable strategy, since they represent one of those exceptional circumstances where making a building a museum of itself represents a sustainable and meaningful choice.

The situations where musealization and new uses are combined provide a more considered approach. It is the case for example of the former Montemartini power plant in Rome. In addition to the possibility of discovering the old energetic cycle, all the machines here preserved serve as a (neutral?) background for a new statuary exhibition, in a search for a blend of exceptional visual power. (Fig. 4) Moreover, the perspective of reuse through partial musealization is illustrated thanks to several landscape experiences, like those in the Ruhr coal-mining region (the Landschaftspark

of Duisburg, the Ruhr Museum by Rem Koolhaas, or the Gasometer Oberhausen), or in the Parco Dora in Turin, where the former industries are now hosting museums, green areas, sports, activities and aggregative spaces.

Returning to the Prague experience, another tendency emerges, combining the preservation of some extremely distinctive elements with the complete renovation of the rest of the building. La Fabrika, for example, is the name of the new culture centre located in the ancient Richter Machine Works and Foundry. The name is trying to establish a direct relationship with the history of the former forge. (Fig. 5) Neighboring Carl Jerabek Metallwaren Fabrik was turned into Design Shop and its chimney and elevator, were preserved as a symbol or like a landmark, while the façade gets a completely new language. (Fig. 6)

Something similar occurred to the Joint-Stock Steam Mill, included in an extensive real estate project. Special attention was paid to the Tower, probably considered the more significant part, while the factory was turned into an office complex after several massive internal and external transformations of finishing, including a glass addition. (Figg. 7, 8)

The first Prague Town Brewery had an analogous treatment of the facades. The introduction of continuous glazing made the ground floor completely permeable, while only a few pieces of the brewing machinery were preserved and displayed inside the new spaces.

The Kovo building too was wholly renovated in order to improve the tenants' comfort and the standards of the offices, and a new safety staircase was added, with only the glass facade designed in 1974 being kept as it was. (Figg. 9, 10)

Albeit they are briefly mentioned, these case-studies, make it possible to record the first glimpses of a new awareness. The idea of preserving iconic elements is an initial assessment of value, but it is not enough. When mostly antiquated and disused, the interest they exert in the property market due to their large dimensions still lets the logic of maximum efficiency and profit prevail.

Nonetheless, the workshop demonstrated that there is a possible, valuable, emerging trend that is in contrast to speculation as a dominant force influencing the market, opposing the benefit of conservation to massive demolition or transformation.

In the Holešovice district, the new experimental space Jatka 78, located in the Central Abattoir and Cattle Market is significant. Replaced in its original purpose by the opening of two other meatpacking plants, the complex was transformed by artists themselves into a multifunctional space in 2014. Here a theatre hall, rehearsal spaces, a gallery and a bar co-exist in the old factory; the new added to the ancient. (Figg. 11, 12)

Still, Vnitroblok can be considered the acme of that approach. In this case, the industrial architecture sited in the district was abandoned and intended for demolition, but an exceptional entrepreneurial insight saved the building. The three young business partners decided to invest time and resources in its new life. They accomplished their goal through deciphering the vocation of the building, of its spaces; they formulated a mixed reuse proposal, including many types of activities, in different time slots, addressed to all age groups. (Figg. 13, 14) Thanks to a bar, a finger-food restaurant, retail



Fig. 1) Materna's Paint Factory before demolitions started. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Viktor Mácha 2013)



Fig. 2) Materna's Paint Factory. The completely renovated façade has been encapsulated into the new building according to facadism approach. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2021)

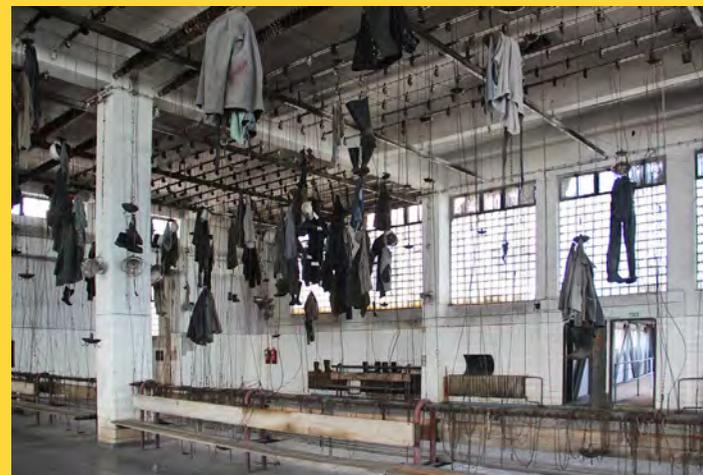


Fig. 3) The working place has been frozen in its last day of activity. Mining museum Mayrau in Kladno, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2016)



Fig. 4) Former Montemartini power plant in Rome. The musealized systems are the background for a new exhibition. Italy. (commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_mus%C3%A9_de_la_centrale_Montemartini_(Rome)_(34166589105).jpg, CC BY 2.0, photo Jean-Pierre Dalbéra)



Fig. 5) Richter Machine Works and Foundry. Now culture centre La Fabrika. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Gabriel Fragner 2014)



Fig. 7) The Joint-Stock Steam Mill turned into an office building through extensive renovation. Only the tower shows some peculiar features preserved like the timber frame, while finishes has been completely replaced. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2014)



Fig. 6) Former Carl Jerabek Metallwaren Fabrik turned into Design Shop. The chimney have been preserved as a landmark. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2019)



Fig. 8) The Joint-Stock Steam Mill turned into an office building. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Benjamin Fragner 2013)



Fig. 9) Kovo building in 1970s. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (Architektura ČSR 1978)



Fig. 11) The Central Abattoir hall converted by artist themselves into the experimental culture space Jatka78. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (archive of Research Centre for Industrial Heritage, photo Petr Jehlík)



Fig. 10) Kovo building was subjected to a massive interior transformation to achieve higher standards of comfort. Original fire staircase was replaced with new one. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2018)



Fig. 12) The Central Abattoir hall converted by artist themselves into the experimental culture space Jatka78. Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (archive of Research Centre for Industrial Heritage, photo Petr Jehlík)

outlets, meeting spaces convertible for co-working, equipped rooms for conferences, exhibitions and artistic performances, they demonstrated how an accurate management of space and time stemmed from a deep understanding of *genius loci* could make the difference. Furthermore, it was precisely the need to save resources – the managers are not the owners – that favoured an extremely conservative attitude towards the existing fabric. The answer to the mandatory requirements was grounded almost entirely on the logic of addition. The pre-existing installations (but also finishes and fixtures) were preserved, respecting the identity-making characteristics of the building. All the new facilities and plants are in plain sight: the chimney of the bar, the new water pipes, the electric line, the heating system. Everything contributes to increasing the quality of the space, telling the whole history of this architecture.

Reflections on the dichotomy, conservation/demolition

In the examination of the cases presented, the latter two appear particularly significant because they refute the idea, too widely accepted, that demolition and reconstruction are more convenient than preserving what already exists. Thanks to enlightened intuition, investors accurately analysed the potentialities of the building, finding the solution requiring the minimum intervention. All the irregularities, the lacunas, were turned into artistic expressions. New graffiti and paintings enriched the plasters without recurring to any demolition. As they matched the functions to the spaces and not vice versa, they could conserve the windows frames or the existing installations.

The Vnitroblock promoter admitted that the real driving force was not exactly a concern for “pure conservation”, rather an aesthetic research corroborated by an economy principle. In this way, however, they saved resources in the initial investment, and surprisingly find out how the *materia signata* is contributing to the spatial and social quality of spaces, without ignoring the fact that the intervention on the building has then triggered more complex synergies, making the whole neighbourhood more attractive.

This shift of perspective is very telling. Despite assumptions that are different from those of the academic world, they confirmed that conservation strategies may be beneficial for all stakeholders involved in the process, recalling, consecutively, the reflections that emerged during the debate.

While wondering if the contemporary technologies (and approach) could be accessible and culturally acceptable in a contemporary city, the Vnitroblock provides an affirmative answer, certainly perfectible but undeniably on the right track. The conservation of this former industry originated from financial evaluations, to reach more comprehensive benefits.

Unfortunately, this could not be considered valid for all restoration projects. Some of them require very expensive workings and craftsmanship that might call these considerations into question. Here then, in the dichotomy between conservation and demolition, it is useful to remind ourselves how the preservation field is deeply rooted in an ethical core, where economic, environmental, social, and cultural values, contribute to varying extents to the quality and success of the intervention, each one becoming a booster for the other constituents. Finding the balance is a hard mission, but guiding

all the stakeholders toward the adoption of a different scale of value is a compelling duty of the discipline. It is imperative to clarify how the cultural domain, the value of Cultural Heritage, so difficult to monetize, could gain a whole new weight in a broader panorama as its repercussions cascade over all other sectors. Cultural Heritage is the base for capacity development and new set of indicators and policies are worldwide required to make conservation attractive also for private investors.

Jane Jacobs, already in 1961, emphasized the need for old buildings for that fruitful mingling of primary uses so vital for the development of cities. New ideas, new low-yield enterprises starting with trial and errors, could not bear the costs of demolitions and reconstructions (Jacobs 1961) but at the same time they could give a new impulse to a borough and create vibrant districts that constitute the mirror of the quality of life.²

Moreover, Historical Buildings are not simply old. In complex dynamics, they have the power to support the capacity development of entire territories whose return (not only economic) could be accounted for in the short and long term as well.³

Definitely, only through a deep and shared awareness of the histrionic action of Cultural Heritage and its implications, conservation would be preferred over demolition and education will be decisive for improving such a social engagement in favour of preservation policies.

Consequently, by bringing the reflection back to the theme of installations as a specific topic of the paper, to re-educate people regarding the use of historical architecture would be a priority, fostering, for example, the concept that optimal micro-climatic parameters can be slightly calibrated based on the peculiarity of buildings (intrinsic and extrinsic) in order to combine human comfort, conservation needs and low costs. Changing users' behaviour and avoiding the indiscriminate application of fixed standards would reduce the potential vulnerability of traditional or modern materials subjected to hitherto extraneous conditions (Camuffo 2019; Pretelli Fabbri 2017). The dissemination and diffusion of studies that can increase awareness about the richness and complexity of technical knowledge hidden behind these systems should be put on the agenda. The approach of transition from retrofitting toward improvement should be fostered precisely as happened in the structural field, and as a consequence, extensive renovations like those experienced in Prague could be finally averted.

In conclusion, even if the industrial revolution undermined the idea of architecture as a complex unitary organism favouring a fragmented yet highly specialized knowledge, a holistic perspective where even purely functional elements are considered worthy of inclusion in preservation policies, should be the goal of a truly contemporary idea of conservation.

Notes

1 [online] Available at <<https://www.bubny.org/en/memorial-of-silence/about-the-project>> [Accessed 20 March 2020]

2 The same happened to the district Prague 7, where the presence of initiatives like Vnitroblok, improving

the quality of life, led to progressive rise of rents.

3 See in this regard the Unesco's guidelines for the management plan of cultural sites (UNESCO 2013, UNDP 2008) and the work done on cultural districts in Italy (Della Torre 2013).

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Fig. 13) New water pipe added in full view. Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Alessia Zampini 2019)



Fig. 14) New mural decorations enriching the walls. Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Alessia Zampini 2019)

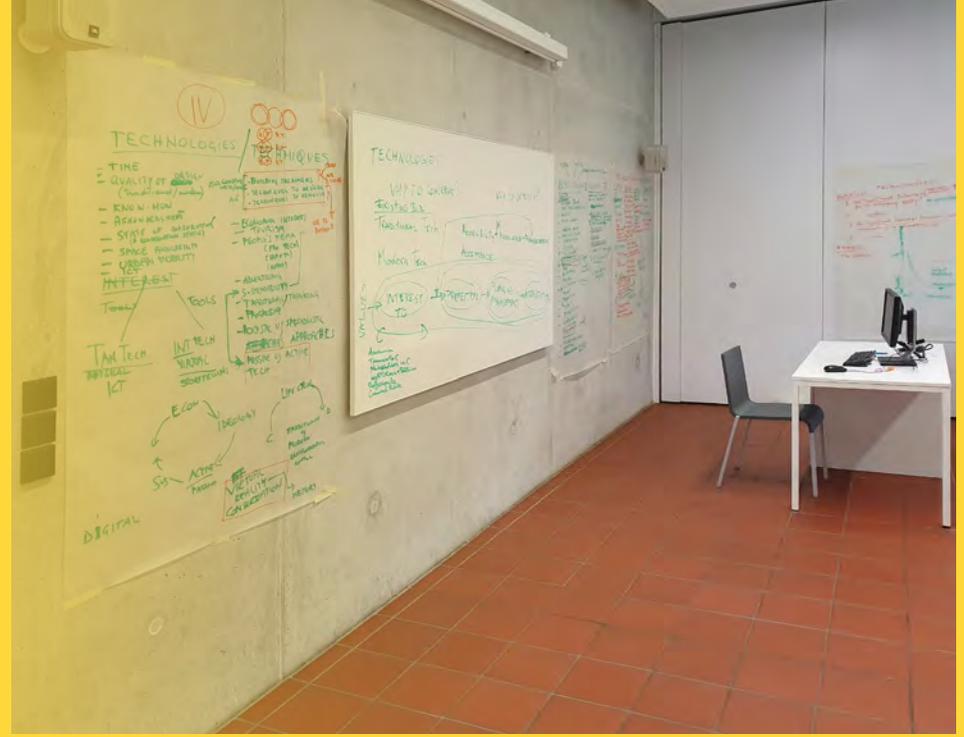
The Scale of New Intervention Versus Memory

It is necessary to articulate the past to avoid its complete erasure. How long does memory last in case of demolition? How and when does Memory become History?

Conservation deals with prolonging of the life of things. Memory is what keeps things alive and what is written in material traces. Through sharing of memories, links are created between memories of different generations.

Demolition within new interventions in heritage buildings scatters the sense of irreversibility. On one hand, demolition denies transmission of value and leads to loss of material and immaterial support for memories, and therefore heritage. On the other hand, the act of demolition may lead to a greater awareness of the importance of heritage to respective communities, may improve indoor comfort and building performance, and eventually open possibilities for new memories.

From the perspective of conservation, demolition can be addressed by documenting heritage assets, transmitting knowledge, and balancing conservations issues with other related aspects.



Conservation and Demolition. Memory and Oblivion

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«And the memories bring back memories bring back you.»

(Maroon 5, Memories, 2019, Interscope Records)

Introduction

Conservation of the built heritage has seen an increase in the number of cultural values to be preserved and growth in the number of elements of listed architectural and cultural heritage. In the last several decades, UNESCO and ICOMOS have been identifying all those aspects of our cultural heritage that must be preserved, authenticity and identity, the tangible and intangible cultural elements, and natural landscape. The number of agents involved in preservation and conservation actions have increased, therefore, along with professional and public awareness. Due to the increase of listed heritage and values, and amenity groups, conservation of our cultural heritage needs to address more threads than in the past and to cover a wider range of actions and scales, from individual to collective, cultural to social, and material to immaterial.

During the recent EAAE Network on Conservation Workshops, we have discussed many of the topics and threads that the discipline is facing, including how the increase in tourism is overwhelming the listed heritage, concerns regarding the adaptation of protected structures and buildings to new uses, the dilemmas facing the reconstruction of buildings and sites due to natural or provoked catastrophic events, regeneration and transformations, and the importance of teaching goals and methods. In the 2019 Workshop held in Prague, the thread addressed was the intentional destruction of sites or buildings, including their partial or total demolition, and how it affects individuals and their communities.

The agents involved in conservation always face the dilemma of whether to preserve, adapt, transform, or demolish an historic building or piece of urban fabric. They must consider all material and immaterial components, the use of modern technologies in construction systems, the incorporation of new solutions and materials, while understanding the commercial forces that historic heritage faces in terms of consumption, the risk of "musealization", the interest in providing a meaningful use of the preserved historic construction, and the implications at different scales that the specific architectural element has.

The topic of demolition within the discipline of conservation also presents multiple dilemmas to the agents involved, not only when addressing historically rec-

ognized architectural sites, but also in the historical urban fabric that has configured specific life events around them, and the sites and their context that have faced damage caused by abandonment or other economic or political events.

Destruction and demolition as part of the historical built environment

In thinking about demolition and destruction, we must not forget, as the philosopher and literary critic George Bataille stated, «we cannot ignore or forget that the ground we live on is little other than a field of multiple destructions» (Bataille 1988: 23). It was human action in the pursuit of shelter, dwelling, development, financial status, building communities, and power among other reasons that created our built environment. It is those elements of the built environment that claim to have cultural and historical value that we demand to be protected.

Historically, the demolition of structures, buildings, urban blocks, and neighbourhoods has been part of the renovation of cities since medieval times. Haussmann's renovation of Paris demolished numerous eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings and blocks of the medieval urban fabric, because of the overcrowded and unhealthy conditions of the buildings. Instead of acting on those buildings and blocks to improve the living conditions for their inhabitants the decision was demolish them. Haussmann's plan was not executed without critics at that time. Patrice de Moncan in his book *Le Paris d'Haussmann*, mentions the loss of Paris' picturesque presence by quoting French writers like Edmund and Jules de Goncourt or French politicians like Jules Ferry that deplored the demolition of parts of old Paris that had played an important role in the writings of the novelist Honoré de Balzac, the philosopher and writer Voltaire or the journalist Camille Desmoulins (Moncan, Heurteux 2002: 198–199). Indeed, de Moncan argues that the Haussmann plan created an important social disruption, by demolishing medieval housing and relocating those families to the outskirts of Paris. It resulted in a dramatic increase in rents in the renovated areas that forced those low-income families to stay in the outer arrondissements, on the edges of the city, which is what we nowadays call a gentrification (Moncan, Heurteux 2002: 172–173).

Similarities can be seen in other examples – the creation of the *Plazas Mayores* in numerous medieval Spanish cities such as the Renaissance *Plaza Mayor* of Madrid, or the Baroque *Plaza Mayor* of Salamanca listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, or the opening of the *Gran Vía* in Madrid in the beginning of twentieth century. These historical urban interventions involved the demolition of parts of numerous medieval cities to create the orderly layout of the large open space of the *Plazas Mayores* within their irregular and cramped configurations.

Numerous current plans for conservation of historical cities in Europe allow for the demolition, or "gutting", of the interior of buildings for their complete renovation or adaptive reuse, while keeping the external facades. Historic buildings become little more than carcasses of their former functions after large renovation campaigns in those historical villages (Crimson 2005: xi). New interiors behind those saved facades, such as museums in old factories or new commercial spaces with the mask of a medieval facade that were once dwellings for city inhabitants, can create a loss of collective memory within the community and lead to an identity crisis.

Demolition and memories, oblivion

In the last decades, the concept of memory has become of special interest for some historians, exploring the social dynamics and the experiential aspects of social processes, oral history, and the representation of the past. In Maurice Halbwachs's seminal book *On Collective Memory*, he points out that it is in society that people acquire their memories and also in society that they recall and organize their memories, binding the people together, frequently referencing their memories to their physical spaces, which creates a moment in which collective identity is formed (Halbwachs 1990). These links between memories, places and communities are evident in Joseph Rykwert's book *Remembering Places*. The author of many influential books on architecture, he wrote his memories with continuous references to their physical spaces, buildings, neighbourhoods, and cities as well as to the societies and communities to which they belonged (Rykwert 2017). Aldo Rossi made clear references to urban contexts when he argued that the memory of the city is in its buildings, referring to the collective memory of its inhabitants, which allows them to identify and follow the traces left in the city. Disappearance of those traces or buildings can lead to memory loss, and to cities losing their collective memory of its form (Rossi 1984: 130).

During the recent past, there have been important issues raised concerning the post-industrial city and contemporary urban forms based on the relocation of industry. During the twentieth century, many countries have experienced the process of dismantling and remaking of industrial cities as part of capitalist investment practices. Those processes were aimed at the introduction of new functions, transformation, regeneration, and restyling, included a process of gentrification.

In the first half of the twentieth century, New York City saw an important process of demolition of city memories. Max Page in his book *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan, 1900–1940*, described how many slum clearance projects, created to improve the physical environment and offer amenities and services for low income citizens, resulted in the destruction of those areas considered “unhealthy” for the city, but which were financially interesting for the government and private sector elites (Page 1990). The protection of Greenwich Village in New York City by Jane Jacobs in the 50's and 60's is well known. Jacobs clearly understood the “organized complexity” of neighbourhoods that have a mixture of building uses, in which residential areas are combined with industrial facilities, promoting a diversity of population (Jacobs 1992: 428–455). She used the Village as the best example of a functioning, vibrant and diverse city neighbourhood in arguing against Robert Moses' urban renewal projects, which demolished large existing urban areas, and transformed those neighbourhoods using the modern model of isolated residential buildings and segregated uses, such as was done in Stuyvesant Town, that has now been discredited.

Max Page, in the above-mentioned book, references Halbwachs when addressing the destruction and rebuilding of parts of Manhattan, saying «How can spatial memories find their place where everything is changed, where there are no more vestiges and landmarks?» (Page 1990: 252). The co-dependency that memory and the physical environment of buildings or landscapes creates has been lately studied and explored

by historians. Recall of those memories is often seen as an example of intangible heritage in a social and cultural context, containing values for conservation practices. Addressing the memories of places as heritage also brings the addition of collective and social values to historic and aesthetic elements that are usually controlled and only addressed by professionals in the field of heritage.

A city's memories and traces linked with its inhabitants were evident during the EAAE Network on Conservation visit to the neighbourhood of Holešovice in Prague, a heavy industrial and mass-housing suburb in the north of Prague, located on the west bank of the meander of the River Vitava that was developed during the end of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century. During the last several decades, the Holešovice district has seen the renovation and adaptive reuse of its former slaughterhouse into the *Prague Market* (Pražská tržnice) (Fig. 1) which also houses art galleries and an international performance space; the transformation of the former Rossemann and Kühnemann machine, wagon and locomotive factory into the *Dox Centre for Contemporary Art*; the conversion of the industrial buildings of Ritcher Machine Works and Foundry into *La Fabrika* multifunctional cultural centre; and the transformation of *VnitroBlock*, an former industrial complex, into a social, cultural, and shopping creative centre. (Fig. 2) Some of the residential blocks built during the first quarter of the twentieth century in Holešovice have been renovated as well with insertions of new contemporary residential construction. Large areas of numerous blocks have instead been demolished and will be redeveloped into new condominiums and large offices buildings. The district seems to be fighting to maintain its past identity and recover its memories, while an important process of gentrification is occurring, and both the government and private developers with economic and financial interests are taking advantage of the situation.

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur identifies in his book *Memory, History, Forgetting*, the erasing of traces as one of the most important aspects of forgetting at a “radical level” (Ricoeur 2004: 414). Different obscure interests throughout history, from political to financial and social to cultural, have driven those processes of effacement of traces of what might be call the burden of memories. The debate about and practice of conservation and intervention in heritage raises identity questions related with these processes. What are those traces of the past that sustain memories of the place? What do we select to remember or forget? What do memories and oblivions tell us about specific places?

Two cases in Scranton, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

A short editorial in The New York Times addressing the demolition of the Penn Station in New York City in October of 1963, reads «we will probably be judged not by the monuments we build but by those we have destroyed» (NYT 1963: 38). The demolition of the emblematic and beloved train station sparked a debate about the dynamic of the destruction of buildings in the United States. It also brought well known modern architects and historians to action. The architect Philip Johnson and historian Lewis Mumford among others, were seen in front of the train station holding placards in favour of its conservation

and against the demolition (Byles 2005: 142). This debate in the United States is still going on, where The National Trust for Historic Preservation complained at the beginning of the twenty first century that «a disturbing pattern of demolitions is approaching epidemic proportions in historic neighbourhoods across America» (Fine et al. 2002: 1).

The city of Scranton, in the Northeast of Pennsylvania, has been one of the numerous medium size cities in the United States of America that have seen its built heritage neglected and wrecked. During the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century, Scranton was one of the greatest industrial and coal mining cities in U.S.A, leading in the manufacture of heavy hardware and textiles, with a vast railroad network, and with the nation's first electrified trolley system (The Scranton Board of Trade 1912). By the mid-twentieth century, the city of Scranton had a population of 140,000 inhabitants. After World War II, the turn from coal to oil and gas for heating fuel marked the start of a process of decline in the manufacturing, transportation, jobs, and population that lasted for six decades. Industrial buildings and commercial buildings in the downtown area were progressively abandoned. What once was a vibrant city was transformed into a ghost town. As mines were abandoned, cave-ins and massive fires in culm dumps resulted in the suggestion by 1970 that it might be more economical to abandon the city than to make it safe.

The last quarter of the twentieth century brought an increased interest in the revitalization of the city. The journalist Jane Jacobs, the author of the book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* who was born in Scranton, recognized in a visit there in 1984. While some historic properties have been renovated, and some transformation has occurred, neglect has also led to the demolition of important historic urban fabric.

In April 6, 1992 the Headlines of Scranton Times Tribune read «Scranton Demolishes Buildings to Make Way for New Mall Buildings in Scranton Blow Up. \$101 Million Mall to Rise from the Rubble». The City of Scranton did in fact implode the 200 and 300 Blocks of Lackawanna Avenue in the heart of its downtown. They quite literally blew them up. What was once called "The Great White Way", because of all the lights that illuminated the buildings at night, was erased in a matter of minutes. (Fig. 3) It took just one quick flash; five loud bangs and the buildings fell like dominoes in succession. (Fig. 4) Onlookers stood and watched in wonderment. Some were cheering while others were crying. It was a traumatic event from which the City has never fully recovered. The memories of the once bustling city had been sacrificed for progress. «I am watching History disappear», said one shop owner (Salter 1992). In its place, a sparkling new suburban shopping mall was to be injected into the fabric of its City Center and was sold at the time as the start of Scranton's "Second Renaissance".

One of the observers, who was not on the street that day, but who was certainly watching from a distance, was Jane Jacobs. On December 31, 1987 Jane wrote a letter to Mr. Tim McDowell, Director of Scranton's Office of Economic and Community Development. This was during the Mall's early planning. The Letter opens with complimentary language: «Dear Mr. McDowell, on a visit to Scranton in 1984 I was struck with how visually attractive it's downtown had become and at the many visible signs of vitality and prosperity» (Jacobs 1981).¹

In her letter, Jacobs continues pointing out the many handsome old buildings which have remained and further praises him for the City's resurrection from the Great Depression. She then expresses her concerns and backs them up with a series of explanations as to why the proposed Mall is a "terrible" idea. She predicted the future. Everything she said in the rest of the letter came true: «However, now I am appalled to hear that there is a proposal to level an appreciable section of the downtown on one side of Lackawanna Avenue and to erect, of all things, a suburban-type shopping mall. Far from enhancing or strengthening Scranton's downtown, a mall development is guaranteed to be destructive economically, visually and socially» (Jacobs 1981).

Jane closes her heartfelt letter with a plea for her First City Scranton which in fact is her hometown. «Why is an outsider like me being so officious as to send you advice you haven't solicited? Two reasons: First, I hate to see gratuitous destruction visited on any city and more so when the city has so much going for it that is beautiful, admirable, and promising. Second, I am not entirely an outsider. I was born in Scranton and brought up in Scranton and Dunmore. ... I have felt sad when Scranton fell on hard times, have rejoiced to see it prospering and turning weakness to strength, and feel vicarious pride when I hear others admire the downtown I admire. I only hope that you respect what Scranton is, has been and can be» (Jacobs 1981).

The recent discovery of this unpublished letter from Jane Jacobs in the archives of the Architectural Heritage Association in Scranton, brought back temporarily people's memories of the traces of its downtown historic fabric that fell into oblivion. Today the SteamTown Mall now sits mostly empty, having wreaked havoc on the downtown economy, and is visually out of step with the remaining historic buildings, making real Jacobs's predictions. Now, some of those architecturally significant buildings are being transformed into loft-style apartments, while others are being demolished and rebuilt as replicas in a style that tries to mimic their original splendour.

The outstanding industrial heritage of the city of Scranton has been also affected. One of the largest industrial complexes in Scranton during the city's more prosperous years was the Scranton Lace Works. The large central clock tower of this cluster of industrial buildings dominated this part of the city. From its inception in 1897, it became the image of what was the first – and at one time the largest – manufacturer of Nottingham Lace in America, using cast iron-framed looms imported from England that were more than 50 feet long and two and a half stories tall. The company employed as many as 1,400 people at the height of its operation, and featured a theatre, bowling alley, gymnasium, infirmary, the clock tower with a Meneely cast iron bell and other amenities for the employees. (Fig. 5)

The factory complex was abandoned in 2002 after the company went bankrupt, and much of it was torn down in 2018 to make way for the construction of a mixed-use development of townhouse apartments and commercial space to be known as Laceworks Village. (Fig. 6) In an effort to preserve some of its iconic elements, the new project will incorporate the clocktower and a portion of the original factory that will be renovated into apartments. As people from the neighbourhood gathered to watch the buildings come down, one said: «When my dad returned from World War II, he was an



Fig. 1) Exterior of The Prague Market, former Abattoirs, in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2021)

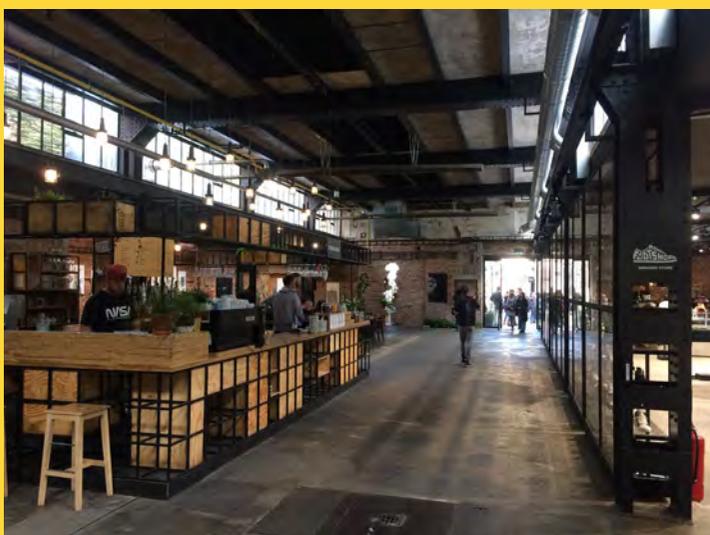


Fig. 2) Interior of Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Miguel Angel Calvo-Salve 2019)

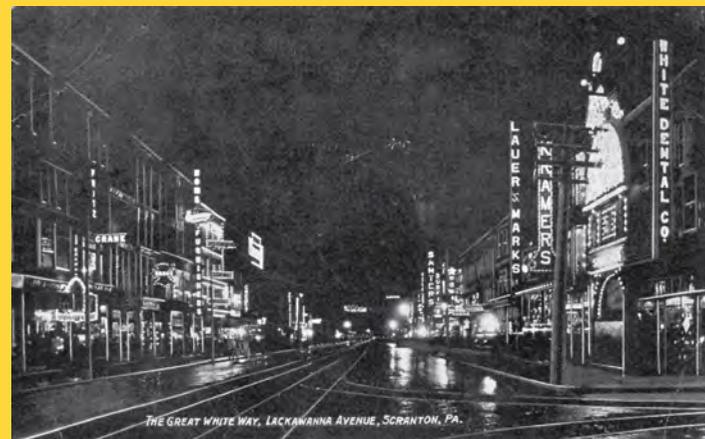


Fig. 3) The Great White Way 1912, Lackawanna Avenue, Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA. (photo in Public Domain)



Fig. 4) Demolition of 200 and 300 blocks of Lackawanna Avenue in 1992, Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA. (copyright by The Times Tribune, image published on April 6, 1992)

accountant, my mother was a secretary, and they met here. My mother gave my dad one look and she said, this is the man I'm going to marry». The old Factory reminded him of his parents in their younger days. Another who lived across the street said: «I can still hear the looms at night. If only I could imitate the sound... But it didn't keep you up at night, because you just got used to it» (Lange 2018).

The collective memory of historic downtown Scranton has been lost through the neglect and the failure to preserve the iconic buildings and the communities linked to those urban structures. The new dynamics of the city have socially isolated its residents since there is no longer a walking culture within those blocks of the city.

Conclusions

It is evident that places and buildings are related with memories, constructed individually or collectively. These intangible links between the environment, natural or built, do not elevate the preservation of a part of the heritage to being an act of interpretation, as Lucia Allais states in his book (Allais 2018: 29). Recognizing that memories are attached to places does not make the architectural or natural objects relevant solely by being part of their individual or collective imagery, perhaps with the intent to democratize their historical value as memories of the common people. Choices as to whether to conserve or demolish, preserve or destroy have been made for a very long time while ignoring these attachments between the environment and its inhabitants. The nature of their intangibility has made them invisible to the eyes of those global forces of modernity, and even to those who have the intent of recovering the past.

As Professor Loughlin Kealy stated during the EAAE VII Workshop on Conservation hosted in Prague during the fall of 2019, «Conservation deals with how we extend the life of things» (Kealy 2019),² in other words, how do we keep things alive. Our memories play an important role in our lives, and through human experience, memories are constructed through an intense compromise with time. They are continuously nurtured by those invisible links, and they do not just imply a nostalgia for the past. They live within the modernity, they live within us, and to keep them alive we must conserve those tangible and intangible values of our heritage because of their undeniable ability to continue to create memories.

From Haussmann's demolitions and reconstructions in the city of Paris, to Robert Moses' wrecking ball and bulldozer removals of whole in New York City blocks, and to the destruction of small enclaves that were part of the collective memory of historical events and communities, it is possible to recognize that there is continued interest in society in erasing some traces of our past that may need to be forgotten for the sake of contemporary news development. The destruction of these physical traces is an intrinsic problematic part of our relationship with the past, and it brings with it the threat of the effacement of the invisible attributes of our own culture.



Fig. 5) Scranton Lace Clock tower with a Meneely cast iron bell image of 2018. Image from Meylert Ave. and Glenn Street, Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA. (photo Maria N. MacDonald 2018)



Fig. 6) Demolitions of Scranton Lace buildings, image of 2019 from Albright Avenue, Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA. (photo Maria N. MacDonald 2019)

Notes

- 1 This letter was found by Professor Maria McDonald and graduate student Josh Berman in the archives of the Architectural Heritage Association of Scranton, and thanks to Glenna Lang who knew that the letter existed.
- 2 This conversation was part of the Group 4 discussion on The Scale of New Intervention Versus Memory during the EAAE Workshop VII Conservation-Demolition, held in Prague, Czech Republic, 25–28 September 2019.

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Necessity and legitimacy of demolitions as strategy for conservation.

Reflections on twentieth and twenty-first century heritage

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An antecedent

On the first day of September 2020, just one month after the inauguration of the new vehicular bridge designed by Renzo Piano in Genoa, the mayor of the city announced a new urban regeneration programme for the historic centre. «In a couple of weeks we will present the urban regeneration project. We will work on the ancient buildings using the “demolition strategy” (to preserve and enhance architectural and urban heritage). We are confronting with other Institutions to understand where it is possible to demolish creating new small squares and where demolish to re-build».

This is not the first time that the public administration, which is in charge of the management of one of the more dense historical centres of Europe, addressed the problem of demolition. Previous Town planning Councillors, when renovation of the ancient city appeared a strategy of economic and social growth (late '80s and beginning '90s), invoked demolition as a strategy to regenerate and preserve the old city. Bruno Gabrielli, at the end of the last millennium, dared to make the proposal to demolish buildings built after the bombs (ww2), whose architectural characters were in dissonance with traditional ones. And, before him, on the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America (1992), the Town planning Councillor relaunched an old idea of demolishing the loggias to “restore” the hypothetical medieval image of the city, starting from the *Ripa maris*.¹

20th century, the era in which urban renewal is subordinate to demolition

Demolition is certainly the action through which 20th century culture and urban evolution could give expression to the values of modernity, progress, renewal, urbanisation, expansion, while neglecting historical heritage, to which little value was accorded. This recent history, unquestionably in opposition to conservation, is perhaps still conditioning the idea of legitimacy in demolition during our contemporary era.

«The fundamental characteristic of Futurist Architecture will be transience. Houses will last less than we do. Each generation will have to build its own city».²

Demolition, throughout the 20th century, is the *viaticum* to renewal, a necessary and complementary act to the accomplishment of progress: in the name of

modernity, development, affirmation of a new way of conceiving the city and the space of living, small or large portions of historic urban settlements collapsed under the impact of the «breaker pick».³ The skyline of Manhattan is constantly changing, with an endless process of emptying, demolition and reconstruction on the same sites.

The implosion of Morandi Bridge (Genoa), a “necessary” demolition

Genoa Valpolcevera: June 28, 2019.

A few months before the start of the VII workshop of the EAAE Network on conservation in Prague (September 2019), in front of national and international broadcasters, multiple and simultaneous explosive charges imploded Morandi bridge, crumbling it in a split second.

A “necessary” demolition, it was said, covering as well the less scenic and less media impactful demolition of the buildings below the bridge, invoked by local authorities, national government, residents of the area affected by the collapse gathered in city committees and associations. The demolition was also evidence of a desire to turn the page and erase all material traces of a wrong and painful story, of a design that was innovative but not durable in time, and of an insufficient and ineffective maintenance approach.

The fragility of an infrastructure and the tragic history that followed it decreed the sudden oblivion of what, only a few decades before, had been an icon of modernity and progress. Few were the voices in favour of the preservation of what remained after the tragic collapse of August 14, 2018, representing a minority and discordant even within the closest scientific community that has made the preservation of material traces its banner. (Figg. 1, 2)

Questions posed during the VII EAAE Network on conservation

Among the topics proposed for discussion during the workshop in Prague are the following questions: 1) Can demolition be accepted as a legitimate option or strategy? 2) Can we accept demolition in the process of conservation? Moreover, could there be a “necessary” demolition? Who is entitled to determine its legitimacy? And why?

It is very difficult to look for answers that go beyond the specificities of individual episodes, the “case by case” evaluation; yet a reflection on the legitimacy of demolition, especially in its relation to material and immaterial conservation, to the meaning of history and memory and relation among construction and time, can offer a timid perspective on the problem.

Assumptions of “legitimate” demolition (past), and consequences (present)

As time goes by, judgments of values on the assumptions and consequences of substantial urban demolition during the 20th century, at that time invoked as appropriate, legitimate, and even necessary, are obviously changing. By way of example, we mention some episodes in the local history of Genoa, certainly similar to many other national and European urban contexts.

The central economic headquarters of Genoa, *Piccapietra*, was designed and built, from 1953 to 1975, carrying out extensive demolitions, well beyond the damage caused by wartime bombardments. This programme was, in fact, the completion of an urban plan born out of the culture of the '30s and the myth of the "modern", which sacrificed a large part of historic city, without much opposition, even from conservation interests. Demolitions included buildings (such as the old Hospital *Pammatone*) that today, with a chronologically distant look, we would regard as unnecessary and culturally questionable (Repetti 2020). (Figg. 3, 4, 6)

In 1973 the cranes began the entire demolition of the suburb called *Lanaiuoli* to build the Ligurian Center, a complex of public offices, headquarters of the Liguria Region and the Municipality of Genoa, today among the most alienating places in the city centre. A "massacre" that, when the work was finished, is stigmatized by the inhabitants with the erection of the «infamous column».⁴ (Fig. 5)

Ten years later the building block called *Corte Lambruschini* suffered the same fate; it was a nineteenth-century building used as a public market and social housing complex, razed to make way for a new central "business centre" in front of the train station, a curtain wall architecture, actually anonymous and outdated. The operation also included the demolition of the flower market, an interesting small rationalist building, not yet worthy – at the time – of being the object of conservation battles. Four years ago the aerial walkway that connected this complex with the square in front of the station was demolished without any regret: corroded, degraded, unused and very dangerous, a clear sign of an aggressive design attitude typical of the period (today we would define it as "utopian", perhaps only inattentive to human needs). (Figg. 7, 8)

Still a little less than ten years later, in the year of the celebration of the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America and the inauguration of the Old Harbour, the fire station of *Corso Quadrio*, formerly a popular hotel for seafarers, was demolished. In a few seconds a huge *Art Nouveau* building collapsed, one of the first reinforced concrete buildings in Italy, bringing with it the controversy between the supporters of the "new that advances" and the demands of conservation. In its place was built a small playground, a service building, a parking lot, nothing really worthy of knowing how to "sew" the edges of history (city walls of the medieval period).

«The "dinosaur" will go down» was headline on the local newspaper on September 22, 1994. The "dinosaur" was the ancient tannery *Bocciardo* in *Valbisagno*. The demolition occurred after about twenty years of public debates between those who wanted to get rid of the building and those who instead thought to save at least the nineteenth-century part, as being more valuable.

The demolition of the proto-industrial complex made way for a public parking lot and a school, the *Firpo* Institute, pruner of architectural styles now obsolete and far from our taste. Moreover today – not even thirty years old – the school already seems old, attacked in its physical structures by the signs of time and vandalism.

These are some of the cultural roots on which we base our contemporary idea of demolition and bringing different perspectives to bear. On these roots have been grafted multiple considerations: the obfuscating myth of progress, the suddenness of physical

and social decay, the consigning to oblivion of material traces of the past, a renewed awareness of historical values, the awareness of political and urban planning mistakes. And so, also our view on recent and very recent heritage quickly changes perspective, finding new legitimations for demolition (as witnessed by the demolition, just started, of the social housing block named "Dam" in *Begato*).⁵

Part of the conspicuous 20th century heritage to be demolished is testimony to the parable of "long life", the conclusion of the idea of *firmitas* that accompanied the construction throughout the modern age.

This is a consequence of the practice of building in the twentieth century which becomes a prerequisite for legitimising demolition in the twenty-first century.

Demolition and time of history. Everything is present

The legitimacy of demolition, today more than fifty years ago, is also based on another presupposition: the condition of living in a non-temporal dimension, where everything is present.

The conspicuous heritage of the twentieth century, disused, obsolete, abandoned and affected by demolition proposals is part of a modern (or more correctly contemporary) time in which we are still immersed and of which we have certainly not fully defined the deep meaning and perspectives.

It lacks, compared to the processes that have generated and modified buildings over time, the distance that would allow us to consider this heritage to be now historized and, therefore, for some at least intangible (even if this logical and normative inference appears increasingly labile). In addition there is also a lack of "proximity" that would still make it a vital part of our daily living environment. This historiographic indeterminacy of values constitutes a disruptive problem that does not admit easy, universal or standardized solutions. Today architecture seems to live an eternal present, incommunicable with the history of architecture itself. It lacks a reflection on the use of history in contemporary society, an ability to read and understand in a diachronic way the constructive and procedural events, to offer interpretative keys, instruments of comparison even between opposing positions, useful for the expression of value judgments and the construction of memories (Olmo 2020).

At least as much as other historical periods, the twentieth century has brought a condition of complexity that weaves, modifying urban and suburban spaces, collective and individual actions, economic, political, social, cultural and technical values. Single architectures, however part of larger systems of cultural heritage (public buildings, religious buildings, schools or high-density residential complexes), are the result of long processes of modification of the territory, landscape and environment (not only physical). These buildings, often still in the process of evolution, are the repository of rationality, whether institutional, bureaucratic, technical, artistic; they testify to the stratification of policies and social imagery (Olmo 2010).

However, this complexity is partially denied by the dimension of simultaneity or synchronicity that is one of the fundamental implications of the term "contemporary" (Guarracino 2001) that affects our way of looking at this kind of heritage, which fruition has neither a defined time nor a finite one.



Fig. 1) Demolition of Morandi bridge in 28 June 2019. Genova, Italy. (photo Astrid Fornetti 2019)

> Fig. 3) Juxtaposition of the urban tissue of Piccapietra (in light blue colour) and the new buildings designed in the urban plan of 1953 (in yellow). Genova, Italy. (Repetti 2020)

> Fig. 4) Piccapietra. View from above of the eastern part of the new complex, residential blocks. Genova, Italy. (photo Giovanna Franco 2021)



Fig. 2) Demolition of the buildings below Morandi bridge in Genova, Italy. (photo Marco Balastro 2019)





Fig. 5) Administrative complex Centro dei Liguri, built after the demolition of an entire part of the old city. Genova, Italy. (photo Giovanna Franco 2021)



Fig. 7) Corte Lambruschini, the new business centre built after the demolition of a 19th century building stock – view from the south side. Genova, Italy. (photo Giovanna Franco 2021)



Fig. 6) Piccapietra. View of the new vehicular road that cuts the ancient urban tissue. Genova, Italy. (photo Giovanna Franco 2021)



Fig. 8) Corte Lambruschini. View from the west side. Genova, Italy. (photo Giovanna Franco 2021)

Contemporary culture, then, with its most recent revolutions (cybernetics, macro-electronics, micro-electronics and digital), emphasizes this sense of simultaneity, making us live in a dimension where time seems to be reduced to the zero of the present instant. At the same time space seems to expand to infinity, through the ease and speed of movements. In this way, simultaneity and synchronicity are conditions of a way of living an endless present and thus devoid of a necessary sedimentation of time (Agamben 2008). This condition has profound repercussions on the perception of recent constructive history, on the ability or inability to look at the city of the twentieth century with a diachronic vision of events, on the sense of memory and aims of conservation.

The views on modern and contemporary architectural and urban heritage, and consequent actions aimed at, maintaining and assimilating it or, on the contrary, denying and destroying it, are based, therefore, on complex and not yet fully established processes of selection.

Demolition/conservation and sites of memory. The example of Vnitroblock, Prague

Physical inheritance from recent times is even affected by the projection of our individual and collective memory (Reichlin and Pedretti, 2011; Halbwachs, 1950) and this factor, together with the others described above, influences the dialogical comparison between demolition and conservation. It is legitimate and necessary to ask ourselves whether there is, within twentieth-century architecture, a “cultural memory” as a fundamental element of its presumed significance or patrimonial value.

The material trace, the testimony, the possibility that places themselves can transmit values so powerful that they can be protected, preserved, appropriated and assimilated by local or wider communities (Ricoeur 1998, 2000) plays a significant role in the dialogue between demolition and conservation.

The workshop in Prague, which put us in touch with a different reality (from the administrative but above all cultural point of view) reinforces the idea that it is possible to perceive, respect and creatively reuse 20th century buildings with a strong bottom-up initiative, involving local communities to even temporarily show that other paths, besides demolition, are possible.

Younger generations with whom we came into contact in Prague, during the visit to Vnitroblock (<https://vnitroblock.cz/>), grouped in associations or individual companies work to “occupy” disused industrial or proto-industrial spaces, waiting for a change in ownership, and provide us with an interesting example of creative and respectful material re-signification of spaces and physical structures in a diachronic dimension.

The “appropriation” of abandoned spaces for new mixed public uses demonstrates the possibility (even legal and economic) to live even in a short-term perspective spaces that evoke different histories and give them new significance. These bottom-up processes, faster than an administrative procedure, could convert the demolition strategy towards memory, preservation and adaptive reuse. (Fig. 9)

Notes

- 1 *Ripa maris* is the system of building on the front of the old harbour, a place of stores and trade in the porticoed spaces on the ground floor. Like many other arcades in the historic centre, over time the ground floor spaces have been closed with a new portion of facade.
- 2 Antonio Sant'Elia, 11 July 1914. Manifesto of Futurist Architecture.
- 3 Theorist and executor of the demolition during the Fascism was the architect Marcello Piacentini, who began a systematic renovation of Italian cities. Via della Conciliazione in Rome, with the demolition of the Spina di Borgo, is the most significant example. The demolition of the ancient neighborhood around St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the tracing of Via della Conciliazione erases the power of Bernini's colonnade and the dome itself.
- 4 The inscription on the marble column: «1945–1981. To the shame of the living and to the posterity's warning as it was used at the time of the glorious republic of Genoa we dedicate this “infamous column” to the greed of speculators and to the guilty weaknesses of the regents of our city. With vandal destruction they have erased treasures of art and history, eliminated entire glorious neighbourhoods of the historic centre, sailor and artisan, disfiguring forever the physiognomy of the city until the unprecedented gesture of demolishing the house where Nicolò Paganini was born. They have thus dispersed the population of these neighbourhoods with the infamous result of uprooting the proud traditions that made Genoa respected and powerful».
- 5 In August 2020 began the demolition of one of the

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two huge buildings built in the 80s of the last century, known under the name of “Dams” for the particular conformation to close the valley of *Begato*. In the two Dams there are 523 dwellings, 486 of them will be demolished. The dams, built to respond to the house emergency in Genoa, represent perhaps the first and only episode of building industrialization started in the urban context, with the application of a so-called *banches et table* system. Reliability, maintainability, rationality of construction processes, cost-effectiveness, durability are the prerequisites underlying the industrialization programs for construction that precisely for social housing, characterized by high population density and built with low cost and time, find their most significant expressions. The short duration of these architectural giants is not so much in the aggression of time and physical inefficiency (life cycle) as in the failure of an urban and social conception, as well as a political ideology. Social discomfort, isolation, degradation, insecurity are the reasons of its “necessary” demolition, despite the fact that some of the protagonists of that important season (invoking the right to housing, the home for all) are still alive. What remains today of that story? Of that ‘victory’, as the city newspaper wrote at the end of construction? At that time homeless citizens lived in hotels and the idea was also to build a large building stock that could close a long and expensive (for the municipal budget) phase of temporary hospitality. Luigi Castagnola, deputy Mayor and Town planning Councillor, said in 1981: «We had a moral duty, before the political one, to give an answer to people who needed a roof and we gave this roof.»



*Fig. 9) Vnitroblok.
Part of the industrial complex
waiting for a destiny, even
future demolition, occupied
by young entrepreneurs.
Prague, Czech Republic.
(photo Giovanna
Franco 2019)*

Creating the Palimpsest City and cultural complexity: Learning from Bath

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The City of Bath was inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Cultural Site (WHS) of international significance in 1987, one of only two complete cities in the World to hold this designation. Its Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) are defined by six key attributes; Roman Archaeology, the Hot Springs, Georgian Town Planning, its green setting and Georgian Architecture reflecting eighteenth century social ambitions. A unique combination of outstanding urban architecture, spatial planning and social history, the historic city sits with a natural and cultural setting of a little over 29 square kilometres defined by the Local Authority boundary. (Fig. 1)

Prague was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1992 as: «... a serial property comprising the Historic Centre of Prague situated on the territory of the self-governing administrative unit of the City of Prague, and of the Průhonice Park, located southeast of the city on the territory of the Central Bohemia. ... The historic centre represents a supreme manifestation of Medieval urbanism (the New Town of Emperor Charles IV built as the New Jerusalem. Its Gothic Period architecture (14th and 15th centuries), High Baroque of the 1st half of the 18th century and the rising modernism after the year 1900, influenced the development of Central European, perhaps even all European, architecture» (UNESCO 1992). (Fig. 2)

In recent years, despite having World Heritage status, the cultural sites of Bath and Edinburgh (2008) Liverpool (2006 & 2011) and London (2006 & 2011) were subjected to joint UNESCO-ICOMOS visits to address development pressure issues affecting these historic urban sites when specific proposals had the potential to adversely impact their OUV's. Although Prague, «... has been saved from any large-scale urban renewal or massive demolitions and thus preserves its overall configuration, pattern and spatial composition» (UNESCO 1992), in 2018 UNESCO expressed great concern regarding «... the number of large-scale development projects proposed within buffer zone of the property and its wider setting, as well as the lack of specific regulations on high-rise developments, which may substantially impact on the OUV of the property» (UNESCO 2018).

The main threats and challenges affecting the integrity, authenticity and OUV's of World Heritage cities such as Bath and Prague include rapid urbanisation and aggressive and inappropriate architectural interventions which often necessitate the demolition of individual buildings or large swathes of historic urban fabric. Other significant factors

that have a detrimental impact on their visual integrity are inappropriate designs that take no account of their historic context, tall buildings, out-of-scale developments to provide large-scale floor space and facilities to meet tourism needs.

Learning from the Bath experience

Approximately 89,000 people live within the site boundary of Bath, and many of the 5,000 listed buildings (the highest concentration of grade I and II* listings outside of central London) continue in their original function of providing homes for people living modern lives within the historic centre. As a modern city, Bath remains vulnerable to large-scale development and to transport pressures, both within the site and in its setting, that could impact adversely on its *rus in urbe* feel (B&NES 2016: 7). The Site generates approximately 1,500 applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent per year – undoubtedly the highest of any UK World Heritage Site (B&NES 2016: 27). The economy of the city is changing, with former traditional employers moving out, and new industry moving in. A significant swathe of the valley floor which formally housed heavy industry is undergoing re-development, and this *Bath City Riverside* enterprise area will represent the most significant physical change that the city has seen for a generation (B&NES 2016: 7). Delivering this sensitively is a priority for the spatial arrangement, visual harmony and relationship between groups of buildings in the squares, terraces and crescents which remain vulnerable to insensitive planning decisions, as do reciprocal views to and from the city to the surrounding landscape setting.

Although inscribed in 1987 the first Management Plan for the site was not produced until 2003. It established systems of management, policies and guidelines to safeguard the integrity and authenticity of the site which, prior to inscription had not been sufficiently protected. There was significant loss of historic fabric during the so-called Baedeker offensive in 1942 when over 400 people died, 329 houses and shops were destroyed, a further 732 were demolished, and 19,147 buildings were recorded as suffering some damage. Following this substantial war damage, Patrick Abercrombie (1879–1957), an influential architect and Town Planner drew up *A Plan for Bath* (Abercrombie 1945), for the development and reconstruction of the city, which, although never implemented, remained influential for many years, particularly in relation to the principles he advocated of preserving the most architecturally important “set-pieces” such as the Royal Crescent and Circus and “clearing” much of the remaining “lesser” buildings.

This rationale led to significant avoidable post-war losses in the period 1950–1973, when Bath was subjected to large-scale demolition projects with over 1000 historic buildings, of which 350 were listed, demolished by the Local Authority to enable large scale urban regeneration for retail and transport infrastructure -- now much regretted decisions from which Prague and other World Heritage Sites can learn.

This wholesale destruction of mostly historic artisan buildings in the southern sector of the city by ideological planners placed them in direct opposition with the conservation movement in Bath, a confrontational dispute which was to continue for over 20 years. (Fig. 3)

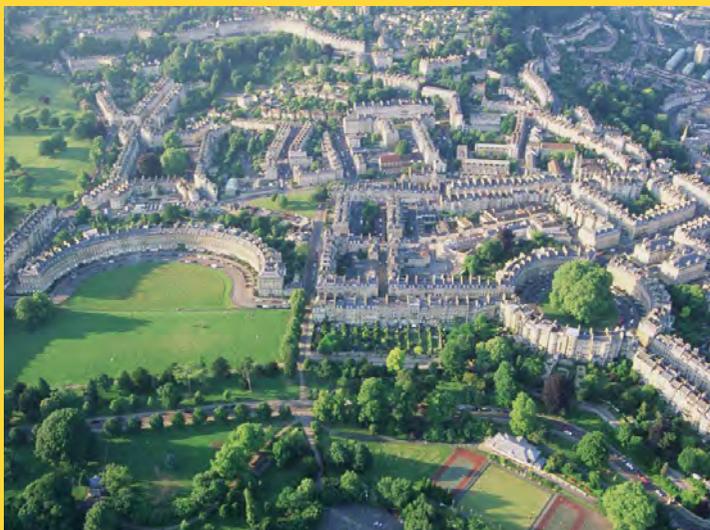


Fig. 1) Bath World Heritage Site Eighteenth Century Town Planning. UK. (Bath and North East Somerset Council)



Fig. 3) Before demolition, Georgian buildings in Southgate. Bath, UK. (Bath Record Office, Bath PX4599_Southgate_1960s, Bath and North East Somerset Council)



Fig. 2) Prague World Heritage Site. Czech Republic. (<commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12063922>, photo David Iloff 2010)

The sheer scale of demolition eventually came to the attention of the National Press when Adam Fergusson, a feature writer for the *Times* brought the destruction to the attention of the nation in 1972, his scathing article turning the City and its “forward thinking” planners into a national scandal. He followed this article with his indignant polemic, *The Sack of Bath: a record and an indictment*, which made Bath a *cause célèbre* and had an immediate impact on the pace of destruction, stopping further clearance of large areas of the city (Fergusson 1973). (Fig. 4)

The bulldozers ceased, but more importantly it awoke in the population nationally and locally an appreciation of Bath’s historic buildings which resulted in the strengthening of Government legislation, most notably in re-enforcing local Conservation Area status as a tool for protecting heritage assets.

Conservation areas

In the UK, Conservation Area designation has been the primary means of protecting historic buildings and urban and cultural townscapes. Local Planning Authorities have a duty under section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate as conservation areas any «... areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance» (Legislation.gov.uk).

There are currently over 50 designated conservation areas within Bath & North East Somerset. Their «... objective is to conserve all aspects of character or appearance, including landscape and public spaces that define an area’s special interest and are an important policy instrument for managing change» (B&NES Conservation areas).

Conservation areas give broader protection than listing individual buildings: all the features within a conservation area, listed or otherwise, are recognised as part of its character, as are the range of uses to which land and buildings are put. The designation helps to protect an area’s special architectural or historic interest by providing the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all aspects of the character or appearance of an area, control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, stricter planning controls and a statutory requirement for the local planning authority to consider the impact of a proposed development upon the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The emphasis is on ensuring local character is strengthened, not diminished, by change. Sensitive management of change is essential rather than no change at all, and applications for planning permission must still be determined on their planning merits (B&NES Conservation areas).

However, although the level of protection afforded by Conservation Area status is long-established, some historic places, including Bath, suffered inappropriate interventions and extensive loss of historic urban fabric, caused through insensitive planning decisions.

Fergusson’s publication came too late to save some buildings, but it stopped the loss of a great deal more, not just in Bath, but in other historic cities suffering the same fate. The scandal gave much-needed impetus to other conservationists to halt

the erasure of history through wholesale destruction and instead find new uses for old buildings and prevent the spread of Brutalist architecture advocated by planners, architects, consultants and developers at that time. Winning the conservation argument however was only one aspect of the battle, the other was to ensure that any new buildings would be sympathetically designed and in character within their historic context. Once lost, architectural heritage cannot be restored, and the authenticity and integrity of the site cannot be recreated, despite the use of homogeneous materials and attempts to recreate the classical language. New interventions that fail to consider the scale and harmony of the Georgian buildings or respect urban texture or reciprocal picturesque views make the property more vulnerable to adverse change.

The matter of contemporary architectural interventions and urban development in historic cities is necessarily contentious and although the conservation movement in Bath won a partial victory, they did not win the battle of styles. For example, the clearance of 10 acres of Georgian streetscape in the south of the city, so denigrated by Fergusson, resulted in the construction of Owen Luder Partnership’s Southgate Shopping Centre and multi-storey car park (1969–1972). An architectural monstrosity, it suffered the same fate as its historic predecessors as this development scheme was subsequently demolished in 2007. (Fig. 5)

Chapman Taylor were commissioned to develop the replacement scheme and their design principle and techniques were meant to ensure that the new £360 million South Gate ‘retail-led, mixed-use development’, (2009–2010), ‘naturally complemented the existing urban fabric, to recreate traditional vernacular Georgian style, scale and detailing’ (Chapman Taylor 2010).¹ (Fig. 6)

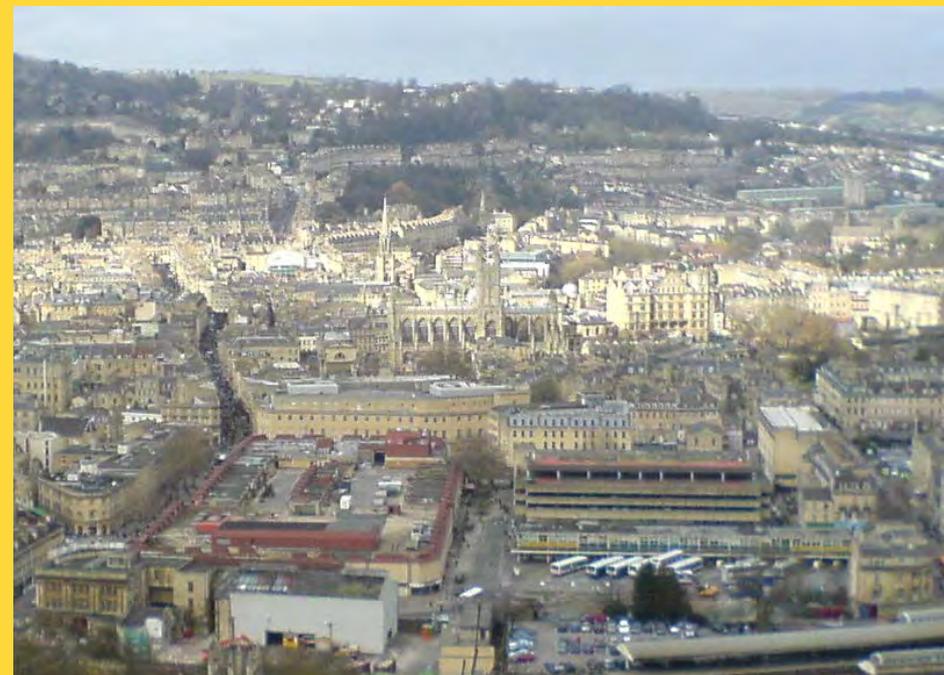
Rather than designing high-quality contemporary architecture which would have added a new layer to the city, the scheme has left Bath with an architectural legacy of industrial scale sheds clad in in “classical style” Bath Stone – the resulting over-scaled historicist pastiche reminding us that the architectural battle to recreate the historic grain of the Georgian city, is yet to be convincingly won.

However, the battle for good well-designed modern intervention that is sensitive to, and respectful of, its historic neighbours and context is possible. The New Royal Baths, designed by Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners to revive Bath’s famous Spa Culture, (which had ceased in 1978) is an exemplar of successfully integrating new design into a historic area traditionally associated with healing, medicine and Spa culture. The complex, completed in 2007, included the demolition of a 1920’s derelict municipal swimming pool, and there was some loss of historic fabric of listed buildings to create an entrance and visitor facilities. In this situation demolition was part of a positive creative process which included the conservation and restoration of five of Bath’s most important heritage buildings which were sensitively renovated and adapted for compatible reuse.

This high quality contemporary architectural intervention respects its historic context allowing old and new to harmoniously coexist, successfully integrating sympathetic contemporary design, managing the complexity of demolition, conservation and traditional and modern technologies to revitalise and reinterpret spa culture. This



*Fig. 4) Demolition
of the Georgian Buildings.
Bath, UK.
([flickr.com/photos/
sevendipity/1075861033/
sizes/o/in/
photostream/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/sevendipity/1075861033/sizes/o/in/photostream/)), photo
Charles Stirton)*



*Fig. 5) Owen Luder
Partnership's Southgate
Shopping Centre and
multi-storey car park,
1969–1972. Bath, UK.
([commons.wikimedia.
org/wiki/File:SouthGate_
\(2007\)_and_Bath_
from_Beechen_Cliff.
jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SouthGate_(2007)_and_Bath_from_Beechen_Cliff.jpg)), CC BY-SA 3.0,
photo Rwendland 2007)*

innovative project enhanced cultural significance and memory through reviving the historic continuity and functions of Bath's Spa waters for drinking and bathing for the long-term benefit of the local community and for future generations to enjoy. (Fig. 7)

Learning from Bath's negative and positive experiences outlined in the two examples above are vital if we are to avoid irrevocable damage to the historic environment. Bath still faces key challenges in maintaining the good state of conservation in the City while delivering a further phase of substantial growth and change to maintain a strong economy, provide homes, employment and transport infrastructure required without detrimentally impacting upon the OUV of the property (B&NES 2016: 23).

To facilitate this a Morphological Study of Bath was commissioned in 2014 as an important part of the evidence base to inform planning policy and future development, giving hope that future adaptive reuse of historic buildings and contemporary interventions might be of similar high-quality design as the Bath Spa Complex and feeds into the Placemaking Plan for Bath: (B&NES 2015).

The study focuses on the patterns of streets and squares, the plots and buildings, their details and materials – the features that give the city its unique identity and acknowledged architectural, aesthetic, historical and archaeological value. The purpose of the study is to provide specific information about the structure, fabric and character of the city to ensure it retains its identity and value as it continues to develop and prosper. The Morphological Study is an important design resource to be used to inform the design of development proposals within the city (B&NES 2017: 22–23).

In addition, the 2016–2022 WHS Management Plan unequivocally states that the site will be conserved and enhanced for this and future generations; be an exemplar of sustainable urban management, a centre of excellence for urban heritage management and conservation founded on strong and effective partnerships of local, national and international communities and organisations. A key consideration in all proposals for change, recognises that small-scale incremental change can be as influential as major interventions and there will be a strong presumption against development that would harm the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site itself, or its setting (B&NES 2016: 6). Further adding, that where development has a demonstrable public benefit, including mitigating and adapting to climate change, this benefit will be weighed against the level of harm to the OUV of the WHS (B&NES 2016: 27).

This policy is supported by The City of Bath WHS Setting Supplementary Planning Document (B&NES 2013) which provides understanding of the implications of any proposed changes and provides a framework for assessing effects using available methodologies and best practice. It is designed to be used by developers, statutory undertakers and their advisors so that the issues can be fully taken into account when considering the siting and design of new development as well as to be used by policy and development management planners when considering development opportunities and development proposals (B&NES 2017: 21).

Managing change at the urban scale

However, the difficulties of reconciling conservation and managing change and development and the adaptive reuse of buildings, which can often include some demolition, are complex. In Bath and the UK these difficulties have largely been addressed through Conservation Area Designation, a legislative approach which strengthens the protection of our architectural heritage and sites. Nevertheless, as evidenced from the case studies outlined above, it is not perfect and if we are to protect culturally sensitive sites and historic cores of cities throughout Europe that are increasingly under threat from development pressures for major changes, a more proactive approach is needed to achieve a balance between conservation and change and develop counterbalancing policies.

This increasing pressure for more dynamic change to accommodate large scale urban regeneration for modern living means that we will inevitably need to broaden the scope of the conservation process from protecting individual buildings and sites to encompass the urban scale if we are to avoid unnecessary losses. To do this will require us to adopt a participatory approach to management as all urban conservation requires a balance between the need to preserve monuments and meeting the needs of a living community.

Europe can learn from the experience of Bath which has emerged from the stigma of a national scandal to being seen as an exemplar of managing a WHS in its entirety, largely because of the enforcement of Conservation Area Status. If European cities are to meet the challenges and threats to the historic environment, the conservation community needs to meaningfully engage with UNESCO's recommendations outlined in their Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach of managing sites giving due consideration to the manifestation of diverse cultural heritages and their role as economic assets which delivers similar outcomes as Conservation Area status (UNESCO 2011).

Recognizing the dynamic nature of places such as Prague as living cities, the HUL approach puts in place measures to manage urbanisation driven by socio-economic change and growth, at the local, national, regional and international levels. It is a useful tool and framework for deploying strategies to prevent uncontrolled demolition or development transforming the site or its setting, encouraging instead the notion of the "City as Palimpsest" with successive layers enhancing the authenticity and integrity of the site, keeping the history of the city alive (Kroessler 2015).²

Conservation of the urban heritage can be fully integrated into general policy planning and practices and those related to the broader urban context through integrating historic urban area conservation and management and planning strategies into local development processes and urban planning. Advocating contemporary architecture and infrastructure development, the HUL concept aims to improve facilities while retaining historic buildings which embody social and cultural values that together maintain urban and cultural identity and a sense of history.

Cities like Prague and the European conservation community generally would benefit from this approach. However, it means radically rethinking traditional approaches to urban conservation which currently primarily focuses on the protection of individual buildings, monuments and sites. (Fig. 8)

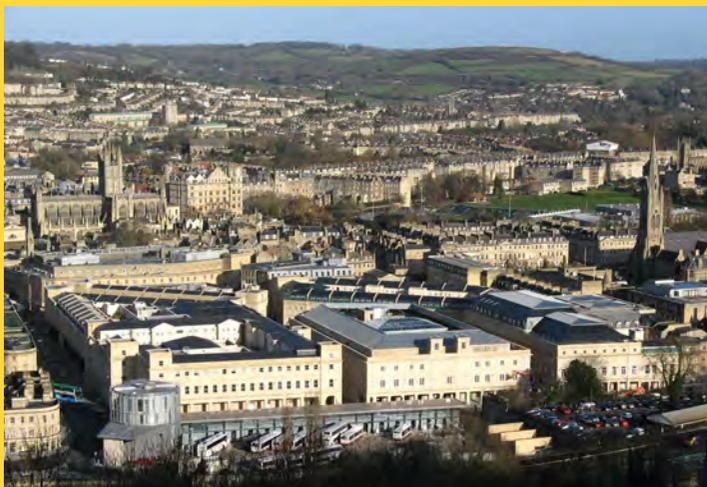


Fig. 6) Chapman Taylor's New SouthGate and Bath from Beechen Cliff. UK. (<commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8674042>, CC BA-SA 4.0, photo Rwendland 2009)



Fig. 8) Out of scale and inappropriate development Prague World Heritage site. Czech Republic. (photo Petr Vorlík 2021)



Fig. 7) The New Royal Bath, designed by Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners. UK. (<en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermae_Bath_Spa#/media/File:Thermae_Bath_Spa.jpg>, CC BY-SA 2.5, photo Michael Maggs 2007)



Fig. 9) The Setting of the World Heritage Site of Bath, UK. (Bath & North East Somerset Council)

If we are to maintain the identity of our historic cities while supporting the notion of social and economic development, we need to embrace a landscape scale conservation-led approach to the historic environment. Adopting appropriate legislative institutional frameworks and measures to safeguard, conserve and manage the historic urban areas and their wider geographical settings, to prevent social and spatial fragmentation and maintain the quality of the urban environment and of the surrounding rural areas are of vital importance. The principles of sustainable development, preservation of existing resources, and the active protection of urban heritage and its sustainable management should be enshrined in the WHS Action Plan for sites. These measures should include tangible and intangible components through a broader recognition of the importance of the social, cultural and economic processes in the conservation of urban values (Harney 2019: 71–85).

Historic cities need to adopt the HUL concept of an inter-disciplinary landscape approach for identifying, conserving and managing historic areas within their broader urban contexts, by considering the interrelationships of their physical forms, their spatial organization and connection, their natural features and settings, their social, cultural and economic values, and their capacity for change. (Fig. 9)

It is evident that the City of Prague would benefit in learning from the Bath experience and conforming to HUL recommendations so that its land use patterns and spatial organization, perceptions and visual relationships, as well as all other elements of the urban structure are identified and appropriately considered in planning processes. This approach also recognises and includes 'social and cultural practices and values, economic processes and the intangible dimensions of heritage as related to diversity and identity' in the management of the site (UNESCO 2011: 9).

Given the unique Global challenges we now face it is increasingly important to achieve a synthesis between contemporary design, conservation and sustainability. Indeed, development without historic preservation in neither desirable, achievable or sustainable.

Placing heritage as a key driver in the development process and taking a comprehensive and integrated approach for the identification, assessment, conservation and management of the historic urban landscape of Prague and other historic cities within an overall sustainable development framework will help to manage and mitigate the detrimental impact of inappropriate architectural interventions, alleviating pressures to demolish and rebuild large sections of historically and culturally important cities.

Notes

- 1 Surprisingly, in 2010 it won the Giles Worsley Award for a New Building in a Georgian Context in The Georgian Group Architectural Awards.
- 2 "Palimpsest preservation" suggest the necessity of keeping the successive layers of urban form alive rather than simply effacing and rebuilding, for that keeps a city's history alive. (Kroessler, J.A. 2015).

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Stories of demolition: conservation and destruction in Naples' suburban areas

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This article examines the modern architectural landscape of two different urban areas on the outskirts of Naples, differing both in morphology and design, focusing especially on the different renovation proposals made for them: the mainly residential district of Scampia and the mainly industrial district of San Giovanni a Teduccio. In this context, the different meanings that demolition and conservation can take on will be explored: sometimes, that of the rejection of the past; at other times, the chance for renovation and for a fresh start.

Some of these topics have already been mentioned during the Conservation/Demolition Workshop in Prague. For example, the debate on modern architectural heritage, such as the socialist architecture in eastern Europe, has brought up the issue of "self-denial" through the misuse or demolition of Soviet architectures. An important example was provided by Professor Petr Vorlík (Czech Technical University in Prague) when speaking about the conservation of modern architectural heritage in Czech Republic, where the most valuable examples of socialist architecture are still not properly acknowledged and safeguarded.

This article will give careful consideration to the different meanings of demolition and conservation through the comparison between the industrial complex "Ex Corradini" in San Giovanni a Teduccio and the residential complex "Vele" in Scampia. Both these complexes have played prominent roles in the turbulent history of Naples' suburban area, a history of both intense industrial development and ever-growing demand for housing, which redesigned the layout of the entire city. Both of these complexes have also been the subject of different demolition proposals: however, as the Ex Corradini has been included in a large-scale project for the requalification of the entire east coast area of Naples, the Vele have long since undergone a process of progressive demolition.

During the course of this twofold tale, the synergies and interactions between demolition and conservation will be explored, together with their social and ethical implications for the conservation of modern architectures.

When conservation takes over demolition: the case of "Ex Corradini" in San Giovanni a Teduccio

Our first case study is part of the broader topic of industrial archaeology,¹ born in England around the 1950^s, this branch of archaeology focuses on the study of build-

ings that are strongly connected to their original industrial purposes. In other words, industrial archaeology pursues the knowledge, the safeguarding and the valorisation of "modern ruins" as examples of an architecture where space, materials and interior design are at the service of the production line.

Ex Corradini represents a major theme of industrial archaeology: a massive industrial complex located in the eastern suburban area of Naples, between the coast and the railway line, it currently lies in a state of total abandonment, waiting for a chance to be brought back to life and reconnected to the city. (Fig. 1)

Its strong link with Naples dates back to the industrial development of the city between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, affecting especially the area of the east coast, closer to the port. The history of the complex is also linked to that of the first Italian railway line, the *Napoli-Portici*, which encouraged the growth of industrial complexes along its path.

The raging industrialisation during the first half of the twentieth century was followed by a gradual relocation and de-industrialisation after WWII, which brought the dismantling of many of the factories built along the coast, including the Corradini, and the consequent architectural and social decay of the area. The industrial complex remained abandoned for a long time before being acquired by the Municipality of Naples in 1999,² leaving its fate poised between the prospect of its demolition and the harder, more expensive one of its renovation. This period of uncertainty contributed to the further deterioration of the complex, aggravated by its isolation from the city centre and the sudden decay of the area surrounding it.

Luckily, the various buildings making up the Ex Corradini complex were listed as assets of historical-architectural interest and examples of industrial archaeology and consequently were put under the protection of the Ministry of Culture in 1990.³ Despite the advanced state of decay, such acknowledgment prevented the complex from being demolished, and, following resolution 785/2014 of the City Council of Naples, a preliminary project for the recovery of the complex, in the context of a broader initiative focusing especially on the regeneration of degraded urban areas called *Pianocittà* (CityPlan), was approved. The project was aimed at the «... creation of an artistic and cultural production district with annexed areas for hosting and recreational activities and other facilities»,⁴ including the reconnection of the district of San Giovanni with the sea by means of two new railway crossing structures. This proposal is still of crucial importance, as it promotes the value of Ex Corradini as a major example of industrial archaeology on the urban scale.

In fact, the archaeological value of the Ex Corradini complex resides in the vast array of architectural types it showcases: the current layout is the result of the juxtaposition of different blocks built over the course of several decades between the 18th and the 20th centuries, allowing for the coexistence of different architectural styles. The original textile designation of the complex can be deduced from the old multi-storey buildings, whereas the more recent heavy industrial use is attested by the ground-level brick warehouses with multiple pitched roofs. (Fig. 2) Despite their advanced state of decay, the expressive capacity of these buildings lies in the quality of their materials.

For example, the tuffa walls characteristic of most of the facilities, are in a state of overall heavy degradation, especially because of the aggressive action of the coastal environment, yet all the historical and anthropological evolutions of the site can be read in them like in a daily log.

The acknowledgement of the past of Ex Corradini, as recorded in its materials and building structure, means that any renovation project must be aware of the inherent connections between its elements. In an architecture where modularity and vast spaces reign supreme, a careful study of the genetic context and original designation of each building, as well as their implications for the interior layout, the size of each room, the location of staircases and walkways, is crucial. A project that is respectful of such connections is one that reveals the traces of past lifecycles without denying their original dimension; doing otherwise, disrupting the space, creating a “system within a system”, imposing changes from the outside may bring one to a contradiction: the denial of the open-space.

An example of such denial occurs in Prague’s DOX, a contemporary art museum located in an old complex of the industrial district of Holešovice, one of the stops on the Workshop tour. Here, the deviation of the new project from the rules of the pre-existent building is unmistakable: overshadowed by dense systems of drywall partitions and panels, whose size seems to rival that of the old complex, the single nave and truss roof, as much as the overall majesty of the building, are hardly discernible. The same “disguise” is imposed on materials: nowhere in the museum is there a chance to contemplate what existed before the recent application of plasters and cladding panels.

The opposite occurs in the project for the recovery of the Vnitroblok, also located in the Holešovice district. (Fig. 3) In this case, the new use of the old industrial building is far more straightforward and spontaneous: the renovation project follows a bottom-up approach, with the aim to create a space appealing to Prague’s youth, creating a vibrant, cosy atmosphere. The choice of reusing the old industrial building as a coffee shop does not overshadow its architectural setting, allowing the latter to speak in all its dignity, to express its full meaning.

The sensitivity shown in this project is further evidence that matter is the most genuine and fascinating element of industrial archaeology: she is the leading actress in the play.

Even though abandoned industrial complexes are often considered as a monument to discontinuity and dismantling, they carry on telling a story of construction and production, of old forsaken neighbourhoods and new community centres. The continuation of this story must be ensured by arranging a new plot featuring the same old actors, a plot based onto the pre-existent factory, building on it in accordance with its materials and shapes, pursuing *concinnitas* between the old and the new. Only then will the story of industrial archaeology have had its happy ending.

When demolition takes over conservation: the case of “Vele” in Scampia

The story of Vele in Scampia, a densely populated district in the northern outskirts of Naples, starts in the early 1960^s with a project by architect Franz di Salvo for

seven new residential blocks characterised by a distinctive and iconic “sail” shape. The project came in response to the strong housing demand of those years, which eventually resulted in a massive population shift from the centre to the outskirts of the city and in the birth of the so-called dormitory neighbourhoods, characterised by a strong residential character and abundant residential facilities.

Di Salvo’s proposal consisted of a social housing project that would encourage the creation of a community of residents connected to the city by means of large green areas and walkways and including playgrounds, schools, shopping centres and religious buildings: a project both for the people and the city, a healthy and appealing urban space.

The residential blocks making up the complex would consist of two terraced building units ranged side by side, each one extending for 14 stories on average, separated one from the other but connected through staircases, lifts, and catwalks built to foster social interactions among residents. Obvious references are to be found in the most famous European architectural works of social housing, Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation in Marseille, with which the Vele share a common social utopian ideal, that of a self-sufficient residential unit, a sort of miniature city where families could shape their own community: a clockwork architecture that could deal with the population’s growing need for housing.

This utopia shattered against the harsh social conditions that developed in the complex by the 1970^s, when the Vele became a major drug-dealing hotspot: garages were converted into supply points for drug addicts, staircases were used as escape routes, and catwalks and terraces were used as watchpoints for spotting incoming police raids. Di Salvo’s intention was to reinterpret and replicate the colourful atmosphere of the typical Neapolitan alley in a modern setting, yet what should have been the set for a vibrant and bustling community life, soon turned into a lair for camorristas and drug addicts.

Yet what has long been regarded as a failure of the architectural solution proposed by Di Salvo was actually a failure in the execution of the original project, which had undergone heavy changes at the building stage: the original trestle structures connecting the central catwalks to the apartments, designed by architect Riccardo Morandi, were replaced with different, shorter ones, reducing the distance between the half-blocks; the catwalks, originally designed as light and transparent structures, were redesigned as bulky, grey, obstructive concrete slabs; the sail shape was relinquished in favour of a ziggurat one, blocking sunlight from reaching ground floors and reducing the gaps between the half-blocks to bottomless pits; common areas, envisaged every six floors, as well as transport lines to the city centre were never built.

The Vele were later taken over by squatters, mostly evacuees from the 1980 earthquake in Irpinia, becoming the subject of a fierce debate over their fate, until the demolition of three out of the seven blocks between 1997 and 2003. More recently, the Vele gained the international spotlight as the iconic setting of *Gomorra*, the critically acclaimed movie based on the eponymous novel by Roberto Saviano.

The debate around the fate of the Vele saw the clash between those who considered them as a social and architectural experiment that had gone wrong and destined

for demolition, and those who considered them as victims of the changes made at the building stage and of the poor management by local authorities. This clash reignited soon after the conclusion of the EAAE Workshop when, on February the 20th 2020, the demolition of the first of the last four remaining blocks, the Green Sail, started as part of the “Restart Scampia” project, an initiative sponsored by the Italian Chamber of Deputies aimed at the rehabilitation of suburban districts and the demolition of obsolete buildings.

Only the seventh sail block, the Blue Sail, will be spared from demolition and be renovated in order to accommodate the offices of the Metropolitan City of Naples. In a recent study project conducted in collaboration with Professor Roberta Amirante of the University “Federico II” of Naples, the author and other architects have explored the different possibilities for the renovation and reuse of the surviving sail block. The proposal reinterprets the imminent demolition of the remaining buildings in a symbolic way, reforging the surviving block into a monument to the memory of the other ones: partly buried in the debris resulting from the demolition of the other blocks, the Blue Sail would become an artificial hillside, a new gathering place for the city and its residents. (Fig. 4)

Such proposal is an example of how the strong desire to focus on the silver linings of a demolition already underway can turn it into a fond memory for the resident population and into a warning against further examples of socially degrading architectures.

In contrast with the envisaged, yet never undertaken, demolition of Ex Corradini, which would have smothered the values of industrial archaeology under its rubble, the upcoming demolition of the Vele in Scampia should be reinterpreted as a rebirth of the new city. (Fig. 5) Quoting Professor Miguel Angel Calvo Salve, rapporteur of Group 4 during the Workshop: “demolition is not always a bad guy”.

The value of an architecture, the value of a choice

The two cases of Ex Corradini and Vele show us how the choice between conservation and demolition is closely linked to the value that a certain building holds in the collective imagination. To the assignment of a positive value to Ex Corradini corresponded a conservation action that acknowledged the complex as a paradigm of the architecture and history of Neapolitan production, ensuring that the renovation project be essentially based on the physical preservation of the factory building. When dealing with negative values, instead, as in the case of Vele, the choice has fallen on a demolition action whose aim was that of deleting the connection between social decay and the architecture fostering it.

How come such different actions have been undertaken on two contemporary examples of modern architecture? The answer is, once again, in the different values acknowledged in a given building, whatever the scale, time or place it belongs to.

In Italy conservation actions are far more constrained than they are in the rest of Europe: in accordance with the principle of “minimum intervention”, restoration proposals for buildings acknowledged as “cultural property” rarely envisage demolition actions. In fact, according to the Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape, «Cultural

property consists of immovable and movable things which, pursuant to articles 10 and 11, present artistic, historical, archaeological, ethnoanthropological, archival and bibliographical interest, and of any other thing identified by law or in accordance with the law as testifying to the values of civilisation.» In other words, cultural property does not consist only of monumental assets of undoubted historical-artistic value, but also of all those architectural and artistic manifestations that testify the passage of man through history. The broad extent of this definition makes it arduous for demolition actions to be undertaken: even the smallest farmhouse, once acknowledged as cultural asset, cannot be subject to demolition. In other words, restoration action in Italy clearly tends towards pure conservation. In the past, however, demolition options have also been explored: the post-war period, for example, saw the systematic demolition of many symbols of the fascist regime, even in cases where they constituted significant parts or decorative elements of major buildings. What unites actions of such different range and scale certainly is the strong desire to affect the collective memory by deleting symbols associated with negative values. This is the so called “psychological instance”, theorised by Roberto Pane in 1978, according to which restoration action should be motivated not only by intellectual and cultural needs, but also by psychological ones.

The user’s understanding of a given architecture must inform the conservation actions undertaken on it: as the psychological factor pushed towards the reconstruction of many symbolic buildings “how they were and where they were” after the war, in an attempt to remove the memories of the conflict from the collective memory (as happened with the Bridge of St. Trinita in Florence and the Church of St. Chiara in Naples), so in the case of the symbols of the fascist regime the community demanded their demolition as bearers of negative values.

The choice between demolition and conservation in architecture, therefore, should always be based on the assessment of the social values associated with a specific historical instance. The two examples considered here clearly show how the fate of a building is often determined by the desires of the community it belongs, which in the Ex Corradini saw a chapter of its history to preserve, whereas in the Vele saw the memory of a past failure to be forgotten.



Fig. 1) The ruins of the complex "Ex Corradini", S. Giovanni a Teduccio. Connections with the landscape. Naples, Italy. (photo Marco Ferruzzi 2018)

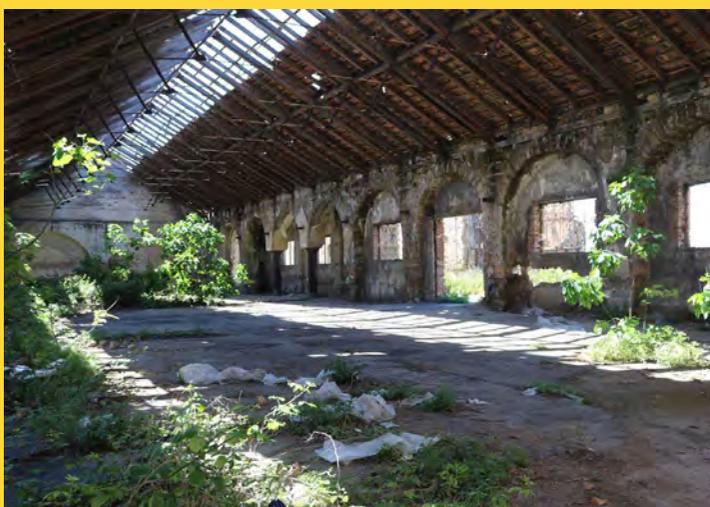


Fig. 2) The ruins of the complex "Ex Corradini", S. Giovanni a Teduccio. Interiors of the industrial ruins. Naples, Italy. (photo Marco Ferruzzi 2018)



Fig. 3) A conservation and adaptive re-use. The case of Vnitroblok in Holešovice, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Sara Iaccarino 2019)



Fig. 4) The Othurtz – a utopian project for the Vele in Scampia, Naples, Italy. (authors Sara Iaccarino, Elena Marino, Orazio Nicodemo, Ciro Priore, Lucia Ruocco, Sara Russo, Raffaella Sessa, Davide Savoia, <divisare.com/projects/332026-sara-iaccarino-elena-marino-orazio-nicodemo-ciro-priore-lucia-ruocco-sara-russo-raffaella-sessa-davide-savoia-the-othurtz>)

Notes

- 1 Industrial archaeology (IA) is the systematic study of material evidence associated with the past (Neaverson Palmer 1998: chapter 1).
- 2 Maritime state property concession to the company Corradini, 10th February 1956.
- 3 Decree of the Ministry for Cultural and Environmental Heritage for the constraint and protection of the ex Corradini, 27th February 1990.
- 4 Urban Implementation Plan San Giovanni a Teduccio, Report to the preliminary plan, Municipality of Naples, 2009.

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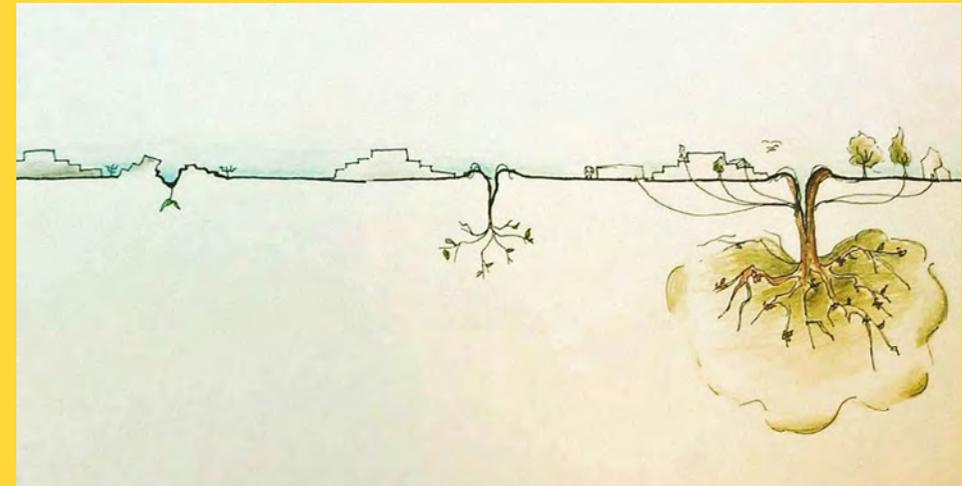


Fig. 5) Demolition as a rebirth process. The "Vele" in Scampia, Naples, Italy. (sketch by Sara Iaccarino 2016)

The workshop brings together a broad range of people, from art conservators to architects, engineers, and officials, to discuss the issues that have come to be of crucial importance in the management of European cultural heritage. Considering the roles that critical reflection and academic scholarship have played in developing conservation as a cultural practice, it will explore how the EAAE Conservation Network can enhance the contribution of these two basic pillars of architecture for the future of architectural heritage.

The workshop takes place in the heart of Europe: the City of Prague in the Czech Republic. It comprises academic presentations on the issues identified below as topic areas, small, intensive group discussions, and study trips to selected sites.

1. Towards the contemporary hybrid city and cultural complexity

Do contemporary cities need a blended mix of history and modernity? How does gentrification impact public or private spaces, their diversity, and the intricate web of relations in the city?

2. The force of everyday life

How can we strengthen the sustainability of the cultural value, ecology, economy, and prolonged life cycle of the built environment through necessary, responsible maintenance? Can we control or manage amateur alterations (adaptations) driven by consumption and commercial forces?

3. Contemporary versus traditional technologies and approaches

Are traditional and modern technologies sufficiently accessible or culturally acceptable in a contemporary city? And what is the role of architects, conservators, municipalities, institutions, legislation, participation, and professional ethics?

4. The scale of new intervention versus memory

Is it possible to accept and make meaningful use of small-scale historic heritage in a contemporary city? Or to benefit contemporary lifestyles? Using current development approaches and building processes? Can demolition be accepted as a legitimate option or strategy? Can we accept demolition in the process of conservation? Or conservation and restitution after demolition?

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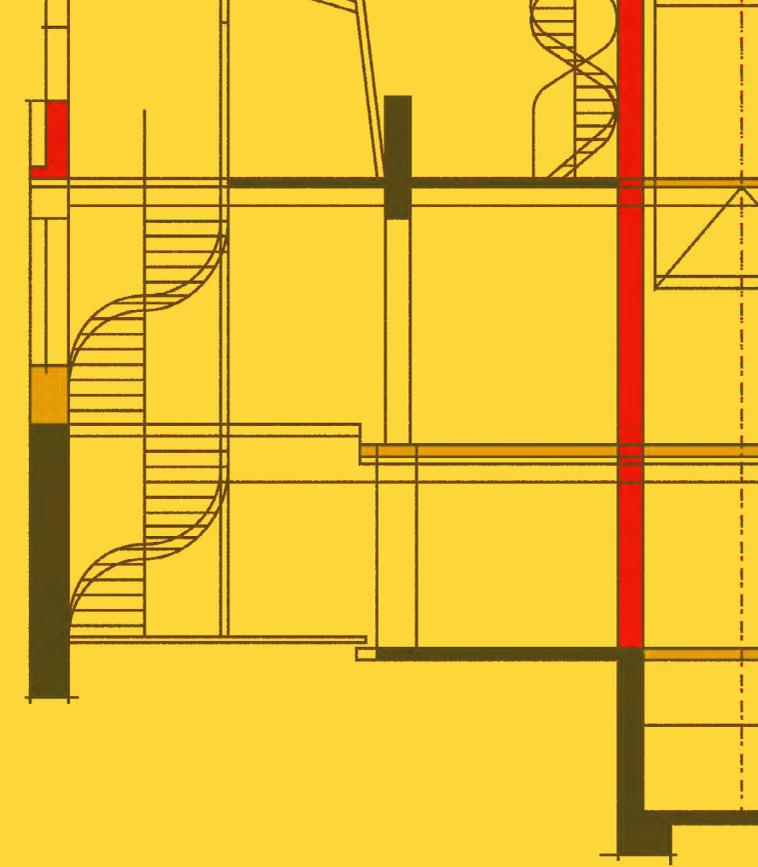
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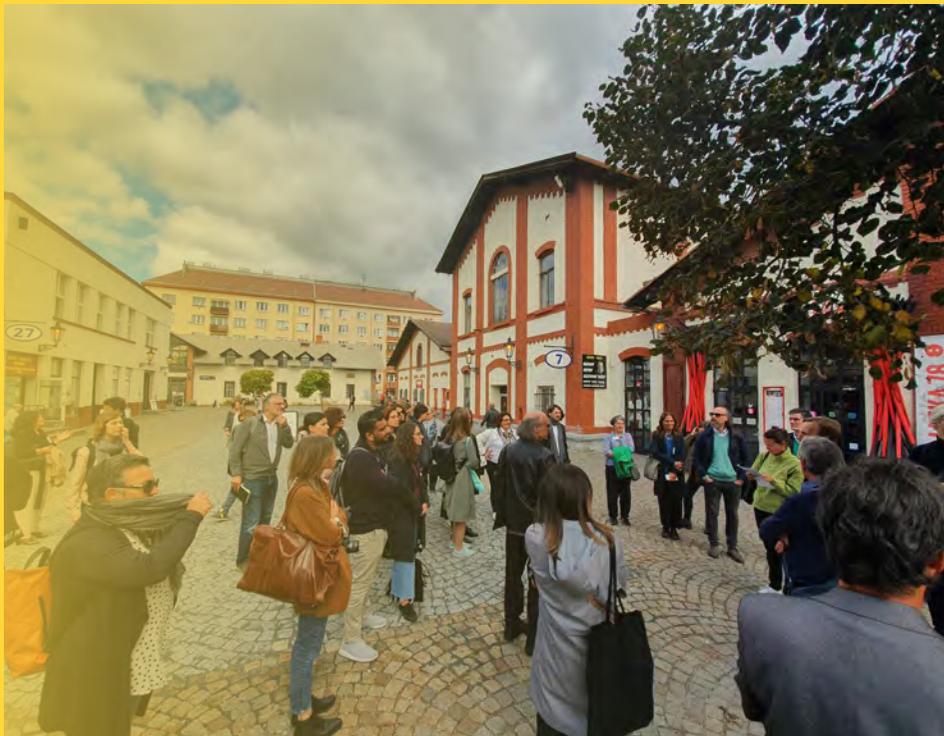
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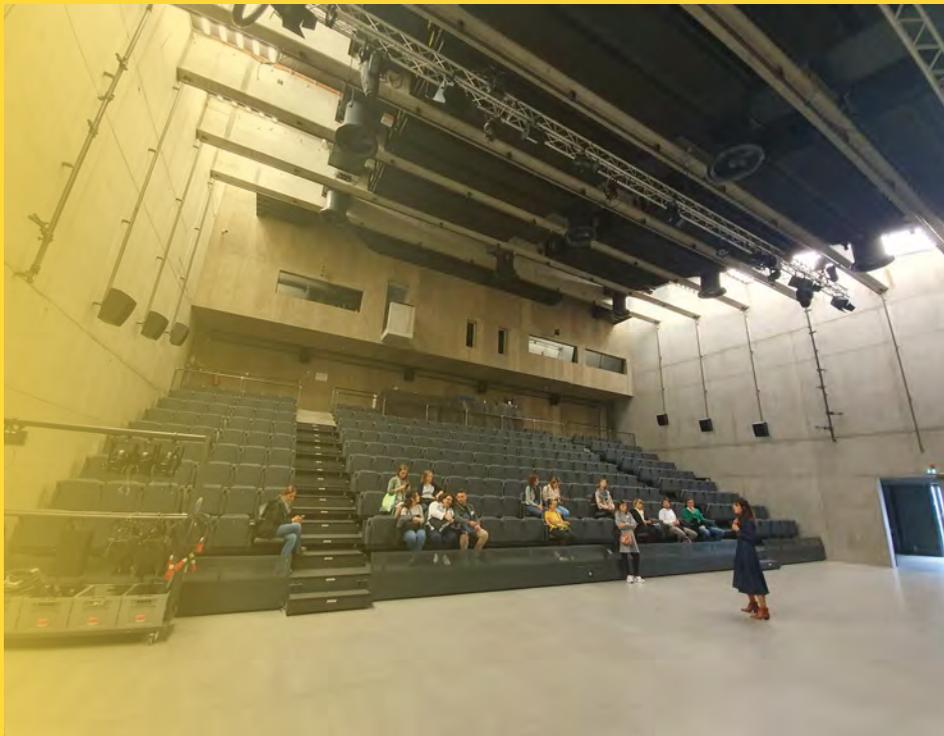
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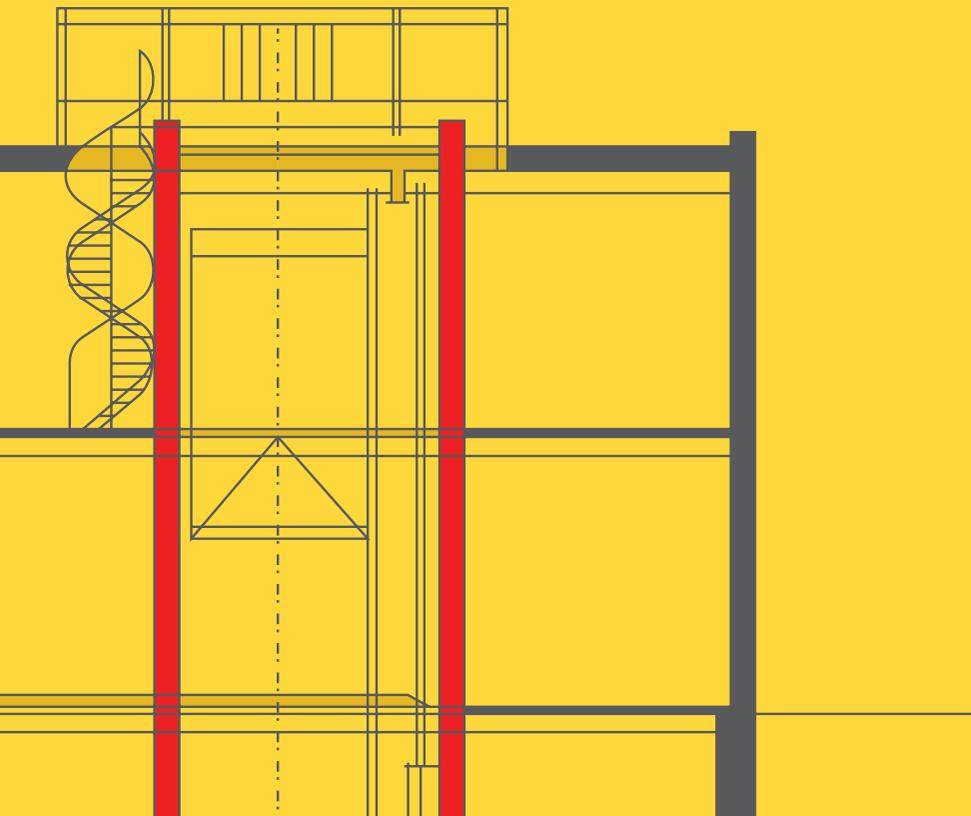
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