

EAAE Transactions on Architectural Education no. 65

# CONSERVATION— ADAPTATION

KEEPING ALIVE THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE  
ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HERITAGE WITH  
SYMBOLIC VALUE

Donatella Fiorani  
Loughlin Kealy  
Stefano Francesco Musso

Editors



European  
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This book presents presents the papers written by 39 participants following the 5th Workshop on Conservation, organised by the Conservation Network of the European Association for Architectural Education in Hasselt/Liège in 2015. All papers have been peer-reviewed. The Workshop was attended by 73 participants from the following countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey, United Kingdom.

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## INTRODUCTION

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### Workshop theme

The theme of the 5th EAAE Workshop, Conservation/Adaptation, captures one of the most critical questions in addressing the legacy of inherited buildings and sites of cultural importance. Over time, protection of the architectural heritage has become recognised as a cultural imperative, supported by international conventions and deepening scholarship. The adaptation of such heritage for contemporary uses is one of the major issues in sustainable development of the built environment, and it has long been recognised that the continuing appropriate use of historic buildings is one of the best ways of ensuring their survival. In this context, the concept of ‘adaptive reuse’ has emerged.

Adaptive reuse can be described as ‘the process of wholeheartedly altering a building by which the function is the most obvious change, but other alterations may be made to the building itself, such as the circulation route, the orientation, the relationship between spaces; additions may be built and other areas may be demolished’<sup>1</sup>. In context, besides retaining the material values of buildings or sites, an important aspect of reuse is the preservation of immaterial significance. This is particularly important in the case of symbolic buildings or sites where the spirit of the place is important, such as those with social, political, commemorative or religious meaning, or those with a negative or ‘infected’ history. The workshop addressed some difficult questions: how to combine the reanimation of such a building or site with the transmission of its material and immaterial values? What are the limits and opportunities in the adaptive reuse of this type of ‘sensitive’ heritage? How is the *genius loci* – the spirit of place – to be preserved?

These issues in the adaptive reuse of historic buildings that embody special meanings were addressed under three headings:

#### *Social meaning*

Europe is experiencing fundamental socio-economic changes, a shift from an industrial society (product oriented) towards a knowledge-based society (service oriented). This has an important impact on built environments and landscapes. What is the future for the relicts of this industrial past that are strongly imbued with social meaning and collective memory, but that sometimes have limited architectural value?

#### *Religious/sacred meaning*

Religious buildings form a rich part of our European cultural heritage, with not only important historical and architectural value, but also an important symbolic value. Over recent decades, however, in different European countries this particular type of heritage has faced major challenges: in some countries, a marked decrease in religious practice combined with a general economic decline has caused the abandonment of many churches,

chapels, convents and monasteries. Together with presbyteries and other types of service buildings, they tend to be privatised. What future do these buildings have? How far can we go in reanimating these sites? Do the new functions need to incorporate the 'sacral atmosphere' of the building? Or can we approach these buildings as 'empty shells' and convert them into concert halls, libraries, hotels or supermarkets?

#### *Commemorative/political meaning*

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, some buildings or sites carry a particular political message, or the memory of an historic event - sometimes tragic, sometimes positive. Is it appropriate to reuse such buildings or sites? How far can we go to exploit them, and make the memory more accessible for the public (musealisation versus Disneyfication)? Can we afford to simply conserve them? How are we to prevent them from being ideologically misused?

Participants were invited to submit abstracts addressing one or several of these aspects, related to case studies of conservation and/or adaptive reuse of architectural heritage that embodies special meaning.

#### **Case study sites**

To steer discussion among participants, local case studies and reference projects were presented by the organising team and visited during the workshop.

#### *Industrial sites in Genk*

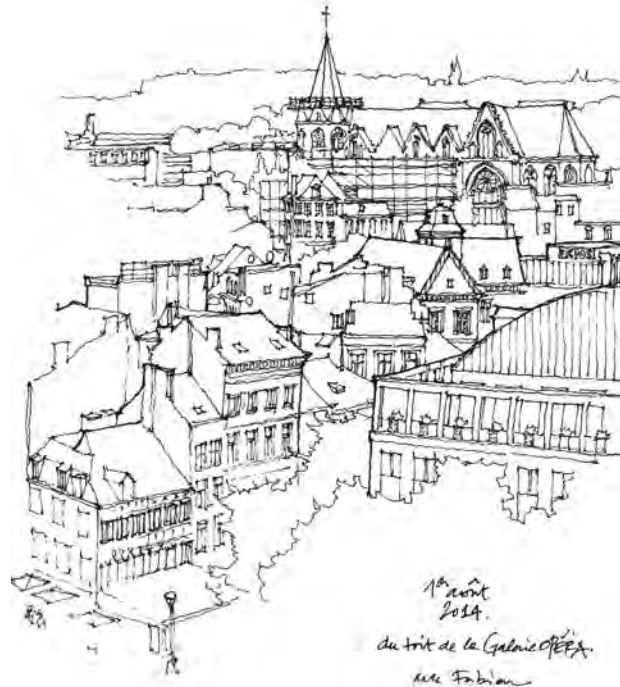
In the early 20th century the city of Genk rapidly became industrialised, mainly through the mining industry. After the closure of the mines in the 1980s the city was confronted with widespread unemployment, and also with the question of how to deal with the built relics of the mining industry, and with its surrounding landscape, also strongly shaped by this industry. New industries were attracted to Genk in order to create jobs and give a new dynamic to the city and in the last decade, several former mining sites were rehabilitated into commercial, social, cultural and educational facilities. However, the recent closure of the Ford automobile factory, the largest employer in the region, has created a new crisis for the city. Again the question has arisen as to how to deal with the desolate industrial site, which has limited architectural value but is nevertheless important for the collective memory of this city.

#### **C-Mine**

The workshop participants visited C-Mine, the former mine of Winterslag, which closed in 1986. In the late 1990s Genk started the redevelopment of this site into a creative hub, organised around four key aspects: education, creative economy, recreation and artistic creation. It now houses various functions, including a school of art and design, an incubator for young entrepreneurs, a cinema, a cultural centre, an art gallery and a museum. Various architects have worked on the different buildings at the site; some of these are adapted industrial buildings, while others are new constructions but respecting the original layout of the site. C-Mine, an enormous labyrinth of gray steel construction designed by the artist studio Gijs Van Vaerenbergh, was positioned on the central square. The labyrinthine structure creates unique views of the site and its different buildings.

Fig. 1. The interior of the Energy building at C-Mine, now a cultural centre (photo by L. Kealy).

Fig. 2. The Sainte-Croix Collegiate Church, Liège (drawing by G. Michel).



The most prominent and best preserved historical building is the Energy Building, transformed into a cultural centre by 51N4E (Fig. 1). A large steel volume marks the entrance at the front, transformed into a cultural centre by 51N4E. The turbine halls and machine rooms are preserved, along with much of their machinery and patina, and serve as foyer, exhibition space, event location, etc. At each side of the central turbine hall, a new construction with auditoria is added. Rooftop spaces serve as terraces in between the existing building and auditoria.

### *The Sainte-Croix Collegiate Church (Liège)*

Liège Sainte-Croix Collegiate Church is listed as 'exceptional heritage' in the Walloon region due to its historical and architectural importance (Fig. 2).

It was founded in 978 or 979 by Notker, the first Prince Bishop of the Bishopric of Liège, whose ambition was to make of the Episcopal City one of the most renowned centres of the Holy Roman Empire. Sainte-Croix was one of seven collegiate churches built in the city between the 10th and the 11th centuries, its impressive octagonal tower aimed at establishing a symbolic bond between collegiate churches, thus defining the religious topography of the city. It is still an important urban landmark.

The present building, erected between the 13th and the 14th centuries on the foundations of the original church, is an example of the Gothic influence in the eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire and retains an exceptional architectural significance. Characterised by its two opposed apses, an eastern choir inspired by the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, and, uncommonly for the Mosan region, a three-aisle nave, the building is highly relevant to studies exploring the influence of the relics of the Passion (which were preserved in Sainte-Croix) on the design of a medieval church, as well as for its neo-Gothic external and internal features, both the result of important restorations conducted in the 19th century.

The fate of Sainte-Croix was, however, dramatically altered by the urban changes that occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries. Formerly situated at the edge of the historic centre of Liège on the eastern side of a natural promontory (the Publémont hill), Sainte-Croix was surrounded by the Sauvenière, a tributary of the Meuse river, and the Lègia stream, which flowed into the Meuse close to Saint Lambert Square. Both rivers were diverted and covered in the 19th century and are no longer visible today. Additionally, in the 1960s the urban area on the northern side of the church was torn down to make room for a speedway connecting the city centre with the highway. As a consequence, Sainte-Croix was deprived of a crucial portion of its built surroundings and its parish, and went through a slow process of abandonment and structural deterioration that eventually led to the church's closure and to its insertion in the World Monument Fund 2013–2015 'watch list' of endangered monuments. In recent years, campaigns for the preservation of the collegiate church of Sainte-Croix and for its restoration have been conducted by several associations. In February 2017, the Walloon regional government announced a €15 million, 10-year restoration project aimed at transforming the building into an ecumenical place of worship and cultural centre.

### *The Interallied Monument in Liège*

Characterised by a double identity as both a civilian and religious site, the Interallied Monument originated from two joined initiatives launched respectively by the International Federation of Veterans of the Allied countries to celebrate the bravery of the soldiers who fought in the First World War, and by the Catholic segments of Liège society, who wanted to build a monument dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the aftermath of the First World War. It was during a congress in Paris in 1923 that the International Federation of Veterans determined on the creation of a monument which was financed by public subscription from the Allied countries, aimed at honouring their soldiers. Two years later, in Rome, the Federation chose Liège as the monument's ideal location, as it was the first city to be impacted by the First World War. When the Federation discovered that a private association had also opened a subscription to create a pilgrimage church in Liège, the two plans were merged, and a competition for the construction of their joint project was launched. The Interallied Monument and the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Sacred Heart of Jesus were thus two complementary parts of an international symbolic project recognising the key role of Liège in the First World War.

The architectural competition was won by Flemish architect Jos Smolderen. Composed of a memorial tower, an open-air esplanade and a pilgrimage church situated in the Liège suburb of Cointe, on a hill above the Guillemins Station, the complex's construction had



Fig. 3. The Interallied Monument and Church, Liège (photo by S.F. Musso).

a long gestation, mainly due to a lack of funding and the outbreak of the Second World War. It was therefore built in phases between 1923 and 1968 in a geometrical Art Deco style. It is adorned by a great number of sculpted monuments offered by former Allied countries (Fig. 3).

Although the monument's crypt and esplanade still regularly host commemorative ceremonies (for instance, the European commemoration of the First World War in 2014) and welcomes new monuments, the extensively deteriorated church, a listed monument since 2011, has been neglected by the parishioners and abandoned. Many possibilities for private reuse have been explored, but they have not yet led to any adequate solution.

Besides its obvious architectural, symbolic and artistic values, the site, built on a hill overlooking Calatrava's Guillemins Station with tremendous views over the city, remains a key element of the city landscape.

#### *The Military Fort of Loncin*

Built between 1888 and 1892 according to the plans of General Henri Alexis Brialmont, the military Fort of Loncin is one of twelve forts built in a ring around Liège as part of its fortified belt towards the end of the 19th century. The triangular fort, surrounded by a deep ditch and semi-submerged in the landscape, has a dual cultural relevance. It is an important element of built heritage. It is also a burial ground as a result of massive bombardment from the 12th to the 15th of August 1914. The fort had been built





Fig. 4. The destroyed Fort de Loncin: its wreckage is a sarcophagus and a site of commemoration (photo by D. Prina).

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Fig. 5. The former prison of Hasselt now houses the faculty of Law of Hasselt University (UHasselt), the octagon seen from a courtyard (photo by P. Vorlik).

to a particular design and using an experimental building technique of non-reinforced concrete rather than masonry. This played an unexpected role in its destruction and transformed the ruins of its powder magazine into a permanent sarcophagus protecting the corpses of the 350 soldiers who were killed by an explosion. The weakness of the structure made the ammunition storage – it contained twelve tons of explosive – vulnerable to the impact of large-calibre shells. The wreckage became first a war grave and then a remembrance site. Although the majority of the bodies could not be moved after the explosion, some remains were buried in a crypt placed at the western tip of the triangle forming the site. In the aftermath of the war, the sentiment of respect in Belgium for the fort's victims resulted in the erection on the site of a number of monuments honouring their memory. Besides its commemorative value, the natural location and the partially wrecked concrete structures confer on the site a broader and powerful landscape significance (Fig. 4).

The Military Fort of Loncin was listed in 2004 and its site now includes a museum. Although the Fort is especially popular for its symbolic role, the motivations for its listing also included its historical interest as a major element in the Belgian fortification of its time as well as its importance in the events of August 1914. Furthermore, the Fort of Loncin was listed for its scientific value (it still contains original weapons and equipment) and for its landscape importance as a privileged site for biodiversity development.



### *Former prison of Hasselt*

The Faculty of Law of Hasselt University (UHasselt) is located in a former prison, built in 1859 on the panopticon model and used as a prison until 2005 (Fig. 5). The buildings of the university were initially located at the outskirts of the city, but it wished to move closer to the city centre. The only available site in this rather small city was the former prison. UHasselt, which prides itself on being an open and approachable institution, did not at first want to preserve the existing building's characteristics, as these features seemed the exact opposite of the university's vision of a centre city campus. Hence the redesign was opened to an architectural competition, won by noAarchitecten. The architects' concept saw the prison as an enclave within the city. Thus, instead of being a symbol of confinement, the walls were to serve as a symbol of prestige attaching to the community of the students and staff of UHasselt.

The original prison wall was preserved in its entirety, and no changes were made to the front facade. The side entrance doors were replaced by fence gates to allow views of the green courtyards behind the wall. The basic structure of the interior and the characteristics of the typology were retained. The centre space of the panopticon served as the main entrance hall, which was made more monumental with the addition of a new staircase and terrazzo flooring. The former cells were kept, serving the new function of individual study cells for students. To fit the large programme within the existing building, the triangular courtyards between the different wings were partly filled with two auditoria and a

cafeteria. The original corridors running along the side of each wing were enlarged to give access to these new spaces. In the original prison building, daylight could barely enter the building interior, owing to the extremely small windows. Throughout the transformation, daylight was brought into the building through the roof, where old and new parts of the building were connected. A number of the green roofs were made accessible; the prison and the city may be viewed from there.

In addition to these buildings and sites, participants also visited three buildings in Maastricht which had religious uses in the past: the Minorite Monastery, now an archive; a 13th-century former Dominican church, which is now known as the Selexyz Dominicanen bookstore; and the 15th-century former Crutched Friars monastery and church, which has been converted into a 5-star and 60-room hotel (Kruisherhotel). These buildings were to prove a significant element of several papers.

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### Notes and references

- <sup>1</sup> Brooker, G., Stone, S., 2004. *Re-readings: Interior architecture and the design principles of remodelling existing buildings*. London.

# Essays



## NEW LIVES FOR DECONSECRATED CHURCHES. SYMBOLIC VALUES AND THE IDENTITY OF PLACES

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There are many reasons why a religious building loses its sacred character. New political and social developments, abandonment of previous religious practices in favour of others, economic necessity, a reduction in the number of people in the local communities: these are just some of the possible reasons why it is decided to deconsecrate a church and turn it into a secular building. The means by which new life can be injected into buildings conceived and built to be sacred places is simple. In the case of Catholic churches, there are several reasons why a church may be deconsecrated, such as changes in parish structures or the population in the area, damage to the structure rendering impossible to use or simply that it is no longer practical to use it (Montini 2000) and they are ruled by Canon law, in particular Can 1211, Can 1212, Can 1222 (§ 1 e § 2). The key question is whether this gesture is enough to efface the complexity of the meanings embodied in a church at different scales and levels, transforming it into a simple container in which a new use can be installed.

Very often the way these places are in fact reused does not have a close relationship with the 'container' – that is, with the material nature of the building – but is the result of other kinds of logic (commercial, economic, occasional, spatial and architectural) which partially interpret the tangible and intangible components of the built heritage. The cases are many and varied. The solutions that can be observed range from unplanned interventions to highly sophisticated operations. One of many possible examples of this process is the Dominican church in Maastricht in the Netherlands (Hovens et al. 2006) which since 1796, the year when it was reassigned to military use, has served widely varied functions, alternating with periods of abandonment: storage room for Maastricht town council, headquarters of the Municipal Orchestra, art gallery, flower display (Fig. 1), parties (Fig. 2), boxing arena, car shows, storage facility for bicycles and finally a bookstore<sup>1</sup> (Figs. 3-4). The current solution is the result of a complex design process whose outcome focuses on a specific item – a multi-level, steel, black, walk-in bookcase situated asymmetrically in the church – to which is entrusted the value of the solution found (Weelen 2014: 25–27). The basic idea is that the customers of the bookshop, while browsing the books on sale, can 'experience the colossal dimensions of the church and view the historical murals from close-by'<sup>2</sup>. The question that underlies the operation, which needs to be argued in depth, is whether the refined design of the furnishings and the use of the space, avowedly designed to be reversible, are sufficient to preserve the spirit of the place and safeguard the tangible and intangible heritage (ICOMOS 2008).

### **Multi-layered palimpsests and the loss of identity of places. Italy vs the Netherlands**

The phenomenon taking place in Maastricht, where other former places of worship have been manipulated and reused – the Franciscan monastery that now houses the reading room of an archive centre and library<sup>3</sup> and the former Monastery of the Friars of the Holy Cross, which today is the lobby, bar and restaurant of a hotel<sup>4</sup> – is not an isolated case tied



FIG. 1. Dominican church in Maastricht. Flower exhibition, 1899-1903 (Hovens et al. 2006: 142).

FIG. 2. Parties and meeting in Dominican church, 1912 (Hovens et al. 2006: 144).

FIG. 3. Steel bookcase of Selexyz Dominicanen bookstore during construction (Hovens et al. 2006: 242).

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FIG. 4. First and second level of the steel bookcases (photo by F. Albani, 2015).

FIG. 5. Madonna della Neve church at Portichetto (Como) converted into mechanical workshop (© Andrea Di Martino).

to a specific cultural context, but is broad and widespread. In a country like Italy, whose culture has been deeply influenced by the Catholic religion, it might be thought that the issue of the deconsecration of places of worship would be limited and the phenomenon would be dealt with differently. It might be supposed that the authorities, the offices responsible for conservation, historians, art historians, designers and local communities together – Catholics and laity – would concentrate and devote their energies to devising strategies to identify a new use for a cultural heritage that is part of their identity. In reality, growing numbers of churches are being deconsecrated (Marzano 2012), as is the practice that sees these ‘containers’ adapted arbitrarily to functions in which the old structures – walls, vaults, frescoes, plaster – remain in the background, forming the setting for a new life that no longer has any ties with that of the past. In the place of the altar, the ambo and the candles, there appear tables, car hoists, the counters of bars or theatrical stages.

A glimpse of this reality can be seen in the work *The Mass is Ended* by the photographer Andrea Di Martino, winner of the Amilcare Ponchielli Prize in 2010 and the Fotonoviembre 2015 ‘Authors in Selection’, revived and expanded for a recent exhibition in Basel<sup>5</sup> (Di Martino 2016). It is a collection of images of deconsecrated churches that have found a new future<sup>6</sup>. ‘Research soon led me to discover a much larger world than I expected. From north to south the former churches, sometimes refurbished, sometimes just kept standing, told me stories of a variegated Italy: refined and superficial, fashionable and popular, out-

rageous and believing, but in the end surprisingly mixed', told Andrea Di Martino in an interview in 2016. These buildings, previously symbols not only of the 'sacred', but also places in which communities and cultures identified themselves and which often acted as poles capable of influencing urban development, have become branches of banks, warehouses, pizzerias, weaving workshops, gyms and classrooms for municipal councils. A photo that will surely not leave viewers indifferent shows the church of the Madonna della Neve at Portichetto near Como, closed for worship since 1959, and since 1966 converted into a mechanical workshop (Fig. 5). The situation is certainly extreme, but not particularly rare.

However, the phenomenon does not affect only small towns afflicted by more or less pronounced forms of depopulation. In densely populated Milan, there are also churches converted and reused in various ways. They range from the most complex situations and carefully pondered cases, such as that of the church of Santa Teresa in Via della Moscova, which after a period of neglect was reopened in 2003 as a media centre, an interactive multimedia library of the Biblioteca Braidense, to that of the former church of SS. Simon and Giuda in Via Correnti, deconsecrated in the Napoleonic period and turned into a theatre known since 1976 as the Teatro Arsenale. Other examples are: the church of San Paolo Converso or alle Monache in Corso Italia on the corner of Via S. Eufemia, converted by a private foundation into a hall for cultural events; the Oratorio SS. Filippo and Donato at Molinazzo, turned into private offices (Scaraffia 2010); and the most extreme examples of the nightclubs called 'La Chiesetta' in Lomazzo Street and 'Il Gattopardo' in Piero della Francesca Street<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 6).

Each of these places has endured various vicissitudes that have affected their current states. But the factor they have in common is the loss, in different degrees and proportions, of those values and historical, cultural, social and symbolic meanings that characterise the tangible and intangible heritage of religious buildings, transforming them in ways that are more refined or coarser – sometimes with traces of vulgarity – into new places that no longer have any link with the density and multiplicity of meanings which they embodied in the past.

### **The illusion of reversibility**

Justifying every change, even the most bizarre, with the argument of its reversibility appears a widespread and common practice. In fact it is widely known and firmly established that 'reversibility' is inconceivable (Petzet 1995), since the actions that have taken place and that have altered the tangible – but also the intangible – reality of a place cannot be effaced (Oddy 1999).





FIG. 6. Night club “Il Gattopardo” in San Giuseppe della Pace church in Milan (© Andrea Di Martino).

FIG. 7. San Quirico and Giulitta church in Azzanello, Cremona, Italy (photo by F. Albani, 2009).

Next page:

FIG. 8. Exhibition of rural life in San Quirico and Giulitta church (2011).



‘Reversibility’ is not a lexical problem related to specialist debates (Biscontin, Driussi 2003). It is a way of conceiving the project that deals with existing situations, the consequences of which can be read in many of the examples given. Even when the emblem of reversibility is trumpeted and emphasised, if one looks closely and enters into the merits of the choices and the architectural details, the alterations are very often highly invasive and far from ‘minimal’.

It can be assumed that the pretext of reversibility entails a danger of losing the awareness that no action is truly reversible and this leads – perhaps unconsciously – the project to be conceived as ‘provisional’ and/or ‘precarious’ (Trivella 2002). Hence there is a lack of reflection conducted with a due sense of responsibility for the future, which should underlie the identification of new uses and changes. And even if, in physical terms, a conversion project is actually respectful (and this is hardly ever the case) it would never be possible to reverse the use, the memory, the significance that this alteration has had in cultural, social, economic and historical terms.

The question, however, is more complex than it might seem, because the new use of these former religious buildings – parish churches, shrines, monastic churches, oratories, chapels – has repercussions not only on the architectural scale, but also on the urban level. These architectural forms have usually played a central role in the evolution of settlements; the changes in the uses of the buildings and the perception of them by local communities mean in most cases altering the equilibrium, the significance and the way of life in portions of the city, and sometimes even of the city itself.

It goes without saying, therefore, that to guarantee a future for this multi-layered cultural heritage rich in symbolic values, one of the objectives should surely be to define a

conversion project which seeks to avoid being invasive – and even perhaps with some small temporary aspects! But above all, the project must be openly based on an awareness of the importance it will have on different levels and from a number of points of view, not only in the present, but in the future, since the act of design will inevitably foster a process that will unfold in time, leading to unpredictable and uncontrolled interpretations and uses.

### **Conclusion: the need for a broad participatory process**

How to combine the needs related to new uses of these buildings with the transmission of their tangible and intangible values is the central question in this paper. Religious buildings clearly form a rich part of our cultural heritage, not only with important historical and architectural values, but also an important symbolic value. These buildings are affected by complex events that have undergone transformations, expansions and changes, whose meanings are embodied in the stratification of their historic structures. As shown by many of the examples given, the simple timely conservation of these historic structures, with the new uses being installed in them as if in a box, is insufficient. The considerations underlying the design have to be moved onto a different plane. In identifying a form of intervention that is not highly invasive, it is important to involve different skills and subjects, including contributions from the authorities, experts and scholars active in the cultural heritage and the local authority, but above all, local communities with their various members.

One such case is the church of San Quirico and Giulitta at Azzanello (Fig. 7), a small farming village in the province of Cremona in the Po Valley in northern Italy (Aporti 1837; Prati 2006). The church, dating from the 16th century, stands on a morphological terrace of the River Oglio and on the main road of the village, a medieval road that once linked Cremona to Bergamo. Originally maintained by the confraternity of the Disciplinati, its rich ornamentation comprises frescoes, wall paintings and stucco decorations. After it was deconsecrated, despite being a listed heritage building, in the 1980s it was used as a workshop for car repairs. Bathrooms were installed in the plinth of the bell tower, the walls were cut open to install machinery and a number of windows were opened in the chapels. From the early 1990s to 2009, it lay in a state of profound degradation, in part because of abandonment and lack of maintenance, but mostly because of thoughtless and chaotic alterations and additions. In 2011, about a decade after its acquisition by the municipality, followed by restoration work, a permanent exhibition was inaugurated within it devoted to rural life in the Po Valley (Fig. 8). The church, an important urban landmark in relation to the development of the town, continues in this way to be a symbol – no longer religious, but social – for the local community, linked to tradition and to the ‘vocation’ of the village. The exhibition tells of the daily lives of people who perceived this church as a place of gathering and prayer. This solution, interesting above all for the process by which it was discovered, is the result of a complex procedure that involved the Cultural Heritage Office, the region, the province, the city, the university<sup>8</sup>, professional training schools, scholars and local professionals<sup>9</sup>, and above all the community of Azzanello. It is a project perceived as a stratification, characterised by a certain



degree of reversibility, which is configured as yet another stage in the life of the place and which interprets many of the relevant symbolic, historical, artistic and cultural factors. In this case, the process that accompanied the decisions relating to the conservation and reuse of a complex place charged with significance, a deconsecrated religious building, was broad and shared. This resulted in each of the actors in the process becoming aware that they were only temporary custodians of this cultural heritage, in which the contingent needs of the present have not prevailed or effaced the record of the past.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The design of the Selexyz Dominicanen bookstore was coordinated by the Satijnplus Architecten office, while the design of the interior and the entrance portal is by Merckx+Girod. The bookstore was opened in 2006, but the restoration work was completed in 2011. See *SATJNplus Architekten*. [online]. Satijnplus. Available at: <<http://www.satijnplus.nl>>; *Merckx+Girod*. [online]. Merckx&Girod. Available at: <<http://merckx-girod.nl/>> [Accessed 26 June 2017].
- <sup>2</sup> *Selexys Dominicanen Maastricht*. [online]. Merckx&Girod. Available at: <<http://merckx-girod.nl/en/projects/retail/shops/selexyz-bookstore/dominicanen-maastricht>> [Accessed 26 June 2017].
- <sup>3</sup> Today the church is used by the Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg.
- <sup>4</sup> The design of the Kruisherhotel of the Chateau Hotels & Restaurant chain is by Satijnplus Architects together with the Groningen-based interior designers Henk Vos and Ingo Maurer.
- <sup>5</sup> *The mass is ended* is the catalogue of the exhibition held in Basel in the Church of Don Bosco from 15.1.2016 to 5.3.2016.
- <sup>6</sup> Andrea Di Martino presents a collection of 70 images – one for each church – in square format with the same point of view and perspective.
- <sup>7</sup> In Milan, the San Giuseppe della Pace Church, built in 1930, was deconsecrated in the 1970s. In 2001 it was transformed into a disco bar named ‘Il Gattopardo’.
- <sup>8</sup> For two consecutive years the students of the Laboratory of ‘Historical Building Preservation Studio’ of the Politecnico di Milano, School of Architecture, academic years 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 (Proff. Francesca Albani and Anna Ferrugiari), studied and advanced design conjectures on the Church of SS. Quirico and Giulitta. The presence of the students, teaching exhibitions, conferences and debates triggered a process that has stimulated the interest of the local community. I especially wish to thank the then deputy mayor Carlo Dusi, and Elena Manzoni.

- <sup>9</sup> The School of Restoration ‘Cr Forma’ in Cremona conducted a campaign of diagnostic inquiry in 2007 (stratigraphic analyses and description of the materials) in collaboration with the local administration.

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## BUILDING AND URBAN SPACE: THE CAPABILITY OF THIS SYMBIOSIS OR DIALOGUE TO KEEP THE 'SPIRIT' OF A PLACE ALIVE

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This theoretical reflection will be on the intimate connection between a building and the urban space where it stands and, more specifically, on the capability of this symbiosis or dialogue to identify and keep alive the 'spirit' of a place in recurring reuse and re-adaptation. The latter involves both the building (structure, plan, spatial layout, use, architectural qualities, etc.) and its setting or location (relationship to a road, square, surroundings, etc.).

Some important Italian examples are cited, geographically and historically diverse, which underline the importance of that 'reciprocity': they are used as paradigms to compare with the cases of Genk and Liège, which were the objects of debate in this workshop. Two specific Italian examples are taken to represent the extremes to which this reflection refers.

The first points out the capability of 'regeneration' of a building and its urban context in their mutual adaptation. This is Hadrian's Temple (2nd century AD) in Rome, now seat of the Chamber of Commerce, and its relationship with the present Piazza di Pietra, where the original eleven columns belonging to the north side of the Roman building still exist<sup>1</sup>. During the 17th century, the temple ruins became the Customs Palace and part of the north side was reused as the main front, opening onto the square (Fig. 1). Another important transformation occurred after the unification of Italy, when the building became the seat of Rome's stock exchange, until the recent adaptation of the main hall (originally the cell of the temple) as a 'political space' and of the square as a pedestrian tourist attraction.

The second case concerns the 'transfer' of a symbolic place. It involves the loss of the older place and the reinvention of a newer one which is still not fully established. The case refers to the church and the square, which from medieval times represented the heart of the urban centre of Avezzano (L'Aquila, Italy) until it was destroyed in a disastrous earthquake in 1915 (Fig. 2). Subsequently the decision was taken for the complete removal of the entire ancient centre, cancelling out the original religious and civic nucleus and identifying a new symbolic centre in the area of contemporary urban expansion. This new urban centre is still searching for its identity<sup>2</sup>.

These two examples represent the antipodes of the capability of humankind and of history to reinvent or delete the *topoi* of a town – the synthesis of significant architecture bound physically and 'sensorially' to the surroundings.

Within these theoretical extremes and related remarks it is intended to present some reflections in relation to the sites visited and which were the focus of discussion during the workshop – Sainte-Croix Church, the Inter-Allied Monument, the Fort of Loncin at Liège, converted churches at Maastricht, the C-Mine site at Genk and the Law Faculty of Hasselt University. The architecture of these is significant in relation to the meeting's

FIG. 1. View of the Hadrianeum (formerly the Customs House) in the Piazza di Pietra (etching by Giovan Battista Piranesi, 1760-78).

FIG. 2. Ruins of church S. Bartolomeo in Avezzano after the earthquake of 1915.



theme, *Conservation/Adaptation: keeping alive the spirit of the place; adaptive reuse of heritage with 'symbolic value'*.

These complexes, whether of recent and more or less extensive transformation (the C-Mine site, the converted churches and the Law Faculty), or in partial disuse (Sainte-Croix Church, the Fort of Loncin and the Inter-Allied Monument), are strongly characterised by a close relationship between several factors: original destination of use and symbolic value (religious, civil, historical, politico-social); notable scale and typo-morphological specificity (church, monument, fort, factory); architectural distinction and connection with the neighbourhood, town and countryside.

The specific architectural resilience of these buildings, evident in their singularity, contrasts, however, with the fact that today they are seen and valued as 'foreign' in the ever-changing cultural and environmental context; a quality that denies both their contextual value and their individual worth.

In this regard, certain observations arose during the workshop concerning the relationship between the interior and exterior, the building and surrounding space: a relationship comprising factors such as the contrasting scale of the building and of its surrounding context, the capability of the building and its layers to communicate not only the essence of the location, but also its social value in terms of community memory and cultural background – so creating the possibility of generating a process of integration and a sense of belonging; offering the community a new space to occupy whilst remembering their own roots and facilitating the creation of new memories.

With respect to these reflections, a sort of generational clash has occurred regarding design hypotheses, involving a re-run of the timeless dispute between 'conservatives' and 'innovators'. This confrontation has been reiterated many times in history, particularly in Italy, sometimes generating attitudes and technical indications of compromise or easy consensus. This has occurred mainly but not exclusively following catastrophic events (in Italy, the recent earthquakes in Umbria, Abruzzo and Emilia), with solutions endorsed by collective emotionalism and carrying the risk of 'façade architecture', especially in the rebuilding of the long-established 'minor' centres such as the legendary village of Prince Grigorij Aleksandrovič Potëmkin (1739–91).

However, the recomposition of spaces whose values go beyond the figurative is a complex matter: it is difficult to restore bonds of contiguity that have been disrupted, and to counteract fragmentation, creating a new dialogue between elements and their urban, territorial or landscape contexts.

The C-Mine site at Genk, the Sainte-Croix Church and the Inter-Allied Monument, (both at Liège), although very different from one another, testify to the importance of this relationship in order to keep alive the spirit of the place. The first advocates the need to re-join its *diseicta membra*, scattered across a very large area; *membra* that have irreversibly lost the logical continuity of an industrial process (Fig. 3). The second requires spatial and symbolic unity both in internal space (*Hallenkirchen* with opposing apses) and in the strong relationship with the neighbourhood – the roads of Saint-Pierre and Haute-Sauvènière and the part of town that it dominates from the hilltop (Fig. 4). The third vigorously declares the historical, figurative and landscape quality of its architecture, and the symbolic value that it represents uniting a religious monument and a civil memorial planned to commemorate the fallen in defence of Liège and the neutrality of Belgium during World War I<sup>3</sup>. The history of this ensemble, a synthesis of two 'competing' initia-

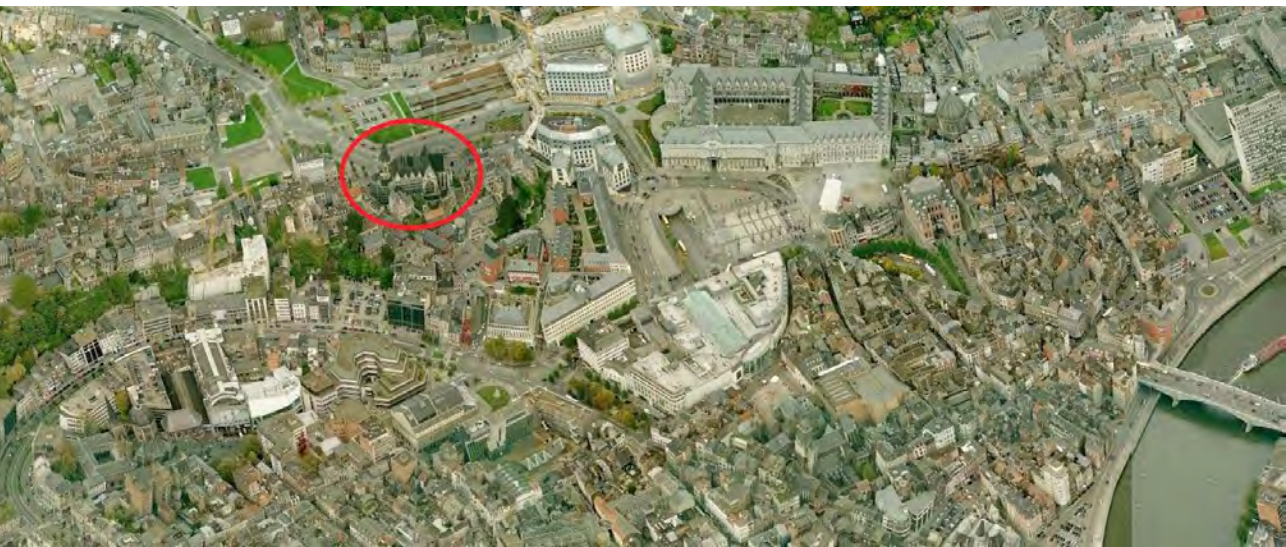


FIG. 3. C-Mine site at Genk (photo taken during the workshop).  
FIG. 4. Sainte-Croix Church and the town of Liège.

FIG. 5. Interlaced Monument at Liège. The status of partial abandonment of the religious monument.



tives (a far from simple project that is also the result of changing alliances in the twenty years between the two World Wars), demands consolidation because it expresses the worldwide memory of the history of the 20th century, which was the foundation stone for the European Union<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 5).

Rome offers several examples – often unresolved or incomplete – to compare with the three selected Belgian sites. The examples are drawn from both the historical centre of Rome and also from its original industrial outskirts, which became an integral part of the city decades ago. They represent the renovation of architecture, or of parts of the urban texture of Rome, in which the critical role of the reconnection of the parts emerges more and more.

Among these, the reconstruction of the Ara Pacis Museum and the integration of Augusto's Mausoleum (still in progress) and the entire Piazza Augusto Imperatore is a paradigmatic case. The relationship forms a whole, in which the Ara Pacis constitutes the boundary toward the Tiber, the embankment and road, and the Mausoleum forms the fulcrum of the square. Although it owes its origins to massive demolition and the opening of the archaeological venue at the end of the 1930s, the site emerged as a proposition at the beginning of the millennium. A fragmentary and unappreciated space, it had lost its earlier vivacity, derived from the popularity of the Mausoleum site (from 1780 to the 1930s), Corea's Theatre, the multi-purpose Teatro Umberto I and the auditorium of the Academy of St. Cecilia. The new Ara Pacis Museum, commissioned from the famed archi-





FIG. 6. The entrance of new Museum of Ara Pacis in Rome.

tect Richard Meier in 1996, generated great controversy both before and after its opening in 2006. Without entering into those arguments, it should be emphasised that the project was conceived outside the framework of the plan for the entire space, thus amplifying its function as a border of the monument and its strong marginality in this context (Fig. 6).

Subsequently, the renovation of the square was entrusted to the architect Francesco Cellini, winner of an international competition in 2006<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 7). The plan, still in progress, focuses on accessibility and usability of the archaeological site, considered from the perspective of its being a significant urban space to give back to the community. The 'hub' of the project coincides with the southern part of the area, between the apse of San Carlo al Corso Church and the staircase leading to the entrance of Ara Pacis Museum. At the archaeological level, this axis touches and reinstates the Mausoleum, whose restoration is assigned to the Capitoline Superintendent<sup>6</sup>.

Thus the solution interweaves routes and spaces, creating visual and movement flows that tie together each monumental element of this special urban palimpsest.

Similarly, the rearrangement of the archaeological-urban area of the Portico of Octavia aims to rehabilitate the ruins as an integral part of the town – an accommodation brought about as a result of the archaeological excavations that revealed the base of the propylaea, part of the pavement relevant to the Flaminian Circus and the medieval necropolis connected to Sant'Angelo in Pescheria, a church created within the Portico itself<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 8). Similarly, in the early 2000s the planners Laura Romagnoli and Guido Batocchioni worked



FIG. 7. Piazza Augusto Imperatore in Rome. The renovation of the square by architect Francesco Cellini, winner of an international competition in 2006.

on a system of ramps and paths in order to reconfigure the ratio between the old site and today's dynamic urban space<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 9). This solution has once again given accessibility to the area inside the propylaea: a permeability that celebrates and does not segregate the complex stratigraphy of Rome's architecture.

No less intricate, and still under discussion, is the adjustment of the tract of via Giulia at the height of the Carceri Nuove. Here the Master Plan of 1931 had provided for the 1939 demolition that led to the destruction of three city blocks. The demolition of that section of residential housing caused a disruption in the rectilinear road, designed by Pope Julius II Della Rovere at the beginning of the 16th century and a key element of his *Renovatio Romae*. This gap is formed by a declined plane that, in cutting via Giulia, joins Lungotevere dei Tebaldi to the lower via dei Banchi Vecchi (Fig. 10). The engineer Marcello Rebecchini began a project in the 1990s, realised in 2000, for part of this area – the block between via della Moretta and vicolo Malpasso<sup>9</sup>. A partial recomposition of a single building block also includes the church of San Filippo Neri (San Filippino). However, the resolution of the entire area still remains open, namely the restoration of buildings in front of via Giulia and the renovation of the riverfront.

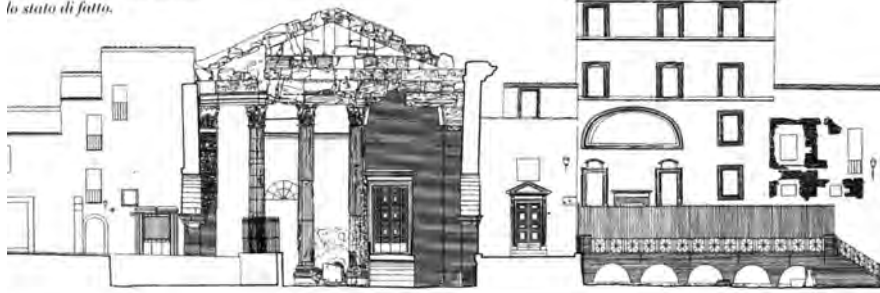
The solution was complicated by the decision in 2008 to provide a three-storey underground parking area in the block between via Giulia and Largo Perosi. In 2011, archaeological investigations brought to light important Roman remains, in part attributable to the stalls of the racing teams (*factiones*) of the Aurighi that ran in the Circo Massimo

FIG. 8. Octavia's Portico and church of Sant'Angelo in Pescheria at Rome.

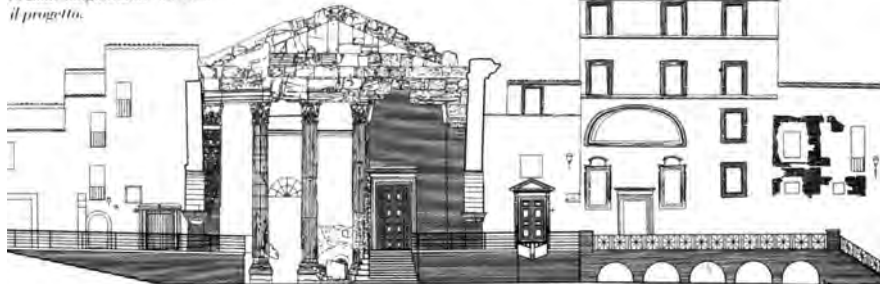
FIG. 9. Longitudinal internal sections of Octavia's Portico before and after the project (Portico d'Ottavia 2000: 57).



*Portico d'Ottavia.  
Sezione longitudinale interna:  
lo stato di fatto.*



*Portico d'Ottavia.  
Sezione longitudinale interna:  
il progetto.*



(in the Augustan era). This discovery has further exacerbated controversy between the Municipality and the Associations of Residents<sup>10</sup>.

In February of the same year, the auditorium of the Ara Pacis organised a meeting and exposition on the theme 'The Moretta and via Giulia'. The past and new ideas meet, involving seven projects developed by Italian and foreign designers invited by the Municipal Administration, namely Aldo Aymonino, David Chipperfield, Stefano Cordeschi, Roger Diener, Paolo Portoghesi, Franco Purini and Giuseppe Rebecchini. The design of the atelier Diener & Diener (in partnership with the Roman atelier Garofalo Miura Architects and Gunther Vogt, landscape painter of Zurich) was selected from among the projects, all of which differed but focused on the role of roads and viewpoints<sup>11</sup>. Diener & Diener's project planned to create a garden above the parking – a green secret place enclosed by a wall which, citing the nearby garden of Palazzo Farnese, was intended to restore the street alignments (Fig. 11).

Meanwhile, the parking dealership submitted a completely different project by the architect Stefano Cordeschi, a design that (in addition to making the archaeological remains accessible) contains a museum, an urban centre, a hotel and some dwellings. Today the issue is still uncertain, with strong opposition from the organisation representing the residents of the historic town. This organisation succeeded in stopping the development, through a 'precautionary instance' from the Consiglio di Stato (Fig. 12).



FIG. 10. Rome. View of the declined plane that, in cutting via Giulia, joins Lungotevere dei Tebaldi to the lower via dei Banchi Vecchi.

FIG. 11. Diener&Diener's project for the area of via Giulia.

FIG. 12. A recent image of the situation of the site via Giulia, Lungotevere dei Tebaldi.



FIGS. 13-14. Rome. The area of 'Mattatoio' in Testaccio reused as a cultural place.



The cited examples underline the problematic nature of 're-welding' the connective tissue of the buildings in the historical stratified context of Rome. However, this difficulty has also emerged in the original industrial fringe of the city.

A meaningful example is that of the former 'Mattatoio' in Testaccio – a structure and neighbourhood with a strong historical and architectural identity. The industrial plant was built to the design of architect Gioacchino Ersoch, Director of the Division III (Aedile and Architecture) of the Municipality of Rome, between the end of the 1880s and the early 1990s<sup>12</sup>. The plant, consisting of rows of sheds (built with mixed technology in brick, stone, iron and double-pitched roofs), was already improved between 1910 and 1920 by installing a refrigeration building and shelters along the road. Finally, in 1975 it was deprived of its original function because the activity of animal slaughtering was reallocated to the New Meat Centre in the Prenestino area.



In the 1990s, the municipality decided on the re-adaptation of several pavilions as places dedicated to culture, art and interdisciplinary studies, in agreement mainly with the Roma Tre University and the Academy of Fine Arts (Figs. 13–14).

At this time, despite the high quality reuse of many specific pavilions, the lack of a cohesive project and the fragmented nature of the ensemble (entrusted to several management groups: Città dell'Altra Economia, Accademia di Belle Arti, M.A.C.R.O. La Pelanda, Ararat, M.A.C.R.O. Testaccio, Villaggio Globale, etc.) significant critical matters have arisen<sup>13</sup>. A coordinating function capable of linking together all (individually valid) components is missing. In addition, 'empty' spaces create a less enjoyable appearance of the ensemble as a whole.

The Roman examples mentioned aim to offer some suggestions for the three selected cases of Liège and Genk, stressing the important role of the context – the historical and social urban texture – with the intention of maintaining the spirit of place alive in the present and also into the future.

## Notes

- 1 Ciranna, Altobelli 1987.
- 2 Ciranna, Montuori 2015.
- 3 See Smolderen 1935.
- 4 On this topic the author presented the report "Un faro su una commemorazione 'sospesa': il Memoriale interalleato a Cointe, Liegi" at International Conference *Lest we forget: Cemeteries and Military Ossuaries of the Twentieth Century in Europe* (Rome, Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, 31st March – 1st April 2016).
- 5 *Progetto di riqualificazione di piazza Augusto Imperatore*. [online]. Divisare. Available at: <<http://divisare.com/projects/287270-francesco-cellini-progetto-di-riqualificazione-di-piazza-augusto-imperatore>> [Accessed 9 April 2016].
- 6 ATP Urbs et Civitas, Cellini, F., 2015. *Il Mausoleo di Augusto e la sua piazza: uno spazio pubblico, non solo archeologico*. [online]. Comune di Roma. Available at: <<https://www.comune.roma.it/PCR/resources/cms/documents/piazamausoleoaugusto.pdf>> [Accessed 9 April 2016].
- 7 Salvagni 2000.
- 8 Batocchioni, Romagnoli 2004.
- 9 Rotondi 2013.
- 10 Up to request to TAR of suspension of work by the Coordinamento Residenti Città Storica. See, among others: Serloni, L., 2014. "Salvate le Scuderie di Augusto", *appello per gli scavi di via Giulia*. [online]. Repubblica. Available at: <[http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/09/17/news/salvate\\_le\\_scuderie\\_di\\_augusto\\_appello\\_per\\_gli\\_scavi\\_di\\_via\\_giulia-95929979/](http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2014/09/17/news/salvate_le_scuderie_di_augusto_appello_per_gli_scavi_di_via_giulia-95929979/)> [Accessed 5 March 2016].
- 11 Diener & Diener Architekten, Garofalo Miura Architetti, Vogt Landschaftsarchitekten, 2010. *Via Giulia. Roma*. [online]. Comune di Roma. Available at: <[http://www.comune.roma.it/PCR/resources/cms/documents/VIAGIULIA\\_idee\\_SCREEN.pdf](http://www.comune.roma.it/PCR/resources/cms/documents/VIAGIULIA_idee_SCREEN.pdf)> [Accessed 7 March 2016].
- 12 Cremona, Crescentini, Parisi Presicce 2014.
- 13 Ex Mattatoio di Testaccio 2015.

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## THE DILEMMA OF THE REDUNDANT CHURCHES: TO LOSE OR TO REUSE?

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Within the 2015 EAAE conservation workshop focused on adaptive reuse, one of the discussion topics coupled two concepts – historic building and sacred meaning – each of them involving specific values that impact on the intervention. On one hand, the conservation of the historic building is conditioned by the cultural values recognised in that building and the principles generally considered in this matter. On the other hand, when the historic building is a former church, other added values are brought to the fore and these ones are mostly put in question when considering the adaptive reuse. Yet it is to be noticed that both categories of values are determined by the way people relate to buildings, recognising – more or less – these values, and this relation changes in time.

A church is both architectural construction and sacred place. ‘By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself [...]. A sacred stone remains a stone; apparently (or, more precisely, from the profane point of view), nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality’ (Eliade 1959: 12)<sup>1</sup>.

When a historic church loses contact with religious people able to experience the manifestation of the divine there, it becomes redundant as sacred place, yet remains architectural construction. In other words, the materiality of the church is no more transmuted into supernatural, but it continues to be historic architecture representative of the faith which gave it birth. In this case, the conservation mainly refers to the values usually considered with regard to architectural heritage. Yet these values are enhanced by the memory of the sacred embedded in the construction: even for the profane man, the old churches still retain an exceptional architectural quality as materialisation of an act of faith.

### **Sacred and profane**

Sacred and profane are two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history (Eliade 1959: 15). For those people who have a religious experience, a church building reveals itself as sacred and its material reality is invested with supernatural qualities. The irruption of the divine which occurs within the sacred precincts results in detaching a territory qualitatively different from the surrounding profane milieu.

In a sacred space, the religious man comes in contact with the manifestation of the divine through a personal sensory experience stimulated by the way in which the space is conceived. First of all, there is the symbolic value of opening and passage between two modes of being, the profane and the religious. ‘The threshold, the door shows the solution of continuity in space immediately and concretely; hence their great religious importance, for they are symbols and at the same time vehicles of passage from the one space to the other’ (Eliade 1959: 25). Moreover, the church itself represents an opening in the



upward direction and ensures communication with the world of the gods. 'On the most archaic levels of culture this possibility of transcendence is expressed by various images of an opening; here, in the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven' (Eliade 1959: 26).

A sacred space is a strongly significant space. Often there is no need for a hierophany<sup>2</sup>, properly speaking; some signs suffice to indicate the sacredness of a place. When no sign manifests itself, it is provoked or asked within rituals (Eliade 1959: 27).

But only religious man is actually able to live the sensory experience of the sacred within a church. Modern man has desacralised his world and largely assumed a profane existence. Desacralisation pervades the entire experience of the non-religious man of modern societies and, in consequence, he finds it increasingly difficult to understand and rediscover the existential dimensions of religious man in the archaic societies. In this case, do the signs and symbols embedded in the construction of the historic church still have the same meaning today as they did in older times?

### **Signs and symbols**

Semiotics generally deals with two issues: one concerns what signs and symbols mean, the other how they work or the logic by which they come to mean something. There is distinction between signifier (the perceptible vehicle or external form), signified (the meaning, referent, connotation, etc.) and signification (the relation between the two)<sup>3</sup>. There are also differences between signs and symbols. A sign tends to have a singular meaning; signifier and signified are closely connected, typically come from the same context, and the signification itself is mostly metonymic; for example, the cross sign stands for Christianity. Symbols expand the notions of signs. Symbols are characterised by rich meanings that are multiple, fluid, diverse, layered, complex and frequently based on metaphorical associations – as are those between typical church architectures and the corresponding spiritual attitudes with respect to divinity, proper to different Christian religions<sup>4</sup>.

Whether the signifier is a sign or symbol embedded in an object, the communication is determined not by the object itself but rather by how the signifier works. A sign or symbol conveys information only insofar as it has meaning to a specific community. The meanings of signs and symbols – especially those of religious ones, often charged with emotion – are dependent on cultural contexts and thus variable, both in space and in time. This means that if the sign or symbol (signifier) is preserved intact but the meaning (signified) is changed in a new cultural context, the signification (as relation between signifier and signified) can have a result different from the original one; moreover, the signification can be completely lost when a sign or symbol no longer has meaning to a specific community.

### **Secularisation**

The theory of secularisation in sociology explains that as society advances in modernity, religion withdraws. Intellectual and scientific developments have undermined the spiritual, supernatural, superstitious and paranormal ideas on which religion relies. Bryan Wilson, one of the main supporters of the theory, defined secularisation as 'the process

whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose their social significance' (Wilson 1966: XIV).

Proponents of the secularisation theory assert that religion loses its social significance as a direct and inevitable result of three processes involved in modernisation:

1. *Rationalisation* – which means that society is increasingly organised according to rational principles and procedures, where religious concepts and values have no place.
2. *Differentiation* (social fragmentation) – which considers that we live in societies with increasingly specialised institutions (economy, education, health, politics, family, etc.), and religion is no longer directly relevant to the operation of any of them or of the social system as a whole.
3. *Decline of community and socialisation* – which refers to the fact that modern life is increasingly organised and regulated not within close-knit local communities, but on the societal level governed by state bureaucracies. Religion used to be at the heart of local community life, and it is irrelevant for a society regulated by bureaucratic rules (Shterin 2007).

The same scholars (e.g. Bryan Wilson, Steve Bruce) point to some trends, mostly observable in developed Western European societies, which are of interest for our topic:

- Previously accepted religious symbols, doctrines and institutions lose their prestige and importance.
- People live in greater conformity with the material world and no longer have much interest in the supernatural.
- Religion has become a private matter and no longer has much influence on other spheres of life.
- People are increasingly less committed to religious values and practices.
- Religion has become more a 'leisure pursuit' rather than a significant public endeavour (Shterin 2007).

Anyone familiar with Western European societies can observe the drastic decline of organised religion and the phenomenon is confirmed by statistical data. 'In 1851 about half the population of Britain attended church regularly. Now it is about 8 per cent. [...] In the Netherlands, the percentage of the adult population describing themselves as having no denomination rose from 14 per cent in 1930 to 39 per cent in 1997 and 42 per cent in 2003. An overwhelming majority of Swedes (95 per cent) seldom or never attend public worship' (Bruce 2006: 36).

The explanation of the decline of religion is certainly complex and there are many scientific works dedicated to this matter. Yet the phenomenon itself is undeniable. It is evidently there and generates effects: an increasing stock of redundant churches. A sign with the words 'for sale' on a church building is not uncommon in certain parts of Western Europe (Fig. 1); sometimes such 'useless' churches are demolished to make space for new constructions.

Admitting this phenomenon and considering its extent, in 1989 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 916, titled 'Redundant religious



FIG. 1. ‘Grade II listed’ church for sale in Preston, Lancashire, UK (2014). The local Baptist congregation cannot sustain the property anymore and in 2011 decided to sell it (by <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-lancashire-14080311>) [Accessed 19 June 2017].

buildings’. This document points out ‘the very considerable number of religious buildings throughout Europe that no longer fulfil their original function and are therefore vulnerable through neglect to demolition or inappropriate transformation.’ The mentioned Resolution recommends the integrated conservation of redundant religious buildings, which are often of architectural and historic significance, ‘through their sensitive adaptation to new uses’, avoiding, except in particular cases, their preservation as ruins. At the same time, the responsible authorities (Church, government and local administration) are called to promote ‘projects for reuse and readaptation which are not incompatible with the original function of the building and do not cause irreversible alteration to the original fabric’, and to encourage ‘a more imaginative use of existing religious buildings’.

### Adaptive reuse

The reuse of religious buildings for other purposes is not new. Moreover, there is a long tradition of changed use of sacred places, as a result of various processes and events that occurred throughout history. Probably the most famous case is the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul – the patriarchal church of Constantinople built by Emperor Justinian in 532–537, which was turned into a mosque by the Turks in 1453 af-

ter their conquest of Constantinople and then became a museum in 1938. Many church buildings, which today are considered milestones of our architectural heritage, have only survived thanks to adaptive reuse. After the French Revolution, confiscated churches were used as stores, barns and stables. In the early 19th century a Carthusian church in Ghent was converted into a textile factory. The abbey of Fontenay in Burgundy, which is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1981, was used as a paper factory from 1820 to 1903 (Coomans 2012). And the examples could continue. Before the development of scientific theories on historic monuments, restoration and compatible use, many churches had been reused mostly based on economic considerations and their potential to serve as ‘public utilities’. Some of these uses would now be considered inappropriate, but they have assured the preservation of those buildings, sometimes with little change to their original structure.

As times are changing, religious needs are changing too. As shown above, nowadays fewer people consistently attend religious services, faith communities have less economic force, and maintenance of worship buildings becomes unsustainable for their owners, re-

sulting in a significant number of churches left unused and subject to decay. Yet churches are in most cases buildings of historic and architectural interest valued by the community; therefore, it is imperative to consider their preservation. But preservation without reuse is not easy to justify in sustainable economic and financial terms.

Churches are expressions of faith, which is a decisive factor in the identity of social groups and communities, even in times when religious practices mean only tradition and historic reference. A religious building historically acquires a complex range of psychological and ideological values referred to power and authority, emotion and devotion, ethic and aesthetic, theology and liturgy, individual and group, divine and human, etc. For that reason, the reuse of churches – where sacred and secular aspects are mixed in different proportions – is a delicate question. Moreover, one should note that there are significant differences between different Christian religious institutions and communities when it comes to potential adaptive reuse of derelict churches.

A church was born as a worship place but it is essentially a public space which belongs to the community rather than to a limited group of devoted churchgoers. Within the prevalently secular modern society, a historic church should continue to pertain to the local community. Conservators should always have in mind that heritage values are conditioned by their social acceptance, which can be enhanced through socially efficient use.

From an architectural point of view, churches are very different from other buildings – through their particular spatial typology, iconography and environmental characteristics. Based on their characteristics, churches are not the best candidates for a pragmatic profane reuse. Many churches are saved from being demolished not just for the fact that they are sustainable (an old church or cathedral can be expensive to heat in the winter and the maintenance costs are generally high) but for their distinctive artistic and historic qualities. In practical terms, they translate simultaneously into advantages, protecting churches from being altered significantly, and constraints on the adaptive use: elaborate façades, interior decorations and features like steeples, altars, religious carvings and large wooden doors might be visually stunning but impractical for secular purposes.

Churches are generally characterised by spacious interiors, with large spans and heights. Dividing up that interior space with walls and flooring (often required by investors for functionality and/or maximisation of profit) means to cancel the essence of its architecture. In such cases the church is reduced to nothing more than a large shelter maintained only in order to preserve its role in the urban landscape and/or to give a certain touch of ‘antiquity prestige’ to the new, profitable use.

Speaking about conservation of historic buildings, Feilden asserts that the supreme architectural values are spatial and environmental. ‘It is by walking through an architectural ensemble that one senses its quality, using eyes, nose, ears and touch’ (Feilden 2003: IX). The interior of a church is by its essence a place of quiet contemplation, with discreet general light emphasising local effects due to candles, translucency and luminous strips; a church has specific acoustic qualities, as well as particular haptic properties. In designing the adaptive reuse, these environmental characteristics should be also considered as specific values, defining the architectural quality to be preserved.

It appears obvious that a derelict church cannot be given just any use: on the one hand, the activities should be compatible with its spatial and environmental qualities; on the other hand, they have to meet the broad consent of the residents. Broadly speaking, cultural uses are considered to be the most appropriate functions for former churches,

since the buildings can remain open to the public and be a further part of community life. But in pragmatic terms the new use has to be economically sustainable too. Therefore, the choice of the new use to be assigned to a former church is to be questioned from at least three points of view, which must be reconciled: conservation of architectural values, social acceptance and economic sustainability.

Subsequently, the manner in which the intervention is designed also leaves room for divergent opinions and confrontations, generating strong debates and critiques, sometimes virulent. On one hand, there are opponents whose inflexible approach 'seems to be increasingly caught in progressive bureaucratisation of conservation' (Frampton 2001: 11)<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, excessively daring interventions sometimes leads to 'a kind of Disney World that nobody needs or desires' (Frampton 2001: 11). However, cases of sensitively calibrated 'middle-ground' adaptive reuse of former churches certainly exist, and relevant examples are not scarce. They demonstrate how, with appropriate interventions, a former church building can be suited to a number of purposes – sometimes with alluring results, providing unique visitor experiences obtained with little change to the original structure and by reversible construction.

The Netherlands is an interesting case from this point of view, exhibiting many examples of adaptive reuse of churches as a consequence of the dramatic drop in religious practice over the past fifty years. At one time the Dutch Catholic church attendance was one of the highest in Europe. In the 1970s the Dutch population was 40 per cent Catholic, but today only 24 per cent identify themselves as Catholic. And many of those who declare themselves Roman Catholic do not regularly attend church. As a direct result, hundreds of Catholic churches in the Netherlands have been shut or sold<sup>6</sup>. But the Dutch have given creative new uses for these derelict historic building and three examples, all in Maastricht, have been visited and discussed within the 2015 EAAE Conservation workshop. In the following, we will comment on these examples, in ascending order of invasiveness of the intervention.

An incontestably successful example of adaptive reuse was achieved by the monumental Franciscan 'Minderbroeders' church in late Gothic style. The Franciscans started to build the church in 1300 but the choir was only completed in the 15th century. However, in 1485 the church was again in ruins. It was probably then that the restoration work began, the relieving arches and buttresses were built and the monastery constructed. The year 1632 (when the troops of Frederik Hendrik conquered Maastricht, previously occupied by Spanish troops in 1579) marked the end of the Franciscan monastery. In the following years, the Franciscan 'Minderbroeders' were forced to leave the city and the church was turned into an arsenal until 1867. By the end of 1881, a section of the church was taken to be used for archives. The monastery buildings had several uses, including a reformed orphanage (1640–1690), a military hospital (1685–1798), a prison (until 1917), a sauerkraut factory, the workshop of the Dutch sculptor Charles Vos (d. 1954), and a workplace for the blind and people recovering from tuberculosis. After the Second World War, the Franciscan church remained furnished for a long time as an archive depot with beautiful neo-Gothic cabinets. By the beginning of 1962, the cupolas were restored and a more modern archive establishment was installed.

In 1980, plans were made to extend the State Archives of Limburg and in 1984 it was decided to realise the extension at the existing location, under the motto: 'To use a monument is to maintain it'<sup>7</sup>. The Franciscan church is now host to the study hall of the State Archives of Limburg, officially opened in November 1996.

This building, more than 700 years old, was created as a Catholic church, but it has had a sacred function for less than half of its life. For over one hundred and thirty years (since 1881) it has been used for archives; thus the recent intervention didn't involve a change in use so much as the 'updating' of an historic adaptive reuse. The discreet and stylish design valorises the spatial and environmental characteristics of the church, as an historic memory of the original spirit of place (Fig. 2).

The second example – one of the most well-known and largely discussed cases of adaptive reuse – is the 13th-century former Dominican church in Maastricht. Built in 1294, this building served the local Dutch community as a Dominican church for 500 years. Since 1794 (when Maastricht was invaded by Napoleon and the Dominican religious order was forced out) it has served as: a parish church, a warehouse, then an archive, and most recently as a bicycle storage location. Since 2007 it has housed the Selexyz Bookstore, designed by the architecture firm Merckx+Girod in Amsterdam<sup>8</sup>. After more than 200 years of different uses (more or less appropriate), the redundant Dominican church was returned to a decent active life and the present community benefits from the new use of the historic space.

Within a sensitively calibrated adaptive reuse, the old church was fitted with a minimalist and modern interior design, intended to emphasise the distinctive architecture of the church while ensuring requested functionality<sup>9</sup>. The major addition is a three-storey book stack asymmetrically placed in the church, thus leaving to the left the entire height of the Gothic church intact. Thanks to the slender frame structure in black steel and the use of perforated steel plates, the new insertion looks discreet and does not conflict with church's architecture. Moreover, the new walk-in book stack is similar to a scaffold which stretches up to the stone vaults, allowing the visitor unprecedented views of historic architectural details from close-by and an impressive overall perspective of the colossal space of the Gothic church. Last but not least, the construction of the new walk-in book stack is reversible and can be dismantled at any time without altering the historic substance. (Figs. 3–5). A cross-shaped reading table was included into the former choir: in the new profane cultural context, a new signification is generated by the old Christian sign, recalling the primary, sacred use of the building.

The third example shows a completely different approach. It is about the complex of the former Kruisheren monastery in the centre of Maastricht, recently transformed into a luxury hotel designed by the Dutch firm Satijnplus Architecten.

After the foundation of the Order of Crutched Friars (the Kruisheren) in 1238 in Huy (Belgium), in about 1437 it was decided to establish a new monastery in Maastricht. Construction started in 1440 with the chancel of the church, completed in 1459. In 1461, paintings were added to the Late Gothic ceilings. The construction of the east wing of the monastery began in 1483, and the entire complex was completed in 1520 with the finalisation of the south wing of the monastery. During the French occupation, the monastery was closed down and the monks were exiled. From that moment on, the complex was used for the storage of munitions and later as a barracks and military bakery.

Following the departure of the French, the building became the property of the Dutch state and, in time, the complex started to show signs of decline. By the end of the 19th century, Squire Victor de Stuers, the founder of the Dutch cultural heritage movement, started to show his interest in the complex and began organising its restoration. He decided to house the National Agricultural Research Station here, with the aphorism: 'There is no better solution to the decay of old buildings than to give them a good purpose'<sup>10</sup>.

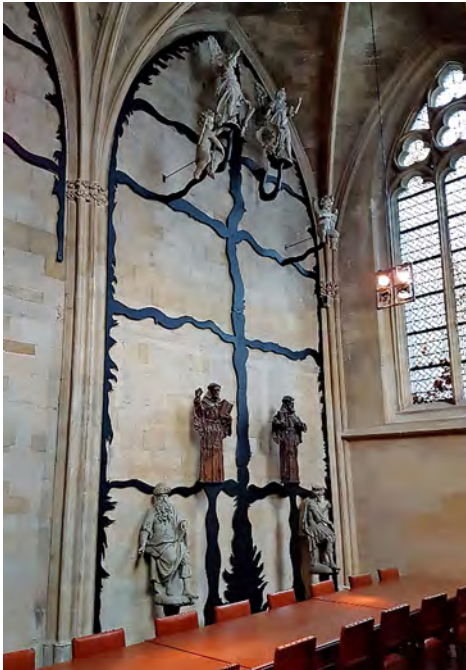


FIG. 2. The State Archives Limburg in the former Franciscan 'Minderbroeders' church in Maastricht: view of a meeting room in the former chapel Our Lady Star of the Sea (CC-BY-SA-4.0).

FIGS. 3-5. Selexyz Bookstore in the former Dominican church in Maastricht.

In 1900, after radical restoration work, the cloister remained in use as the National Agricultural Research Station. In the mid-20th century, the Kruisheren cloister became a protected national monument under the Dutch monuments law.

The Kruisheren monastery was abandoned in the early 1980s and the complex began to fall into disrepair once again due to disuse and neglect. Afterwards the city of Maastricht bought the buildings and started looking for a new use. The first idea was to accommodate the Academy of Fine Arts there. However, this plan was not feasible because the educational establishment could not bear the repair and maintenance costs. Other uses suggested in the following years were rejected due to the same problem of insufficient financial resources. In late 2000, Camille Oostwegel, owner of Chateau Hotels and Restaurants, proposed that the city of Maastricht accommodate a luxury hotel in the derelict monastery. His proposal was received with enthusiasm by the municipality, provided that all interventions would be reversible in order to preserve the historic values<sup>11</sup>.

The Kruisheren Hotel was inaugurated in 2005 and is advertised as a 'design hotel between heaven and earth'<sup>12</sup>. The Gothic church of the former monastery houses several hotel facilities: reception, lobby, three lounge corners (in the former side chapels), three modern boardrooms, a library, a glass lift and the wine bar exhibiting an unusual wine storage. The nave of the church also contains an extensive mezzanine with a restaurant area. The modern intervention is particularly impressive (not necessarily in a positive sense) due to the stunning manner in which the many hotel facilities have been designed and inserted in the monumental Gothic building.

Entering the building, it becomes evident that the design of the conversion was mainly focused on the commercial attractiveness of the profitable new use, and not on the valorisation of the 15th-century Gothic church. The historic construction is assigned only the role of shelter and its prominent murals become only a background for the futurist design which emphatically redefines the architecture of the place. The typical Gothic spatiality is cancelled by numerous partitions, and by the dizzying agglomeration of strange forms and striking colours. Visual effects (recalling funfair amusements) deflect the attention from the original architecture. The acoustic and haptic characteristics of the historic building are completely changed too. On the whole, the heavy and inflated interior design seems a gathering of stalls and amusements for public entertainment that totally clash with the austere architectural character of the monumental church<sup>13</sup> (Figs. 6-8).

Even if disputable from a theoretical perspective, the adaptive reuse saved from ruin a valuable historic building fallen into disrepair after a long period of vacancy and neglect. As it was proved impossible to support the renovation from public funds, a high amount of private financing (80 per cent) was used, leading to the prevalence of commercial profit criteria in designing the adaptive reuse. The best part of the intervention is that the transformations are based on a 'box-in-box' construction: independent construction units are positioned in the church and could be removed at a forthcoming change of use.

## Conclusions

As society advances in modernity, people are ever less committed to religious values and practices. In the new cultural context, previously accepted religious symbols, doctrines and institutions lose their prestige and importance.





FIGS. 6-8. Luxury hotel facilities in the Gothic church of the former Kruisheren Monastery in Maastricht.



The drastic decline of organised religion generates an increasing stock of redundant churches. They are vulnerable through neglect to demolition or inappropriate transformation. In most cases, derelict churches are buildings with historic and architectural interest, worthy of being preserved. But preservation without reuse is not easy to support in economic and financial terms.

Redundant as sacred space, a church building remains representative of the religion for which it was created, testifying to local identity and traditions. Even in a prevalently secular society, the historic and identity values of religion still exist. Preserving and reusing a church for socially accepted purposes enriches the community with historic values.

Reuse is a continuous process and reflects the constantly evolving society. Each successive reuse can be considered as a new start in a building's life, one which adds a new layer in its history. History proves that successive reuses can alternate religious and non-religious uses. During their long existence, some churches were used less for worship than for other purposes; in critical periods this prevented their loss.

Reusing redundant churches is always better than demolishing them. Adaptive reuse can turn these at-risk churches into buildings of opportunities. A more liberal attitude to the reuse of churches may be beneficial in preventing their definitive loss, as long as the adaptive intervention does not cause irreversible alteration to the original fabric and is based on reversible construction.

For the architect, the adaptive reuse of historic church buildings with exceptional architectural qualities can be a professional exercise on the highest level and 'the best way to keep the tools sharp until the great job, the great moment, comes along' (Rexroth 1959). It is also an exercise in understanding and appreciation of the work of predecessors. The architect who can project himself into exultation of another learns more than the craft of designing a building. He learns the stuff of architecture<sup>14</sup>.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) was a Romanian historian of religion, fiction writer, philosopher and professor at the University of Chicago. He was a leading interpreter of religious experience, who established paradigms in religious studies that persist to this day.

<sup>2</sup> Hierophany (Greek: *hieros*, 'sacred', + *phainein*, 'to show'). The manifestation of the divine or the sacred, especially in a sacred place, object or occasion. Manifestations of some particular aspect may be named after the aspect revealed, e.g. theophany (of divinity), kratophany (of power). Apud Bowker, J., 1997. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. [online]. Available at: <<http://www.encyclopedia.com>> [Accessed 17 February 2016]. According to Mircea Eliade's theory, hierophanies form the basis of religion, splitting the human experience of reality into sacred and profane space and time.

<sup>3</sup> *Symbols*. [online]. International Encyclopedia of the Social Science. Available at: <[http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Signs\\_and\\_symbols.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Signs_and_symbols.aspx)> [Accessed 2 March 2016].

<sup>4</sup> Analysing the three major types of Christian architecture – the Romanic basilica, the Gothic cathedral and the Byzantine church – Lucian Blaga (philosopher and writer, commanding personality of the Romanian culture of the interbellum period) proposes an interpretation of the metaphysical determination International of the architectural forms based on specific relations with the transcendence proper to different religions. The severe architecture of the Roman basilica focuses on the altar and the priest.

Its architectural concept is based on the idea that transcendence can be forced to show itself through a miracle due to the strong power of the magic ritual act performed by the priest in front of the altar. The Gothic cathedral, with its frenzy of verticality, expresses the spiritual aspiration to rise toward transcendence through human effort, interior transfiguration and sublimation. The Byzantine church seems to float between earth and sky like a world in itself, bounded only by its own vaults. Through their construction, Byzantine churches express the idea that the transcendence is descending to become palpable and a revelation from above is possible at any time. This feeling is reinforced by the role of light rays, which penetrate the obscurity and acquire material consistency in the sacred space; the light is an integral part of the Byzantine architecture, as a visible and symbolic expression of transcendence (Blaga 1969: 78).

<sup>5</sup> 'Have our standards become so exacting that they inhibit a more liberal approach to the reconstruction and appropriation of antique form? The world as a whole seems to be increasingly caught in progressive bureaucratisation of conservation... with architectural purity on one side of the argument, and crass reconstructivism operating with impunity on the other; the latter leading to a kind of Disney World that nobody needs or desires. Between these two poles, there surely exists an intelligent sensitively calibrated "middle ground"' (Frampton 2001: 11).

<sup>6</sup> *Maastricht. New Live for Old Churches*. [online]. Available at: <<http://viewfromsintpieterstraat.blog>

spot.ro/2014/03/maastricht-new-lives-for-old-churches.html> [Accessed 10 March 2016].

<sup>7</sup> *History Franciscan monastery*. [online]. RHCL. Available at: <<http://www.rhcl.nl/en/discover/history-franciscan-monastery/>> [Accessed 16 March 2016].

<sup>8</sup> Pham, D., 2011. *Ancient Dominican Church renovated into Modern Bookstore*. [online]. Inhabitat. Available at: <<http://inhabitat.com/gorgeous-church-renovated-into-modern-bookstore/>> [Accessed 16 March 2016].

<sup>9</sup> According to the statement of the authors, available at: <<http://merk-x.nl/retail/dominicanenkerk-maastricht/>> [Accessed 16 March 2016].

<sup>10</sup> Satijnplus Architecten, 2006. *Kruisherhotel. The Crutched Friars Monastery*. [online]. Divisare. Available at: <<http://divisare.com/projects/17766-satijnplus-architecten-kruisherhotel/>> [Accessed 16 March 2016].

<sup>11</sup> *Kruisherhotel, Maastricht*. [online]. Her Bestemming. Available at: <<http://www.kennisbankherbestemming.nu/projecten/kruisherhotel-in-maastricht/>> [Accessed 16 March 2016].

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> 'With the restoration of the Kruisher cloister in combination with the development of a new role as a hotel and the reversible way in which the necessary interventions have been implemented, this project contributes to the international debate on restorations. This project has become an example for contemporary views on restoration and the reversible conversion of monuments in Europe.' (Satijnplus Architecten, 2006. *Kruisherhotel. The Crutched Friars Monastery*. [online]. Divisare. Available at: <<http://divisare.com/projects/17766-satijnplus-architecten-kruisherhotel/>> [Accessed 16 March 2016]).

<sup>14</sup> Paraphrase after Kenneth Rexroth, 'The Poet as Translator' (1959). In the original: 'The writer who can project himself into exultation of another learns more than the craft of words. He learns the stuff of poetry.'

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## STRATEGIES FOR DISSEMINATION OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE AND PROMOTION OF TOURISM IN THE REUSE OF CHURCHES

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At present one of the greatest opportunities for sustainable development of the built environment is the reuse of architectural heritage. At the same time, the conception of cultural heritage has been amplified, assuming a leading role in the local schools of thought as concerns the cultural economics. Starting from the historical and artistic value of single artefacts, the understanding of the cultural resource has already extended beyond the actual monument to include the urban context and, furthermore, is able to motivate new forms of participation and social coherence.

In evaluating the economic aspect of a recovery and restoration operation, one also has to consider that all the products of human actions in preserving and increasing its value are in continuous evolution, with updates and modifications in form, materials, aspect and functional features. However – and on the contrary – the permanence and increase in value of cultural heritage rests in its non-modification and, as far as possible, in its remaining in the place of recovery or where it was created. Thus, we ask what links this heritage to changes in meaning? What changes in the ‘taste’ of the community, the progressive way in which changes in the cultural patrimony are ‘viewed’ and considered: that is what contemporaneity and universality of their message consists in (Carughi, De Falco 2016).

From this point of view the reuse of deconsecrated churches is today a delicate issue. It is a phenomenon particularly widespread in Europe: from Holland, where the numbers are greatest, to England, where about twenty churches each year are closed down, being transformed not only into concert halls or cultural centres, but also into gyms, supermarkets and even skating rinks (Bergamo Post 2015). It is therefore of primary importance to reflect on the consequences of the type of transformation introduced to instil new life into cultural heritage. Religious buildings, in particular, apart from their having an architectural value and significance, are also rich in symbolic values. The debate is about how to combine the reuse of such a building with the transmission of its material and immaterial values. What are the limits and opportunities in the adaptive reuse of this type of heritage? How can the spirit of the place, the ‘atmosphere’ and the ‘sacredness’ of the religious building be safeguarded and respected? Up to the Modern Movement and as desired by the owners or the architects, buildings fall completely within their semantic significance and their identity has not been modified over time. Any building designed for a purpose may be interpreted in any way, excluding where that purpose contradicts its form, its function and its internal coherence (Eco 1990). In the current reality, however, the dissemination of knowledge and technical skills and the constant effort to excel and surpass ‘limits’, drives interpretation of the ‘sense’ of the construction to peaks of unimaginable interpretation. Nevertheless, in terms of preservation, religious buildings are particular as they elicit emotional responses in their users. From this point of view the case of the apse of the medieval church transformed into a bar in the new Selexyz Dominicanen

Bookstore in Maastricht certainly poses some questions regarding whether the choice of a cross-shaped table in its centre is appropriate or not. One should also consider that this patrimony is to be considered the world's heritage and not just the property of the local user group. Prior to design intervention and even prior to the concept stage, there must be a dialogue with the place, its users and its stakeholders in determining the programme. The designer must have an understanding of the place and empathy for it and must be aware of the importance of the intangible qualities of the religious building.

It is therefore necessary to respect and conserve the memory of the 'spirit of time' in which the monument was created; in other words, that specific and individual character of an era which the works of art and of architecture are called to evoke (Pigafetta 2003: 33). Yet the Selexyz Dominicanen Bookstore without any doubt lends itself to being 'chosen' as an example of the present phenomenon of reuse of ancient churches: it has already become an icon (Mandiello 2014). Will the Dominican church be remembered in time for its medieval history or for its contemporary period?

This provocation serves to stimulate reflection. Research carried out in the context of the history of architecture is an essential support to strengthen the knowledge of monuments that must be preserved through reuse. Therefore, the task of transmitting the significance and the values of architectonic works is to be sought in that discipline. From this point of view, any intervention for reuse should be filtered by careful historical analysis that guarantees respect for the cultural heritage, even without impeding its transformation. During the workshop it has been rightly underlined that, in looking for those features of value that would be worthy of being handed down, a synergy between historians, restorers and designers. Is desirable It is necessary to ensure that this value of the heritage is communicated to the user groups through the sharing and dissemination of knowledge. It should also be considered that altering the function of a building is the most obvious of changes, but other alterations may be chosen such as the circulation route, orientation, and the relationship between spaces. The perception one normally has of a church is its longitudinal space. In transforming a church into a bookstore, the project in Maastricht provided for the insertion of a structure to access higher levels from which the new spatial dimension is unveiled and one may take advantage of an unusual view, appreciating the detail of the decorative elements close-up. The height of the ceilings, on the other hand, allows large piles of books to be stored even though the muffled and silent atmosphere might be better preserved if the use were a library or an archive. Especially when the reuse project involves a transformation of the 'meaning' of the building, we need to reflect on how to preserve and transmit the historical memory as an integral part of the project.

### **Promoting tourism in the reuse of churches: the case of Sant'Aniello in Naples**

In Italy also there are dozens of abandoned religious buildings. A characteristic that is often neglected is that they have not been deconsecrated. It is therefore even more complex a matter to find new functions that are compatible with a religious activity that may still take place. In this regard, Naples has had the example of the 'Libreria Utopica Temporanea' where an exceptional book sale event was arranged in the baroque Croce di Lucca church in piazza Miraglia. The Archbishop's Curia, on the other hand, in an illuminating manner, and in order to find economic subsidies, announced competitions for management concessions for some unused churches, on condition that they were used for cultural and social purposes.

FIG. 1. Inside the former church *Matri divinae gratiae Dicatum*, which today hosts Grimaldi publishing Company's Head offices.



es. A case in point is the church of *Matri divinae gratiae Dicatum*, 1921, in via Carlo Poerio, re-opened in 2014 after thirty years' abandonment, and inside which Grimaldi, editor and antique bookstore, has established its head office (Fig. 1).

An interesting case for the implementation, enhancement and tourist promotion of a reuse project is offered by the church of Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli<sup>1</sup>. Its restoration is completed, but it requires with an equal degree of necessity, an activity that can re-establish a public civic function, adequate to its importance, after years of oblivion and irrecoverable loss of numerous works of art. In addition, it is necessary to establish the particular identity of the district within the ancient city of Naples, and the defining position of the monument in the past, now lost, can be the starting point. A project, thus expanded in scope, can be the means of harnessing local resources, creating an interactive network of private interests and institutional bodies, within the ambit of the 2013 'Historic Centre of Naples: World Heritage Site Enhancement'. Cultural non-religious activities, with the active contribution of associations and people from the cultural and institutional world, do not exclude religious activities and they may not only nurture an economic virtuous process in support of further restoration and management, but they may transform the church into a centre for regeneration of the urban and social fabric. At present there is an opportunity for its use and subsequent opening, possible due to the valuable collaboration of the 'Legambiente' (Environment Party) and the Archbishop's Curia, to whom the church is entrusted (with the protection of three competent Neapolitan superintendents), promoting guided canonical visits and also exhibitions, conferences, artistic manifestations, musical events and even the setting up of restoration laboratory schools. The Church of Sant'Aniello is the symbol of the earliest penetration of Christianity into the acropolis of Neapolis (Strazzullo 1985: 2). Damaged during World War II, the church was

closed and abandoned for such a long time that the local people do not recall its history, as can be seen from the visitors' guide of 1976 which dedicated only a few words, describing it as 'redone a number of times and now ruined' (Bertarelli 1927: 256). And yet it is extraordinary because it encompasses, in a relatively confined area, an environment that embodies distinct and quintessential traces of the development of the city. It thus establishes a unique opportunity for experimentation, to recover the identity of the place, commencing precisely from the church itself. The church is greatly stratified with structures and artefacts from different eras, and therefore capable of becoming representative of an area. Already in 1385 the entire neighbourhood was described as 'Regio Sancti Anello Maioris' (Colombo 1921: 81). Agnello was the abbot of the monastery of San Gaudioso in the 6th century AD and patron of the city, together with San Gennaro, although no one today remembers Agnello (Vitale 1799: 2). In the 6th century the Archbishop of Taranto extended the small pre-existing church, defining the typology of post-Reformation churches. (Pandullo 1799: 7). For its salubrity and peacefulness, it was chosen as the site for the Hospital of Santa Maria del Popolo degl'Incurabili, and now houses the University Hospital of the University of Naples II (Giannetti 2010).

The 6th-century imprint can be found in the double façade, which although simple in its design can be inserted in the manner of the works of Cosimo Fanzago, whose noteworthy example is the nearby church of Santa Maria della Sapienza (Carughi, De Falco 2016). The exterior of the church of Sant'Aniello thus summarises the character of the place.

If the history of the monument and site, briefly described below, aids in underlining its material and immaterial value, the innovative restoration by Ugo Carughi – although re-composing, as far as possible, each and every surviving marble, picturesque and architectonic element – transforms the internal configuration of the church, creating an entirely new sense of the space (Carughi, Muselli, Gravagnuolo 1989). This is due to the large empty rectangle of 9.65 x 5.15 linear metres created in the floor of the nave, which gives the church a new dimension and depth (Fig. 2). From the entrance one may admire the prestigious main altar and at the same time, one may see part of the defensive Greek walls of the city, part of the Roman walls *opus reticulatum* and some tombs from the Dark Ages, without having to go down to another level, and just by looking through the glass 'invention' dug into the centre (De Fusco 2011). The entire historical sequence of the city from its foundation era to contemporary times are synchronically visible inside the church. The open visibility of the archaeological artefacts dispenses with the usual protective coverings. From the main aisle one may access a continuous overhanging structural glass walkway, approximately two metres in length – one of the first in Italy – supported by steel joists set into the floor slab. One may walk suspended in the immense emptiness. The wooden pews are set on a wooden platform perimeter mounted on the crushed earthenware floor – the platform houses the installation cables and the heating. The pews can be orientated in two different directions by manually rotating on a steel hinge that also enables various space use options.

At present, the process of defining the most fitting activities for the reuse of the church is underway. Besides those mentioned, a tentative contribution was made during the course of the Exhibit History Lab, whose yearly theme was replaced by a series of suggestions such as the possible re-insertion of a book-sharing activity or the use of video-mapping (Figs. 3-4).

The present dominance of images and the exploitation of new technologies to elicit emotions and create 'experiences' in the beholder brings to our attention the use of vid-

FIG. 2. The glass-cased archaeological ruins with overhanging glass walkways set in the nave of Sant'Aniello Church.



eo art where the façades of architectonic buildings are used as projection screens (Irace 2013; Maniello 2014). Among the most renowned groups specialising in this new art are Urban Screen and Antivj, from Germany and Belgium respectively. The spectacular effect is immediate: the façade comes to life, playing with its original forms or creating new ones, with 3-D images and effects that loom over the spectators and pedestrians (Fig. 5). The artistic event draws in the public without having any effect in terms of the permanent transformation of the building.

Given that temples, cathedrals and churches have also had, over time, a function of assembly and collective identification, this solution would seem congenial to the church of Sant'Aniello. Two factors arise from this perspective – and apply generally to the recovery of religious buildings. On one hand, attention must be paid to the habitability of the place, to the individual–environment relationship, addressing the complex system of elements that establish the qualitative level of the relationship between people and place: access, pedestrianisation, safety, lighting, removal and disposal of waste, urban fabric, poster and billboard design. On the other hand, to truly recover the historical awareness and recognition of the monument by the citizens, a specific communication strategy has to be put into action. It is therefore of primary importance to transmit the image of Sant'Aniello in order to promote tourism and use of the site, through the present and necessary perspective of 'setting up a network' related to this cultural heritage.

An example of this may be found in recent times: in the 1950s and 60s, knowledge and awareness of monuments and cities in Italy commenced with the dissemination of tourist posters and billboards whose power to make an imprint on the collective imagination was well exploited (De Falco 2014).

Two interesting examples of recent art promotion initiatives designed to spread awareness visually are worthy of mention. *The Grand Tour* was realised in 2007 by the





FIG. 3. Booksharing concept by Daniele Caccavale and Maddalena Sammarco designed for the Exhibit History Lab course.

FIG. 4. Event card concept by Teresa Iavarone and Martina Panico designed for the Exhibit History Lab course.

Next page:  
FIG. 5. Play of imagines through video-mapping technics on the façade of Duomo di Milano.

National Gallery together with Hewlett Packard, when over a period of twelve weeks they transformed the streets of London into an open-air gallery, positioning forty-four full-size framed reproductions of paintings from the museum, using advanced techniques. They were sited in the most unexpected places in the city to attract the public's attention. The second project, *Musei in Strada: L'arte va in Città*, carried out between December 2014 and June 2015 as part of the manifestation *Roma Grande Formato* with the intent of reducing distances that separate the museums from the outskirts of the city, "transferred" fifteen works of art from Palazzo Braschi, from Gnam and from Macro, into the outer districts of Tor Bella Monaca, Ottavia and Trullo by means of photographic images on canvas. The images were also related to an app to be downloaded onto a smartphone. One should also bear in mind the communicative potential of new forms of contemporary art, such as that installed in Delaware Street in Washington D.C.<sup>2</sup>

Communication methods are especially relevant in advertising historical buildings, to invite citizens to learn about and visit them, when their new use is not permanent. For



this purpose, ‘branding’ or a logo is needed; one rooted in historical analysis and which serves to transmit a sense of that history. The logo of a monument can also be included in a cultural itinerary card, and circuits linked thereto to promote recognition or spread awareness and knowledge<sup>3</sup>.

### **Conclusion: a suggestion for Sainte-Croix**

The Neapolitan experience may provide some inspiration for a reuse proposal – or, prior to that, the transmission of awareness so to avoid forgetfulness regarding places of interest – and in due course to promote tourism for the Church of Sainte-Croix. Throughout the Middle Ages Liège was a true ‘city of churches’ and, furthermore, as it merged with the Roman road coming from Maastricht directly into the commercial and artisan area, it was the centre for merchant exchanges. Today it is still the centroid of a network linking Paris, Amsterdam and Cologne and is regarded as a city of art, history and the homeland of great artists (Kupper 1991).

The Gothic church is just a short distance from Place Saint Lambert, considered the cradle of the city, where the Cathedral of Saint Lambert used to be, the ruins of which have been brought to light during some recent excavations. In the Musée d’Art Religieux et d’Art Mosan, the reliquary of the Triptych of the True Cross is kept – a noteworthy example of 12th-century work, it was donated by the Emperor Henry II to the Church of Sainte-Croix and could be repositioned inside the church and be a visitor attraction.

If it is true that the best way to see Liège is on foot – bearing in mind that the Macadam Festival of Street Art (with musical and theatrical shows, clowns and jugglers) is hosted in September, and also looking at the extremely popular district of Outremeuse on the

other side of the river, the birthplace of George Simenon – the hypothesis of making the area around Sainte-Croix more dynamic and so contributing the future of the city may be brought into focus, starting with the launch of activities dedicated to tourism, situated inside the church.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The toponym of 'Caponapoli' refers to either the higher part of the acropolis or to the mermaid Partenope, nicknamed the 'head of Naples', who, legend would have it, is buried in this place (Galante 1872: 92; de la Ville Sur-Yllon 1894).

<sup>2</sup> The artist Alex Hense Brewer was commissioned to paint the abandoned Friendship Baptist Church as an art installation.

<sup>3</sup> A concept for a proposed logo for Sant'Aniello was created from a reflection on the Caponapoli name (within a university course conducted by the author), referring to Partenope's head and the church's historical stratification, which is rendered graphically. It was an effort to link the value of the monument and the spirit of the place, while at the same time promoting cultural activities taking place within and around the site.

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## INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIETY: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESTORATION

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### Premise

During the workshop *Conservation/Adaptation: keeping alive the spirit of the place. Adaptive reuse of heritage with 'symbolic value'*, the restoration of architectural heritage known as 'industrial archaeology' barged into the reflections of participants. The group debated the study and conservation of architectures that have been or are in the process of being abandoned, are degraded and often at risk of being demolished (Fig. 1).

### Endangered architectures

Abandoning industrial buildings that were once significant for their production output, architectural features, presence and geographical position is a widespread phenomenon that is often aimed at demolishing the factory under the pretext that is impossible to restore it, let alone reuse it. Decades of industrial archaeology studies have defined methods and processes of historical inquiry, researching the cultural and therefore social values of the architectural features of these places, which are often of extraordinary documentary interest. The culture and techniques of restoration have long dealt with the specifics of conservation and possible reuse of these buildings.

However, it is true, as stated in the documents provided during the workshop, that an issue arises as to what should be done with the former mine buildings and landscapes and the economic void left by their closure. When a culture ceases to operate at this grand scale, the anxiety of what may replace the lost activity of extensive industry is palpable<sup>1</sup>.

Today, it is appropriate to say that a country measures its degree of civilisation by its ability to keep alive the architectural structures that gave meaning to the local people and their commitment to work, transforming the buildings so as not to permanently strip them of their memory and their role in the people's social conditions.

Similarly, more and more frequently in recent years, the topics suggested as dissertation exercises and surveys have come to include historic buildings designed and intended for productive purposes linked to the economic, geographical and social features of specific areas, which from the point of view of the market economy have become obsolete, abandoned, often forgotten, and are undergoing both a rapid and cruel degradation.

Very often these buildings, alongside others like them, make up territorial productive systems that gave meaning to and ensured the livelihood of generations of residents of urban and peri-urban areas, therefore typifying these areas from an architectural point of view and reflecting the values and memory entrusted to the many people who worked and lived here.

This too is a very good reason to ask the institutions, private individuals and ourselves to put all our effort toward preserving this precious geographical legacy through conservation methods that are proactive, scientifically rigorous and consistent with present needs. I wish to



FIG. 1. C-Mine: retained machinery creates an iconic.

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FIG. 2. C-Mine: steel base helps define external space.

underline that with this commitment we can give a future to a matter that was born in almost perfect symbiosis with the geomorphic features of these sites and was designed and built in harmony with the production cycle it embodies alongside the required machinery, thanks to the men and women who made it materially and financially possible.

Therefore, the essential background analyses, surveys, research on methods, spaces, production techniques, the analyses of pathologies and various forms of degradation that affect the building must lead to accurate restorative suggestions regarding the material components of the artefact. Meanwhile, a new and unprecedented renovation project should seek to repurpose the former production site while respecting and enhancing its historical features and the history of the building itself, in order to attract new users, new forms of knowledge and intelligent ways of using the spaces of a former industrial building and the area around it (Fig. 2).

### **'Factory' architectures**

The restoration and repurposing of these abandoned buildings should always recall and encompass their authentic being by retaining at least some of the significant components of the production cycle, the machinery used – which are often beautiful and very ingenious mechanical inventions.

Other renovations should be capable of translating the local production needs – such as the orography, streams and general landscape traits – in a way that is original and entices people to stay, visit, work and enjoy cultural activities, therefore constituting various forms of investment, revival and maintenance of the abandoned site. We should never forget that a hotel, a conference centre, a shop or houses *are* extant 'factories'. When new purposes and technological needs call for additions and architectural fittings, these can and should be the products of our times and the result of a deep critical reflection.

### **C-Mines in Genk: composition and re-composition of spaces, lexicon and materials**

The workshop in Belgium and the Netherlands showed us different ways of thinking about the past and handing down its legacy to the future, through different ways of rearranging the space and time of several abandoned and decommissioned buildings. The former coal-mining complex in Genk is certainly among the good examples of an intelligent and discerning restoration and repurposing of a historical building (Figs. 3-4).

The cited article by Holbrook says that 'C-Mine, by Brussels-based architects 51N4E, establishes a regional cultural centre in the Flemish town of Genk. The project, completed in 2010, reworks the powerhouse buildings of a former coal-mining complex to provide a pair of multipurpose auditoria of different scales, meeting rooms and spaces for flexible



cultural programming, and accommodation for technical support and administration [...] The plan for the cultural spaces is worked out to develop a logic of relationships with a discipline as tough as the original industrial planning’.

As well as the brief commentary drawn from the documents prepared by the workshop organisers, we should add a strong appreciation for a project that reveals a rigorous analysis of the deep meaning of a building which, like all industrial buildings, was based on the very close relationship between production, landscape changes and architectural solutions.

The project proposes a text that is built upon and ‘composed’ of rhythms and complex yet essential metrics, made up of people’s work and the specifics of the materials used, with no concessions to the ephemeral or superfluous. Its ability to recount the greatness of labour through the vast spaces and horrendously human machinery – which still produce noises that become sounds and movements and stir emotions – is beautiful and fascinating at the same time. The analytical composition corresponds to a newly composed text that includes the historical factory, yet opens up its meaning, extending it by rephrasing it in necessary re-composition and novel ways (Fig. 5).

The position and metrics of these additions not only do not deny the past, but they make its value more accessible, thanks to the use of space and to the choices of layout, distribution of spaces and re-composition. The decision to create direct spatial connections between the existing structures and the additions actually allows for easy circulation and to discover both – the existing and the additions – as a cultural journey, which is absolutely necessary in order to analyse the meaning of the restoration of an industrial building in a critical and thoughtful way. The legacy is therefore used as a future cultural

FIGS. 3-4. C-Mine: intelligent and discerning restoration and repurposing.



investment, by revisiting and even reversing any canonical interpretations of its distinctive traits. This occasionally means taking a physical and deliberate distance between old and new architectures, which in this case are compressed and recombined, transforming fragments and scraps, old and new, into a necessarily unified compound (Figs. 6-7).

Without wishing to insist on a critical reading of the intervention details, it should nonetheless be stressed that, unlike others, the materials and significance of industrial buildings are preserved and contained in the design process to outline a rationale that explores the process, not only the specific programme, and stresses the urgency of a cultural exchange. Perhaps this is all it is about: when restoring abandoned factories we are faced with an open question, a scenario in which all the principles of restoration exist, but need to be brought back to an architectural production that requires more study and a more experimental approach than what has been granted it so far.

**Is it not perhaps above all a matter of perceptive architectural inventiveness?**

From my point of view the reference to design awareness and thus to a patient search for the best possible result in terms of aesthetic value, to be achieved through the project, is an important aspect of its success. Of course, this is closely related to the ability to combine all the factors just referred to; designing for restoration is always a matter of rethinking critically, and of complex relationships that are interconnected through history, which is also the history of compositions that construe sense. Ultimately, it is precisely this starting point which determines the depth of the project proposal and its aesthetic value, in contrast to formal exhibitionism tainted by indifference towards the critical knowledge of a place. It is also and above all the ability to shape the existing buildings and the additions that makes it a matter of composition and re-composition.

FIG. 5. C-Mine: recomposition of spaces.

FIGS. 6-7. C-Mine: use of redundant machinery as spatial elements.



Despite it being unusual, or perhaps because of it, the deeper meaning of the architectural composition must be brought out, and even exhumed from deliberate oblivion. The restoration project is more than ever the composition and re-composition of matter, space, shapes and meaning of architectures using a coherent method.

Organising creative activities and the search for harmony between the parts, which typifies the process of composition in music and in architecture, is instrumental in restoration projects; it is an act of awareness in an unprecedented journey that can only derive from a scientific process and strive for a new outcome, a present-day demonstration of the existing building with specific formal responsibilities.



In the case of abandoned industrial architectures, awareness and expression should also be derived from a knowledgeable and elegant reaction to a *specific* type of iron, glass, concrete, claddings and space, which is incredibly vast and therefore extraordinary and unique. It becomes necessary to use inventiveness to serve a moment in history that has been able to connect large-scale requirements resulting from a new conception of production and architectural production, in an extraordinary sum of industry and crafts, arresting spaces and manufacturing beauty.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Holbrook 2013.

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## SUITABLE USE RATHER THAN ADAPTIVE REUSE: RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

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### The future of places of worship

Throughout Europe and the western world there has for some time been a focus of study upon the buildings and locations that once served a religious purpose within communities but have now lost that original function. Churches, sanctuaries, monasteries and other places of worship constitute a rich artistic and historic patrimony whose significance is even more 'intangible' than that of other historical sites, and the future of such places raises political, legal, economic, sociological and, of course, religious issues<sup>1</sup>. The discussions held within the framework of the 2015 EAAE conference on the theme of conservation/adaptation were, therefore, part of a range of international initiatives, bringing together some of the many voices to be heard in a now globalised West. One thing that does not emerge clearly from discussions between architects and experts on the preservation of the architectural/cultural heritage is that it would be simplistic to reduce this complex and many-sided question to the formulaic equivalence of 'empty building' and 'opportunity for adaptive reuse'. As long as the theoretical bases for such 'adaptive reuse' remain uncertain, it would be reductive to see the issue solely in terms of such an approach.

Within Europe, places of worship – be they Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox – reflect specific religious practices and rituals, and their future poses to contemporary society profound questions that have long been a matter of debate. The issue is not a new one, but it re-emerges with ever-renewed urgency in response to pressing local problems, or when the phenomena involved become of increased importance and scope. For one thing, it is now abundantly clear that one should not approach the issue of unused places of worship in the same way as one does that of the other disused and abandoned sites to be found throughout our cities; even when closed-down and deconsecrated, churches and places of worship are not to be dealt with in the way one deals with disused industrial facilities (Dawans, Houbart 2014).

The discussion of such matters involves a variety of voices, with the themes raised including: the crisis in religion itself and the resultant abandonment of collective forms of religious worship; new forms in religious expression; how such expression has changed since the early days of a Christianity which for many is to be identified with the very foundations of European society itself. Within the multicultural West there is now the presence and (often antagonistic) co-existence of different religious and secular identities. Given this, how has the very meaning of the 'sacred' changed?

Alongside such issues, one must also consider the problems of the physical maintenance of buildings that are officially recognised as part of our shared heritage, by virtue of economic/financial difficulties whose increase is in direct proportion to decline in the use of such buildings and in the size of their congregations. Obviously there is a local aspect to each individual case. However, certain agents have key roles to play here: the religious

institutions that are the actual owners of the 'decommissioned' places of worship; the organisations that are jointly responsible for the survival of such structures; the bodies specifically set up to protect our cultural heritage; public authorities, even if these latter suffer an endemic shortage of funding.

Such religious heritage is of social, territorial, historic and artistic significance, but it is also an economic resource. Hence, the issues involved in its protection and use should, within research bodies and universities, draw together fields of study and disciplines that are not usually associated with each other. Different disciplines tend to work within their own fields of interest. For example, architecture poses technical and planning issues and resolves them as such, sometimes without taking into account what might be learnt from other spheres of knowledge. Now, however, it should reflect upon – and propose solutions for – such problems in a wider context. The starting point for all of this remains the heritage itself: the buildings generated by events that form part of our heritage are no mere raw material. To quote Thomas Aquinas, they are a *materia signata quantitate*, a substance which bears the traces of those events; traces to be recognised for what they are and thence made available to future generations.

### Stories of reuse and conversion

There are deep-seated reasons for why, in the modern age, the history of the patrimony of religious architecture has been so troubled and complex; and this is true in a range of different geographical, historical and cultural contexts. In the last few years, for example, we have seen mosques destroyed by Islamic militia, by government troops and also by Christian communities; but this is just the most recent example of the dangers which for centuries have faced symbols and places associated with religious worship. At the same time, the reuse or conversion of religious properties has by now become a feature of European history from the temporal power enjoyed by churches to the recent history of religious architecture under totalitarian regimes and the fate of Orthodox churches in Communist Eastern Europe (Pickel, Müller 2009; Ramet 1993). In spite of these dramatic fluctuations, however, a large number of religious buildings have survived through political and religious wars, through the despoilment and devastation wrought by revolution, through the massive programmes of expropriation promoted by various 19th-century states, and finally through the various forms of violence that characterised Hobsbawm's 'Age of Extremes'. In a sense, the reuse of former church property nowadays is not so very different from what occurred in the past. However, we have developed rather more refined cultural instruments to pursue this reuse. There is now more focus upon knowledge of and respect for the past, upon how we envisage the future; indeed, such an approach has developed in tandem with the very notion of the 'cultural heritage' and the ideas that have played a significant role in its gradual formulation.

The Middle Ages were a period that saw the exercise of political power as imbued with a certain sacred aura. It was then that various monastic communities constructed abbeys, monasteries and convents that formed an integral part of the urban and rural landscape, as well as playing a role in the very formation of the structure of political power. Since that time, however, those buildings have undergone several changes in function and use. One such change that is often cited concerns the papal bull *Instaurandae Regularis Disciplinae*. Issued by Pope Innocent X on 15 October 1652 (Boaga 1971), this suppressed small monasteries or transferred monks from one to another, depending upon the income enjoyed

by the different religious communities; within Italy as a whole it would result in the closure of 1,513 monasteries or convents (out of a total of 6,238) and the transfer of their properties to diocesan authorities.

Taking just one case history – that of the Minorite monastery in Maastricht (the Netherlands) – we can see how such buildings went through a sequence of re-uses. After deconsecration, that monastery first served as a barracks and arsenal, then as a reformed orphanage (1640–1690), a military hospital (1685–1798), a prison (until 1917) and even a sauerkraut factory. For some periods it was left unused, then underwent restoration projects, and finally came the extensive damage caused during the Second World War: from 1939 to 1942 major restoration work took place again, when the dilapidated part of the monastery was demolished and a wing was rebuilt in ‘historic’ style. The monastery church itself had, since 1879, been used as an archive building, being stripped of its baroque structures in 1880: the restoration culture of the day meant that the existing cupola was replaced by Neo-Gothic ogive arches. After further redevelopment work and the addition of new structures (1984–1996), the complex became home to the Provincial State Archives, housing various documentary material relating to the history of the region. In 1995, the building, owned by the Government Buildings Agency, was again substantially restored, with work including a completion of an underground storage facility. The church now serves as a reading room and exhibition centre for the Regional Historic Centre Limburg (*Historie Minderbroederskerk* – RHCL).

As various countries of Europe saw the collapse of the *Ancien Régime*, monasteries were converted into barracks, military hospitals, and court buildings; then, following the suppressions that were a feature of the short period of Napoleonic rule (Naselli 1986), a number of buildings that had been occupied by the regular clergy were put to new use, particularly as schools and other educational facilities. In Italy itself, the post-unification state would introduce laws in 1866 and 1867 (Boaga 2015) that made it possible to sell off the vast amount of property appropriated when religious houses had been suppressed; cloisters, refectories, reading rooms, libraries and chapterhouses that had once been the setting for the daily life of religious communities now passed into private ownership and were converted to the most varied uses. In many cases, for example, the structures were subdivided into housing, losing the forms that were typical of their original function and gradually being absorbed into the urban fabric of present-day cities and towns. As for churches, they might be converted into storehouses, stables, workshops, libraries or even cinemas.

However, it is difficult to cancel the morphology of church architecture of large dimensions within the ordinary urban fabric. As historic city views and cartographical depictions reveal, places of worship had long been features that had served to define the very appearance of cities: the number and wealth of churches had stood as a symbol of the prosperity of a city as a whole, serving – on paper at least – to overcome the tensions and clashes that had for centuries divided ecclesiastical and secular powers. The sheer size and volume of cathedrals, collegiate churches and the larger monasteries means that they still dominate the surrounding urban fabric, even if their appearance has often been redefined by successive projects of restoration. Recognised as historic monuments, these are still features that serve to identify cities. Yet they can also be striking as examples of neglect. This is undoubtedly true of the church of Sainte-Croix in Liège, whose current state is in stark contrast to the magnificence of its past: the interior that for centuries housed

a huge congregation is now bare and bleak, the exterior shows ever more signs of decay, and the almost permanent presence of scaffolding is an open admission of failure. Close to Sainte-Croix, the small deconsecrated parish church of Saint-Nicolas-aux-Mouches has, due to its size, been rather more amenable to reuse: after repeated reconversion, it is now a private residence (Piavaux 2013).

### **Secularisation, re-secularisation and a post-secular society**

For the Catholic Church, the adjective 'secular' defines those members of the clergy who live outside religious houses in the *saeculum* – literally, 'century' – unlike the regular clergy who live within religious communities organised on the basis of a 'rule' (*regula*). It is no coincidence that this use can be linked to the root of the term 'secularisation', which originally meant the transfer of Church property and land to non-clerical ownership: it would appear that the verb 'séculariser' was used for the first time in 1646, by the French legate Longueville during the Münster peace negotiations that would ultimately lead to the signing of the Peace of Westphalia, which brought the Thirty Years' War to an end (Reguzzoni 2009). Over time, measures relating to the 'secularisation' or alienation of Church property would heighten conflict between Church and State, between those who concerned themselves with final goal of human existence and those who concerned themselves with the management of its contingencies. Even at the end of the 19th century, the Church hierarchy was still condemning such measures as illegitimate, arguing that they were a sign of the degeneration they identified as the 'de-Christianisation' of Europe, of a war waged to destroy Europe's Christian identity. Secularism, in their opinion, amounted to nothing less than this. On the other side of the argument, secular intellectual circles saw such secularisation as the 'liquidation of an illegitimate religious power' (Lübbe 1970: 34), as the final liberation of society and humankind from the influence exerted by the clergy.

In the 20th century there has been wide-ranging and fierce debate with regard to the concept of 'secularisation'. Though with some vociferous exceptions, the opposition between 'religious' and 'secular' was widely interpreted as the same as that between 'primitive' and 'modern', between tradition and change. The distinguishing features of modernity were identified as: industrialisation, the expansion of cities and the transformation of the ancient urban fabric; increasingly impersonal relationships between individuals; a loss of community solidarity. At the same time, Émile Durkheim famously defined religion in these terms: 'A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, i.e., things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them' (Durkheim 1995 [1912]: 44). Each religion forms itself within a society in order to give cohesion to that society. The sacred may inspire fear and reverence, it may occupy a space that is 'set apart', but one gains access to it through various forms of ritual. Prayer, the celebration of religious functions and the very cycles of the liturgical calendar are institutionalised practices and structures whereby one belongs to a cohesive community.

Interpretations of the significance of 'secularisation' can focus on various factors: the decline in the influence religion exerts upon communities and shared ethics; the progressive independence of all spheres of society from the control exercised by religion; the shift within the 'modern' West away from shared collective expressions of religion to a private, inner sense of religion; the role of science in the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) and devaluation of mysticism apparent in modern society, where rationalism reigns su-

preme; the 'previously unmatched sense of inner solitude felt by the single individual'; Protestantism (rather than Judaism) as the religious 'root' of modernity. At the beginning of the 20th century, various leading figures in the sociology of religion and writers on philosophy of religion – first and foremost Durkheim (1912), Max Weber (1920) and Ernst Troeltsch (1912) – offered models of interpretation that would be developed upon throughout the coming century, sometimes in ways that contradicted their original pre-suppositions. One of the many issues addressed is whether 'secularisation' is a phenomenon to be seen solely in Christian societies, in a world where the speed of demographic and geopolitical change is rapidly redrawing the map of what constitutes 'Christendom' (Jenkins 2014). There has also been debate as to whether the role that religious ideas and practises play in establishing social integration and a sense of shared community might be played by secular morality. Furthermore, it has been argued that 'secularisation' itself might not be irreversible; in other words, a multi-dimensional model of the phenomenon has been proposed, analysing the developments in the process and charting within it a range of different directions, phases and forms, all of which are influenced by variations in socio-cultural context. In line with this approach, we have seen analyses of the scale and characteristics of the processes of secularisation (Bruce 2011) and of de-secularisation and re-secularisation (Rosati 2002) within contemporary society. Various authors have also agreed on a definition of ours as a post-secular society (Rusconi 2008), in which there is a constant tension between religion and secularisation; in which one sees the co-existence of various forms of religious expression originating in Christianity with not only the different types of religious worship introduced by peoples from outside Europe, but also the most diverse forms of personal religious experience. It is no coincidence that current Catholic doctrine uses the term 'healthy laicisation' to describe the present state of the relations between the spiritual and the temporal, between transcendence and rationality. Such a view recognises the state as the guarantor of religious freedoms, of the presence of faith within society; in other words, it sees the state as a 'partner' in the crucial task of meeting the challenges posed by the contemporary world (Habermas, Ratzinger 2005). However, 'forms of the post-secular sacred can find expression in musical, political, sporting and religious events that reflect styles of life predicated upon the search for a range of different emotions. Whilst these events may celebrate myths, rituals that reflect ancient traditions and collective values, they can also celebrate various forms of the cult of the personality' (Berzano 2009). Even supermarkets and outlet stores have been defined as 'cathedrals of consumerism'. And if the term can be used for a range of places where all sorts of different collective 'rites' are celebrated – think, for example, of sports stadiums – what is to become of the original cathedrals, which were an expression of religious faith?

### **Between sacred and profane**

Sociology continues to examine the policies that should be applied with regard to religious heritage: 'Debates on religious heritage are gaining prominence in the contemporary world amid processes of secularisation, diversification and religious revitalisation. As dynamics of transnationalisation and global migration unsettle inherited understandings of citizenship, nationhood and belonging more broadly, questions of how religions relate to imaginations of national communities are becoming more and more important. In this scenario, processes of negotiation, contestation and reinterpretation of religious pasts take on greater saliency in the public, cultural and political spheres [...] these pro-

cesses feed into new forms of politics of religious heritage, redrawing symbolic boundaries around affectively charged cultural cores, and explores how these politics play out in different fields' (*RC22 Sociology of Religion – Programme Theme 2016*). The profound, ongoing changes within societies thus open up multiple ways of interpreting and understanding the survival of religious heritage and the future before it.

In October 2015 we visited a number of buildings and sites around Liège that were dense with symbolic meaning, some of which show how issues of the sacred can be transferred to non-religious places and bound up with questions relating to national identity and belonging. There was, however, a stark contrast between the condition of the collegiate Church of Sainte-Croix – which, in spite of the numerous appeals and activism of intellectuals and local citizens, is inexorably losing its aura as a site of worship – and what one sees at the Fort de Loncin, which bears dramatic witness to the events of the early 20th century. Half-destroyed by German bombardment during the First World War, this site then became a cemetery for 350 of those who had fallen in the battle of Liège; the present Fort-*sacrum* is a powerful reminder of what those days of conflict, surrender and sacrifice must have been like. A whole range of factors contribute to making a visit here into a ritual whose celebration serves to 'keep alive the spirit of the place': the fact that the narrating voice, that of a descendant of one of the victims, witnessed the events; the way in which the life of the garrison is reconstructed along the vaulted room of the fort; the short films illustrating the fort's defences; the recorded sounds of the bombardment; the shrapnel and shell markings still visible in the rough reinforced concrete of the fortification's walls; the skilful reworking of the surrounding landscape and its various features.

On the other hand, the material fabric of religious buildings is a reflection of collective rituals, of the various services in which the community of the faithful participate; indeed, modes of worship are reliant upon the architecture and furnishings of each church, upon the fittings and works of art it contains. Interruption in the use of a structure for devotional practises raises issues with regard to the sacred itself. For example, canon law defines as sacred 'those places that are destined for divine worship or the burial of the faithful, and are dedicated or blessed to this end in accordance with what is laid down in liturgical texts' (*Codice Diritto Canonico – n. 1205*). As the patrimony of moveable goods within a church is dispersed, as structures and fittings become degraded, the process of 'desacralisation' becomes evident. At the same time, the necessary measures of protection are neglected. The interconnection between proper conservation and the sacred standing of such buildings is something Max Dvořák was clear about in his *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* (1916–18), where he criticised practices that were becoming habitual amongst the priest and clergy. True, these people were responsible for the care of souls, but Dvořák insisted: 'the safeguarding of monuments is one of the clergy's duties. Those priests who destroy works of art [...] behave in a way that is detrimental to the community and to religious life; [they] smother awareness of historical continuity and undermine those feelings that should sustain such an awareness, serving as sources of a deeper concept of life itself'.

Even if there has been no official deconsecration of a church, the suspension of worship there means that what had been a sacred place now, in effect, becomes secular. Canon law examines various causes for what it calls 'the cessation of a religious building'. These include: 'gradual decline there in the practice of religious worship' and economic difficulties 'linked to the maintenance and care of the buildings themselves' (resulting in the impossibility of restoring the building to a state in which it can serve as a place of wor-

ship). When the situation becomes this serious, one may proceed 'to a non-sordid secular use of the church', a policy that had been accepted and reiterated as early as the Council of Trent. However, in no way should the new use be 'in explicit conflict with the previous use as a place of worship' (Montini 2000).

These are the conditions to be respected in the case of Sainte-Croix, which was initially one of Liège's seven collegiate churches, but was then suppressed during the time of Napoleonic rule and subsequently reopened as a parish church. The case of Sainte-Croix, a building now owned by the city itself, brings together a number of issues raised thus far. A medieval triple-nave structure – unusual because of its twin apses, the west apse being surmounted by an octagonal bell-tower – the church clearly suffered as a result of urban planning decisions made in the 1970s to facilitate motor traffic through Liège. A rather tardy act of 'modernity', this adaptation of the road system at the very heart of the city resulted in irreversible changes to the area's social and urban fabric. Whole blocks located between rue de Bruxelles, place St. Lambert, rue de Saint-Pierre and rue de Sainte-Croix were, after compulsory purchase, demolished, meaning local communities were dispersed and there was a drastic decline in the size of congregations. The suspension of regular worship at the church meant that ordinary maintenance work halted – for example, the heating system went unrepaired – and this lack of maintenance gradually resulted in actual decline. There was a risk in 2003 that Sainte-Croix would be deconsecrated – as had happened to the old monastery churches of Saint-Antoine and Saint-Gerard. And even though in 1999 the Regional Government of Wallonia had listed it as 'heritage of exceptional importance', there was difficulty in obtaining the funds necessary for restoration. Then, in 2005, safety concerns and repeated vandalism made closure to the public inevitable. Where, the local newspapers asked, was the €25,000 necessary for restoration to come from? And would spending this sum on a single building mean that others with similar problems had to be neglected?

Working together with the associations formed to save the church and restore it to useful life, various experts have examined possible cultural reuses of the building – exploiting, for example, its fine acoustics. At the same time, an important work on the construction history of Sainte-Croix – from its origins right up to the restoration work carried out at the end of the 19th century – highlighted the significance of this collegiate church; thanks to the building's archaeology, for example, it has been stressed how important the structure is for a comparative history of medieval (Romanesque and Gothic) architecture in the area of modern Belgium and the Netherlands, which at the time formed the western boundary of the Holy Roman Empire (Piavaux 2013). This and other studies promoted by the University of Liège, together with the Holy See's policy of opening such structures to refugees and immigrants, ultimately led the regional church to become more proactive on the matter. On 14 September 2014, Bishop Jean-Pierre Delville chose Sainte-Croix as the church for the celebration of mass on the feast of *La Croix Glorieuse*, citing the cross as a symbol of the world's suffering and then suggesting that the church could perform an ecumenical function, serving peoples of different religions, especially victims from the war-torn Middle East: 'The Collegiate Church of Sainte-Croix would be an ideal place to remember all the suffering in the world, to pray for its victims and to give hope through solidarity. Hence the various members of the Ecumenical Council – which includes Greek and Russian Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans, Syriac Christians and Catholics – have suggested that the Church of Sainte-Croix might have an ecumenical function – that is, it could be a place of unity and rapprochement between the various Christian Churches



and those of other communities of faith... Without overlooking its pluralist cultural role in the heart of the city of Liège<sup>2</sup>. His hope was that 'This renewed interest in the Church of Sainte-Croix might stimulate the restoration of the building, and I wish to thank all those who are working to this end, including the City Works Department, the Conseil de fabrique and the ASBL SOS Collégiale Sainte-Croix'<sup>3</sup> (Delville 2014).

This idea could result in a highly significant project, where the re-sacralisation of the building goes along with its openness to cultural and transcultural activities. However, for this to be possible, the work on conservation and consolidation that must precede the public re-opening of the structure has to be based upon detailed evaluation of the type, cause and intensity of deterioration. There must be a primary focus upon completion of necessary structural work, safety requirements and the updating of plant and facilities (heating, wiring etc.). A programme for the conservation and reuse of the building to be implemented section by section would make it possible to obtain the necessary funds in instalments, allowing Sainte-Croix once more to play a role as a tourist attraction, to host local events and to engage with other communities. This would be a far more innovative approach than merely adopting a project of conversion to any possible function.

There are cases such as the 13th-century Dominican church in Maastricht, which is now Selexyz Dominicanen (defined as an 'impressive contemporary bookstore'), or the former 15th-century Crutched Friars monastery and church in the same city, which has been converted into a five-star and 60-room hotel (Kruisherhotel). Both of these figure amongst the top '15 Houses of Worship Turned Secular' through conversion into facilities that range from homes and libraries to nightclubs. In each case, the conversion has been praised for maintaining 'all of [the building's] awe-inspiring original architectural elements – [such as] vaulted ceilings, arches, altars and stained glass windows – while adjusting to needs that are more mundane' (Rogers 2013).

This may not turn out to be the case with Sainte-Croix, but one should also recognise that the conversion of a church into a library, or a monastery into a state archive building, is part of a long and ongoing history: as we have seen, the tradition of sordid or 'non-sordid' reuse as allowed by canon law dates back centuries, and the forms through which the glorious past of sacred buildings might be adapted to present use continue to develop. Amongst such projects, however, those which are purely commercial in inspiration seem rather more controversial, with ogive arches, soaring Gothic columns and stained glass (either original or 19th-century) being little more than curious reminders of a long-gone past that is served up for the delight of tourists. The fact is that, from a technical point of view, a policy of adaptive reuse tends not to adapt itself to existing historical buildings, but rather to see the internal space of such structures simply as an empty shell, whose layout and fittings can be redesigned at will. In fact, even the Wikipedia entry with regard to this approach warns that 'adaptive reuse can become controversial, as there is sometimes a blurred line between renovation, façadism and adaptive reuse. It can be regarded as a compromise between historic preservation and demolition'<sup>4</sup>.

There is hope that this will not be the case with Sainte-Croix, whose rare character has served to obstruct any project of unrestricted conversion. Now, therefore, there is an opportunity for reuse that, while compatible with the original, is also innovative and responds to contemporary needs. As has been observed, 'An exceptional monument must absolutely render a service to society'<sup>5</sup> (Dawans, Houbart 2014) – and ideally the functions it serves should be as exceptional as the monument itself.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Minelli 1995; Crăciun, Ghitta 1998; Stovel et al. 2005; Cardia 2007; Flores-Lonjou, Messner 2007; Collectif 2007; Basdevant-Gaudement, Berlingo 2009; Noppen, Morisset 2005; Cranmer, Garcia Oliva 2010; Coomans et al. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> [Original]: 'La collégiale Sainte-Croix serait un lieu idéal pour évoquer les souffrances du monde, prier pour les victimes et susciter l'espérance à travers la solidarité. Dans cette ligne, les membres de la Concertation œcuménique, qui comprend orthodoxes grecs et russes, protestants réformés, anglicans, syriaques et catholiques, ont suggéré l'idée que l'église Sainte-Croix ait une vocation œcuménique, c'est-à-dire qu'elle soit un lieu d'unité et de rapprochement des chrétiens d'Églises et de communautés ecclésiales différentes... sans exclusion, bien sûr sa vocation culturelle et pluraliste au cœur de la ville de Liège'.

<sup>3</sup> [Original]: 'Cet intérêt renouvelé pour l'église Sainte-Croix pourra stimuler la restauration de l'édifice et je remercie tous ceux qui s'engagent dans ce sens, à commencer par les Services de la ville, le Conseil de fabrique et l'ASBL SOS Collégiale Sainte-Croix'.

<sup>4</sup> *Adaptive reuse*. [online]. Wikipedia. Available at: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptive\\_reuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaptive_reuse)> [Accessed 23 March 2016].

<sup>5</sup> [Original]: 'Un monument exceptionnel doit-il absolument rendre un service à la société.'

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## MODERNITY AND OBLIVION: ADAPTIVE REUSE AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION EXPERIENCES

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*Now, if I want to fight this world,  
I must fight against its essential feature, its transience*  
(Kafka 1972: 745)

It has been asserted that the conservation of cultural heritage allows, in some way, the grieving process to take its course<sup>1</sup>. The emotional reactions felt because of the fear of loss lead contemporary society to guarantee an overabundance of memory places intended as remedy against the oblivion; on the other hand, Judy asserts that 'to forget means to conceal'<sup>2</sup>.

Historical buildings and sites acquire social, cultural and emotional meanings, becoming memory carriers. As one of the forms of cultural expression, cultural heritage contains material and immaterial values related to human activities, connecting the meanings of the past to the present day. Some buildings are themselves icons and symbols of the past by virtue of their permanence; others, however, are fragments of more complex systems defined by both architectural and territorial dimensions.

In the second case, the understanding of places condemned both to abandonment and to a marginal existence because they are situated in deeply changed contexts perhaps represents the greatest challenge.

Some of the sites visited in Belgium, such as the Fort de Loncin and the Inter-allied Memorial at Cointe in Liège, have territorial relevance or they actually qualify as significant areas. These sites evoke a well-known story for the community<sup>3</sup>; for this reason, the need that leads to their preservation requires that the monumental signs that represent collective memories continue to exist 'to ensure the collective view towards a possible transfiguration of the future [...]'<sup>4</sup>.

The Fort de Loncin represents a faultless example of a symbolic place that embraces collective memories with architectural and landscape qualities. The experimental nature of the buildings erected at the end of the 19th century with unreinforced concrete, and then destroyed by the German army during World War I, emerges today as a unique war cemetery in which the bodies of about 350 soldiers remain under the rubble.

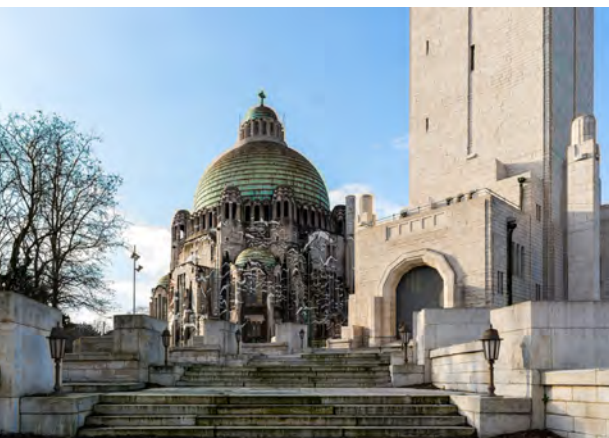
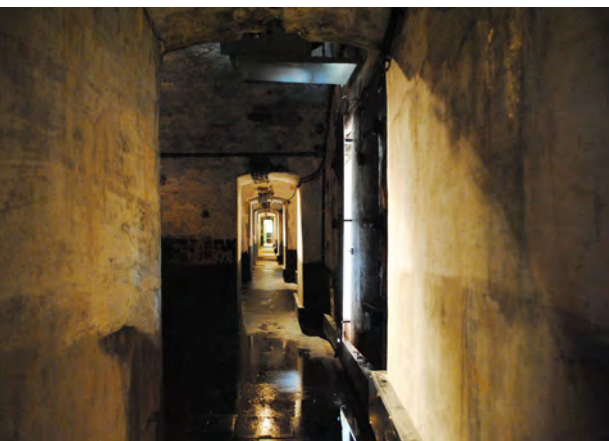
The conservation and reuse intervention conducted on the site has tried to respond to the difficult relationship between modernity and oblivion arising from the passage of time. Le Goff describes the relationship between social memory enhancement and cultural oblivion, maintaining that contemporary people are 'haunted by the fear of loss of memory, a collective amnesia, [a fear] that finds an awkward expression in the so-called *rétro trend*, or trend of the past, shamelessly exploited by memory markets since the memory has become one of the symbols of consumer society'<sup>5</sup>.

FIG. 1. Fort de Loncin. Museum itinerary inside the fortified buildings (2015).

FIG. 2. Fort de Loncin. Landscape design of the bombed site (photo by S. Di Resta, 2015).

FIG. 3. Inter-allied Memorial and church of Sacré-Cœur at Cointe, Liège (2015).

FIG. 4. The vast esplanade of the Inter-allied Memorial Monument at Cointe, Liège (2015).



A *rétro trend* could be observed in the dummies dressed as soldiers or in the museum showcases full of thousands of war relics, perhaps memories of an outdated idea of a museum. On the other hand, the memory place also becomes a metaphor for cohesion around the collective defence of social identity. The musealisation of the bombed site (Fig. 1) and its landscape design (Fig. 2) also allows continuous cross-references between the tragic memory connected to the place and the quality of the environment. At the same time, the site represents a collective recollection and a perpetual reassurance: the permanence of these places, still revealing the signs of the tragedy, exhorts future generations not to make the same mistakes.

The Inter-allied Memorial and the Church of Sacré-Cœur at Cointe in Liège (Fig. 3) constitute instead a monumental locus composed of two distinctive constructions that characterise a new landscape setting (Fig. 4). Listed by the decree of 24th January 2011, the two buildings were commissioned from the architect Joseph Smolderen and were

built between 1925 and 1937. The civil memorial contains monuments offered to Liège by the allied countries, located both inside the tower and along the vast esplanade.

Nowadays, the buildings exhibit two different states of conservation: the Inter-allied Memorial was recently restored and it enjoys the full attention of the community. The church is abandoned, but has instead become an expression of collective feelings thanks to the artists who recently decorated its walls with metaphoric seagulls in flight: ‘...the *locus* is a site of the most important memory of the commemoration, the construction of which is often subject to the conscious desire to commemorate or to the unconfessed fear of forgetting’<sup>6</sup>.

Other places represent catalysts where collective memory overlaps private memory. As a symbol of hard work (often carried out by immigrant miners), the source of wealth for a wide region and sometimes a tool for social redemption of succeeding generations, the former coal-mining complex in Genk has now become a public attraction due to the architects’ skill in differentiating the experiences offered by the industrial buildings (Fig. 5).

The great attraction that is the regional cultural centre ‘C-mine’ stands beside the architectural qualities and the figurative power of this disused production site. Nevertheless, keeping the spirit of places and not only their materiality also required an accurate balance between cultural development and ‘commercialisation’ of the place: ‘There is no cultural development without marketing. Nowadays, the most common strategies try to move towards a combination that includes the following contradiction: also what is considered sacred does not prevent the circulation of material values’<sup>7</sup>. The adaptive reuse of the site converted the buildings to provide multipurpose auditoria of different scales, meeting rooms and spaces for flexible cultural programming (Fig. 6).

It was not an automatic recalling of what has been in the past, nor ‘the attempt to cancel the time which is usually at the base of many individual and collective anxieties of our years’<sup>8</sup>, but the successful attempt to avoid the possibility of losing a sense of continuity with its history.

A refocused attention towards sites of the recent past is also based on the reinterpretation of marginal places, which thus become effective vehicles of social and cultural memory. Even sites postdating the age of mechanical reproduction (not ‘hand-made worlds’ or ‘slow worlds’<sup>9</sup> looked upon with nostalgia, but places weighed down by modernity’s contradictions) are becoming sources of social recognition: ‘The effectiveness of the *locus* intended as vehicle of cultural memory concerns [...] every historical context. This is partially due to the coding power of the place. In fact, we must distinguish between the intentional encoding, susceptible to a semiotic analysis and the coding produced by a stratified tradition’<sup>10</sup>.

The colonial hamlet Le Trezze di Quarto d’Altino represents an Italian case study that is highly relevant to the issue of the adaptive reuse of places with symbolic values, although it is also an example of the growing gap between history and memory. Set on the edge of the Venice lagoon, the hamlet is situated in that area where the mainland gives way to the water; a complex physical and environmental system that has undergone profound transformation processes originated either by natural or anthropic events.

Reclamation works were carried out systematically by the fascist regime starting from 1927 and comprising the last phase of impressive works initiated by the Venetian Republic in the 16th century. The water projects conducted in the reorganisation of the territory entailed profound changes to the natural landscape, and had two main goals: the protection of the lagoon from the sedimentary effects of turbid water from river flooding, and the preservation of the Sile river as a vital trade route in the lagoon area. The river used to

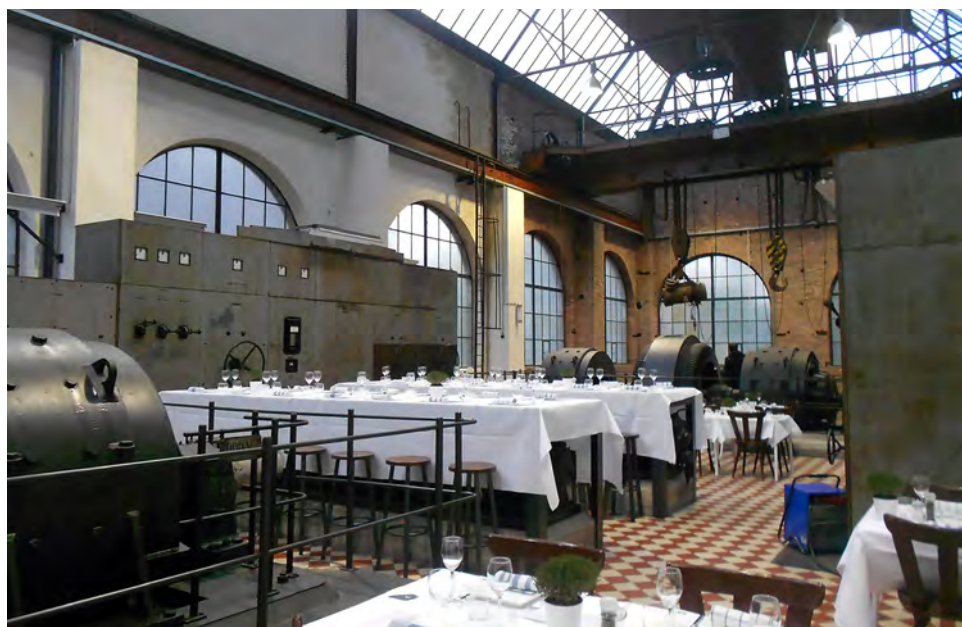
FIG. 5. C-Mine Cultural Centre in Genk. Exterior view of the mining complex (2015).

FIG. 6. C-Mine Cultural Centre in Genk. Leisure spaces in the former powerhouse (2015).

Next page:

FIG. 7. T. Scalfarotto, The Venice Lagoon, 1783-1784 (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Savi ed esecutori alle acque, Laguna, Disegno 94B neg. 1230/P.13, foto 150).

FIG. 8. IGM - Italian Military Geographical Institute, Topographic map, scale 1:25000, 1931 (Foglio n. 52, quadrante IV, orientamento S.O., Caposile, Comune di Quarto d'Altino, Venice).





flow into the sea at Portegrandi, but in 1683 it was deflected by excavating the Taglio del Sile canal, transferring waters into the bed of the river Piave and making them flow into the Adriatic Sea (Fig. 7).

In 1808, the Napoleonic Land Register for the area between Trepalade and Portegrandi recorded nineteen buildings and fourteen other constructions set in 1200 hectares of land. The private reclamation of Le Trezze by the Levi Company of Venice did not start before 1880, but the real acceleration would come in 1927 with the draining of the marshes by the Caposile Reclamation Consortium<sup>11</sup>. In the same years, a new road linking Caposile and Portegrandi on the left bank of the Taglio del Sile was constructed alongside the reclamation works to replace the road that, for over two centuries, had linked the two villages along the right bank of the canal leading towards the lagoon<sup>12</sup>.

A long row of farmhouses was erected along three kilometres of the new road traversing the landscape, forming a simple, linear settlement overlooking the lagoon on the edge of the large area of reclaimed land (Fig. 8).

The rhetoric of the fascist regime was reflected in the propagandistic, salutatory names, marked in large letters on the façades of each house, referring either to their location (Ca' Sile [*Sile House*]), the fertility of the soil (Ca' Florida, Ca' Fertile, Ca' Feconda, Ca' Favorita [*Florid House, Fertile House, Fecund House, Favourite House*]), the land reclamation (Ca' Risorta, Ca' Speranza [*Resurrected House, Hope House*]) or especially to political propaganda (Ca' Rinascita, Ca' Redenta, Ca' Vittoria, Ca' Imperia [*Rebirth House, Redeemed House, Victory House, Imperial House*]). Finally, the farmhouse named Ca' Romagna referred to Benito Mussolini's birthplace. By 1931, all the new farmhouses located along the Taglio del Sile had already been built<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 9).

In the vast areas of reclaimed land, the farmhouses are generally devoted to living quarters in part and partly intended for agricultural activities, sometimes integrated with auxiliary buildings. The morphological structures of the rural settlement comprise three recurring typologies of residential and farm buildings, each designed to take account of the number of families housed and the activities performed: the housing unit on three levels with stables and barn, the compact housing unit on two levels with warehouse and the compact housing unit.





FIG. 9. The colonial hamlet Le Trezze di Quarto d'Altino beside the canal Taglio del Sile. Location and building typologies (photo by S. Di Resta, 2013).



FIG. 10. Elements of the landscape. The view of the sown fields from the buildings [top], the elevated provincial road [middle], the Venice lagoon from the canal Taglio del Sile [bottom] (photo by S. Di Resta, 2016).

The buildings are set within the landscape in stylistic continuity with the Venetian rural architectural tradition. However, they are examples of an important transition from traditional construction methods to one based on the use of materials and techniques typical of industrial production. Despite the traditional appearance arising from the use of load-bearing walls and double-pitch roofs, these buildings represent 'hybrid structures' that introduce reinforced concrete into well-established construction practices. Unlike the developments that characterised urban construction at the time, the concrete is not used in the already long-established technique of the frame, but it is found in edge beams inserted in the walls and in elements subject to flexure (such as architraves) to replace the more traditional use of wood, which was still used for the roofs and floors of the houses. Finally, construction techniques based on the use of both steel and masonry and concrete were adopted in order to cover larger spaces such as those used for haylofts, barns or stables.

The identity of those places where it is difficult to distinguish between natural and man-made features lies in the reciprocal relationship between architecture and landscape. The rural settlement resulted from the changes brought to the area, which was rigorously divided into fields, canals and roads and governed by the presence of the houses that fit neatly into this pattern.

The basis of the plan was an idea of society and development that gave impetus to works which, albeit achieved in marginal areas, were an expression of modernity: the elements of the landscape ruled by human intervention and resulting in transformations that were instrumental to improving living conditions and, therefore, to progress.

The first signs of crisis in agriculture and the increasing attractiveness of great industrial complexes in the region triggered the slow abandonment of the settlement by the farmers. Moreover, the elevation of the provincial road resulting from works to raise the banks of the Taglio del Sile abruptly cut off the connection between the houses and the lagoon. By the late 1960s the rural settlement was almost completely abandoned.

Nowadays, the image of a society indifferent and oblivious to these places emerges between the outlines of a landscape made up of treeless fields, neglected labour, abandoned houses. The reasons why the settlement, isolated from the main urban centres, was marginalised and disconnected from the tourist routes that favour Venice and the beaches also lay in the controversial history of which the rural colony is a reminder. Nevertheless, the house still represents an ancestral source of meaning and memory for society: 'the house, or the ancient residence [...] establishes symbolic and preferential relationships between space, time and emotions: it represents the place where memories [...] naturally inhabit'<sup>14</sup>. This place 'emerges from the bottom of a memory that I would define as "reassuring". It is able to speak to us because suitable to communicate something [...], it is made up of an intimate, domestic, familiar matter: the usual elements of the landscape and the ruins of the childhood tales. The place is a memory carrier all the more when its material traces speak the language of pain'<sup>15</sup>.

In this perspective, even a place relegated to the margins both because of social changes and the *damnatio memoriae* of all the fascist regime's expressions, could represent a monument: 'the *monumentum* is a sign of the past [...], if we go back to its philosophical origins, it is all that can recall the past and perpetuate the memory [...]'<sup>16</sup>. The memory carried by the settlement does not recall the atrocities of the war; this fragile but yet impressive historic and cultural heritage provides evidence of the keen experimentation and stubbornness of an era.

An accurate, non-rhetorical analysis may constitute a first contribution to the enhancement of a place straddling nature and project, landscape and territory.

The first desirable step is the decree of Landscaping Constraint by the Superintendence of Fine Arts and Landscape, to guarantee the area an initial form of protection. A further objective is to initiate a process aimed at a compatible adaptive reuse of the site: the quality of the spaces offered by the settlement's restoration and an influx of visitors via the Portegrandi–Jesolo provincial road (particularly in the months when the tourist inflow is more intense) may support a plan focused on the enhancement of the rural and natural aspects of the area. Due to the quality of the environment, this part of the lagoon has much to offer the leisure industry.

The farmhouses lie at the heart of a process of social and cultural importance that can rediscover the unique qualities of the place: the constructed environment, composed by buildings that punctuate the territory and by the roadway that severs the cultivated land from the lagoon, together allow us to grasp the layered elements that comprise the site (Fig. 10). The houses become vantage points from which one can capture and re-compose the natural and historical traces of place that represent not a static picture of the past, but a living space of cultural and social memory.

Only by changing the speed of our usual gait and by increasing our capacity to perceive this heritage – not taken for granted – will we get this intense image dedicated to the 20th-century ideal of people and progress.

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## Notes

- 1 Jeudy 2011: 7.
- 2 *Ibidem*.
- 3 Feld, Basso 1996: 53–90.
- 4 Jeudy 2011: 25.
- 5 Le Goff 1977: 394.
- 6 Connerton 2010: 48.
- 7 Jeudy 2011: 17.
- 8 Gregotti 2010: 6.
- 9 Connerton 2010: 41.
- 10 Connerton 2010: 42.
- 11 Pavan 1991: 172. See also Sormani Moretti 1880–81.
- 12 Pavan 1991: 171.
- 13 Cfr. IGM [Military Geographic Institute], 1931. Topographic map of the Venice Lagoon, 1:25.000.
- 14 Tarpino 2008: 4–5.
- 15 Tarpino 2001.
- 16 Le Goff 1977: 443.

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## REUSE AND STRUCTURE IN HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE: CONSTRAINTS IN THE CONSERVATION PROJECT

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### Introduction

In the last decade, a certain sharing of purpose and methods has matured between the reasons for the restoration and those for consolidation<sup>1</sup>, especially when structural work on a historic building takes place as a response to structural disruptions or to the need to obtain a better seismic performance. The question linked to the reinforcements needed for a change of the intended use, or for the continuation and strengthening of the existing one, appears less well dealt with. In fact, historic buildings often present a web of structural conservation issues due to transformations that have occurred over time, both architectural and of the intended use, together with disruptions caused by lack of maintenance or even by exceptional events such as an earthquake. So a careful reflection is necessary to resolve the various issues in order to achieve a subsequent reorganisation, both architectural and structural<sup>2</sup>, of the whole building.

The recent guidance framework on the consolidation of historic buildings, both Italian and international<sup>3</sup>, enforces a close dialogue between *restorers*, traditionally inclined to an overall vision mainly focused on spatial and architectural values, as well as concentrating on the physical preservation, and *structural engineers*, engaged in numerical evaluations and generally less likely to think about the stability issues from the perspective of historical and constructive knowledge. In a restoration project aimed at reconsidering the use of architectural spaces, choosing uses that are compatible with the original ones is considered, from a structural point of view, the way to avoid invasive interventions; another is the adoption of materials and methods that respect the existing arrangement<sup>4</sup>.

### General methodological considerations

If an appropriate reuse of the historic heritage, and in particular of religious buildings, allows us on the one hand to revive the buildings and avoid their abandonment and subsequent progressive deterioration, on the other hand it requires special care in understanding the historical and architectural values inherent in such buildings, as well as the transmission of their relative symbolic meanings. The various ways in which the design of the existing space can materialise – from the addition of volumes *detached* from the ancient structures to insertions that are strongly *welded* with these, from the total preservation of the status quo to *grafts* appropriately calibrated with the historic organism – the examples of reuse observed in the churches of Maastricht and recurring in various religious buildings of the Netherlands (Zuiderkerk in Amsterdam and St. Jakobus Chapel in Utrecht, for example) favour a reinterpretation of the architectural space that is responsive to the new intended use and is built with structural elements generally independent from the original enclosure, unless for localised points of support, suspension or insertion.

In thinking about the appropriate balance of intended use, architectural values and structural logic of the building, it could be useful to reflect on the ways in which a compatible consolidation can renew structural function.

Even in the case of maintaining the existing use, the historic building may not meet the thresholds required by regulations, both because the building was conceived in the absence of such requirements and because the deterioration of its materials over time has compromised its structural performance. An example is the reinforcement of floor slabs to adapt them to the new operating loads that were established by technical legislation over time, or to satisfy fire protection requirements for buildings in public use. The wooden floors of historic buildings, for example, can generally be reinforced to at least increase their load-bearing capacity, and in seismic areas to counteract their tendency towards in-plane deformation<sup>5</sup>. As regards possible means of intervention we face a wide variety of experiences that, beyond the specific outcomes, and especially beyond strictly structural needs, can include solutions that derive from reflections related to restoration and the interface between values and critical issues that characterises the intervention project from the architectural scale to the technical details. If a limited section of a floor beam has deteriorated, the prevailing approach is generally one of maintenance, responding to the most basic repair mode of consolidation, which does not change the original structural functioning and minimally alters the appearance<sup>6</sup>. But if the wooden element is irrecoverable and, all things considered, is of poor aesthetic value, the mode of intervention necessarily turns towards its replacement – mimetic or not, depending on the intention: to distinguish the new beam or not to do so. In this case, which is apparently simple from a structural point of view, we need an examination of possibilities that depends on considering how and whether to differentiate the new element, in compliance with the intervention guidelines that characterise the restoration project as a whole. An even more distinctive scenario arises where the single beam or indeed an entire ceiling is of particular interest, in that they contribute to the overall configuration of the environment in which they are located. In this case the conservative mode prevails, aiming not only at maintaining the constructional components in place but also trying to establish a means of reinforcement that enables the element to continue to make a structural contribution. In addition to the consolidation of the matter, we find further elements – for example, arranged to complement or to overlap on existing structures – that at least partially fulfill the structural deficit, in ways that depend on the operating conditions and once again on the figurative meaning that we intend to assign (or not) to the reinforcement<sup>7</sup>. The extreme solution, in this conceptual examination of the various possibilities of consolidation, is to completely transfer the static function to a new structure, safeguarding the image of the ancient one but recognising the impossibility of recovering its structural capacities and of adapting it to the required standards<sup>8</sup>.

This way of reasoning extends to all structural components of the historic building, since if it is true that the horizontal structures are those more directly involved in coping with changes in loading related to use, the vertical structures absorb all the stresses, finally conveying them through the foundations to the ground. The structural fallout then springs from a considered balance between, on the one hand, the capacity of the building, its state of conservation and its potential to accommodate change from the initial condition of use and, on the other hand, the visual outcome, to which technical solutions can directly or indirectly contribute, revealing the architectural conceits and the relative symbolic meanings.

FIG. 1. Selexyz Dominicanen, Maastricht (by <<http://www.homedsgn.com/2012/07/05/selexyz-dominicanen-bookstore-by-merkxgirod-architecten/>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).

FIG. 2. Kruisherenhotel, Maastricht (by <<https://www.oostwegelcollection.nl/kruisherhotel-maastricht/home>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).

FIG. 3. St. Jakobus church, Utrecht (by <<https://www.yatzer.com/Church-conversion-into-a-residence-in-Utrecht-by-Zecc-Architects>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).

FIG. 4. An old Catholic church, Utrecht (by <<http://www.zecc.nl/index.php?page=1&projectId=1&Language=en>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).



### Reuse and structure in historic religious buildings

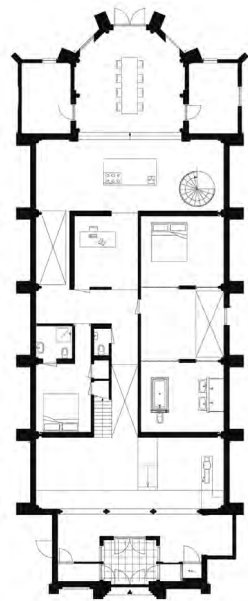
Several restorations of religious buildings conducted over the past twenty years in Europe offer an opportunity to think about the connection between design choices, reuse (including the issue of whether or not to express the religious significance of the place) and structural arrangements.

The interventions carried out in the 13th-century Selexyz Dominicanen<sup>9</sup> in Maastricht, renovated as a bookshop (Fig. 1), in the 15th-century complex of Kruisheren, also in Maastricht and now a hotel (Fig. 2), in the 19th-century church of St. Jakobus in Utrecht (Fig. 3) and in a private Catholic chapel located at Nieuwegracht/Herenstraat 4kin, Utrecht (Fig. 4), the last two converted to residential buildings<sup>10</sup>, are examples of how the recon-

FIG. 5. St. Jakobus church, Utrecht: plan (drawing by <<http://www.zecc.nl/en/project/23/Residence-Church-Utrecht>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).

FIG. 6. Kruisherenhotel, Maastricht: detail of connection between the new metal walkway and the church's windows (from case study document called *Maastricht*, 3).

FIGS. 7-8. Bagrati Cathedral, Kutaisi, in Georgia, after the restoration led by Andrea Bruno (by <<http://www.progettarearchitettura.it/domus-restauro-e-conservazione-i-vincitori/>>; <<http://www.dmm.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/interno3-cattedrale-1024x806.jpg>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).



figuration of interior spaces can be obtained with the introduction of structural elements that are detached from the original ones.

In the Selexyz Dominicanen Church, the new use is realised with structurally independent shelves and mezzanines. As in St. Jakobus, the upgrading project is aimed at creating

a single element of accommodation on two levels, conceived as a new temporary structure inside the historic building.

In these interventions, the link between the ancient architecture and the new structure is effectively absent, while the relationship between the existing building's own space, no longer recognisable and reduced to a mere container, and the new volume, articulated as 'other' with respect to the image of the historic building<sup>11</sup>, appears jarring.

In those Utrecht churches transformed into residential buildings the new environments are realised with predominantly metal structures or reinforced concrete *septa*, completely disconnected from the ancient walls (Fig. 5). However, in the complex of the Kruissherenhotel in Maastricht, for example, even though the greater part of the new spaces (reception, conference room, library, wine bar, restaurant) are also conceived independently of the pre-existing (box-in-box), the metal walkways system that connects the church with the hotel rooms finds points of support that correspond to some of the church openings, thus interfering with the ancient structure<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 6).

One can observe very different interpretations of the link between the historic architectural space and the structural intervention in churches where the survival of architectural integrity has been significantly affected, for example through exceptional events that caused the collapse of significant sections, together with prolonged abandonment. In the examples illustrated below, the structural component has played a significant role because of the substantial additions brought about in the intervention, in addition to the adaptation of the historic buildings to the new intended uses, and the fact that they were designed respecting the historical and architectural identity of the pre-existing structures. The structural solutions are welded to the figurative outcomes, being functional in terms of the replenishment of architectural lacunae.

The medieval Bagrati Cathedral in Kutaisi, Georgia (11th century) is a case in point. It had been subjected to several transformations prior to the substantial destruction inflicted by Ottoman troops at the end of the 16th century. In the 1950s it had been subjected to archaeological investigation and some sections of walls had been reconstructed with blocks of stone, some recovered from collapsed masonry and some a result of new workmanship (Fig. 7). The recent restoration (2011–2012) by architect Andrea Bruno in collaboration with a team of Georgian engineers (Kapiteli Ltd.) hinged on a 'reconstructive project of the analog-conjectural kind' (Maietti 2013: 47). The project realises completions and additions using new materials and technologies that are compatible with and respectful of the harmony of composition and aesthetics of the site and of its historical pre-existences. This approach allowed for the creation of a new structural apparatus that faithfully reproduces the original layout, preserving and enhancing the functional spatiality of the church. It also provided for a new use in the form of a museum to be set up in the women's galleries. While these had totally collapsed, their disposition and volumes were clearly legible. They were rebuilt *ex novo* with a metallic structure (pillars, coffered ceiling and a sheet steel vault), deliberately articulated to express the dialogue between past and present.

The perimeter walls of the church were reinforced with concrete ties; the central body with the drum and the dome was rebuilt, completing the four octagonal columns and reconstructing all the vaults in reinforced concrete<sup>13</sup>. The two circular columns, external to the footprint of the drum and located in the western aisle, the completion of which had been undertaken in the 20th-century restoration, were completed in reinforced concrete



and partially clad in steel ‘to represent the structural and temporal hinge between the stone cathedral and the intervention of Andrea Bruno’ (Maietti 2013: 54) (Fig. 8). The example is especially significant in showing how it is possible to restore a religious building full of symbolic meanings – one affected by an articulated construction history that impacted greatly on its state of preservation – and return it to a use compatible with the architecture and the existing structure, while at the same time clarifying the reading of past transformations, conceiving contemporary grafts that are in harmony with the original space, and using articulated technical solutions (in steel and concrete) to reinforce existing structural systems and delineate new interventions. The memory of the place, of its features and of the events that happened there are thus narrated, from the past to the present, maintaining the high symbolic value expressed by the architecture.

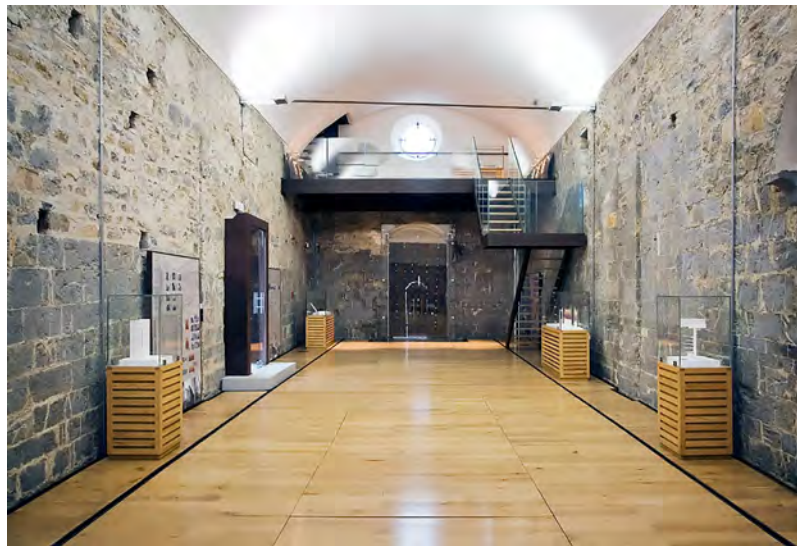
The post-war restoration work on the Oratorio dei Filippini in Bologna is another case in point: there, a portion of the elevation was reconstructed in reinforced concrete and brickwork and was maintained intact after the later 1997 intervention. Through the visible conservation of existing structural elements directly in contact with newly introduced structures, it highlights a close dialogue between history and architecture, past and present, memory and transmission to the future<sup>14</sup>. The late 20th-century restoration of the Oratory has provided for a change of use, but is appropriately designed to mend the relationship between intervention and the pre-existing in a deeply conscious way. The reconfiguration of the vaults and the dome, destroyed during the Second World War, is obtained by integrating the brick portions (consolidated with carbon dressings and traditional steel tie rods) with a wooden structure made up of load-bearing ribs and strips and appropriately sized for its own weight and the fire protection requirements (Figs. 9a-9b). The wood is used in a fully structural manner, supporting the natural aging process of the building, fitting quietly inside the ancient text and conferring a new meaning.

In the above examples, the restoration project has achieved a virtuous synthesis between the conservation objective, an appropriate use of the building and structural solutions combined with the figurative outcomes.

A different method of carrying out structural interventions that take account of resolutions between architecture and use may be found in some churches, usually intact in their physical structure, but fallen into a state of neglect. In these examples the restoration project has provided a new, non-religious function for the buildings while redesigning the architectural space in a way that is not necessarily compatible with its construction history, by introducing structural elements grafted onto the pre-existing.

The intervention conducted in the church-fortress of St. Peter<sup>15</sup>, located in the historic centre of the hamlet of Lingueglietta in Cipressa, Italy, gives the building a new function reinterpreting its dual identity: that of the single nave church with apse (built in the mid-13th century), and that of the fortress, into which the building was transformed at the time of the second barbarian invasions of western Liguria, in the mid-16th century (Figs. 10-11). The restoration project involved the consolidation of foundations, walls and covering vaults with traditional materials and techniques and the preservation of local stone floors and the introduction of a new raised floor, in wood and Corten steel, which could be dismantled and reassembled according to the different uses of the monument, as well as accommodating the necessary technological equipment essential for an adequate reuse of the building. The design of the new system is primarily characterised by how the vertical circulation is constructed. Consisting of two sets of stairs in Corten steel,

FIGS. 9a-9b. Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri in Bologna, after the restoration developed and directed by Pierluigi Cervellati (by <<https://divisare.com/projects/298891-weg-studio-oratorio-dei-filippini>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]). FIGS. 10-11. Church-Fortress of San Pietro, in Cipressa (Imperia, Italy), after the restoration developed by LDA Studio (by <<https://divisare.com/projects/153796-ld-sr-andrea-bosio-restauro-chiesa-fortezza-san-pietro>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).



interrupted and held together by a mezzanine, it is made of metal plates, bolted together and fixed to the masonry of the side and end walls. It announces an exhibition path that helps visitors to understand the history of the church-fortress, concluding in a walkway covered in Rheinzink, from where one can see the other coastline fortifications with which this structure interacted. It is a reanimation that introduces a new use, grafting new structures onto the existing historic structure, and still retaining the reading of the original space and its transformations.

FIGS. 12a-12b. Church of Sant Francesc convent, in Santpedor (Catalonia), before and after the restoration developed by David Closés (by <<https://www.curbed.com/2014/12/23/10008938/sant-francesc-santpedor-spain-renovation-architecture>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).

FIG. 13. Church of Sant Francesc convent, in Santpedor (Catalonia), the façade after the last restoration (by <<https://www.yatzer.com/Saint-Francis-Convent-Church-David-Closes-Santpedor-Spain>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).

FIG. 14. Church of Sant Francesc convent, in Santpedor (Catalonia), reinforced concrete structures supported or grafted into the wall (by <<https://www.yatzer.com/Saint-Francis-Convent-Church-David-Closes-Santpedor-Spain>> [Accessed 10 March 2016]).

Next page:

FIG. 15. Church of Sainte-Croix, in Liège (Belgium), degradation of the vaults (by Ste-Croix-Dossier de presse, 24.10.2013, p. 4).

FIG. 16. Church of Sainte-Croix, in Liège (Belgium), degradation of the vault in chapel on the left of presbytery (photo by D. Fiorani).



The recent interventions (2006–2011) conducted in the church and in the remains of the 18th-century convent of San Francesco in Santpedor (Catalonia)<sup>16</sup> averted its demolition by transforming the complex into an auditorium and multi-purpose cultural centre. Although they follow a similar design process to that of St. Peter's church-fortress, they push the graft of the new elements further with the result that they sometimes tend to betray the identity features of the pre-existing (Figs. 12a-12b).

While the nave of the church is left intact and perfectly legible, the facade and the apse are affected by mainly metal vertical connecting structures. These are inserted in the masonry to form rather disruptive massing with respect to the appearance and the significance of the pre-existing architectural elements (Fig. 13). The theme of the new grafted onto the old in this case finds a more extreme solution in the creation of new volumes, poised over the crumbling spaces of the convent – apparently suspended, but actually resting on the remains of ancient masonry walls and supported by large concrete beams (Fig. 14).

The absence of contact between old and new structures means not generating static forces in the restoration project. Conversely, an architectural intervention reinstating

large portions with structural solutions that create a new formal entity requires maximum control of the newly introduced structural behaviour of the system as a whole, thus influencing the design choices of the restoration. Similarly, the methods used to graft new components onto the historic walls, upon which they usually rest as point loads, require a careful evaluation of structural effects.

The Church of Sainte-Croix in Liège (Belgium), abandoned as early as the 1970s, exhibits widespread degradation of materials due to water ingress, and no doubt requires consolidation of roofs and vaults (Fig. 15). The building – a complex and significant space incorporating different construction phases from the 12th–13th century to the Gothic period and finally to the 19th-century interventions, but still intact and organic as a whole – requires new functions that can properly interpret its strongly connoted historical and architectural values. The Gothic and neo-Gothic language that prevails in this architecture



suggests 'light' structural reinforcements aimed at repairing and possibly strengthening the roof and the vaults, and especially the interconnections between different structural elements, to ensure the natural transmission of loads. Besides the question of the most appropriate new use, structural intervention definitely requires an evaluation of the materials and techniques in place – expressions of the different historic periods – together with a reading of the structural behaviour intended by the Gothic matrix and the deployment of structural interventions that are consistent with the authentic static behaviour of the historic building.

Of particular interest and structural complexity in Sainte-Croix is the set of cross vaults, which have solid ribs, and conversely, some areas that have deteriorated through moisture infiltration. The presence of moisture, which has caused degeneration of the bedding mortars, caused several disconnections between the stone elements of the vaults (Fig. 16). A remediation of moisture penetration, a possible lightening of the buttresses, the reconstitution of the bedding mortars and an extrados reinforcement (for example, using a reticular system of fibres to restore continuity to curved surfaces<sup>17</sup>) should ensure a static restoration that is effective and coherent with the natural structural concept of the architecture.

The direction of intervention above comes from the belief that the restoration project and the re-functioning of the church are to be weighted towards protecting the reading of the Gothic space and thus its structural matrix, preferring choices that can balance any contemporary grafts with a well-defined architectural pre-existence.

Maintaining within restoration a firm relationship between architecture, use and structure allows for better direction towards a real conservation of the identifying characteristics of historic buildings, and demands a knowledge and critical approach to intervention that embrace rich, stimulating and creative ideas in design.

On the other hand, uncoupling architecture from the considerations related to use and structural design is not only likely to betray the historical, architectural and symbolic values inherent in a renovated historic building, often reducing it to a mere shell: it can even compromise the static balance of the building itself. The damage that particularly affected the churches of L'Aquila, Italy after the 2009 earthquake turned out to be connected, in many cases, to 20th-century restoration<sup>18</sup>. Directed by a preconceived rejection of the Baroque language and of its meaning while not providing for any change of intended use, the work had favored its total removal and generated Romanesque reconstructions, together with concrete structural devices (ties, roofs and slabs, shells) generally hidden within the mass of the walls. These interventions have resulted in raising the heights of the walls, aimed at obtaining an image considered close to the Middle Ages but also useful in accommodating cement ties and in-style reconstructions of entire portions, predominantly those in the Baroque style, which were considered incongruous with the original spatial conception<sup>19</sup>. In particular, the raising of the walls led to greater vulnerability to the action of the earthquake, while the practice of interrupting the concrete ties at the façades did not give the desired box-like behavior and the in-style reconstructed portions proved to be structurally weak<sup>20</sup>. So the lack of understanding of the architectural space, of its transformations and of their meanings, along with inadequate structural awareness, generated interventions that were generally inappropriate.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The recent contribution of scientific research has seen the emergence of studies that on the one hand based on a solid historical and architectural knowledge, have developed an approach to stability fundamentally centered on kinematic analysis on an empirical-experimental basis (see for example Blasi, Coisson 2006), while on the other hand have deepened the analytical procedures looking for numerical solutions that adhere as closely as possible to the material and constructive reality of the historic buildings favoring feedback gathered from experimental diagnostic (see for example Lagomarsino, Podestà 2004).

<sup>2</sup> See Doglioni 2008: 121–156.

<sup>3</sup> *Guidelines* 2011 and ICOMOS ISCARSAH 2003.

<sup>4</sup> See *Guidelines* 2011: 41.

<sup>5</sup> For an updated reference on the intervention techniques on wood elements, please refer to the dedicated charts in Musso 2013.

<sup>6</sup> An example of a restoration of a wooden beam with an insert of epoxied chestnut has been conducted in some floors of Palazzo Albertoni in Rome (Pierdominici 2004).

<sup>7</sup> The crypt of the Sacromonte in Varese, interested in the 1930s by a cumbersome but effective passive reinforcement system, not very respectful of the visual integrity of the space, was consolidated with an intervention able to remove the 20th-century structural devices. 'The solution adopted, the last among the many studied, has provided for the use of metal arched shoring, to form a sort of structural *gazebo*. The system flanks the slender stone columns to operate in parallel with them, helping to partially relieve their loads' (Jurina, Arricobene 2015: 564).

<sup>8</sup> The umbrella vaults of the rooms on the first floor in the complex of the Cloisters of Carmine in Brescia (Italy), on the occasion of the recent restoration that has provided their re-functionalisation as the new headquarters of the university library, have

been adjusted in order to be suitable for the legal loads overlapping metal floors to the extrados, thus avoiding a direct intervention on the delicate vaulted structures (Berlucchi, Brandolisio 2011).

<sup>9</sup> The Gothic church of Selexyz Dominicanen, deconsecrated in 1794 and for years used as a municipal archive, warehouse and storage of bicycles, is destined in 2005 to become a bookshop, on a project by architects Merckx+Girod. A similar case is represented by Broerenkerk Church, a Dominican Church of Zwolle, Holland, now called 'Waanders In de Broeren': place of worship from 1466 to 1982, the building now houses a bookshop, a restaurant and an exhibition space. See Chiocchia 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Both the church and the chapel at Utrecht were re-functionalised as private residences by the study ZECC ARCHITECTEN. See Argyriades 2011 and Zecc 2007.

<sup>11</sup> About the *close* relationship between the understanding of the characters in the architecture of the past and the contemporary intervention, in which an important role is played by the choice of the new intended use, what is expressed in Labelli (2008: 33–42) is interesting. The author, while not thinking in terms of restoration, highlights the major potential of the new project more as the dialogue with the pre-existence is tightened.

<sup>12</sup> The punctual supports reveal themselves, for historic masonry, as concentrated loads. This load condition requires an analytical monitoring of the actual new structural behaviour both in static condition and under the effect of seismic events.

<sup>13</sup> Maietti 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Under the direction of architect Pierluigi Cervellati and organised by the Del Monte Foundation of Bologna and Ravenna, the restoration of the Oratory of San Filippo Neri (18th century) took place between 1997 and 1999. For a long time the building had been used as a garage and a warehouse; the intervention destines it for an auditorium (Cervellati 2000).

<sup>15</sup> The restoration project of St. Peter's church-for-tress was conducted by LDA Studio in 2010 and awarded 'PAI 2012' in the category Restoration and Recovery of Existing Buildings. See Archilovers 2011.

<sup>16</sup> The project of restoration and functional recovery of the San Francesco complex in Santpedor (Catalonia) was designed by architect David Closes. See Parafianowicz 2012.

<sup>17</sup> An example of extrados static reinforcement for cross vaults was conducted in the Praetorian Palace in Gubbio (Umbria, Italy). Piccarreta 2004.

<sup>18</sup> See Lagomarsino 2012.

<sup>19</sup> The practice of superelevation in the basilical complexes – as happened for example in the

Basilica of Collemaggio in L'Aquila in the restoration carried out by the then Superintendent Mario Moretti – eliminated the Baroque transformation, resulted in numerous reconstructions in imitation of a supposed original phase and caused structural vulnerabilities then revealed by the last earthquake. See Bartolomucci 2004: 84–85; Cerone et al. 2012.

<sup>20</sup> For a synthetic outline of the safeguarding and restoration of religious monuments damaged by earthquakes in Abruzzo, see Donatelli 2009: 54–62.

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## WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS PLACE? LOSS OF UNDERSTANDING AND THE PLACE OF THE IMAGINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORIC CHURCH REUSE

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*Dilectio decoris domus Dei*  
Abbé Suger of St Denis



FIG. 1. A figure of Christ from Jerpoint Abbey, Co Kilkenny (by Laurent Ulysse)

### Introduction

The recent EAAE workshop theme of ‘Keeping Alive the Spirit of the Place’ provided the time and the place for reflection on what is a critical theme in current conservation practice; the conservation and adaptive re-use of sacred spaces. In this paper I wish to focus my reflections on one of the workshop sites; the collegiate church of Sainte-Croix in Liège, with a number of comparative references to a current Irish example in our reflective practice: Saint Patrick’s Union church in Waterford.

### Historical comparisons

Sainte-Croix is a medieval collegiate church located in the heart of Liège (Fig. 2). It was built in two major phases, one in the late 10th century, the other in 1391. Since 2013 it has been cited as one of six endangered Belgian monuments by the World Monument Watch. It no longer has a critical mass of parishioners sufficient to meet the needs of its upkeep and has been all but abandoned for the purposes of regular worship.

In Ireland we have many historical church sites that became contested sites during the Reformation. Saint Patrick’s belongs to this category, but unlike Sainte-Croix it was in disuse for most of the 17th century, before being substantially rebuilt before 1725 as a parish church of the post-Reformation Church of Ireland (Duffy 1998). A declining congregation and a perception of unsuitability for purpose has threatened its viability in the recent past. It contains some early 18th-century finishes in a late-baroque style, but is otherwise undorned. Sainte-Croix is a repository of medieval and post-medieval art, although its famous reliquary is now housed in the Grand Curtius. Its medieval character as transmitted to us via its fabric has survived relatively intact. And yet Saint Patrick’s has found a new purpose as place for community and faith-based activities, while Sainte-Croix remains empty.





FIG. 2. A photograph of an engraving of Ste Croix in the 18th century (photo by F. Duffy).

In the case of St Patrick's, the size of the building was more compatible with the size of its current congregation than is the case with the much larger Sainte-Croix, and the fabric has less significance in terms of historical value. Also, the church, as a reformed church site and extensively rebuilt in the early 18th century in a relatively austere classical style, has fewer historical layers than Sainte-Croix, thus simplifying the conservation issues at stake. St Patrick's was 'saved' by the commitment of its congregation to stay on the site, which was not an easy decision for it to take, as it meant sacrificing a degree of flexibility and control over the site in the interests of continuing the site's historical tradition. Had the congregation chosen not to stay, St Patrick's would now most likely be in a worse position than Sainte-Croix, since its historical importance was not considered sufficient to merit state or local authority intervention and was unlikely to have generated alternative uses, given the restrictive nature of the site access and surrounding graveyard.

So, what possibilities are there for places of such enormous artistic and architectural value when no-one wants to use them, and when uses are proposed, how do we judge them for *compatibility* so that the place's character is respected?

### Context

In an attempt to answer these questions, this paper proposes that any assessment of places whose primary functions were religious and spiritual must go beyond the physical aspects of place, such as fabric and historical 'facts' to include an assessment of their 'metaphysical' aspects as well. The analytical method usually employed in current conservation practice has been inherited from Boito's eight points in the 1890s, which prescribe an approach based on a scientific examination of the fabric and history. We come to an understanding of the place's importance based on this evidence. We generally confine ourselves to the historical vista that is offered from the place where we are currently situated in space and in time, which can only provide an incomplete understanding of the historical context. The guiding principles governing intervention are generally accepted to be embodied in the conservation charters, which promote an evidence-based approach to our understanding. Like any empirical method, it more readily lends itself to accurate material or fabric analysis, as well as the discovery of 'known earlier states'. It is less comfortable when attempting to ascribe *meaning* in the historical context. This is not a criticism of empirical, evidence-based methods, but they are more effective in exploring the physical context, having originated from late 19th-century scientific method, with its

emphasis on the phenomenological and the quantifiable. Medieval art and architecture represent a seamless fusion of *corporeal* and *incorporeal* qualities and the techniques we use in their analysis must be able to simultaneously examine both without seeing them as separate entities.

### The medieval genesis

It is hard for urbanised, contemporary Europeans to fully imagine the socio-cultural conditions that led to the creation and sustenance of important medieval churches, which were usually built by means of local efforts and resources during times that were at best uncertain and at worst discontinuous. Harder still in an increasingly secular world is an appreciation of how fundamental was religious belief to almost all medieval action. And yet, the medieval period has produced some of the finest artefacts in human cultural history. Despite the 'Gothic' aspersions cast by Renaissance theorists, these works are of a scale and quality on a par with any other period of human endeavour. This was much more than 'decorated vernacular': the high Gothic period represents perhaps the only time in Western architectural history when an original and lively architectural style flourished independently of classical tradition. In his authoritative work *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, Umberto Eco clearly exposes the existence of a coherent and conscious medieval aesthetic theory, based on a Christianisation of Platonic thought through the Scholastic tradition. He cites St Thomas Aquinas' three requirements for beauty as:

'Firstly, integrity or perfection – for if something is impaired it is ugly. Then there is due proportion or consonance. And also clarity: whence things that are brightly coloured are called beautiful' (Eco 1986: 71).

We already know how fundamental light was as an element of medieval space. Bonaventure (Eco 1986: 51) described light's four fundamental characteristics as:

'...clarity which illuminates, impassibility so that it cannot corrupt, agility so that it can travel instantaneously and penetrability so that it can pass through transparent bodies'.

Bonaventure would have been equally aware of light's divine qualities; its capacity to illuminate the soul and to transfigure mortal bodies. The aesthetics of consonance in musical harmonies and concordance in proportional relationships were important qualities of medieval art. Derived from musical proportion following Pythagorean and Platonic ideas, concordance united the 'architectural, the plastic and the semantic' in a way that not only fused art and architecture, but used this harmony to communicate the Christian lexicon through symbols and objects. Indeed, the function of churches as pedagogical devices in an age when few could read or write has been largely lost to our understanding. The Synod of Arras in 1025 declared that whatever the common people could not understand from the scriptures should be taught to them by means of images. A cathedral was at once *liber et pictura* and via murals, statuary and stained glass was a repository of visual representation, at once image and imagination. According to Henri de Focillon, 'that which the 13th Century could not express in words, it sculpted' (Recht 2015: 1653). These 'vast encyclopaedias of stone' had a textual purpose, as an exposé of the scriptures for the illiterate and unlearned, but more importantly as embodiment of the ineffable through a mystical union of matter, form and image. In the medieval world, nature was seen as an

allegorical representation of the supernatural world, and architecture was at once manifestation and mediator of these worlds.

Another recognised quality of medieval architecture was the science of its construction. This is the aspect with which the 19th-century revivalists (Ruskin excepted) were most comfortable and which they went to great lengths to analyse and describe. Viollet-le-Duc's *Entretiens* are first and foremost a manual of historical construction methods (both classical and medieval), presented as a manual of techniques rather than aesthetics (Viollet 1977 [1863]). Medieval construction, however, did not separate art from building. Art was understood then in its classical sense (*ars*) as the science of making things, be they buildings, paintings or sculpture. *Laborare* and *orare* were synonymous in the monastic tradition, rendering the constructive act itself a form of prayer. To the medieval, God was the instigator of all great works via creation, of which man was but a part, and man's creation therefore a unified representation of this process. The stones of the cathedral themselves became imbued with the spirit through the hand and will of its maker.

### **Churches as an expression of the unity of God and the people**

This principle of concordance, already fully manifest in church building through a unity of art, architecture and expression of faith, extended also to a unity of people and place. The church was the centre of parish life, of life rituals from birth to death, and a place which could not be bypassed without reciting a prayer or making a sign of the cross. In this sense, the building and the people were one and shared a common life. The other striking aspect of medieval art, compared to attitudes towards monuments today, was the unselfconsciousness with which periodic 'overwritings' of the site occurred. Sainte-Croix, for example, had at least two major rebuilding stages over the foundations of the earliest known structure on the site, and each in the most up-to-date style of its time. Chartres Cathedral, largely built between 1194 and 1250, is the last of at least five structures on the same site. This suggests that the medieval world did not consider these structures as monuments in the static, objective or formal sense, but rather as a sacred work in progress, as time and resources allowed, where the very act of construction itself was a form of worship. While they were undoubtedly places of memory, in that they were often named for a founding saint or devotion to a particular apostle or relic, they were primarily repositories of the divine presence, which required continuous honour and devotion. In this sense they were built expressions of a continuous presence, rather than historical narrative. Unlike a classical temple, they were not generally freestanding; their main structural supports were frequently located externally of the skin and additions were often made in an accretive manner. The consciously architectural parts of the church faced the processional entrance via the western façade (its face to the corporeal world) but were primarily focused internally towards the sanctuary and its the divine presence, bathed in an aura of volume and light.

### **Widening the conservation reflection**

Given therefore that these monuments are complex and unified, artistic and constructive, sacred as well as profane, we may be justified in stepping outside standard build-

ing conservation paradigms in order to consider them under the rubric of art conservation theories. In this context, we no longer need to separate sculpture from structural elements or painting from the masonry to which it was applied. Cesare Brandi's *Teoria del restauro* is interesting in this regard (Brandi 2001). Even though the complexity of a work of architecture might be considered very different to the painting or sculpture which inspired Brandi's treatise, his emphasis on the importance of appreciating the work as *unità del totale* (its quality as 'the sum of its parts') has relevance to Sainte-Croix, or indeed any other medieval church containing such a fusion of the arts. Brandi's approach considers the work of art as both 'object' and 'image' where matter and content are indissociable. We experience it, initially at least, as the fusion of these elements. The object has importance only insofar as it serves to vehiculate the image. The image is timeless but the object is not. Our 'physical conservation' actions are only concerned with the viability of the objective qualities of the artefact – we can never recreate the image (in the same way as Ruskin's dead workman cannot be brought back to life). Brandi also proposes an interesting way of considering the work in space and time. He suggests that there are three 'phases' in the life of a work of art. The first is the time it took to create through the actions of the artist and the period (or periods) of its genesis. The second he calls its 'duration' or historical time, which is the period of time between its genesis and our encounter with it. This is the time where changes occur to its original state (such as damage, accretions or patina etc.), affecting not just the fabric but the original meaning of the work, and separating it in space and time from the artist's intentions and the historical period of its creation. The third phase is the moment when we experience it for the first time, and our understanding of it subsequently, which can only be a product of our time and place, and is not to be confused with its intrinsic historical value. The work of art is experienced by us in a moment of revelation, what Brandi calls the 'epiphany of the imagination' (Brandi 2001: 10). The 'problem' of restoration occurs when we try to assimilate our understanding of the work with the artist's intention. This can only be conjectural, as we cannot travel back through time nor engage with the mind of its creator. For this reason, the work of art is always an historical object and only exists insofar as we experience it.

### **Imagination and perception**

It is no coincidence that Brandi ascribes a quality of imagination to our encounter with the work of art. One of the fundamental qualities of historic objects is their ability to stimulate our imaginations. It is important in that context that a part of them remain beyond our reach so that they can continue to awaken our interest. It can even be said that this space for the imagination is an important quality of the place, as it stimulates us to open new lines of research. The problems occur where we make assumptions about the monument in the absence of 'true knowledge'. We experienced this in the case of St Patrick's, when we were opposed by local residents on our proposals to re-render the external walls. This render had been removed in the 1960s and our research had shown that the building had been regularly whitewashed since the late medieval period. Restoring the external render was the only way to increase the structure's resistance to the damp damaging the internal plasterwork (Fig. 3). In this case, the radical change of appearance that the re-rendering represented in the eyes of the local community,

FIG. 3. Saint Patrick's church Waterford following recent refurbishment work (photo by F. Duffy).

FIG. 4. Ste Croix quartier in 1910. Engraving (courtesy of O. Duchateau).



who had only ever known the building as having exposed rubble stonework, represented an outcome that did not correspond to its *imagined* view of the monument in historical time. However, a far more significant quality of this place in historical terms related to our evidence of its existence in medieval times, even though its superstructure was extensively rebuilt in the late 17th century. Here indeed was real matter for the imagination because of our lack of knowledge of this period, putting the case for an archaeological resolution of the site.

Because these places are products of time as much as repositories of historic fabric, Brandi's approach takes on a special relevance. Brandi has claimed that we can never fully understand the creative act once it has taken place, and that the patina of centuries serves to further distance us from this moment. When we consider that Sainte-Croix is the product of more than one 'moment' of creation, this further complicates our ability to fully understand it. Finally, in the context of our own personal encounters with the artefact (being limited in knowledge and time), the reality of the place's meaning or 'image' can never be truly known, much like the image of the flickering shadows on the wall of Plato's cave. If we then consider the changes to the place in the Brandian sense between the time of its creation and our current perception of it, the greater changes by far have been to the place's 'image' rather than to its quality as 'object'. The loss of meaning associated with the decline in its functional purpose and the gradual extinction of its use is palpable, whereas from the remains of the fabric alone we can still know that this place once served as an important medieval church.

In the context of a place's quality not just as a work of art, but as art with a spiritual content, the question of what represents compatible use or reuse requires examination, if not redefinition. Places such as Sainte-Croix, which marry the corporeal and incorporeal to a high degree, are much more places of the imagination than of bricks and mortar, because of the great gulf in understanding that separates us from their original meaning (Fig. 4). And even if we could overcome the obstacles of place and time that

separate us from this meaning, there will always be a part of them that pertains to the Mystery because of their function as portals between this world and the next. Their genesis was an evolution rather than a moment of birth and this gives them a timelessness that is part of their character. They represent an historical present rather than a 'known previous state'. The unselfconsciousness with which they were periodically rebuilt or remodelled is a tribute to the flexibility of their architectural form, as are the stylistic variations they contain.

### **The case of adaptive reuse**

The current tendency towards the reuse of such structures is too often motivated by a sort of impulse towards functional valorisation, without any serious engagement with what compatible use may or may not represent. Lurking in the background is an underlying prejudice against uselessness and a penchant for 'value engineering', which has more to do with the cost of things rather than their true value. Conservation practice, being also of its time and place, is not immune to these influences. The current trend in conservation theory towards *compatible use* as a measure of returning 'relevance' to a place could be perceived as a hangover from this 19th-century empiricism, which promoted a functionalist worldview. This has more recently and subtly evolved towards meeting the needs of consumerism, as Maastricht's hotel-in-a-church and the bookshop-in-a-church examples demonstrate (the Kruisherhotel and Selexyz Dominicanen respectively). This over-reliance on the materialistic and phenomenological is inversely proportional to our willingness, or ability, to consider the spiritual content of a place, particularly where it pertains to a denominational religious past or present use. In parallel with our methods for assessing a place's physical properties, a full appraisal of these must include a consideration of their metaphysical content. An online description of the recent conversion of the Dominicanerkerk as 'a superb example of adaptive reuse' is a case in point. Not only is this liable to challenge on grounds of design (not to mention hyperbole) but the charters remain silent on any criteria of assessment that might allow us to put this claim to the test. While the bookshop insertion seems to have rigorously respected the *corporeal* qualities of the place (as indeed the law obliges), the same cannot be said of the *incorporeal* ones. The bookshop insertion as expressed by its *separate* structure and selfconscious functionality places itself firmly outside the realm of *unità*.

In this age of shifting paradigms, where allegiance to the *état de droit* has largely taken the place of religious affiliation, and shared beliefs and values have been replaced by the politics of diversity and individualism, we need to find a new mechanism of consensus for the conservation of these places, for without any attribution of collective value, they will become obsolete. The cultural fragmentation that is the primary cause of their decline could also become the means to their 're-imaging', if we accept that they too are entitled to their rightful place in the new tapestry of diversity. While the conditions that created and sustained them are gone, probably forever, civil society must now find the means to finance its duty of care towards them, in lieu of the community's erstwhile role. They must belong to all of us now, regardless of creed or belief. Instead of conditioning their future value on their potential as real estate, we would do well to listen to the message they contain through the silence of their stone. It invites us to look up towards the light that shines into our eyes (and hearts) by the efforts of those 'dead workmen'. It challenges us to consider who we are and why we are here, and in

the process to affirm our own mortality. This is their gift to us as selfless acts of creation, of heroic giving, excessive in scale and intent. They exhort us to the same 'epiphany of the imagination' that brought them as image and object together, to our place and time. We should enjoy the privilege that such places afford us to truly inhabit them as great art on no other terms but their own.

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## PRESERVING THE BUILDING – KEEPING THE SACRED. THE CASE OF THE SAINTE-CROIX COLLEGIATE CHURCH IN LIÈGE

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‘The word “architecture” conjures up an enormous range of meanings that embraces everything from home to building, from symbol to function. But while it includes these things, it also assumes certain conditions beyond the bounds of what is necessary and sufficient to define architecture’s particular discourse’ (Eisenman 2003: 7).

### **A definition of the sacred: the applicability of the concept to architectural space**

The functional transformation of churches as a phenomenon closes a circle, taking into account the fact that Christian sacred space was born into buildings that originally had lay functions (basilicas, private houses). Two thousand years later, the Christian space faces the loss of its sacred character, especially in the Western world. From this perspective, we may ask ourselves what does ‘the sacred’ consist of? It is probably not enough for a space to be ‘religious’ in order to be ‘sacred’ and it is possible for a space to be ‘sacred’ without being ‘religious’ (Dușoiu 2009). In fact, the sacred anticipates the cult, being a priori present and provided while invoked. It abolishes geometric coordinates and installs symbolic ones. The famous historian of religions Mircea Eliade shows that the home existed prior to the temple and it was yet sacred (Eliade 1983).

Social and commemorative dimensions superimpose themselves beyond the concept of the sacred. Space can become sacred through the work carried out inside or can be charged with a sacred meaning as an effect of previous events having taken place in it. An architectural intervention on such a space cannot destroy the sacred, but can potentially hide it. As a consequence, architectural intervention should deal with keeping the sacred visible and understandable. This involves a social dimension (by focusing on the historical testimonies and by bringing the community into the new proposed function), a religious dimension (by retaining a sense of the liturgy)<sup>1</sup> and a commemorative dimension (by keeping its former use in evidence alongside the proposed new use). The sacred space cannot be considered only from the perspective of religious value – social and commemorative dimensions must be included also.

### **Loss of the sacred in the contemporary Christian religious space: a brief overview.**

The idea of ‘palimpsest’ is considered to be fundamental for the deep understanding of architecture (Robert 2003) and in this context architectural conversion plays a role of major importance, being a mechanism for rewriting space. Different interventions or modifications over the lifetime of a building in fact cover a large spectrum: they can refer not only to functional change but also to a sequence of styles on a façade, to the replacement of some decorative elements, or even to the superposition of drawings and sketches in search of an architectural solution. Compatibility of the proposed function with the in-



herited form is the key to architectural conversion. 'Out of the encounter between old envelope and new requirements and means, a unique object will be born – one which is no mere juxtaposition, but a synthesis from the point of view of both construction and architecture' (Claude Soucy in Robert 2003: 11). Philippe Robert has an affirmation that should particularly be a signal for the case of functional transformation of churches: 'The function obtained by a building in case of conversion should express a symbolic charge at least equal to the original one'<sup>2</sup>.

We can associate to this statement that made by Derek Latham (Latham 2000: 10): 'Conservation is about more than simply preserving our past history. More fundamentally, it is about maintaining the health of our towns and villages'. This kind of approach is called by the author 'creative reuse', which can be opposed to the contemporary term 'adaptive reuse', which is rather ambiguous<sup>3</sup>. The influence exerted upon its neighbourhoods by the rehabilitation of a building with a communitarian function cannot be ignored from this perspective. A correctly regenerated architectural object becomes a catalyst for the whole area and a pole of social life, easily appropriated by the local community.

Deconsecration of the religious spaces started under the pressure of economic inefficiency. Transforming churches into community centres, nurseries, youth clubs etc. gives the local population a stronger sense of membership and usefulness in relation to the new space. This transformation generally happens where congregations are weak in terms of membership and in economic resources. These communities do not always take the decision about transforming the church or whether it will change according to their desires.

Once the decision of deconsecration is expressed, some principles have to be taken into account: preserving valuable spatial and decorative elements; division of space while respecting the initial conception; visual communication in the case of intensification of space use on the vertical axis, and so on<sup>4</sup>.

As for the new functions chosen for the transformed churches, those related to the community are to be preferred, so that the space should remain, somehow, under the administration of the local community. Functions related to charitable actions are encouraged as well. Similarly, churches become libraries, museums, theatre and concert halls, but also spaces for sports or dancing, due to their vast dimensions. There are also situations, shocking in reference to their symbolic message, when they become bars, clubs etc.

It is interesting to point out the situation of Great Britain, where there are special bodies that assess the value of churches and decide whether the proposed interventions are acceptable or not ('Redundant Churches Fund', 'Advisory Board for Redundant Churches'). These bodies are charged with proposing compatible functions, always without excluding the possibility of temporary use for worship. They are financially supported by the Church, the State and by voluntary donations (Cantacuzino 1989). This mechanism refers to the churches belonging to the Church of England or the Anglican tradition; this is the state religion, its Supreme Governor being the Queen of England. This provides them with strong institutional protection and of course not all Christian churches come under such bodies. Nonetheless, the British case is worth mentioning.

The workshop *Conservation/Adaptation. Keeping Alive the Spirit of the Place: Adaptive Reuse of Heritage With Symbolic Value* (October 2015) was a deep experience for anyone studying such cases. The city of Maastricht offered the possibility of visiting three transformed churches: a 13th-century Dominican convent that had become a bookstore, a convent of the Crossed Friars which is now a hotel and a 13th-century Franciscan monas-

tery functioning as an archive centre and library. It is interesting that in the third case the church lost its religious function in the 17th century, the church and its annexed buildings being successively an arsenal, an orphanage, military hospital, barracks and prison complex and a factory. The study trip in Maastricht can be a good foundation for developing a future strategy for the case of Sainte-Croix, offering a rich basis for comparison (EAAE Workshop 2015. *Documentation*).

## The case of Sainte-Croix

### 1. Specific aspects: the situation of the church

Built on the foundations of a small 11th-century parish church, the Collegiate Church of Sainte-Croix (13th and 14th century) stands on a natural promontory in the neighbourhood of the historic centre of Liège. The promontory is defined by two highways that were previously river channels – Sauvenière and Légia. The urban context of the church is heterogeneous, including ancient buildings at the base of the hill, the neighbourhood of the speedway and little narrow streets with a row of individual houses recalling the shape of the cloister.

From the urbanistic point of view, the church dominates the surroundings: its height makes it a point of reference and it acts like a node between several vehicular and pedestrian axes. This privileged position has transformed it into one of the symbols of Liège, the only condition being that the community should find in the regenerated building a response to its present needs. The urban situation of the church (with the octagonal tower functioning as a landmark) is one of the strong points that recommend it as an icon of the city (EAAE Workshop 2015. *Documentation*).

### 2. Integrity of the building and specific aspects of pathology

The church of Sainte-Croix is on the list of Exceptional Heritage of Wallonia on account of its outstanding architectural value. Its fabric includes several historical phases, developed over more than eight centuries: Early Romanesque, Late Romanesque, Early Gothic, Late Gothic, revival of the Romanesque and Gothic style in the 19th century. The present state of the monument allows an intervention that would possibly put into light all distinct phases, from the perspective of a 'scientific restoration'<sup>5</sup>. This is the advantage of having a monument which has not yet been touched by great works of restoration. This advantage can turn a new intervention into an architectural jewel in the hands of a sensitive and artful architect.

The ensemble of the Collegiate Church has been damaged in several locations over time: the northern fabric was demolished in order to give way to the new speedway and only the southern part of the cloister has been preserved.

The latest preservation work dates back to the 1970s. It was realised by the architect, H.F. Joway, and consisted of an emergency intervention for that time, but is now redundant and even harmful (EAAE Workshop 2015. *Documentation*). All kinds of material degradation can be observed, both on the exterior façades and in the interior of the space: physical, mainly caused by precipitation of water; chemical, visible in black sediments and stone decay can be observed; mechanical, illustrated by missing and broken stone pieces; and biological, evidenced by moss on the façades and fungi on the wooden roof members (Fig. 1).

FIG. 1. A detail of the northern facade of the Sainte Croix church, Liège, showing physical and chemical degradation and different phases of intervention on masonry (photo by E-C. Duşoiu, October 2015).

FIG. 2. Interior of the Sainte Croix church, with existing religious furniture (photo by E-C. Duşoiu, October 2015).



### *3. Components of mobile and immobile patrimony*

One of the first things that strikes the viewer while visiting Sainte-Croix is the integrity of the elements which decorate its interior: stained glass windows, sculpture, prayer benches, chandeliers, confessionals, pulpit, and so forth. The church is also in possession of an impressive collection of cult objects, constituting its treasure. Christian service seems to have just finished and the church seems to be waiting for the next Sunday liturgy. This is the deep impression I left the church with and such integrity could be both a challenge for a future intervention proposal and a guideline for the future as well. Technically speaking, an inventory of existing mobile components and their present state is necessary and can lead to a correct intervention approach (Fig. 2).

### *4. The Sacred*

Apart from it being still a sacred space, in that it was never deconsecrated and also that it is endowed with memorial value (it is the church where the musician César Franck was baptised), the Collegiate Church of Sainte-Croix has its own protector: the abbot Paul Firket, who was a soldier during the First World War, and a corporal in the Second World War from 1940, and a priest after turning back to Liège. He was arrested by the Germans in the presbytery of the church in 1942, being consequently tortured, condemned to death and killed<sup>6</sup>. This sacrifice, together with the more than 1,000 years of liturgical function in the same place (interrupted only for some years as a result of the French Revolution) give the place an ineffable sense of the sacred which has to be deeply understood and assumed by the future users of the church (Fig. 3).

### **Sainte-Croix in juxtaposition with the transformed churches in Maastricht**

A parallel between the three study sites from Maastricht allows the categorisation of the different approaches to be adopted towards interventions for functional conversion. The bookstore 'Selexyz Dominicanen' is a pretty careful architectural intervention. Reversibility of the technical solution, the study of interior perspectives, with the preoccupation of emphasising the Gothic space and the possibility of viewing it from several levels are among the strong features of the project (Fig. 4). However, the idea of transforming the choir and the area of the altar into a cafeteria, organised around a huge table in the

FIG. 3. Interior of the Sainte Croix church, general view (photo by E-C. Duşoiu, October 2015).

FIG. 4. The bookstore “Selexyz Dominicanen”, in a Dominicans church dated up to the 13th century, Maastricht (photo by E-C. Duşoiu, October 2015).



form of a cross, becomes an unwanted pastiche, subverting the original use of the church. Kruisherhotel, opened in 2005 in a former convent, obviously aspires to a sophisticated and provocative design, wishing to create a clear contrast between the original purpose and the new one. Considered innovative and futuristic but also reversible – a condition imposed by the City of Maastricht while accepting the conversion proposed by the Chateau Hotels & Restaurant company – the intervention is, however, shocking. Colours, materials and forms talk about comfort, pleasure and luxury in some kind of hedonistic discourse, obviously opposing the concept of religious space, penitence and prayer (Figs. 5-6). Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg is a more discreet intervention, focusing on the ergonomic functionality of the space, light and furniture, with minimal changes of the historical space and a considered approach throughout the interior.

In conclusion, all three interventions dealt with concepts such as reversibility, preservation of authentic material, a clear separation between the original container and the new proposed function. However:

- the artistic elements of the interior space (sculpture, frescoes, paintings, stone details, windows of stained glass) are not put into value, neither as historical nor in their role as ‘stage set’ – on the upper parts of the Kruisherhotel there are medieval paintings that are completely ignored, while discreet lightening could have drawn attention to them;

- the valuable mobile patrimony of the churches (furniture, cult objects, etc.) has been lost or removed;
- there is nothing to explain the historical functioning of space, which has been abolished. The logic of liturgical space is completely changed in all three cases, but especially in the first two;
- no sense of the sacred was kept. In the 'Selexyz Dominicanen', the existing tombs are completely ignored and people walk over the tombstones without a care, which can mean a lack of respect towards the people buried there. With just a few design interventions, it would have been easy to avoid passing over them or to indicate their presence.

The opportunity of Sainte-Croix lies precisely in the fact that it has not yet been converted, so it does not suffer any of the traumas the churches in Maastricht are dealing with. Sainte-Croix still benefits from its whole collection of religious furniture, artistic elements and liturgical objects. The only challenge is to bring them to a new life. Sainte-Croix has remained much as it was, so space has not been altered and it has kept its sense of the sacred, as explained above.

### **Some proposals for the future of Sainte-Croix: a school exercise**

The case of Sainte-Croix, one of the most exciting topics considered during the EAAE workshop, was proposed as a working subject to the students of the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in the context of two theoretical disciplines that I teach: Functional Conversion of the Architectural Space and Ecology<sup>7</sup>. The topic was formulated as a challenge to sketch the design of a future for the Collegiate Church, taking into account its present situation, its value, its physical state and the communities and institutions involved in the action of saving it. The basic question was of course 'What should be done with the Church of Sainte-Croix?'

The students' proposals can be categorised in five main groups:

- The proponents of the continuation of the religious function. This group proved to be rather conservative, showing a special sensibility for the intangible values of the church but with no interest in the question of efficiency, which means their proposals did not present a realistic alternative.
- Proponents of cultural functions that could possibly be conducted alternatively with religious service. The most common idea was to turn the space into a library or a performance/conference hall, with an exhibition space nearby. Many students considered this kind of approach to be the most suitable for a religious space, possibly keeping a small area (the altar) for religious service. Offering the space for liturgical purposes at alternative time was also considered (Figs. 7-9).
- Proponents of educational functions. Although traditionally compatible with religious functions, education use was not an obvious proposal for architects wishing to transform and preserve the space of Sainte-Croix. One of the proposals referred to a School of Design, with the transformation of existing prayer benches into specific furniture for drawing. The proposal was original, but needed to be completed with a special study of lighting – the low level of light entering through the stained glass is not sufficient for this function (Figs. 10-11).

FIGS. 5-6. Kruisherhotel, in a former convent of the crossed friars, Maastricht (photo by E-C. Duşoiu, October 2015).

FIG. 7. Transformation of the Sainte Croix church into an art gallery, a project by student I. Grigoras, guided by Assoc.Prof.Ph.D.Arch. E-C. Duşoiu (February 2016).

FIG. 8. Transformation of the Sainte Croix church into a library, a project by student A. Nadu - plan, guided by Assoc.Prof.Ph.D.Arch. E-C. Duşoiu (February 2016).



- Proponents of commercial and/or leisure uses (cafeteria, etc.). Several proposals referred to fairs or commercial stands for diverse products organised in retail modules, with the advantage of being reversible and easy to adapt to other spatial configurations. A cafeteria was generally regarded as a complementary function for the clients (Fig. 12).



FIG. 9. Transformation of the Sainte Croix church into a library, a project by student A. Nadu – interior perspective, guided by Assoc.Prof. Ph.D.Arch. E.C. Dușoiu (February 2016).

FIG. 10. Transformation of the Sainte Croix church into a school of design, a project by student A. Feraru – plan, guided by Assoc.Prof. Ph.D.Arch. E.C. Dușoiu (February 2016).



- Proponents of sporting functions. A few courageous proposals imagined the church transformed into a sports hall, containing a skate park, a bike polo ground and a mini velodrome and the reuse of the existing benches as tribunes (Fig. 13).

Some proposals also analysed the mobile valuable elements of patrimony: pieces of furniture and cult objects. They designed the changes required to adapt them to the new purposes required in the converted space (benches turned into furniture for a drawing school, prayer chair turned into a support for clothes, confessional becoming a retail kiosk. etc.) (Figs. 14-15).

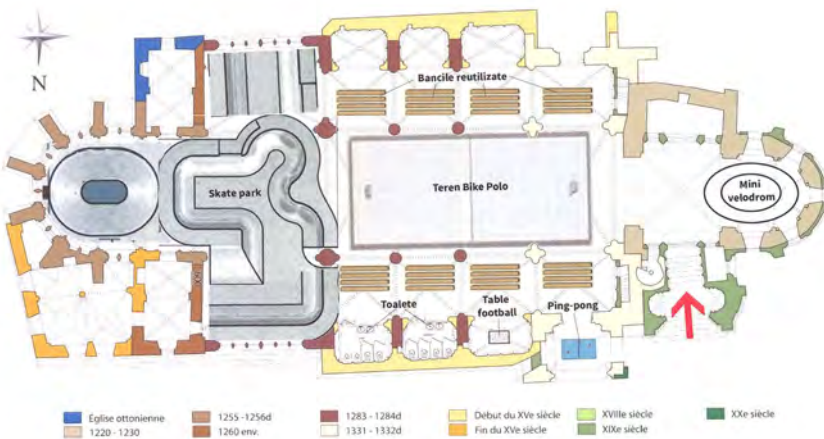
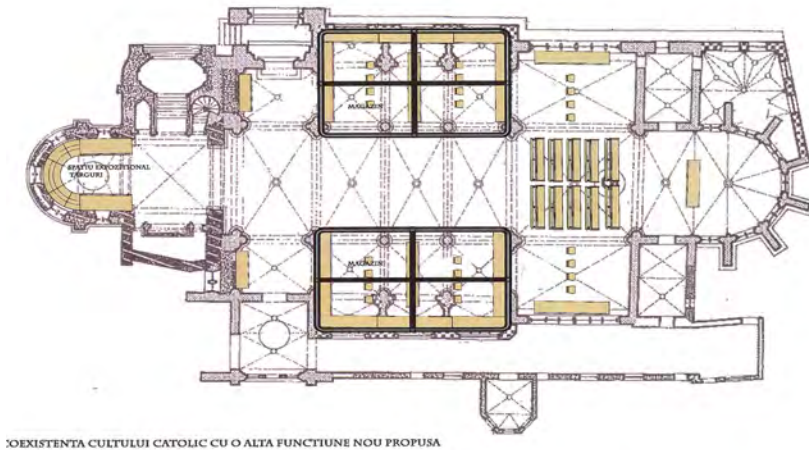
Nobody proposed or accepted the idea of abandoning or demolishing the church.

FIG. 11. Transformation of the Sainte Croix church into a school of design, a project by student A. Feraru – interior perspective, guided by Assoc.Prof.Ph.D.Arch. E-C. Dușoiu (February 2016).



FIG. 12. Coexistence of the Catholic cult with a commercial function in the Sainte Croix church, a project by student A. Nistorescu – plan, guided by Assoc.Prof. Ph.D.Arch. E-C. Dușoiu (February 2016).

FIG. 13. Transformation of the Sainte Croix church into a sports center, a project by student L. Szatmary – plan, guided by Assoc.Prof.Ph.D.Arch. E.C. Dușoiu (February 2016).





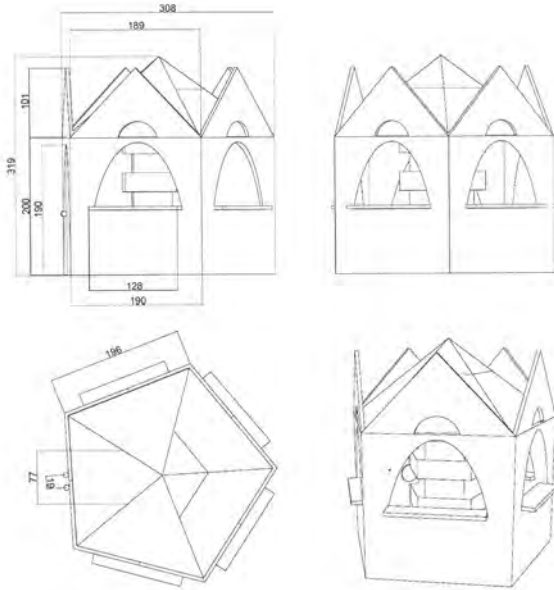
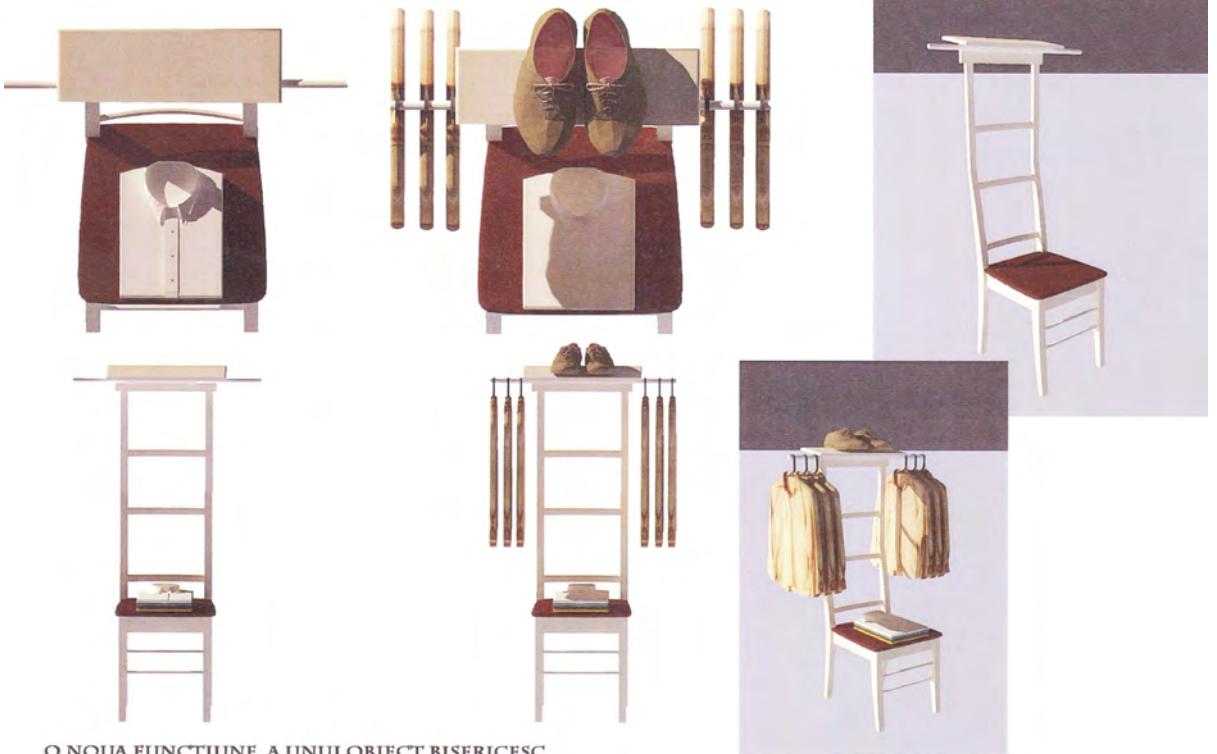


FIG. 14. Adaptation of an existing confessional from the Sainte Croix church as a commercial kiosk, a project by student I. Mintulescu, guided by Assoc.Prof.Ph.D.Arch. E.C. Dușoiu (February 2016).

FIG. 15. Adaptation of prayer furniture from the Sainte Croix church as clothes support, a project by student A. Nistorescu, guided by Assoc.Prof. Ph.D.Arch. E.C. Dușoiu (February 2016).



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## Conclusions

We may ask ourselves if the attributes of the sacred in a space disappear with its functional change. The first Christians used to meet in their own houses or in reused monuments of ancient Rome that were not then called 'churches'. The necessity of preserving liturgical service in a religious space is to be understood from the perspective of respecting an activity which has a heritage value, as in the case of a factory, for instance, where the technological process is the existing reason for the space itself.

The architect Sherban Cantacuzino shows himself to remain true to his native Latin-Byzantine roots while stating: 'Churches are usually landmarks in their surroundings and traditionally a focal point for their community, so that their disappearance constitutes a serious loss. For this reason it is vital that sympathetic new uses are found that will damage neither the exterior nor the character of the church. An appropriate new use is one that fits both the spirit and the form of a church. This means public or community use, with a degree of ritual and ceremony attached. It also means a use that maintains the single volume of the church' (Cantacuzino 1989: 170). Here the author offers the mechanism for saving heritage, observing that dedication to a religious culture is nothing but an extra argument for defining one of the values of the church as a monument, in the sense employed by Françoise Choay – an object of memory (Choay 1998).

The only reasonable solution when facing a functional transformation which is impossible to avoid is to allow the church to live 'beyond' its new function, through a respectful and, of course, reversible relationship. This is the secret of a successful conversion: to let the new and old lives of the building coexist in harmony. It is true that symbols may change, achieve another sense or replace each other, but we have to keep the natural side of this process, without destroying them. 'Visually unconscious' persons, meaning the ones who do not detect the architectural symbol, are comparable with analphabetic persons (Strike 2004). James Strike also cites Umberto Eco in his well-known assertion that any art work (including architecture) should be open-ended, depending on the personal experiences of the observer rather than on those of the author. In this sense of 'opening' we should represent the functional transformation of buildings, allowing a future to manifest through the new transformation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> From the Greek λειτουργώ – to function.

<sup>2</sup> In converting a sacred space, we have to take into account the fact that intervention is realised in a place already possessing the attributes of the sacred, as defined previously. If some religions consider the church to be just a praying house, this fact making it compatible with other communitarian social functions, for others the building of the church means passing to another world and entering another time and no other borrowed function can replace this experience (n.auth.).

<sup>3</sup> See conclusions of the working group on religious values: EAAE workshop 2015. *Conclusions*.

<sup>4</sup> The following principles are formulated in a list that aims to be complete (Latham 2000): 1. A conversion scheme should be considered in 3 dimen-

sions. 2. Added partial levels should appear as detached from the walls and voids as possible, allowing the reading of original space. 3. New (horizontal and vertical) subdivisions should allow reading of the structure, without hiding it. 4. Intervention should be reversible where possible, this fact constituting an advantage in a long term evolution of the building. 5. Replaced materials and installations should be re-used in other constructions as far as possible. 6. Exterior interventions should be minimal, aiming not to alter the image of the church in the context of its neighbourhoods. New voids will integrate with the old ones. Extensions affecting the general volume of the building should be avoided. 7. New designed parking places will not affect the surrounding landscape of the church. 8. Intervention will take place at the same time with archaeological research,

especially in the case of medieval churches. 9. In the case of ensembles containing annexed buildings of the churches, an integrated intervention, referring to the whole, will be designed.

<sup>5</sup> The term was created by promoters of the modern Italian school of restoration: Camillo Boito, Gustavo Giovannoni (Choay 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Information extracted by the author from the presentation panel in the church.

<sup>7</sup> <www.uauim.ro> – SFA-64 and SFA-110.

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## THE ADAPTIVE REUSE OF MONASTIC STRUCTURES. PORTUGUESE EXAMPLES AND DIDACTIC EXPERIENCES

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This discussion paper focuses particularly on the adaptive reuse of disused monasteries and convents, which are of great importance in the Portuguese context due both to their strategic presence in the territory and to the large number of abandoned structures that have survived until the present day. Considering their historical importance in the local economy and their place in the landscape, these structures offer great potential for adaptive reuse, including the regeneration of the surrounding territory through the recovery of their ancient systems (accesses, paths, walls, water supply systems, gardens, buildings, etc). Hence, this subject calls for reflections beyond the question of their compatible functions, namely the connection of these structures with the landscape and local communities, the relationship between 'old and new' (because new uses often require new constructions and infrastructures), and the incorporation of intangible values (spiritual, ascetic, symbolic, etc.) into contemporary interventions. All these issues make such places an interesting opportunity for architectural research, practice and pedagogy.

As Alois Riegl maintained, a 'monument's' physical life is a precondition of its psychic life (Riegl 1995 [1903]). However, the adaptive reuse of buildings inevitably submits them to an exhibition and transformation process that fatally removes them from their original contexts and meanings (Sola-Morales 2000 [1996]; Ferreira 2011). In this way, how can one find a balance between the positive enjoyment of old structures and the embodiment of their intangible values such as their significance and memories? How can one recover principles of self-sufficiency by promoting the regeneration of the landscape and territory, in close liaison with the local communities? How can one preserve their multi-layered consistency (both tangible and intangible) into contemporary interventions? When new additions are needed or requested, how can these issues be related to the old structure, searching for coherence when moving from the general concept to detail?

### *Portuguese examples*

In Portugal, a case in point in the current debate is the adaptive reuse of disused buildings – monastic structures and convents, palaces or castles – which are often converted into hotels or given other uses. Some important examples of such conversions in the Portuguese context are the interventions undertaken at the former monastic structures of the Convento de São Gonçalo in Amarante (museum, A. Soutinho, 1973–1980), the Convento de Santa Marinha da Costa (hotel, F. Távora, 1975–1982), the Convento de Refóios do Lima (Faculty of Agronomy, F. Távora, 1986–1991), Soares dos Reis Museum (museum, F. Távora, 1988–2000), the Convento da Flor da Rosa in Portalegre (hotel, J. Carrilho da Graça, 1992–1995), the Convento de Nossa Senhora da Conceição in

FIG. 1. Convento de Santa Marinha da Costa, new building [at the front] and old convent [at the back].

FIG. 2 . Convento de Santa Marinha da Costa, restaurant.

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FIG. 3. Convento de Santa Marinha da Costa, cloister.



Arraiolos (hotel, J. Paulo dos Santos, 1993–1997) and the Convento de Santa Maria do Bouro (hotel, E. Souto de Moura and H. Vieira, 1989–1997).

The criterion used in selecting the case studies presented in this paper involved focusing on similar pre-existing structures (abandoned convents of medieval origin) that had been converted in the last 40 years: the first group of examples relates to ‘mono-functional’ conversions of structures that were required to perform a similar function (boutique hotels), while the second group consisted of ‘multifunctional’ conversions of structures required to perform a wider range of functions (different uses). Some reflections will be provided on the relationship of these structures with the surrounding territory, on the strategy adopted for the inclusion of new uses, and on questions linked to material preservation and to the embodiment of intangible values in architectural interventions.

### *Boutique hotels*

The conversion of the disused Convento de Santa Marinha da Costa (1975–1982) was undertaken by Fernando Távora, who was an important architect and university lecturer, as well as one of the few Portuguese participants in the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM). Besides this, Távora was, in theory, practice and pedagogy, strongly committed to finding a link between tradition and modernity, using history as a tool for contemporary design. The work on the Convento da Costa marked the beginning of a new period in the Portuguese culture of conservation/restoration, as it introduced a different approach to the relationship between old and new. The architect rejected the proposal made by the Directorate-General of Buildings and National Monuments (DGEMN) to include a new floor of rooms in the attic of the pre-existing structure with the use of a mimetic language. Instead, he proposed the conservation of the former monastic building and the addition of a new building using contemporary

architectural language in a setting position that follows the principles of its constructive evolution over time. The forms and materials of the 'new' are carefully studied so as to ensure a harmonious integration with the pre-existing building, evoking themes that can be related both to a 'curtain wall' and to the façades of traditional local architecture. According to Távora, 'the general criterion adopted in the project [...] was 'continuing inovating' or, in other words, to continue contributing to the long life of the building, by conserving and strengthening its most significant spaces or creating qualified spaces determined by the conditions of its new function. The intention was to create a dialogue, highlighting the affinities and the continuity rather than the differences and the break from the past' (Távora 1985: 77).



As far as the functional strategy of the intervention was concerned, Távora sought to match new uses with old ones whenever possible: installing a restaurant in the refectory, a meeting room in the chapter house and hotel rooms in the old monastic cells (the bathroom is like a cupboard, with a lower height to allow for the perception of the interior space of the cell). The new functions requiring heavier infrastructures are located in the new constructions: the kitchen and the laundry facilities are installed in an underground volume and the 20 new rooms that were requested by the commitment are located in the new building (Figs. 1-3). By deeply understanding the typological, compositional, material, functional and symbolic principles of the pre-existing complex, Távora was able to design all the details himself (lighting, decoration, furniture), attempting in this way to incorporate the building's significance – in his words, 'a certain monastic austerity [was] revealed through a great economy of means and an extreme simplicity in the solutions adopted, both in terms of the spaces themselves and in terms of their treatment, decoration and furniture' (Távora 1985: 77).

Using a different approach, at the Convento de Santa Maria do Bouro (Eduardo Souto de Moura and Humberto Vieira, 1989–1997), the architects focused on preserving the strong image of the pre-existing ruin (freestanding walls with no roofs), and this was achieved in the intervention through the removal of subsistent plasters, the absence of visible window frames and the introduction of plain roof being covered with topsoil. Nevertheless, Souto de Moura rejected the simple conservation of the ruin, as he proposed its transformation through the introduction of new uses, forms and materials: the combined use of concrete and Corten steel slabs, technical areas and infrastructures, and very accurate details of thin brass window frames, while some stones were reused and moved to other places, although the cloister remained untouched as a metaphor for the contemplated ruin. The architect wrote as follows: 'I'm not restoring a convent, I'm building a hotel with the stones of a convent [...]. Recovering a building also means



FIG. 4. Convento de Santa Maria do Bouro, new building [at the front] and old convent [at the back] (photo by L. Ferreira Alves).

FIG. 5. Convento de Santa Maria do Bouro, bedroom with bathroom-cupboard (photo by L. Ferreira Alves).

FIG. 6. Convento de Santa Maria do Bouro, detail of window frame (photo by L. Ferreira Alves).

FIG. 7. Convento de Flor da Rosa, intersection between the new building and the old convent.

giving it an image [...] when you identify a building with a specific century, the restoration should accompany that powerful identity. Otherwise, I would have to choose a century, and for me the only possibility would be the twentieth century' (Souto de Moura 2001: 46). Unlike Távora, who added a new building to the pre-existing structure, which was thus preserved, in this case the ruin was manipulated and transformed, dissipating the physical distinction between old and new. As far as the functional strategy was concerned, Souto de Moura chose, where appropriate, to match new functions to old ones – installing a restaurant in the old refectory and kitchen, hotel rooms in the cells (in this case,

the bathroom-cupboard is a very interesting feature) – and, as in the Convento de Santa Marinha da Costa, facilities such as the kitchen and laundry are located in a new volume (which is almost imperceptible as it has the appearance of a retaining wall). On the other hand, the absence of plasters and the minimalism of the building's details and decoration, despite being an expressively contemporary approach, represent an attempt to evoke the bareness and simplicity of monastic life (Figs. 4-6).

Another example of the adaptation of a former convent into a hotel is the intervention by J. Carrilho da Graça at the Convento de Flor da Rosa (1992–1995). Here, the outcome was determined by the careful conservation of the spaces and surfaces of the old building and by the addition of a new volume that through its accentuated contrast with the former structure (expressed in its pure and abstract language) emphasises the legibility of the contemporary intervention (Fig. 7). The architect chose to place few functions in the old convent (reception, bar, lounges and a few suites) which was converted into a museum, and the new uses (restaurant, kitchen, services, hotel rooms) were incorporated into the new building.

Nevertheless, some of the conversions that have been carried out since the 1980s can be called into question: either because of an excessive affirmation of the new (the consequence of a more literal interpretation of the Venice Charter), promoting the prevalence of the architectural image to the detriment of the material and intangible values of the object, thus irreversibly erasing the traces of history; or because of an exaggerated minimalism related to an architectural trend that (sometimes uncritically) gives preference to the use of certain materials such as concrete, glass, iron, stainless steel or Corten steel.

### *Different uses*

As far as adaptive reuse is concerned, there has been a critical debate about the more elitist and monofunctional nature of the boutique hotels installed in disused convents: they are said to create no synergies with the surrounding territory and the local communities, as they are only affordable to the upper classes; their lack of sustainability is also cited, since these tourist structures nowadays have very low rates of occupation due to the economic crisis. On the other hand, reflections can also be made as to how these high-standard hotels can best embody the spiritual and ascetic values of the former structures.

Given this scenario, some other possibilities of adaptive, multifunctional and sustainable uses have been experimented more recently in Portugal, while also acknowledging the importance of involving local communities in the rehabilitation process. At the Mosteiro de Tibães (intervention coordinated by João Carlos dos Santos – DRCN, 1985–2007), the largest and most important Benedictine monastery in the country, the project team chose to introduce different functions such as the conversion of the ruins into a museum (with a medieval kitchen and refectory, etc.), parish hall, auditorium and exhibition room, residential facilities for a religious community, a restaurant, library and research centre and rooms for hire at medium-range prices (Fig. 8). Another important feature was the recovery of the old perimeter wall with an associated agricultural production (winemaking and the planting of other crops), the inclusion of a water and sewage treatment station, as well as the preservation of previously existing features, such as paths, gardens, chapels, stairways, fountains, lakes and so forth for the enjoyment of locals, visitors and guests. This was a complex and exemplary work that included a range of different actions: resto-





FIG. 8. Mosteiro de Tibães, new building (photo by L. Ferreira Alves).

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FIGS. 9a-9b. Convento dos Capuchos da Arrábida (photos by VMSA).

ration, conservation, the preservation of ruins and a new construction with a contemporary and abstract language (in some ways evoking the asceticism of the old monastery), respecting the typological principles and symbolic value of the monument.

Other recent examples include the Convento das Bernardas (converted into apartments, E. Souto de Moura 2010–2014), the Convento de São João de Arga (a hostel for pilgrims, G. Andrade – DRCN, 2013–2015) and the Convento Capucho da Arrábida (V. Mestre and S. Aleixo, 2012–2014). This last example is an interesting one because, given the absence of a sustainable use for the convent, the architects decided not to introduce a new function (for instance, creating another boutique hotel), but just to surgically consolidate the ruin with clay mortars, bricks and timber structures, preserving the structure's material integrity, strengthening the 'spirit of the place' through the regeneration of the ancient system in its relationship with the landscape (wall, vegetation, paths and hydraulic systems) and opening it up for the enjoyment of the local communities (Figs. 9a-9b). According to the architects, 'The safeguarding of the material consistency is thus based in its intangible significance. The permanence of the ruin now stabilised will be its transitory stage, allowing for its transmission to the future users and guardians' (Mestre 2014: 96). This is a challenging example which gives special privilege to the systemic relationship with the surrounding territory, rejecting heavy architectural interventions through the imposition of a generic use, and instead promoting their progressive conservation and the discussion about possible new uses, considering such matters as community-driven participation, the economic capacity of the owners and the future self-sustainability of the complex.

Current debate and practice on adaptive reuse in Portugal are thus determined by multiple types of intervention, which are also evident in the diversity of the lexicon that is used: 'recovery, renovation, rehabilitation, revitalisation, restitution, reuse, restoration,



conservation’, etc. The expressions that are most commonly used are ‘recovery’ or ‘rehabilitation’, broad terms that can include different types of action (decided upon case by case) and the introduction of new functions, implicitly expressing a dialectic between conservation/restoration and contemporary intervention. Apropos of this subject, Alexandre Alves Costa has said: ‘Today we tend to consider interventions on a case-by-case basis, so that the intervention strategy will be generated by each non-generalised circumstance [...] consisting not only of the expression of each author’s individuality, but also the ethical undertaking to engage in a rigorous and exhaustive recognition of the building to be transformed [...]. The plurality of these terms and so many others that have been used recently is an undeniable indication of the pluralism with which our architectural culture has been able to approach any proposal for intervention’. The same author maintains that recovering a building means transforming it and using it: ‘Not transforming leads to the crystallisation of the past, and the architect limits himself to constructing a mausoleum and to choosing the paths for visitors to follow, which end up explaining an entity without any life’ (Costa 2003: 9–11). Finally, in this regard, it is important to underline the specificity of the Portuguese situation, where conservation/restoration (recovery/rehabilitation) has never been recognised with the same level of disciplinary autonomy as it has, for instance, in Italy or France.

### **Didactic experiences**

The adaptive reuse of old and disused convents is an exercise that is frequently performed at Portuguese universities in the architectural design studio or in theses for Master’s and PhD degrees. This subject leads to reflection about the territory as a stratified palimpsest formed over several centuries, as well as encouraging a critical approach to the theoretical, methodological and technical issues arising from interventions in

pre-existing buildings, involving different kinds of actions such as conservation, restoration, renewal and new constructions (Escola de Arquitectura da Universidade do Minho 2009). An important feature is also the debate currently taking place on the compatible and sustainable uses to be included in an existing structure, considering the 'spirit of the place' (ICOMOS 2008) and its specificities and values, as well as its relationship with landscape and local communities.

Because of their importance in the geostrategic organisation of the northern Iberian Peninsula, as well as their particular architectural features, monastic structures are of special interest for the training of students, since they make it possible to approach several important themes: the '*longue durée*' and its signs in the territory, the diverse possibilities of intervention in the ruin (either preserving or completing it), the transition between different scales (from the landscape to the detail), the principles of composition (such as geometry and modulation), the relationship between 'old and new', and constructive and tectonic issues, as well as a debate on the compatibility between new functions and pre-existent structures, considering also the embodiment of intangible values in contemporary architectural proposals.

The methodological approach involves combining available sources of information (documentary, bibliographical, iconographic, photographic, surveys, etc.) with direct observation *in loco*, considering the building as a material stratified 'document' – a palimpsest to be read, interpreted and transcribed. By considering the specificity of each case and the importance of a deep and rigorous knowledge of all pre-existing features, students are invited to develop several exercises of analysis and interpretation, using drawing as their research tool. Previous studies include: the principles of the territorial setting, different kinds of surveys (geometric, photographic, stratigraphic, constructive, decay mapping), the hypothetical reconstruction of the monastic complex (in different periods – medieval, modern, etc.) and its constructive evolution over time, metric and geometric studies, analysis of the convent's functional organisation and hydraulic systems, as well as a comparison with other monastic structures, among others.

These studies are developed in such a way as to improve students' critical understanding of the pre-existing structure in its multi-layered consistency, deciphering its intrinsic principles (compositional, symbolic, functional, constructive) with the aim of sustaining the architectural project for the adaptive reuse of the disused monastic complex. This previous knowledge makes it possible to understand the trajectory of the building's uses and the different phases of its construction, while simultaneously identifying the limits and potentialities for defining its new uses and a valuable intervention strategy (Figs. 10-12).

According to the Benedictine motto '*ora et labora*', the subject of the adaptive reuse of monastic structures confronts students with the dichotomy between a 'contemplative' dimension – with symbolic premises relating to the reclusive and spiritual life – and an 'active' dimension (Garrido 2009), relating to the strong productive character inherent in the function and subsistence of the monastic complex. The purpose of the exercise is thus to define a new programme that starts with the possibilities offered by the original building and seeks to adapt it to a new use, recognising that the contemporary enjoyment of such spaces is only possible with the involvement and participation of the local population. Students are also asked to consider questions of sustainability and self-sufficiency in their proposals, taking into account both the current context of ecological and economic concerns and the specific territorial condition of these complexes (often isolated from res-

FIG. 10. Convento de São Francisco de Real, evolution of the construction (CE-EAUM 2015).

FIG. 11. Convento de São Francisco de Real, geometrical analysis (CE-EAUM 2015).





idential areas, streets and public infrastructures). In this way, the challenge is to carefully comprehend the biophysical features of the place and its ancient subsistence systems, following the example of the former monks, who were able, in an intelligent and innovative way, to optimise their exploitation of the natural resources in a difficult terrain, of which the advanced systems of water supply are an important example (Figs. 13-14). This may be achieved, for instance, with the selection of passive systems or, in as far as possible, the use of renewable sources of energy (Ferreira, Neto 2015: 15).

Furthermore, this reflection on the adaptive reuse of monastic structures seeks to consider the specificity of the object as a ‘monument’, in the current broad acceptance of this term – built and natural, tangible and intangible – incorporating it into a contemporary understanding of the ‘pluralistic context of modern multicultural societies’ (ICOMOS 2008). Discussions about the broad and narcissistic character of the concept of heritage (Choay 2005) have highlighted the need to go beyond certain fetishistic or nostalgic considerations about iconic or enclosed monument-objects, in favour of a systemic interpretation opened to multiple contemporary appropriations and closely linked both to the territory itself and to the local community (Krakow Charter 2000). In this way, the didactic experiences of adaptive reuse invite students to interpret monastic structures in keeping with the local context, reconciling these testimonies to the past with contemporary lifestyles, and exploring new interpretations that can enrich their subsequent transmission to future generations.

### Final note

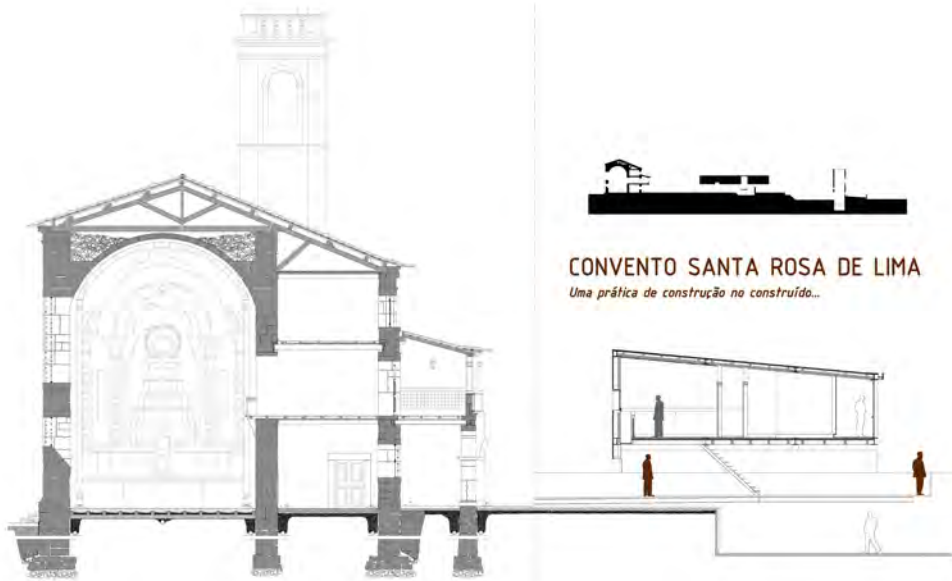
The examples and experiences discussed in this paper demonstrate the complexity of the issues involved and the multiplicity of criteria, approaches and solutions related to the adaptive reuse of monastic structures, from landscape to detail, considering both the tangible and intangible values of the pre-existing structures. These cases also show the importance of having a profound prior knowledge in a case-by-case approach, ensuring

Previous page:

FIG. 12. Convento de São Francisco de Real, functional analysis (CE-EAUM 2015).

FIG. 13. Convento de Santa Rosa do Lima, cross section of the construction between the old convent and the new building (by J. Silva, EAUM 2010/11).

FIG. 14. Model showing the new building and the old convent, Convento de Bustelo (by N. Campos, EAUM 2009/10).



that the design is in keeping with the building's aura, 'complementing not competing' (ICOMOS ISC20C 2011: 4). Hence, as Álvaro Siza maintains, interventions on architectural heritage should not be about the architect's own signature, but should instead focus on 'preserving the integrity of what already exists' (Siza 2011: 186–188).

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## CONSERVATION AND NEW USES IN SPACES OF THE HOLY

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### **What we talk about when we talk about architectural conservation (and use)**

The change in use of Christian religious buildings raises various issues, and establishing a context for them means dealing with core conservation themes while at the same time examining the relationships between form and content in architecture.

For several decades, the debate around this subject was focused on the dichotomy between figurative and historical (material) values. Today, theoretical reflection vacillates between the pre-eminent attention paid to the architecture itself, and to the meanings that we can derive from it.

A quarter of a century ago in Italy, many academics focused on the developing role of changing meanings found in historical buildings, which progressed along two conservation paths, both of which were considered ‘wrong’. Respectively, these were the ‘neo-idealistic’ approach, mainly attentive to the figurative characters of the architecture, and the ‘realistic’ approach, related to the care of material components and the various historical strata of the artefact.

The proposal to instead to focus interest on architectural meanings helped – or even pushed – the field towards legitimate reconstructions and ‘postponed realisations’ (Manieri Elia 1990), but the shift of attention from the object to the subject has actually opened a wider gap. This gap can undermine the goals and tools of conservation and facilitate the realisation of heritage for external reasons unrelated to architecture<sup>1</sup>.

The lack of interest with which ‘existential’ heritage subjects were historically considered has not been without consequences. This can be understood by looking at the evident disparity between theoretical elaboration and operational proposals, or in the recent difficulty of driving conservation strategy in the ‘entrenched’ fields of emergency response. This is especially obvious after earthquakes, characterised by the abandonment of historic town centres, and also in the case of the problems created by property speculation, which is becoming increasingly aggressive towards historic buildings.

Architectural forms gather together and transmit different concepts. These can be spatial, constructive, structural, technological, material; but also social, economic and, in general terms, cultural. If the first group of qualifications defines the properties of the architecture in itself, the second group refers purely to its functional and symbolic dimensions.

### **Symbols**

In new architectural contexts, symbolic contents can relate to the specific shapes that architecture has passed to architecture over time, with differing levels of flexibility<sup>2</sup>. Religious buildings, in particular, have undergone many symbolic variations. They have incorporated existing models that were already characterised by specific meanings: such as the paleo-Christian church, which itself echoed the plan of the Roman imperial basilica; or the ring crypt,



which made reference to the tomb of St Peter. On the other hand, they have also borrowed significant symbols without any mediation, such as Byzantine and medieval cross-shaped plans. Finally, they have adopted pure forms, such as that of geometric perfection or of numeric interpretation – circular or polygonal – on which central systems were founded, used in paleo-Christian baptisteries or for the churches of the 15th and 16th centuries.

The original symbolism of a religious building can strengthen with the insertion of additional components, mostly related to decoration, liturgical furniture and light, in a complex approach that plays an important role in spatial configuration (Ferabegoli, Valentini 2013). This approach works for a space that is considered a place ‘in which the cultural memory of an epiphany – or even a hierophany – is conserved, generally through religious rites’ but also for a ‘site that is interpreted by a specific culture as truly religious’ (Filoramo 2011: 9).

The symbolic recognition of a building assumes great significance, affecting a host of meanings that cross cultures in terms of space and time, social class and other important issues. Historical and artistic quality is not necessarily connected to the symbolic status of the artefact, even if these two features are both understood intuitively by the human consciousness. In a way, if the Mona Lisa represents the Italian genius of the Renaissance, the Colosseum signifies Rome, and Notre Dame Cathedral is the emblem of the Middle Ages in France, then every church – even the most modest and recent – testifies to the presence of the divine, while every mansion harks back to rural life.

The institution of a bivalent relationship between the historical/artistic and symbolic values of an object does not offer a useful tool for the purposes of conservation. Over time, symbolic implication can take on a polarised character, and transform itself via the vehicle of conservation into an engine of destruction. This is particularly evident in buildings that benefit from a special status – original or acquired – associating them with symbolic functions and commemorative features. In effect, the fluctuation of meanings transmitted by the building can guarantee their permanence, as has happened with Roman triumphal columns – or can bring about their destruction, as centuries of revolutions, wars, and recent disasters have demonstrated.

A similar phenomenon is found with other kinds of buildings: those with rigid typologies, where their symbolic meaning dictates their persistence, thanks to the strength of the links they have to special events. These links can be desired or unexpected, real or imaginary. The most fixed type of religious edifice, the Greco-Roman temple, did not adapt to the radical changes in attitude that happened in Western Europe between the 4th and 6th centuries, and quickly lost their *raison d'être* (Ward-Perkins 2003).

Only the slow maturation of a completely different cultural sensibility, more than a thousand years later, fostered renewed interest in this kind of architecture, and only within specific geographic and cultural contexts. This new interest, completely distilled from functional contents and mitigated by the specificity of symbolic references, looks at the buildings as archaeological texts.

## Function

The role of functional aspects in the creation of a building represents one of the recurring issues in modern architecture: in the 18th century, the correspondence between form and function became, with Carlo Lodoli, a clear theoretical statement. After that, it constituted a genuine ‘*topos*’ during the Eclecticism movement, with the idea of correspondence

between style and typology and, later, under Rationalism, it focused on the relationship established between structure and building.

Many scholars have highlighted the contradictions and limits of similar theoretical postulates: the obsessive attention to function that is typical of rationalistic architecture has forced the conceptual references of the architects into the strict confines of direct correspondence with the tangible needs of the human being. This approach reveals an excess of positivism that seems to have been surpassed for some time in favour of new theoretical and designer-based models (De Fusco 1967; Coppola Pignatelli 1975; Bellini 1990, particularly pp. 23–24).

The transformation of the relationship between shape and content is in fact a fundamental part of the history of art and literature. Erwin Panofsky, among the first to pay attention to this aspect of the discourse, defined a 'principle of disjunction': the dissociative mechanism that manages the change of meaning of classical subjects in medieval forms. This principle provides an important indicator for the rules that influence the means of transmitting cultural heritage (Panofsky 1960).

In keeping with this principle, some have observed that function, representing the specific 'content' of architecture, is a significant component of the semantic shifts that a building can endure over time. To summarise the birth of the concept of 'scientific detachment' – transmitted by philology and archaeology – and remembering the position (and its inherent ideological implications) of the 'breaking of modernity', it has been proposed that Panofsky's principle of disjunction be used as a tool for work on existing buildings. In this sense, the instruments of 'modification' and typological abstraction ('figurability') are the best ways to support such a project (Pedretti 2011).

In contrast to arguments from twenty-five years ago, current reflections about the significance of architecture seem to push interventions down the road of innovation rather than reconstruction, showing again the difficulty of building these kinds of propositions on unambiguous and stable theoretical foundations.

Changes in function – the outcome of technological and cultural transformations – happen over time and with changes in behaviour that alter depending on their historical and geographical contexts, and with the nature of the building. In this context a new organic project is generally required, something that is balanced between the priorities of function and those of the existing structure. These different possible orientations have essentially set the disciplinary borders in architecture.

In the field of conservation theories, the relationship between potential current use and the historical building itself was initially measured by looking at the historical distance between the present and the date of creation of the existing architecture<sup>3</sup>. Later, many Charters for Restoration of the second half of the 20th century codified that the function should be a tool, not a goal, of conservation. With these bases, the principle of compatibility (*Dalla reversibilità alla Compatibilità* 2003) permanently safeguarded the new functional purposes of historic buildings, with ultimately preventive and encouraging results.

A separation of goals has therefore affected the character of functional choices, which in the field of conservation are subject to the main intent of respecting the existing architecture, while in the 'reuse' projects they assume a strong orienting role.

Effectively, if the subject of reuse also occasionally appears in the conservation field, especially with castles – just to highlight the importance that functional additions assume in the project – it mostly appears as a design matter. In this latter case, these choices cause

a heterogeneity of purposes and means in a relatively wide span of topics, from historic centres to industrial buildings, and sometimes also tending to involve more important monuments.

Supporting the freedom to 'give new answers to historical answers that have passed into our time as questions' (Pedretti 2011), much criticism arose, in keeping with the theoretical tools formulated by the designers of contemporary architectures. These tools generally accompany an homage to the protagonists of the 19th century, and by a flaunted indifference – not exempt from ideological conditioning – towards 20th-century proposals for conservation.

Thus the practice of conservation and that of new architectural design met – and often collided – in the field, sometimes with a random allocation of buildings between the two practices, and sometimes with the creation of controversial compromises. These mostly arose from the removal of immutable parts from existing historical buildings – mainly on the exteriors – for restoration, and from the unbridled transformation of other parts.

Moreover, the polarising effect of interventions that result in the fragmentation of buildings betrays in depth the intrinsic logic of conservation. In this way, it fails to represent a comprehensive approach, based on knowledge, and oriented around the organic presentation of a building via each project.

### **Churches: aim of eternity in a transient world**

The compatibility/function pairing has mainly promoted the insertion of cultural services into historic buildings, including religious ones. For some time, choosing 'higher' cultural activities has helped to make such reconversions socially acceptable, but the economic crisis of the last few years has promoted a more inclusive pragmatism, one that legitimises almost any change of use in order to avoid possible demolitions<sup>4</sup>.

In this climate, we must contextualise the present issue of the functional reconversion of the churches, in an era when religion – which was once the engine both of personal spirituality and of social aggregation – is being replaced by a more individual and 'liquid' secularisation<sup>5</sup>.

The divestment of churches is not an unprecedented phenomenon, but in the past it was mainly linked to territorial depopulation, to building obsolescence, or to the occurrence of extraordinary and generally catastrophic events, either natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, etc.) or anthropogenic ones (suppressions of religious orders, military events, revolutions, etc.). These phenomena normally involved decay and abandonment, sometimes followed by revitalisations, reconstructions and transformations. The sequence of these events tends to have hidden, over many years, the original configuration of buildings.

Today churches become empty primarily because of the decrease in congregation size, and in these autonomous abandonments, symbolic tension – always present in the previous cycles of rise and fall – seems to be missing.

In a departure from past practice, therefore, the recognisability of religious buildings is rarely betrayed these days, particularly the external elements, while symbolic and functional contents are subverted in a way that is perhaps less strong than in prior years, but achieves the same depth of results.

This phenomenon is widely distributed and sometimes striking, but it assumes different characteristics in different parts of Europe, with more liberal tendencies evident in



FIG. 1. Italian churches with new uses. From top-left to bottom-right: Florence, St Carlo ai Barnabiti (multi-purpose hall); Perugia, St Francesco (weaving company site); Verona, St Felicità (restaurant); Bergamo, St Agostino (multi-purpose hall); Milan, St Paolo Converso (office); Rome, St Simeone e Giuda (theatre).

Protestant countries in the north of the continent, and less impressive results in central, southern and eastern countries, both Catholic and Orthodox.

Functional reconversion uses various strategies with different effects. It can predict, in ascending order of intrusiveness: (1) the creation of transitory, generally spontaneous adaptations; (2) the organised rearrangement of furniture; (3) the insertion of technological elements, mostly utilities; (4) actual conservation work, accompanied by new furniture; (5) the insertion of new functional architectural shapes; (6) the profound transformation of the buildings (Fig. 1).

Following the order of these categories marks the passage from approaches similar in tools and strategies to the field of interior design towards more fully architectural processes. The 'glue' that allows these two contrasting philosophies of design practice to be kept together is the principle of reversibility. Conversely, the phenomenon that marks an insurmountable partition relates to the spatial and figurative identity of the existing building, which the design project sometimes seems to neglect, yet without the consideration of which the conservation project cannot proceed.

A short examination of the situation in Italy – which has one of the richest and most complex historical heritages in existence<sup>6</sup> – will prove useful to understanding the distribution and results of practices for the functional reconversion of the churches, also from a statistical viewpoint.

From a sample of 100 churches along the Italian peninsula, we can recognise four different functional groups and the six categories of intervention that we described above. The four functional groups concern, respectively: new religious uses (for non-Christian denominations and rites), non-cultural uses (residences, offices, shops, restaurants, game centres, gyms, stores, hotels, etc.); 'light' cultural uses (reasonably flexible, such as museums, auditoria, polyvalent spaces, open theatres, artists' workshops, etc.), 'heavy' cultural uses – tied to precisely defined standards (such as theatres, libraries, multimedia centres, and cinemas) (Table 1)<sup>7</sup>.

Chiesa	1	2	3	4	5	6	Uso
Ancona, S. Agostino						•	Museum
Asti, S. Giuseppe		•					Game centre
Bagno di Romagna, S. Lucia					•		Restaurant
Barbaresco, S. Donato		•					Wine shop
Barisciano, S. Colombo				•			Restaurant
Benevento, S. Ilario a Porta Aurea					•		Museum
Bergamo, S. Agostino				•			Multi-purpose hall
Bologna, S. Lucia					•		Auditorium
Bologna, S. Filippo Neri				•			Auditorium
Bologna, SS. Cosma e Damiano							Showroom
Brescia, chiesa	•						Restaurant
Brescia, S. Desiderio			•				Theatre
Brescia, S. Giorgio				•			Auditorium
Brescia, S. Giulia				•			Auditorium
Brescia, S. Mattia alle Grazie						•	School
Brescia, S. Maria della Mansione						•	Shop
Brescia, S. Salvatore				•			Museum
Bronte (Ct) S. Giovanni				•			Multi-purpose hall
Castellammare di Stabia (Na), Oratorio			•				Museum
Certaldo (Fi), SS. Tommaso e Prospero				•			Multi-purpose hall
Crema, S. Domenico			•				Theatre
Firenze, S. Pancrazio						•	Museum
Firenze, S. Carlo ai Barnabiti	•						Multi-purpose hall
Firenze, S. Cristoforo						•	Residence
Firenze, S. Jacopo in Campo Corbolini				•			Multi-purpose hall
Firenze, Oratorio della Madonna del Carro						•	Residence
Firenze, Oratorio dei Bini (o di S. Sebastiano)				•			Museum
Foligno (Pg), SS. Trinità					•		Multi-purpose hall
Gallipoli, S. Angelo				•			Library
Genova, S. Agostino				•			Auditorium
Genova, S. Sabina						•	Bank
Lodi, S. Giovanni e Ognissanti alle Vigne					•		Theatre
Lucca, Suffragio					•		Auditorium
Lucca, S. Francesco				•			Multi-purpose hall
Lucca, S. Romano				•			Auditorium
Lucca, S. Ponziano					•		Library
Lucca, Carmine						•	Market
Mantova, S. Cristoforo						•	Multi-purpose hall
Marghera (Ve), S. Maria	•						Mosque
Matera, S. Martino				•			Hotel room
Mazara del Vallo, S. Egidio			•				Museum
Milano, Besana				•			Museum
Milano, S. Carpofofo			•				Multi-purpose hall
Milano, S. Giuseppe della Pace			•				Discoteque

Milano, S. Paolo Converso					•	Office
Milano, SS. Filippo e Donato					•	Residence
Milano, S. Sisto					•	Atelier
Milano, SS. Simeone e Giuda					•	Theatre
Milano, S. Teresa					•	Mediateque
Montarolo (VE), SS. Pietro e Paolo	•					Warehouse
Napoli, Abbazia di Santa Maria a Cappella Vecchia					•	Gym
Napoli, chiesa di San Francesco delle Monache				•		Multi-purpose hall
Napoli, chiesa di S. Gennaro all'Olmo				•		Multi-purpose hall
Napoli, chiesa dell'Immacolata a Forcella					•	Shop
Napoli, S. Maria Assunta dei Pignatelli				•		Turist Information centre
Napoli, S. Severo al Pendino	•					Multi-purpose hall
Padova, S. Giorgio					•	Theatre
Palermo, S. Elena	•					Library
Palermo, Sant'Eulalia					•	School
Palermo, S. Maria dello Spasimo				•		Open Theatre
Palermo, S. San Paolino dei giardinieri, via del Celso				•		Mosque
Parma, oratorio di S. Quirino				•		Multi-purpose hall
Parma, S. Maria del Carmine					•	Auditorium
Perugia, S. Angelo della Pace				•		Multi-purpose hall
Perugia, S. Bevignate				•		Multi-purpose hall
Perugia, S. Francesco	•					Weaving company
Portichetto di Luisago (Co), S. Maria della Neve	•					Mechanic workshop
Prato (Fi), Oratorio della compagnia di S. Trinita					•	Shop
Ragusa, S. Vincenzo Ferreri	•					Multi-purpose hall
Ravenna, S. Nicolò					•	Museum
Reggio Emilia, SS. Carlo e Agata	•					Multi-purpose hall
Roma, S. Andrea de Vascellari	•					Atelier
Roma, S. Giovanni					•	Restaurant
Roma, S. Isidoro alle Terme				•		Multi-purpose hall
Roma, S. Maria della Clemenza					•	Restaurant
Roma, S. Maria in Tempulo				•		Multi-purpose hall
Roma, S. Marta				•		Multi-purpose hall
Roma, SS. Simeone e Giuda					•	Theatre
Salerno Sant'Apollonia			•			Multi-purpose hall
Salerno, S. Gregorio				•		Museum
San Miniato (Pi), Oratorio di S. Martino	•					Multi-purpose hall
Siena, S. Mustiola	•					Library
Siracusa, Ortigia, S. Pietro				•		Multi-purpose hall
Spoletto, S. Nicolò					•	Theatre
Teggiano (Sa), S. Pietro				•		Museum
Udine, S. Francesco				•		Multi-purpose hall
Ugento (Le), S. Filomena				•		Counsel Hall

Venezia, S. Barnaba		•					Multi-purpose hall
Venezia, S. Basso		•					Auditorium
Venezia, S. Leonardo		•					Multi-purpose hall
Venezia, S. Margherita					•		Auditorium
Venezia, S. Vidal		•					Auditorium
Verduno (Co), S. Rocco	•						Atelier
Verona, S. Maria in Chiavica		•					Auditorium
Verona, S. Matteo					•		Restaurant
Verona, S. Silvestro		•					Bank
Verona, S. Felicità			•				Restaurant
Verona, S. Sebastiano					•		Library
Vicenza, SS. Faustino e Giovita						•	Cinema
Villanova d'Asti (As), SS.ma Annunziata						•	Multi-purpose hall

TABLE 1. Concise illustration of the results of an investigation into a sample of 100 churches in Italy. See the legend in note 7.

More than half the buildings (58 per cent) host a 'light' cultural function, favoured for the less invasive and more reversible nature of transformation, but almost a third of them are intended for other uses. The largest proportion of major interventions (32 per cent) fall into the 'traditional' conservation category. In this case, the project starts with the intrinsic qualities of the existing architecture and works with different strategies, from reconstruction to integration, innovation, and the calibrated insertions that facilitate new functional inclusions.

If we link the architectural quality of buildings to the operational choices made about them, we can see that non-cultural uses prevail in minor buildings, while 'light' cultural functions are given to the more important edifices. A similarly predictable comparison concerns the greater magnitude of alterations to the former category, and the extent of conservation activities in the latter. In a third of cases, the conservative intervention pursued the recreation of original shapes and colours, while in the others situations the strategies were more elaborate, and did not avoid the inclusion of contemporary design.

The evaluation of 'traditional' conservation interventions revisits the issues usually found when discussing conservation theory, which will not be considered in this paper. Instead, we will deal with the insertion of 'working' shapes, which touches on the issues we already discussed in this paper. This kind of intervention sometimes occurs in important buildings (18 per cent), either through the insertion of elements that lack specific figurative identity, or with additions that stand in stark contrast to the existing building.

The ongoing debate about conservation has generally avoided discussing the latter practice for its unorthodox impacts; it is covered occasionally in a few design magazines, for which a few cases of this kind are superficially illustrated. Vice versa, Catholic countries often consider the insertion of new uses into the churches from a point of view of cultural opportunity, looking at 'extreme' modifications that are generally not significant from an architectural point of view<sup>8</sup>.

The situation is different in other European states. Since the beginning of the 1980s the Netherlands, for example, started to experiment with 'strong' modalities to change the function of unused churches. In continuity with these thirty-year-old experiences, var-



FIG. 2. Maastricht, Selexyz Dominicanen church, now used as a library.



FIG. 3. Maastricht, the church of the Kruisheren monastery, now used as the main hall and restaurant of hotel.

ious recent interventions have been extremely free in their functional choices – with a more commercial character than in the past. We will consider the plans and activities carried out on various disused churches in Maastricht.

In this sense, the 13th-century Selexyz Dominicanen church (Fig. 2), was transformed into a bookshop and the 15th-century Kruisheren monastery (Fig. 3), which is now a hotel, are especially significant. The insertion of mezzanine floors – which are structurally disconnected, but quite intrusive from a visual and sometimes material point of view – starkly weakens the spatial identity of the two buildings, reducing their role to that of a shell. The ‘aura’ of the monuments appears unstructured because of the exuberant character of the new insertions and the process of falsification of pre-existing symbolic values. This process follows a post-modern trend, inducing a sort of semantic detachment that aspires to the neutralisation of the symbolic focus – e.g. positioning the Chesterfield-like sofa at the Kruiserkerk’s apse – or to sarcastic suggestion – such as the cross-shaped table at the centre of the Domenicanen Selexyz’s apse (Figs. 4-5).

By contrast, the relationship with symbolic values distinguishes the Italian interventions, which are instead oriented around insertions – as in the church of St Ponziano in Lucca, which is the location of a four-storey library in iron and glass, or in the church of St Paolo Converso in Milan, headquarters of an architectural studio articulated on a black metal structure. Where the Dutch disenchantment with religion is reflected by the bold level of the formal architectural choices, the Italian research into purity by using abstract



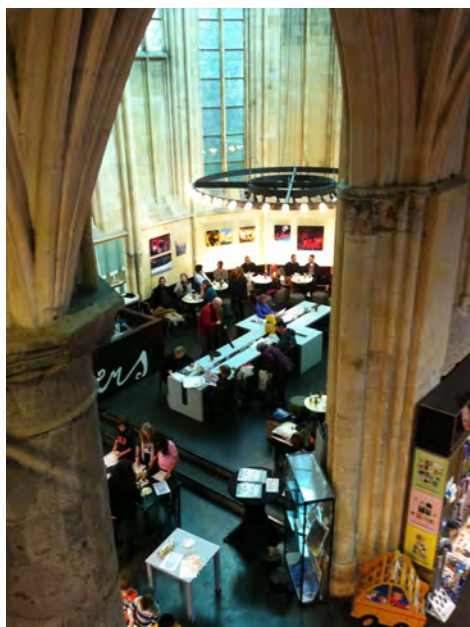


FIG. 4. Maastricht, the apse of Selexyz Dominicanen church with its cross-like table.



FIG. 5. Maastricht, the apse of Kruisheren church displaying its red sofa.

shapes at least returns a deferential nod to remoteness, in the lost dialogue between pre-existence and insertion.

Regardless, both the Dutch and Italian cases described here – which could also be accompanied by other European examples – seem to treat the buildings' pre-existence as a matter of industrial design more than as an architectural problem, to be approached and developed in a detailed, organic and coherent way. In this sense, these projects seem to be based on the same modalities that inspire the organisation of contemporary furniture and installation, just on a bigger scale: functional effectiveness, lightness – at least in the selection of technologies – innovation, reversibility, irony and 'otherness'.

The reduction of architectural issues to mere matters of industrial design follows the trend seen in projects in some countries, and explains the occasional success of this approach in some heritage projects in such places. Furthermore, in religious architecture, the same trend explains the predisposition to interpret the addition of inner elements as a legitimate way to resolve conflicts between conservation and the insertion of new functional elements.

It is not by chance that in Italy too some proposals of antagonistic innovation have followed the twin paths of reconstruction and the insertion of contemporary elements. This strategy indicates the overlapping of contradictory logics, which are perhaps a product of misunderstanding, or perhaps the result of cynical negligence.

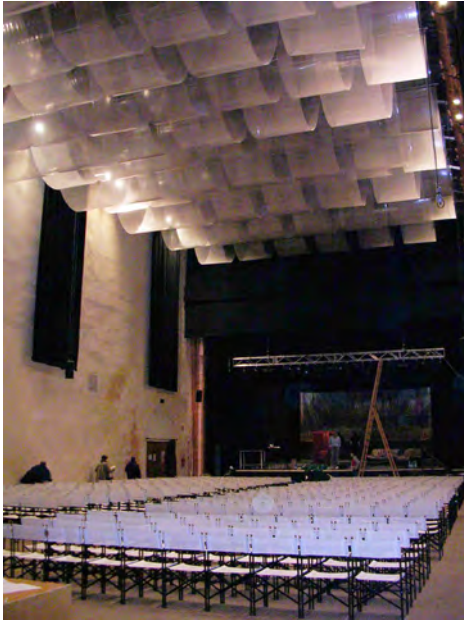
Researching the answers to the deepest conservation questions in the field of industrial design risks charging too high and permanent a price for our historical and artistic heritage, due to existing issues and for the effect on the possible results. Precarious functional efficacy combined with shallow symbolism does not compensate for these risks. If we



FIG. 6. Liège, the sacristy of the church of Sainte Croix.



FIG. 7. Bologna, St Filippo Neri church, now an auditorium.



FIGS. 8a-8b. The church of St. Nicolò in Spoleto in 2005 and today. A long intervention of conservation foresaw an use of the church as a theatre. A new recent intervention has consolidated the same function with the substitution of furnitures and new painting to the walls.

think of applying this kind of modality to semi-abandoned monumental churches, such as the 14th-century Sante-Croix church in Liège, Belgium (Fig. 6), we could face serious danger. We could in fact generate strategies that would seem again to allow such buildings into the vital flow of contemporaneity and its significance but substantially misrepresent their own identity, renouncing the transmission of their value and the profound essentials of their architecture.

Conversely, the interventions on St Filippo Neri in Bologna (Fig. 7), which today hosts a concert hall, or in the Escuelas Pias de San Fernando in Madrid, location of a library, testify to the potential for theoretical and operative methods that are able to give coherence to the logic of integration and that of equipment and furniture (Figs. 8a-8b). Confronting the issues arising from proposals that show new weak functions conflicting with strong ancient symbols, the solutions, yet again, must not derive from the uncertain path of extra-architectural significance, but in the potential for the building itself to show its own specific essence. If it is true that architectural questions from the past reach us as answers through their objectivisation, our answers, to retain credibility, should not avoid the need to build a deep relationship with that same physicality.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The application of ‘weak’ and ‘deconstructionist’ thought to conservation issues, indicated by the acceptance of every possible interpretation of architecture, has ended up justifying all kinds of intervention on the existing building. The historiographic repercussions of this position are evident in the clear overview of the ‘Conservation Movement’ proposed by Glendinning (2013).

<sup>2</sup> For example, enclosed models reaching toward the sky initially expressed the force of defensive architecture; then squat shapes, following the contours of ground, acquired the same meaning. For centuries, *loggia* indicated the commercial vocation of an urban centre, but later they became just another component in the enclosed block of the covered markets of the industrial era. Palaces transmitted the owners’ personality and power in different ways, over time variously expressed by the size of the building, the choice of materials, stylistic or technological innovations, and so on.

<sup>3</sup> The definition of conservation categories by Camillo Boito, or the distinction between ‘living’ and ‘dead’ monuments that Gustavo Giovannoni proposed following the suggestions of Louis Cloquet are expressions of this kind of approach. See also Bellini, 1990, for a reinterpretation of the history of conservation in terms of the question of use.

<sup>4</sup> Many studies and scholars – mainly from English-speaking cultures – testify to a similar orientation (see among others: Kiley 2004; Hobohm 2008; Lueg 2011). An identical approach is seen with trusts created for the conservation of historical architecture (e.g. Scottish Civic Trust 2006). In

the central European context, the same position is shown in Plevoets 2009. The common path proposed by ‘adaptive reuse’ considers every kind of possibility of practical use without paying particular attention to the original architectural quality of the existing building, and basing its judgments on the produced innovation.

<sup>5</sup> Since 1960 in England there have been an estimated 10,000 churches that have fallen into disuse; in the Netherlands the rate of closure is about 175 religious buildings per year; in Germany 15,000 churches will be closed over the next few years – a quarter of the current national total (Meotti 2013). In Italy there are approximately 25,000 deconsecrated churches, and recently many newspapers have considered the matter of the abandonment of churches, mainly after the solicitation to find new solutions from Monsignor Carlo Ravasi, president of the *Pontificia Commissione per i Beni Culturali della Chiesa*. See, among others: Zizola 2009; Spinato Vega 2012; Rosaspina 2013; Galeazzi 2014. In individual urban contexts, we find similar analysis: at the end of the 20th century, in Venice 124 sacred edifices were identified, which included 14 that were totally closed, and 19 allocated to other uses (*Spazi sacri* 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Some estimations indicate that the Church owns about 100,000 premises; in 1995, the *Ufficio dei Beni ecclesiastici italiani* began a national census of these buildings (Santi 1999). Today (March 2016), the online catalogue ‘Beweb’ contains about 64,000 registered premises (available at: <<http://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/it/>> [Accessed March 2016]). With respect to the (decon-

secrated) churches that are not property of the Church, a specific catalogue does not exist, but an extraction from the Risk Map of the Italian Ministry of Heritage revealed about 1,200 ex-religious buildings. In the 1980s the *Pontificia Commissione* created a 'Charter' for the reuse of the ancient religious buildings with the purpose of managing the functional alterations of former public and private churches (Santi 1987). Similar orientations have been reiterated in Concas 2008.

<sup>7</sup> The table shows the result of an investigation into a sample of 100 churches in Italy. We have distinguished six kinds of intervention, in ascending order of incisiveness: (1) the creation of transitory, generally spontaneous adaptations; (2) the organised rearrangement of furniture; (3) the insertion of technological elements – mostly utilities; (4) actual conservation work, accompanied by new furniture; (5) the insertion of new functional architectural shapes; (6) the profound transformation of the buildings. New functions in the churches relate to four functional groups. They concern, respectively: new religious uses (green), non-cultural uses (yellow); 'light' cultural uses (pink), 'heavy' cultural uses (blue). We have excluded churches that are 'museum of themselves', abandoned churches (which are numerous: there are more than 100 in Naples alone) and those without sufficient data. The selected churches show clear historical and artistic value (white box) or are 'minor' architecture (grey box). In column 5 we distinguish mimetic interventions (red dot) from interventions that have a more conservational and distinct character (black dot). In column 6 we have distinguished function-oriented interventions (yellow dot), functional-oriented interventions with mimetic characteristic (red dot) and interventions with clearer formal connotations (black dot).

<sup>8</sup> We should remember, as examples: in Italy, St Giuseppe della Pace in Milan, a 20th-century church transformed into a night club via the insertion of post-modern scenography; in Spain, S. Barbara a Lanera, an early 20th-century building that became a covered skate park with the help of bright pop-art repainting and the insertion of a wooden track on the floor.

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# THE REUSE OF GOTHIC AND NEO-GOTHIC CHURCHES: FRAGILE ARCHITECTURES, RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF CHANGE

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## Introduction

The conservation of sacred architectural heritage is nowadays at risk because of the deep crisis that our society is experiencing from a religious point of view. Therefore, many buildings are in disuse, and sometimes they become subjected to private interests. As a consequence, very often 'reuse' means 'abuse'. Indeed, the insertion of new functions that respond to the needs of our society implies a distortion of the 'spirit' of these places.

With this in mind, this paper examines some recent reuse projects concerning religious architecture, specifically Gothic and neo-Gothic churches. The aim is to evaluate if and how the 'use value' of a monument can be in conflict with symbolic, historical, aesthetical and material significance, and what the role of the design project can be in respecting and empathising with these meanings. This evaluation is carried out through the analysis of some case studies, demonstrating how some tendencies are widespread throughout the globalised world, not respecting local traditions, and showing the predominance of economic processes on cultural issues. This screening demonstrates how some of the contemporary principles of critical restoration are totally ignored, but it also allows us to focus on the relationship between 'old' and 'new', and finally to think about the role of the architect/conservator/restorer today.

## 'Use value' and Gothic churches

The debate on the reuse of churches is a topical one, especially in Christian countries, where the spiritual crisis has led to the decommissioning of several architectures. As a consequence, new functions have been allocated which are inevitably very different from the former ones. The phenomenon, already widespread for about forty years in nations with a Protestant tradition, has only recently begun to affect Catholic countries. On the contrary, it does not happen and cannot happen in the Orthodox world, whose rules prohibit the decommissioning of sacred heritage.

The decommissioning of these very interesting and complex architectures means thinking about the vast and difficult theme of use and reuse, which involves, in the design project, several issues, relationships and meanings at various territorial, urban and architectural levels. In consequence, the question of reuse can only be resolved by sharing ideas, with the involvement of institutions – such as universities, public authorities, organisations and associations – and citizens, as well as specialised professionals. In other words, it is a topic which should be skillfully managed, both in terms of strategies – based on political, economic and social considerations – and, above all, in terms of the design project. In order to avoid, as often happens, re-use becoming ab-use, it is essential to enable a process through which cultural expression, economic feasibility and social cohesion are respected at the same time. As other researchers have underlined, the city and its historical architectures have to evolve, but the natural process of transformation can only



FIG. 1. Cultural uses | Museums: a) Lambeth (United Kingdom), Saint Mary's church (12th century), converted into the Garden museum, by Philip Charles Hardwick (1977); b) Napoli (Italy), Santa Maria Donna Regina Church (1325), converted into the Madre Museum, by Alvaro Siza (2005). Available at: <<http://www.gardenmuseum.org.uk/page/history-of-the-museum>> (photo by D. Grandorge); <<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-jhbEeSqFwS4/T0oxQRgYyII/AAAAAAAAABps/DMiaMvyB8iA/s1600/Arte+Povera+piu%CC%80+Azioni+Povere+1968,+Santa+Donnaregina+Vecchia+Church,+Naples,+Italy,+2012.jpg>> [Accessed 1 May 2016].



FIG. 2. Cultural uses | Libraries and Archives: a) Müncheberg (Germany), S. Marien kirke (13th century), converted into a library by Claus Block (1992); b) Maastricht (Holland), Franciscan church (14th century), converted into the Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg (1996). Available at: <<http://www.detail.de/inspiration/einbau-st-marien-kirche-in-muencheberg-107630.html>> [Accessed 1 May 2016].

be made consciously and by means of a high-quality design project able to emphasise its values (Canella 1990; Biraghi 1998; Ferlenga 2007; Cocco, Giannattasio 2017). On the other hand, disuse leads to a slow and progressive decline, which can only be stopped by making use of the architecture. This opinion was supported about 150 years ago by Viollet-le-Duc and in the early years of the 20th century by Alois Riegl, who even considered use as a value, calling it the 'use value' (Riegl 1990 [1903]: 58–60). Therefore, after the interruption of use, reuse comes to rescue heritage.

Until at least fifteen years ago, reuse was considered an action which could only be taken for certain categories of buildings. This is clear in the words of the architectural historian Marco Biraghi, who explains that reuse is a possible action exclusively concerning buildings which are 'already irremediably devalued, having lost any economic value and not having (yet) acquired historical and artistic meaning' (Biraghi 1999: 15). Therefore,



FIG. 3. Residential uses | Apartments: a) Chicago (Michigan), church (19th century), converted by Scafrano Architetti (2015); b) Utrecht (Holland), Jacobskerk, by Gerardus Gerritsen (1870), converted by Zecc Architects (2007). Available at: <<http://www.archdaily.com/772188/church-conversion-into-a-residence-linc-thelen-design-plus-scafrano-architetti>>; <<http://www.zecc.nl/nl/Projecten/project/23/Woonkerk-XL-Utrecht>> [Accessed 1 May 2016].

old churches were not even considered as sites for new uses. This is true at least in the Italian context, whereas in Protestant Europe, as mentioned above, pre-existing heritage has been reused (notably in Italy) – often without paying much attention to the consequences – since the late 1980s. Additionally, Biraghi’s reuse definition is even less suitable for churches, because they have never had an economic role. Biraghi continues, saying that reuse implies a transformation of the pre-existing heritage, a real metamorphosis. Moreover, he argues that any action should not impose a new unrelated use to the building, but it should ‘interweave, *penetrate* the new use (with its set of shapes, spaces and materials) and the existing shapes, spaces and materials, changing the latter both with the inclusion of the *new*, and by innovating without touching them’ (Biraghi 1999: 15).

### The conflict between ‘values’

If we read these words by taking a look at the most recent reuse projects, often inappropriate, we recognise that in most cases the core of the question is not the definition of what is or could be the ‘right’ function for a certain building, but the quality of the design project. A project should be able to respect, exploit and reveal the significance of the building, while at the same time giving it back a role, which is essential for the pursuance of its existence.

At this point, focusing on the intrinsic values of ecclesiastical architecture, we realise that they are essentially of two kinds: material and immaterial. Faced with this duality, everything becomes more difficult compared to other typologies of building, since the project should respect the spirituality of the place, inevitably denied by all non-contemplative functions. Moreover, Gothic and neo-Gothic churches are marked by such structural, symbolical, spiritual and aesthetic strength that they would not need any revealing and emphatic design ‘gesture’. Moreover, even totally respecting the essence of the architecture, the insertion of a new use inevitably compromises intangible values: first of all, that concerned with contemplation – that is, silence. So, what is to be done? If we want to respect these conditions, many functions should be *a priori* rejected for their incompatibility. For example, appropriate uses could be archives, libraries, museums, theatres or concert halls (Figs. 1-2), which would certainly guarantee respect for symbolic, spiritual and contemplative values. Conversely, residential uses (apartments and hotels) (Fig. 3), commercial uses (bookshops, clothing stores and markets) (Figs. 4-5) and leisure uses (skate parks, fitness centres and discotheques) (Figs. 6-7) would become unacceptable.





FIG. 4. Commercial uses | Bookshops and stores: a) Zwolle (Holland), Broerenkerk church (1466), converted into a bookshop by BK. Architecten 2013; b) Arnhem (Holland), Pauluskerk (1889), converted into a clothing store by Roel de Vos (2000). Available at: <<http://www.archdaily.com/422678/waanders-in-de-broeren-bk-architecten>>; <<http://www.dearchitect.nl/projecten/2008/ARI+27/Arnhem+De+Vos+Winkel/Arnhem+De+Vos+Winkel.html>> [Accessed 1 May 2016].

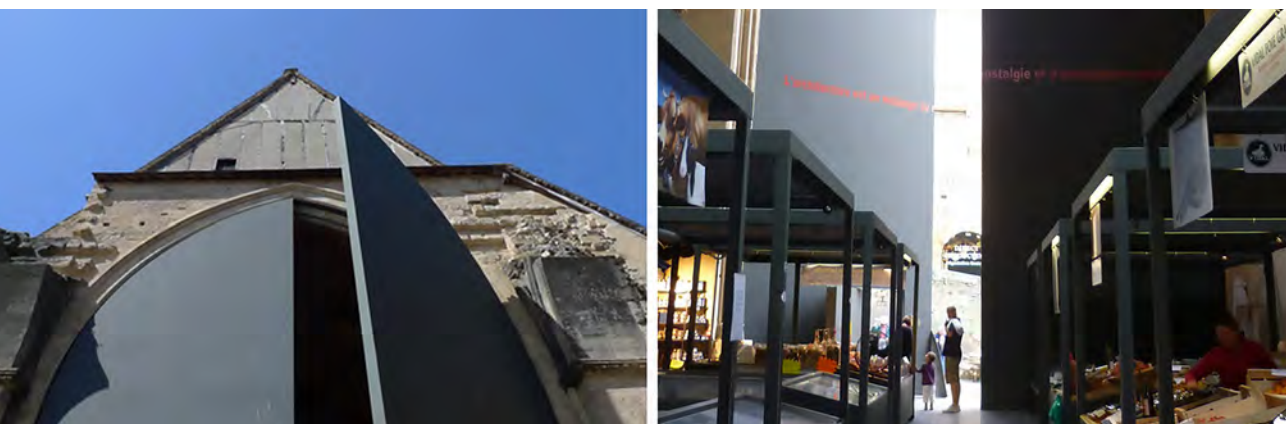


FIG. 5. Commercial uses | Markets: Sarlat (France), Eglise de Sainte Marie (1350), converted by Jean Nouvel (2002). Available at: <<http://www.house42.com/2009/10/18/sainte-marie-church-sarlat-la-caneda/>>; <http://le-blog-de-maya.blogspot.it/2011/07/sarlat-la-caneda.html> [Accessed 2 May 2016].

### Globalisation and recent reuse tendencies

We should note that in conservation practice, the function should be ‘the means, and not the aim of the project’ – or rather, it should be a tool for improving the historical, material, symbolic, aesthetic and spiritual meanings of the architecture. In contrast to this principle, nowadays the most required functions are those related to consumerism and leisure (Carbonara 2007: 30; Carbonara 2011: 59). In consequence, old buildings are transformed into ‘machines’, totally forgetting that the design project in relation to pre-existing architectures should be minimal, compatible and reversible, as well as distinguishable. Uses bend to the demands of a nihilist society, dominated by a ‘liquid life’ and by the ‘consumerist syndrome’, which has dethroned duration in favour of transiency and placed the novelty value above that of duration (Bauman 2012: 61). The adaptive reuse of 13th-century churches situated in Maastricht historic centre could demonstrate the above.

Even if some design projects attempt a dialogue with the pre-existing building, at the same time they generate unavoidable conflicts due to their nature. For example,



FIG. 6. Leisure uses | Skateparks: a) Arnhem (Holland), Jozefkerk (1929), converted into the Arnhem Skate Hall (2011); b) Llanera (Spain), Iglesia de Santa Barbara, by Maneul del Busto (1912), converted by the artist O. San Miguel (2014). Available at: <<http://www.skatehalarnhem.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/wsj-pic1.jpg>>; <[http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2015/12/17/foto/spagna\\_da\\_chiesa\\_sconsacrata\\_a\\_paradiso\\_degli\\_skaters-129654640/1/#1](http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2015/12/17/foto/spagna_da_chiesa_sconsacrata_a_paradiso_degli_skaters-129654640/1/#1)> [Accessed 1 May 2016].

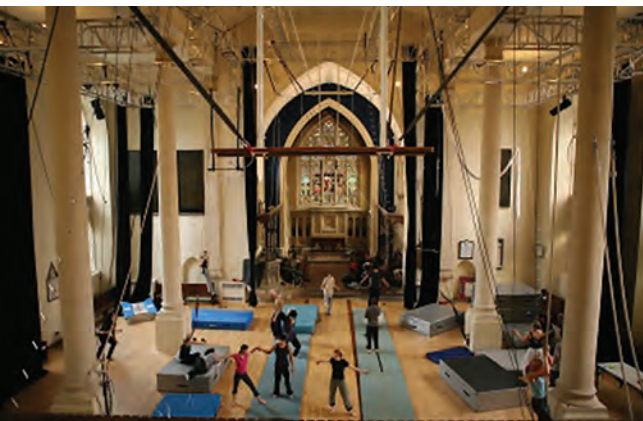


FIG. 7. Physical activity uses | Circus school and Fitness centers: a) Bristol (United Kingdom), Saint Paul's church (1790), converted by Daniel Aia (2005); b) Montreal (Canada) Saint-Jude church (19th century), converted into a Spa (2013). Available at: <<http://www.discoveringplaces.co.uk/circus-and-church-st-pauls-church-bristol-2/>>; <<http://www.blazingcatfur.ca/2013/11/06/montreal-churches-converted-to-other-uses/>> [Accessed 2 May 2016].

the Selexyz Dominicanen Bookshop (Dubois 2009), ingeniously and reversibly conceived even though it is very dominant, enhances the spatiality of the place and offers new views of the architecture, but with its new function it inevitably denies the observation of silence.

The Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg was the subject of a very minimal and delicate design project and the new function is perfect from an acoustic point of view, but the new additions – furniture, lighting system and walkways – enhance the horizontality, a fact which does not acknowledge the vertical dimension of the space, a fundamental characteristic in Gothic churches.

Finally, the Kruisherhotel is a demonstration of how the 'noise' created by furnishing elements can severely compromise this characteristic. This case relates to a widespread trend nowadays, which involves impressing people with a shocking and hard design project often without sense. This is a trend similar to that which marked the Baroque period, but in this case it is without any cultural justifications except to escape the *horror vacui*

phobia; without understanding that avoiding the ‘filling’ gesture means making the historic building more visible. The issue becomes even more serious in view of the nature of such places, constructed for contemplation and to encourage a sense of suspended time in the user/viewer. I like to recall, at this point, the thoughts of Carlos Martí Arís, which highlight the poetry of the silence:

‘We live besieged by noise, submissive to the syncopated and frantic rhythm of a modernity that throws fleeting flashes on the world to evoke momentary images that disappear before we can capture them. From the ferment of this disrupted and turbulent reality, a culture obsessed by the need to record the palpitations of the present arises. A media culture, immersed in the noise of information and events, which, to make itself heard, has to shout louder. An ephemeral culture that, dragged from modernity in a dizzying escape forward, ends up confusing itself with this, reproducing and amplifying it without the slightest sign of distance. The noise of the world is oppressive and deafening [...] The *silence* is not opposed to the *word*, which is a loyal ally, but to the *noise*, which is his bitter enemy’ (Arís 2009: 119–121).

The void keeps the parties separated and enhances the field of relationships (Arís 2009: 153).

### **The quality of architectural design**

These penetrating words lead us to reflect on the second aspect of the issue: that is, the quality of the design project. At this point the architect-restorer becomes essential for the identification of those values we talked about earlier, which must be protected and enhanced by the design of the new. Reuse may become unavoidable when faced with socio-economic and religio-cultural scenarios that induce resolute, powerful, sometimes shocking transformations, as has always happened throughout history. Therefore, if history, economy and society transmit these new scenarios, perhaps the most appropriate and reasonable thing to do is to think about the quality of design, specifically regarding respect for the concept of minimal intervention and its degree of reversibility, but above all for its ability to dialogue with pre-existing buildings, to emphasise its meanings and at the same time to make innovative concepts possible. One of the essential issues is perhaps the fact that there is a lack of effective cooperation, and also unity of method, between the discipline of Restoration and Conservation and that of Architectural Design (Varagnoli 2007), and an absence of direct involvement of planners, sociologists and economists, widely recommended by many intellectuals since the end of the Second World War, but only rarely implemented.

Obviously, as also mentioned earlier, Gothic churches are extreme cases and among the most difficult to deal with, given their imposing physical, structural and spiritual character. However, they become at the same time highly effective tools that challenge us on wider themes, which we can use when addressing different types of buildings such as prisons, barracks and castles. For example, if we just consider modernist churches, the problem is largely bypassed, because of the presence of more simple and versatile space for adaptive reuse compared with Gothic churches.

Thus, the design project should consider the nature of the pre-existing architecture. Indeed, it should be inspired by it, in order to reach not antithetical results, but harmonious ones. In other words, it should be marked by a contemporary approach, both in formal and functional terms, with a *poiesis* that should be inspired by the ‘text’ on which

the work takes place, and should approach/overlap/insert with politeness, discretion and humility. In my opinion, this can be done only through an 'archaeological' approach. The only way to create a symbiotic relationship between the architect and the building is to read its signs, to understand its meanings, 'to understand "what" and "why" to preserve' (Torsello 2010: 142), and thus to properly guide the project, in accordance with the forms, the material, and also the typology of the pre-existing building.

Regarding the triad of *venustas*, *firmitas*, *utilitas* articulated by Vitruvius, who considered these three qualities to be of equal importance, Torsello notes that, since the birth of aesthetics, that is since the mid-18th century, *utilitas* has begun to take on a secondary role as compared to the other two, being gradually degraded to pure practical purpose. And this trend was first accentuated with Eclecticism, when 'the idea of *utilitas* is combined more and more closely with efficiency, based on the model of the machine and industrial production cycles' (Torsello 2010: 142). *Utilitas* was later given more importance in rationalist and functionalist architecture. This process leads gradually to forgetting the spiritual and existential values of a place. More and more, architecture ceases to be *place*, that is to say the house of Man, to become *space*, that is an abstract combination of timeless geometries, a scenographic compositions of forms (Torsello 2010: 143). These concepts were introduced and discussed already by Norberg-Schultz, coherently with Heidegger's thinking, and later by Lynch, which highlighted the need for a return of use value, closely related to meanings far beyond utilitarian purposes, but based on those of identity, emotionality, existentialism and vitality. 'Man exists in relation to many objects: physical, psychological, social and cultural' (Norberg-Schulz 1982: 56). The architectural space should be space that can create 'unity in plurality', and in which, therefore, man is able to identify himself.

'The value of the great works of art is to allow different interpretations without losing identity. The "interpretations" offered by a "chaotic form" are only the *ego's* arbitrary projections and they explode like soap bubbles. In an ambiguous, complex, but structured, architectural space, we then see the alternative to fatal mobility and disintegration concepts [...] The architect's task then is to help the individual to find existential support, realizing his images and dreams' (Norberg-Schulz 1982: 134). Many reuse projects, where function is inappropriate, are the negation of this concept that is still topical. The Gothic and neo-Gothic churches, although they are fragile and delicate, are resilient to change. Thus, the attempt to turn them into a kind of 'non-places' fails. However at the same time, the inclusion of stereotypical forms, which have a *déjà vu* look, reassures and therefore attracts the viewer (Augé 2004: 87).

### **The contemporary architect's responsibility**

In the light of these reflections, architects should make themselves aware of the responsibility they have towards contemporary society and the educational role that can be played, both in formative terms and through the projects which they create. Design projects, which express the critical ability of each individual, oppose cultural flattening and propose an architecture that does not follow an idea of 'final story', but rather a continual progress (Carr 1966). Furthermore, these buildings should contemplate the fundamentals of making architecture, and at the same time respect both the 'spirit of architecture' and the human psyche. Very often projects are based on debased contemporary visions, made for economic and consumerist reasons, and continuing this way there may be no turning

point. Architectural forms follow the ephemeral fashions of the moment, and too often historical architectures are those which pay too high a price.

Led by a historical-critical and aesthetic judgment, as well as by conservation principles, not forgetting psychological and spiritual components, the design project should arrive at genuine solutions and respect for building values, both tangible and intangible. It must be able to give a new meaning to history and to really connect the old with the new, trying very hard to resist economic interests. As the architecture of the past must adapt to current events, its development should also respect the past. That is, not a reuse design 'on' the pre-existing building, but a reuse design 'with' the pre-existing building.

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## THE REUSE OF HERITAGE WITH 'SYMBOLIC VALUE' AND UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

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Over time, the needs that prompted the construction of many architectural complexes have ceased to be as the assigned functions of the buildings disappeared. Assigning new functions to abandoned complexes or to buildings that have lost their original role is a common problem, but this is more and more critical in the case of buildings that had a highly specialised function. Furthermore, the old function was often accompanied by an equally strong symbolic and spiritual meaning, so the issue of giving new functions becomes more complex. This is the case with religious buildings.

A gradual shift away from the religious practices performed over centuries can be observed throughout the Christian West, in countries with both Catholic and Protestant traditions. As a result, the abandonment of old churches has become a pressing problem<sup>1</sup>. For example, in the last fifteen years about 500 German churches have been closed, and four-fifths of these were Catholic churches.

In some cases, the Church hierarchy has tried to manage the phenomenon, creating special offices dedicated to selling abandoned complexes, so as to control, in a sense, the future functions. This has happened, for example, in Scotland, the Netherlands and France, where some dioceses have even created special websites where all the buildings on sale are listed with pictures, a description of the asset and price.

The massive immigration that has occurred in Europe in recent years has shifted the balance between the different faiths; while on one hand the number of Protestant and Catholic Christian churchgoers has diminished, Christians of other denominations, such as Orthodox and Coptic, have increased although they lacked places of worship. So, when some abandoned buildings were assigned to the exercise of other cults, it was easy to allocate the existing churches to different Christian denominations. The same cannot be said of the transformation of churches into mosques, which had been almost totally absent in the whole Christian West but which became necessary by virtue of the strong immigration from Islamic countries. Only in some cases, such as that of the Church of San Paolino dei Giardinieri in Palermo, has the transition of a church from Christian worship into a mosque occurred without problems. On the other hand, during the 2015 Venice Biennale, the Church of Mercy (privately owned since 1973 and unused since 1969) was used as Iceland's pavilion and the artist Christoph Büchel oversaw its transformation into a mosque for a period of seven months<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 1). This caused innumerable controversies, including that stimulated by the Patriarch of Venice, who stated that 'for any other use but the Catholic Christian worship, permission should be requested from ecclesiastical authority'.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law (Canon 1222 §1) states that: 'If a church cannot in any way be used for divine worship and there is no possibility of its being restored, the diocesan bishop may allow it to be used for some secular but not unbecoming purpose'. In any case, a new sacred use is not forbidden, as in the case of the deconsecrated church of San

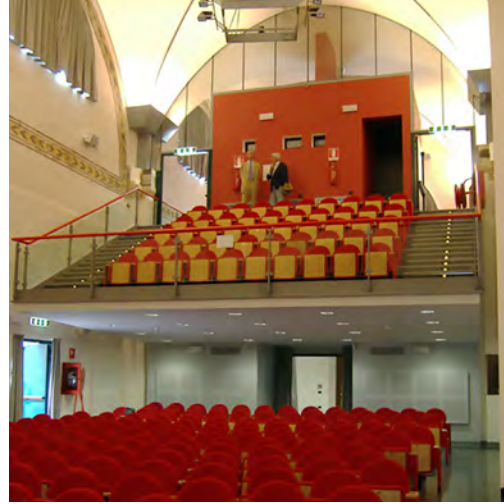


FIG. 1. The interior of the Church of Mercy in Venice, temporarily converted into a mosque during the Art Biennale in 2015.

FIG. 2. Mezzanine, volumes and colors in the transformation of St. George's church in Ruzante Theatre in Padua.

FIG. 3. The interior of the nightclub Limelight in New York has completely deleted the appearance of the original neo-Gothic church.

FIG. 4. The classic facade of the Observance Church in Montpellier with the back of a red Cadillac inserted in the portal lunette to mark the entrance of Rockstore Cafe.

Paolino dei Giardinieri. In 1990 it was sold to the region of Sicily by the Curia of Palermo in order to convert it into a mosque, and the building was chosen precisely because of its orientation towards the holy places of Islam. This was done, transforming the bell tower into a minaret, while the interior remained essentially unchanged: the pre-existing sacred images were covered and just hidden from view, and a *minbar* and a *mihrab*, a simple new arch located into the apse but detached from it, were added.

The debate on the transformation of Christian churches into mosques is widespread, particularly in France where the Islamic population is very large and the shortage of places of worship is juxtaposed against the high rate of abandonment of Christian religious buildings<sup>3</sup>.

Evidently this problem does not arise when other end uses – ones that are more remote from the original function, from a symbolic perspective – are assigned to deconsecrated churches. The presence of a huge room, the hall, facilitates the use of churches as group meeting spaces. Thus, these buildings are often converted to auditoria, concert halls, exhibition halls and so on. Unfortunately, each of these functions requires public use, thereby obliging the community to ensure not only conservation and restoration, but also to recruit new staff for daily cleaning, care and surveillance of these new public buildings. As this is onerous, it is virtually impossible to convert all disused churches to public functions.

So it can be easily understood why a theatre is a frequently assigned function. It happened in Neuveville in Switzerland, where the Church of Preachers, a Huguenot temple built in the 17th century, has been transformed into a theatre simply by covering the altars with a removable wooden structure<sup>4</sup>. In Italy, some churches have been converted into theatres, changing the existing structures in a very different way: in Bolsena, the Church of San Francesco was transformed into today's Teatro Comunale San Francesco<sup>5</sup> simply by elevating part of the hall floor with some steps to achieve a limited visibility curve. In contrast, in Padua, where the Church of St. George is now the Teatro Ruzante, the transformation made by Gianni Fabbri was not at all painless<sup>6</sup>: an upper circle has been built at the level of the Gothic vaults and a strong new character has been given to interior spaces, adding new volumes and mezzanines and painting the additions in red. So the perception of the original space has been completely altered (Fig. 2).

Many abandoned religious buildings have had end uses that are completely different from the original. As previously mentioned, the hall size suggests new uses as public spaces (and in fact many buildings are reused for such spaces, but of a quite different kind): a large number of them have been turned into restaurants, pubs or discos. This happens on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the United States the Church of St. John the Baptist in Pittsburgh, a Catholic church, was deconsecrated in 1993 and three years later converted into a pub/brewery<sup>7</sup>, and the neo-Gothic Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion in New York now houses The Limelight, one of the most important clubs of the eponymous chain of entertainment and musical venues<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 3).

Throughout Europe these end uses seem most common for disused churches. In London, the Presbyterian church in the suburb of Muswell Hill is now a pub<sup>9</sup> and in Ruigoord, a few kilometers outside Amsterdam, the old Catholic church was converted into a club for dubstep music<sup>10</sup>.

In Montpellier the neoclassical Observance church, inserted in 2007 in the list of French historical monuments, has a façade with a facing of limestone ashlar, four tall Doric pilasters and a heavily protruding triangular pediment. The building formerly hosted a printing house, then a garage and a cinema. Since 1986 it accommodates the Rockstore nightclub<sup>11</sup>. To mark this new use, the back of an American car of the 1950s, a red Cadillac, has been inserted into the classic portal lunette (Fig. 4).

In Edinburgh, the neo-Gothic Elim Pentecostal Church, inserted in the Listed Buildings of Scotland, has been converted into the Frankenstein Pub (Fig. 5), with furnishings that, as expressly stated in the name, characterise the new interior room with a gothic-horror atmosphere that stands out from the setting in the old religious building<sup>12</sup>.



FIG. 5. The gothic-horror atmosphere of Frankenstein Pub in Edinburgh makes unintelligible the original space of the neo-Gothic Elim Pentecostal church.

FIG. 6. The great hall of the Paradise nightclub in Amsterdam during a concert.

FIG. 7. The interior of Gattopardo Café in Milan, where the bar counter has taken the place of the high altar of the church of St. Joseph of Peace.

FIG. 8. The circus school Circomedia in St. Paul's Basilica in Bristol, with metal frames suspended from the ceiling and hanging multiple trapezes, poles, ropes.



In Amsterdam the Paradise nightclub (Fig. 6), called 'the most famous venue of the rock scene in northern Europe', is housed in a former 19th-century church once used by the Vrije Gemeente religious community<sup>13</sup>. The building has not undergone big changes, apart from being divided into two rooms. The largest, hosting major rock concerts, holds up to 1,500 people. Similarly, the former church of St. Joseph of Peace in Milan was little altered (Fig. 7); today it has become the Gattopardo Café<sup>14</sup>, a disco club and multifunctional space where the high altar space is now occupied by the bar counter.

Other churches have been converted into fun spaces. In some cases, such as the former church of St. Joseph in Arnhem, Holland, the building is now a skatepark<sup>15</sup>; in the Basilica of St Paul in Bristol<sup>16</sup>, the old church has housed the Circomedia circus school (Fig. 8) since 2005, although curiously the church is still consecrated. It is worth noting that such transformations take place without heavy interventions on the building struc-



FIG. 9. The wall paintings made by Okuda San Miguel in Kaos Temple, the skatepark built in the former church of Santa Barbara in Llanera in Asturias, heavily alter the perception of interior space, even though the walls have remained completely unchanged.

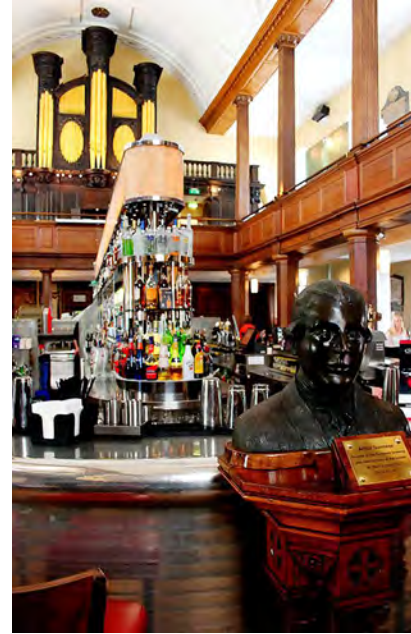


FIG. 10. The bar counter of the former St Mary's church in Dublin, which became the resto-pub The Church.

ture; in most cases the transformation is achieved by the addition of easily removable internal furniture. The reversibility achieved in such adaptations makes these transformations minimally invasive, even if the new function is very far from the original one. The Asturian Church of Santa Barbara in Llanera<sup>17</sup>, also turned into the skatepark Kaos Temple is a special case (Fig. 9): the interior surface has been completely decorated with 'kaleidoscopic geometric drawings', a veritable rainbow of bright colours painted on all walls and vaults by the Spanish artist Okuda San Miguel, whose work has perceptually almost erased the original building interiors.

Minor internal alterations characterise other buildings: in Dublin, the deconsecrated church of St Mary's has become the restaurant-pub The Church<sup>18</sup>, where the interior has been perfectly preserved and where the restaurant tables are located on the balconies on either side of the nave (Fig. 10); or in Antwerp, where the deconsecrated chapel of a former military hospital has been converted into the new The Jane restaurant<sup>19</sup>. In this last building, although the interior has been completely preserved in the transformation, the new lights, huge and intrusive chandeliers, heavily alter the perception of the space.

What happened to the 13th-century Church of All Saints in Hereford is quite unusual: in 1997 some parts of the church, which is still in use, were transformed into a coffee shop, the Café All Saints, and the main nave is now used for various types of events, 'from Shakespeare to flamenco' (Fig. 11). The church website makes the basic concept of transformation clear: 'The building is a church, a community centre and a café. It is a place where people of all faiths and beliefs are welcome to pray, worship, talk, eat a delicious meal or use the space for all kinds of performances and meetings...'<sup>20</sup>. The change was not



FIG. 11. At Hereford in the thirteenth century All Saints Church, a still officiated apse lives with parts of the nave transformed into Café All Saints.

FIG. 12. The all-white interior surfaces of the single-family dwelling, achieved in the former Sanct Jacobus church in Utrecht building new floors and partitions.



FIGS. 13A-13B. St. Georges Church in Manchester, divided into several flats and a room of the dwelling located in the nine levels of the bell tower.

ainless: it entailed the creation of a loft in the aisle to make room for coffee tables, new glass entrance gates, wooden walls to define the space, a stairs leading from the nave to the loft, and raising the floor in the café area.

In Italy too there are examples of abandoned religious buildings used for similar purposes. This is the case with the old single-hall church of Santa Felicita in Verona<sup>21</sup>, now the restaurant The Sacristy: here the apse was transformed into the kitchen, creating a loft over part of the nave, while preserving some fresco and stucco fragments, though most of them have been removed and are now preserved in museums.

Although it might seem that residential use, which typically requires small rooms, would conflict with the main feature of the religious buildings – namely the large room of the hall and its considerable height – some disused churches have been adapted for

residence. Two opposing examples are worth pointing out: the Church of Sanct Jacobus in Utrecht<sup>22</sup>, adapted by Zecc Architects into a single family dwelling (Fig. 12) with an area of almost 700 square metres, and the large St. George's Church in Manchester<sup>23</sup>, which has been partitioned into many apartments. The most valuable (at least according to the sale price) is located inside the bell



FIG. 14. A prized suite of Martin's Patershof Hotel in Mechelen is drawn in the upper part of the apse of the former church of Friars Minor.

tower: nine levels that are not even connected by a lift (Figs. 13a-13b).

The construction of a hotel in a disused monastery is a common practice because of the excellent correspondence (accommodation of multiple users in separate spaces) between the original and the post-conversion building. Unsurprisingly, many former monasteries have been designated for such a purpose. The transformation of a church into a hotel is indubitably less common, as it can only be done by fragmenting the large original space with new floors and partition walls.

This has been done in Malines, Belgium, where the church and part of the former monastery of Friars Minor has been transformed into Martin's Patershof Hotel<sup>24</sup> where the most valuable rooms are those located inside the church (Fig. 14). In Maastricht, in the conversion of the old Crutched Friars monastery into the Kruisherhotel, the bedrooms have been placed in the monastery building, while the church has been used for services such as reception, the restaurant, the bar, and so on. In this transformation the walls of the church have been left almost untouched, but its interior space is now nearly unrecognisable as the heavy, high body of added services occupies almost the whole nave; the space is moreover altered by new, strong colours and by huge lamps, like great flying saucers, hanging from frescoed vaults (Fig. 15).

Also in Maastricht, a central element has been likewise inserted in the old Dominican church, now converted into a bookshop. In this case constructed to the right side of the nave, the addition creates a similar final effect, although the lower height and width of the new insertion alter the sacred building's interior space somewhat less; it is still perceptible, albeit in a fragmented fashion (Fig. 16).

The transformation of old churches into retail spaces is quite common: in Arnhem, a church of the early 20th century has been transformed into the Humanoid clothing store; with a loft inserted and painted white, filled with invasive furnishings, the space is now unrecognisable. In Bologna, the former Church of Santa Maria Rotonda dei Galluzzi<sup>25</sup> now houses a perfumery; its hyper-modern furniture is housed in the ancient structure, its columns and stucco capitals still preserved. Sainte Catherine's Church, the second largest in Brussels after the cathedral, was in danger of becoming a market hall until a very recent decision by the bishop caused the building to be reopened for worship<sup>26</sup>.

As can be seen, the revitalisation of religious buildings or monasteries, where the buildings have lost their original function, demonstrates the relevance of the end use to



FIG. 15. The vaults of the old church of Crutched Friars in Maastricht, now Kruisherhotel Hotel, largely hidden by huge chandeliers.



FIG. 16. In the old Maastricht Dominican church, the body housing the new library shelves has been inserted in the right half of the church, leaving unchanged the other half and making quite appreciable the original interior space.

achieving a compatible utilisation. Compatibility can be related to the material integrity of the building or be extended to the foreseen functions.

Compatibility with material integrity should be the first constraint for any designer who engages with the restoration of ancient buildings. However, allowing for the risk of losing the integrity that makes these buildings unique and unrepeatable, functional compatibility can allow for a range of options.

If compatibility is understood in a broad sense, new designations for cultural uses (which are often attributed to abandoned religious buildings) may be considered sufficient. This factor, combined with the uniqueness of the space they offer, explains why many deconsecrated churches are transformed into auditoria, libraries, conference rooms and so on.

Privatising unused religious buildings may often be necessary, but this is to betray its first meaning, that is: a building for the community, often built with the contribution of all citizens. Introducing a social function does not betray this aspect, at least, even if the new use is profane. The destination of public use and therefore towards space reserved for the common good can – as well as avoiding profane uses often actually at odds with the spirit of the building – be considered in a broad sense to support the *genius loci* of the site, next to the intent of the builders.

However, if we want to recover the deep spirit in which these buildings were built, the goal becomes much more difficult to achieve. In certain situations it can nevertheless be pursued and least approached.

The freedom inherent in university research offers excellent opportunities to explore this matter, as shown by a series of degree theses in architecture discussed at Florence University.



FIG. 17. Elevations and cross-sections of the former convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Stia, whose new proposed use fully respects the spirit of the original function as a travellers hospice.

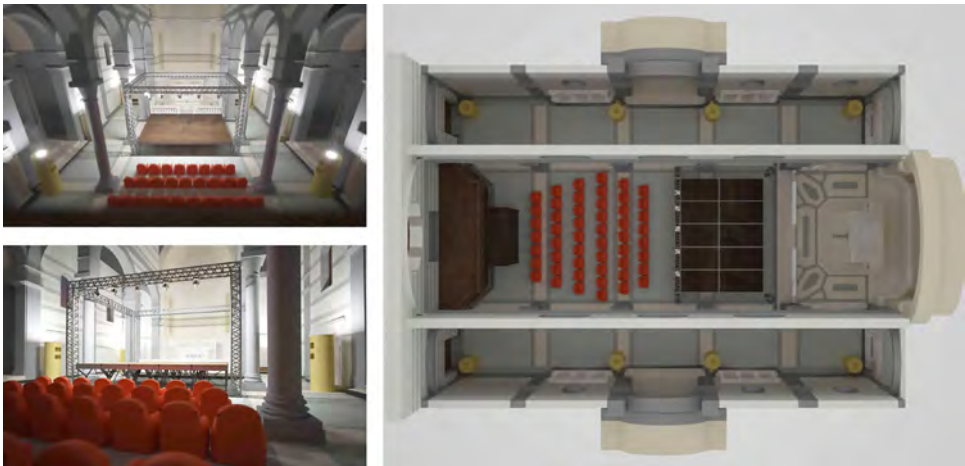


FIG. 18. Interior views and perspective of St. Andrew's Forisportam Church in Pisa in the proposed adaptation to a theatrical space achieved using only mobile furnishings.

In the study on the restoration of a Tuscan convent, the former convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Stia<sup>27</sup>, a new use was proposed with the issue of recovery in mind: to recover the original role of the building in supporting pilgrims, it was proposed to use the building as a hostel devoted to the rehabilitation of drug users, today's lost wayfarers. The compatibility of spaces and functions (laboratories, residences, meeting rooms and so on) was established, and with a few necessary adaptations and interventions the feasibility of such a recovery of the original spirit of the building was demonstrated (Fig. 17).



FIG. 19. Elevation of the right side of the church of St. Francis of Women in Perugia, for a long time housing a loom and featuring weaving craftsmanship, and views of the proposed reorganisation of the interior spaces.



FIG. 20. Aerial view, front and longitudinal section of the unfinished and abandoned Monument to Ciano at Livorno, whose renovation and new use as a Sailor Monument have been proposed.

This is not always possible, but in other cases a careful study of the building and of its substance allows an adaptation of the old sacred building to new functions, to be designed with very limited alterations to the architectural structure and to the interior, at the same time ensuring that the original space, often of great architectural value, is still perceptible. In the proposed restoration of St Andrew's Forisportam Church in Pisa<sup>28</sup>, a 12th-century Romanesque building, the current designation as theatre space has been maintained, with a new internal layout fully based on mobile and versatile furnishings, thus keeping intact the wall structure and the interior space of the church (Fig. 18).

The same has happened in the planned restoration of the Church of St. Francis of the Women in Perugia<sup>29</sup>, which has long been the location of an artistic crafts laboratory (loom weaving). In the proposal, the current valuable use has been maintained with the spaces rearranged so as to enhance both the production activity and the ecclesiastical space: transept and apse (the exhibition area of handloom products) are reserved for the looms but visually open to the aisle, and the whole church space is thus perceptible (Fig. 19).

Equally difficult is the problem of new uses to be given to commemorative buildings that for various reasons (incompleteness, desire to erase the memory of their original commitment, abandonment) have now lost their original meaning. Again, the attribution of a function corresponding to the modern sensibility seems difficult to pursue, but the alternative – between ignoring the problem of abandonment or striving for a balanced recovery with the purpose of an equally well thought re-functionalisation – certainly lies in favour of the latter.

This is what has been envisaged for an unfinished monument near Leghorn, the Ciano's Mausoleum<sup>30</sup>, full of negative value arising from its intended commemoration of a fascist officer, but in landscape terms significant because of its location on a hill overlooking the sea. A new and broadly shared dedication, for example as Memorial to the Sailor, could allow its symbolic recovery (Fig. 20).

University research enables us to pursue these ambitious goals. There is no doubt about the educational importance of research directed to this purpose, which can also make clear to future designers and restorers the feasibility of such choices based on criteria beyond the simple logic of the market, which is often the only one used to dictate the choice of new uses to be assigned to disused complexes.

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## Notes

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## GENIUS LOCI RESTORED: THE CHALLENGE OF ADAPTIVE REUSE

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### Abstract

The underlying concept of *genius loci*, or spirit of place, embodies a particular kind of historical knowledge and lived experience that can be made subjectively available through a place 'being there' at specific events or activities, and can recover the tangible and intangible elements that give a place meaning and value and induce emotional engagement. In current heritage discourse, the term refers to a distinctive sense of place, the atmosphere and character of a site, including its physical and symbolic values – its spirit of place<sup>1</sup>.

Through case studies of adaptive reuse of significant sites this paper considers distinct philosophical approaches to these particular places to examine whether their true authenticity, which conveys the spirit of place, is sufficiently identified and used as a critical tool to define the conservation philosophies and priorities for preserving these significant cultural heritage assets. Opportunities for and limits to the adaptive reuse of redundant buildings and their associated relict landscapes are investigated and defined in the context of the challenge of capturing and safeguarding their essential spirit of place during the conservation process.

Although adaptive reuse usually refers to finding a new purpose for defunct sites, the adopted methodologies for establishing conservation priorities might be applied to situations where the transmission of material and immaterial values is desirable, including those of the collective memories and social meaning embedded in the tangible and intangible cultural heritage for their respective communities.

The paper concludes that in the adaptive reuse of heritage with symbolic value, due consideration must be given to respecting its value and significance, while being aware that strategic sustainable development practice is an increasingly important aspect of conservation projects. The case studies discussed demonstrate that the principles, physical, intellectual and digital interpretation and degree of intervention required for keeping alive and transmitting the spirit of place to new audiences must acknowledge that not all buildings are suitable candidates for adaptation. Consideration of places that need to change is site-specific, but if the matrix of complex values is approached with understanding and sensitivity, the conservation process can be positive, provide new experiential value and create new narratives for individuals and society. The German concept of *Industriekultur*, which conflates two distinct notions of culture – historical reconstruction and to the sites themselves as *de facto* manifestations of German cultural history that carry meaning and significance – may be a way of resolving these tensions, particularly in relation to redundant industrial complexes.

### Introduction

There are many sites of historic significance that hold symbolic value and are no longer used for their original purpose. The adaptive reuse of redundant places is sustainable

conservation practice and is often the only way of ensuring that they are conserved for future generations, as buildings that are no longer relevant are subject to decay, neglect and ultimately demolition. If they are to retain their cultural significance, then appropriate new uses must be found that combine sensitive adaptive conservation with considered, constructive interventions. How conservation professionals are involved in the theory, practice and management of the adaptive reuse of redundant places, and the philosophical approach adopted, will determine whether the cultural significance and essential spirit of a place is lost, retained or enhanced during the conservation process.

The *Québec Declaration on the Preservation of Spirit of Place* preamble states (ICOMOS 2008)<sup>2</sup>: ‘Spirit of place is defined as the tangible (buildings, sites, landscapes, routes, objects) and the intangible elements (memories, narratives, written documents, rituals, festivals, traditional knowledge, values, textures, colours, odours, etc.), that is to say the physical and the spiritual elements that give meaning, value, emotion and mystery to place. Rather than separate spirit from place, the intangible from the tangible, and consider them as opposed to each other, we have investigated the many ways in which the two interact and mutually construct one another.’

The cultural and symbolic value of the place to be adapted should guide its reuse and aim to retain significant existing fabric, features and inherent character, or *genius loci* of the building, landscape, place or setting, as: ‘Awareness of locality... brings past, present and future into evolutionary dialogue’ (Fleurie 1935)<sup>3</sup>.

Wherever possible, continuing historical use is preferable, but this is not always practicable or economically viable. In these cases, the philosophical approach should be that of minimal intervention to achieve the new use and continuing social relevance. In addition, the remodelling of existing buildings should wherever possible be compatible, reversible and authentic, convey site-specific narratives that gave a place symbolic meaning, interpret significance and express collective memory. There must be a context-based evaluation of the conservation project and each solution proposed must be based on the unique characteristics of the particular site. The assessment and understanding of significance and heritage value is crucial, while new architectural interventions can reveal and enhance interpretation and understanding of the spirit of the place and serve to heighten appreciation of the original building.

The redundant 13th-century Dominican church in Maastricht has had various incarnations, as warehouse, archive and bicycle park, and was in 2007 converted into a bookstore, *Selexyz Dominicanen*, with retail design by Merckx+Girod, retaining the original architectural structure but incorporating a contemporary insertion which respects its religious and symbolic value but is also reversible (Fig. 1).

Most significant and successful, however, is the adaptive reuse of Old Minderbroederskerk, also known as the First Franciscan Church, Maastricht. Historically used as an arsenal, orphanage, military hospital, barracks, prison and factory, an innovative and stylish modern insertion of 1995 to a design by architect M. van Roosmalen, architect at the Government Buildings Agency, facilitates its current function of Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg. Minimalist and innovative but entirely respectful and appropriate, this intervention in the historic interior retains the spirit of place and symbolic value and is fully reversible (Fig. 2).



FIG. 1. Bookstore *Selexyz Dominicanen*.



FIG. 2. Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg.

In contrast, in the adaptation of the prison complex as a Faculty of Law for Hasselt University, Belgium fails to respect the significance of the historic building or its cultural context; this has resulted in its inherent character and spirit of place being irrevocably eradicated. The transformation of this 19th-century panoptical prison was carried out by noAarchitecten 2009–12, without considering how the meaning of the place or its symbolic value could be transmitted to future generations. Scant attention is paid to the building's history or heritage value, constructional and spatial characteristics, its former function and traditional role in the city or how its intangible significance for the local community might be communicated. Significant historic fabric was removed and replaced with modern materials, and no cognisance was taken of the material and immaterial qualities of the site (Fig. 3).

The façade to the street has been retained and it does have a contemporary use in the community and a viable function, but no principles were formulated to conserve the spirit of the place or recognise its character-defining elements as a historic building.

The conservation of the Fort de Loncin renewed its iconic role in the community but represents a good example of the concept of 'museumification'<sup>4</sup>. Constructed in the 19th

FIG. 3. Entrance Hall, Faculty of Law, University of Hasselt.

FIG. 4. Evidential remains at the Fort de Loncin.



century, the Fort de Loncin is one of twelve unreinforced concrete fortresses that formed a semi-circle around the city of Liège. Most still survive, but the Fort de Loncin, located to the northwest of Liège, has the most evocative and moving story to tell because of the catastrophic loss of life that occurred here on 15 August 1914: around 350 of the garrison were killed when the powder magazine was hit by a shell, ‘roughly 200 of whom remain where they fell, buried beneath tons of concrete that collapsed in the blast’<sup>5</sup>. Fort de Loncin is now a museum and war grave cemetery and in this capacity its commemorative, associative and symbolic value for the collective memory of Belgium and the local community is immense. The site is a burial ground and the philosophical approach here was to conserve as found. The significance of this place is embedded in the material remains of the building and its landscape setting, so the works to the historic structure and the landscape conformed to the mantra of ‘doing as much as necessary and as little as possible’ to allow the bomb-damaged building and its context to become an integral part of the narrative associated with the place<sup>6</sup>. The tangible and intangible aspects are interpreted through communication strategies that convey its traumatic political history, including leaving the devastated site and its associated debris precisely as it was in the aftermath of the explosion. The shocking event is further enhanced through a combination of first-person dialogue, visual references, sound effects, realistic re-enactment and digital and sensory technologies. It is an impressive site, where the spirit of place has been preserved intact with evidential remains of a destructive event in Belgian history clearly visible (Fig. 4).

However, the future for a museum site with such unique characteristics and emotionally charged history may not be sustainable. The infrastructure and fabric is deteriorating, but although the building has no architectural merit, the tangible value of the structure can be conserved. The intangible values are to a large extent conveyed by visual remains, the sombre atmosphere and the auspices of ageing volun-

teer guides who help bring the story of the devastation of the site to life. But they are diminishing in number and the historic memory of the site they represent will be difficult to retain. The conservation strategy here has ensured that the symbolic value of the place remains palpable for the time being, while this powerful memorial is too fragile and precious to lend itself to any other use. At present, there appears to be no prospect of an economically viable future for the site, or a succession strategy to replace the veterans who keep alive the spirit of the place and transmit its political, commemorative symbolic value.

Immaterial cultural value must be given significant weight in the balance between adaptive reuse and the preservation of inherent memory for individuals and communities. Conservation is a participatory social process, as recognised by Salvador Muñoz Viñas: '...societies protect these objects [heritage assets] not because of the objects themselves, but because of the intangible, symbolic effect an unwarranted alteration might have upon the subjects that make up that society'<sup>7</sup>. Before decisions are made on the modification or change of use of a heritage asset, a statement of significance should be developed in conjunction with a management plan for its future that incorporates an evaluation of community value. Principle 4 of the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994) states that: 'the conservation project succeeds when histories are revealed, traditions revived, and meanings recovered in a palimpsest of knowledge'. Value and authenticity should always be defined within its specific cultural context. However, critical analysis of the industrial case studies visited during the thematic workshop indicates that best practice did not always inform the adaptive reuse project.

### **Case studies**

The reuse of redundant industrial heritage poses particular challenges, including the issue of ties to the local community. Extensive historic remains of cultural practices and traditions may be present, but sites may lack architectural merit, and incorporate massive problematic infrastructure, functional buildings, machinery, workshops, mines and factories and industrial processes. There are currently in excess of 40 such sites on the list of World Heritage Sites, many prime examples of a bygone industrial age representing immense historic, social and community value. At C-Mine, Genk, while the project is successful insofar as its industrial structures have been retained and conserved by the 51N4E practice to provide a new cultural resource, it represents a lost opportunity in terms of capturing intangible values. The spaces created are contrived and there is little remaining of its original spirit of place, nor evidence to explain its previous function nor the reasons for the closure of the entire site by 1987. It took until 2000 to develop a vision for the adaptive reuse of the site as a creative hub with four purposes: 'education, creative economy, creative recreation and artistic creation and presentation'<sup>8</sup>. The original façades remain, but the interior spaces are significantly altered with interventions to accommodate new uses. Where significant spaces have been retained, such as the Energy Building, used in part as design centre and workshop accommodation, the spaces have been gentrified and sanitised and the obsolete industrial artefacts merely act as 'inanimate props' for changing exhibitions (Fig. 5).

The Cultural Centre has been radically altered internally, with the insertion of high quality design and materials such as theatres, cinema and performance spaces within



FIG. 5. Industrial remains in the workshops at C-Mine.

Next page:

FIG. 6. Blaenavon Ironworks (Available at: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blaenavon\\_Ironworks#/media/File:Blaenavon\\_Ironworks-24May2008.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blaenavon_Ironworks#/media/File:Blaenavon_Ironworks-24May2008.jpg)> [Accessed 27 July 2017]).

the shell of the original building. The interiors have lost their character and there is no acknowledgement of their former use or indication of the historical purpose of the site. Even the 'Mine Expedition' consists of a tour of redundant mining tunnels with modern art installations strategically placed along the route. The lamp and washrooms are now a high-tech restaurant and bar which appropriate the remaining industrial artefacts and infrastructure as decorative pieces. The physical fabric of the site has been conserved, but without an attempt to reanimate the intangible heritage associated with the place.

The conversion and revitalisation of C-Mine as a cultural destination is an innovative use of this iconic industrial complex and has given the site a new, accessible and sustainable role in the community. It is also commercially successful as a setting for cultural events and as a catalyst for economic urban regeneration in creating over 330 jobs in 42 companies and organisations. However, the conservation process has stripped the site of symbolic meaning, leaving the visitor hard-pressed to find the spirit of the place or much evidence of the site's original industrial function. Although some of the aesthetic value in the scale and visual impact of the buildings remains, radical alterations to the internal fabric and its cultural landscape setting to provide visitor infrastructure have left it an empty shell, devoid of most of its historic and symbolic value, and the associative and social connections it once had with its surrounding community are mostly lost.



At Blaenavon, South Wales, the emphasis has been on revitalising the redundant industrial complex and relict landscape ‘as a place of resort, a tourism and recreational destination in direct contrast with its long years as a highly productive, but also destructive, working landscape’. This has been achieved through remembering and transmitting the spirit of the place and presenting its associated social and political history<sup>9</sup>. Blaenavon’s tangible and intangible heritage value has been authentically conserved through a positive political and social process which revealed layers of meaning and understanding of local heritage through the merging of local identity, significant natural landscape features and industrial archaeology.

Inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2000 for its critical role in the Industrial Revolution, it is a prime, largely intact representative of the coal and iron industry, and its inscription became a catalyst for significant regeneration and social revival. The site is a model of socio-economic regeneration in the adaptive reuse and revitalisation of its structures, industrial features and surrounding landscape as a cultural resource. The National Coal Board’s Big Pit, the last substantial working colliery, closed in 1980 and was reopened as a mining museum in 1983. A conservation study of Big Pit by Brooke Millar Architects in 2003–4 informed further restoration proposals and a strategy for protecting and enhancing the tangible and intangible character of the site; these were implemented by 2005. This incorporated a new museum in the former pit head baths building and a multimedia simulated mining experience to augment underground tours with ex-miners<sup>10</sup>. Machines, artefacts and production equipment were preserved to present the site in a dynamic and vivid way for visitors, with a modern heritage centre, multimedia virtual gallery, blacksmith’s premises, a shop and canteen, while a Visitor Experience and Interpretation Plan identified the potential of digital technologies for presenting the site<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 6).

The associated 2007 Forgotten Landscape Partnership Initiative was created as a result of the growing awareness of the historical and ecological significance of the ‘cultural landscape’ and centred on the town of Blaenavon with the aim of involving the community while resolving conflicting interests of archaeology, historic landscape, nature conservation and cultural heritage.





FIG. 7. Panoramic view of the Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord, Duisburg, Germany (Available at: <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11672874>> [Accessed 21 June 2017]).

## Conclusions

Keeping alive the ‘spirit of place’ requires an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset, including a range of values: architectural, historical, social, cultural and spiritual. ‘Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage’ considers the methodologies conservation professionals and others need to develop to capture and define *genius loci*, so that it can be reflected, communicated and safeguarded during the conservation process (UNESCO 2003). Digital technologies used at the Fort de Loncin and Blaenavon proved to be an effective method of conveying spirit of place and enhancing the intangible qualities of the sites. Their potential was recognised in the Québec Declaration (ICOMOS 2008):

‘Considering that modern digital technologies (digital databases, websites) can be used efficiently and effectively at a low cost to develop multimedia inventories that integrate tangible and intangible elements of heritage, we strongly recommend their widespread use in order to better preserve, disseminate and promote heritage places and their spirit. These technologies facilitate the diversity and constant renewal of the documentation on the spirit of place’.

Comparing and reviewing sites that have similar problems but have provided a successful adaptive solution may provide sustainable long-term strategies to conservation issues. The recognition that continuity and change are not mutually exclusive and that associative and symbolic values evolve over time is relevant to the future adaptive reuse of obsolete sites worldwide. If complex redundant sites are to be conserved, we have to accept that they cannot all be turned into museums and adapting them to contemporary relevance, while retaining their visual and historical form and protecting significant elements, means that compromises are necessary. The German concept of *Industriekultur* adopted in the

post-industrial revitalisation of the Ruhr Valley, Essen's Zeche Zollverein, Gelsenkirchen's Nordsternpark, Oberhausen's Gasometer and Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord may provide a best practice model, at least for large industrial complexes<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 7). These sites represent:

'...markers of the cultural rebirth of the Ruhr district's industrial loci in the realm of the aesthetic. Under the overarching concept of *Industriekultur*, they link historic preservation to on-site education. Some of the sites serve as full-fledged museums in themselves, while others foster historical consciousness alongside the creative use of buildings and structures for exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, and other cultural or recreational activities'.

'The concept of *Industriekultur* conflates two distinct notions of culture... On the one hand, it refers to the historical reconstruction of the proletarian culture of the Ruhr river valley, inextricably linked to the rise of heavy industry in the region and the economic and political impact it had; on the other hand, it refers to the sites themselves as *de facto* manifestations of German cultural history, that is, as cultural objects that carry meaning and significance similar to a medieval fortress, a Renaissance chapel, or an early 20th-century art nouveau building'<sup>13</sup>.

These hybrid sites may be an inevitable consequence of their transformation, while the retention of their physical presence in the urban landscape provides historic continuity and helps local communities to identify with their unique character and symbolic value. It is not always possible to convey the original meaning of a building or capture every aspect of their original spirit of place, but changes should be a result of a dialogue between old buildings and compatible new functions if we are to attain a harmonious relationship between adaptive reuse and conservation practice. This negotiation needs to occur with sensitivity, compromise and empathy towards cultural context if we are to retain collective memories and make cultural heritage work for new audiences, and is preferable to losing significant buildings that sustainably contribute to the cultural continuity, historic identity and heritage value of a place.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In relation to architecture, the term *genius loci* ('spirit of place') was introduced by the Norwegian architect and theoretician Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) to describe the immateriality in the experience of architecture.

<sup>2</sup> ICOMOS 2008, adopted at Quebec, Canada, October 4th 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Fleurie 1935, quoted in Torfaen County Borough Council 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Menon 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Centenary News 2013.

<sup>6</sup> The Burra Charter advocates: 'Do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained' (ICOMOS 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Muñoz Viñas 2005, quoted in Klingenberg 2012: 160.

<sup>8</sup> *C-Mine website*. [online]. Available at: <<http://www.c-mine.be/>> [Accessed 21 June 2017].

<sup>9</sup> Torfaen County Borough Council 2011.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

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## THE RITUAL ASPECT OF TIME IN (RELIGIOUS) HERITAGE – BALANCE BETWEEN DAILY AND SACRED LIFE AS A LINK BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE

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The times, they are a-changin'. Decades ago a young singer-songwriter advised the world population to start swimming in order not to drown in a flood of change. There is nothing new under the sun: today our generation faces its own contemporary challenges. Change consists of both intangible and tangible threads interwoven in a complex stratification. Built heritage is one of the places where those transformations materialise. For example, developments in economics, political or social fields become visible in neglected buildings, which were once beacons to their surroundings. Places are constantly rethought on a physical and social level, from the mind and appropriation of inhabitants and users, as Margaret Crawford (1995) explains. There is a need to open up the understanding of these processes towards a new spatial and social reality from a daily perspective and to let them influence the future direction.

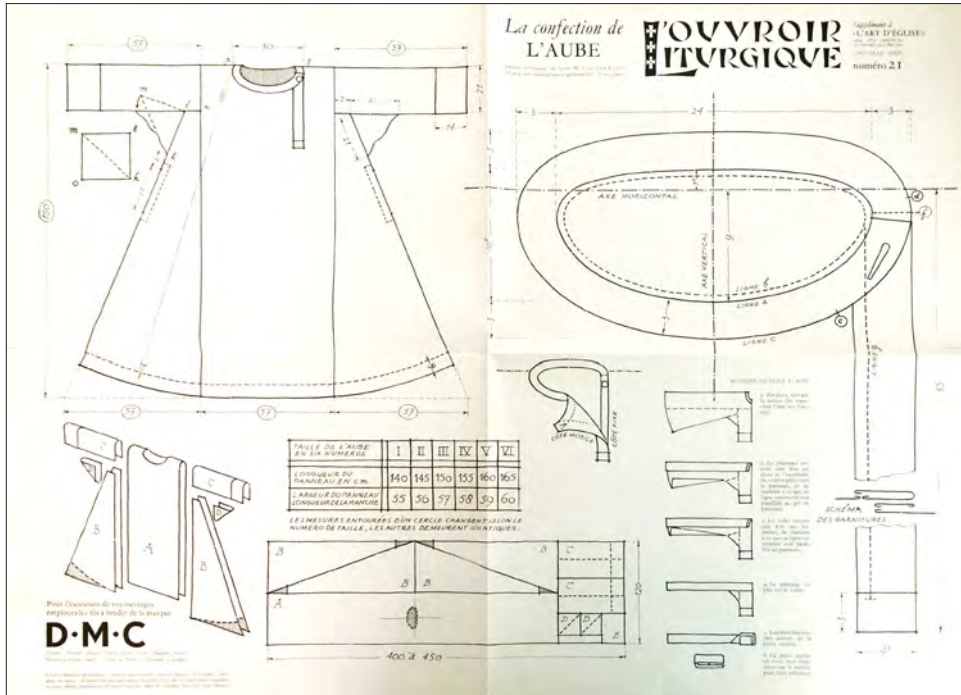
Underused religious or sacred sites are outstanding witnesses of our evolving society. Conservation, restoration, reinterpretation or (adaptive) reuse; every measure we take in order to preserve them for following generations will have consequences for these sites.

Although in Western Europe the programmes of churches, monasteries or presbyteries seem to be irrelevant today, we can find a possible answer to the troubled future of religious heritage, or heritage with a strong symbolic value in general, right there. These sites and their uses materialise 'time' in many various ways. We see the aspect of time in the patina of historical façades and fading interiors. Time is fixed in the phased, often hybrid development of the buildings or gardens and their different historical architectural styles. It is concretised in the rural or urban organisation of its surroundings and visible in the growth of social networks starting from these places. Above all, it is anchored in the public and private timelines of the lives of those concerned.

Therefore, the time facet has a strong presence in the original or current use of religious heritage in the form of rituals. Both religious and non-religious communities have rituals, which bind them by rhythm in time and space as designer and Benedictine monk Dom Hans Van der Laan stated (1985). Rituals take time, but in doing so they strengthen the links both between different participants and participants with the (historical) place itself. In this way, they achieve a balance between daily and spiritual life or between the average and the sacred. The revaluation of and reinterpretation of rituals are both important levers in the action against the loss of religious or sacred heritage, and even built heritage in general.

How can we as researcher-designers define, visualise and (re-)create rituals anchored in a threatened historical site? A fashion technique called *moulage*, which is a combination of working with patterns and draping, can give answers both metaphorical and practical to this question. We develop this method through the reinterpretation of monastic heritage sites by focusing on the definition and translation of rituals into basic programme lines as both architect and researcher. However, as an initial step towards the application

FIG. 1. Van der Laan Confection de l'aube.



to a broader field, we want to apply this to one of the cases we visited and discussed during the EAAE workshop about religious values, namely the Mémorial Interallié in Liège. First, we explain what moulage involves in fashion and how it could be translated to architecture. Next, we briefly frame its experienced use in the reinterpretation of monasteries to ultimately test this technique on the Memorial in order to suggest the initiation of a revaluation process based on rituals in time and space.

### Moulage – a couture technique as a reinterpretation metaphor

Patterns are pieces of a puzzle, which results in an article of dress. Designers like Martin Margiela and Rei Kawakubo or game-changers such as Coco Chanel showed unexpected opportunities when they stacked up classic combinations to create surprising end-pieces with recognisable basic elements. Draping is a technique almost as old as humankind. From animal skins to Roman togas pinned with an elegant fibula, they were all draped over men's or women's shoulders. Artists such as Alix Grés bundle both methods and create stunning robes with fixed pattern parts and flexible draped fabric sewn at carefully considered spots.

A detailed technical drawing by Dom Hans Van der Laan (1949) for a liturgical tunic (Fig. 1) offered inspiration to connect the described couture method to challenges of adaptive reuse. Van der Laan is a 20th-century designer, architect and Benedictine monk. In his studies, he looks for an historical basis in sacred clothing (Ferlenga, Verde 2001) and their mathematical proportions (Van der Laan 1977). However, he also pursues a mini-

mum of couture procedures. He analyses them extensively, dividing the original sources in almost architectural pattern pieces in order to create timeless liturgical garments. Liturgy is about performing rituals to connect daily life to the sacred. Therefore, both rituals and streamlined basic puzzle pieces shape his design principles. In his building designs he uses a similar approach, which results in moderate and human, but also layered, constructions with a special appeal.

Struggling with the structure and subdivisions of an inventory of monasteries, his drawings stimulate the use of another research angle. My PhD study handles alternative reinterpretation procedures of underused Catholic monasteries. At the start, I tried to mark formal characteristics in order to define clear (sub-)typologies usable as fits or linkable to specific adaptive reuse programmes (Lens, Plevoets, Van Cleempoel 2013). However, the survey of approximately 270 monastic sites in the province of Limburg, Belgium, and the historical research of Western European monasteries showed the shortcomings of this effort. Every case is different. Recognisable parts are present at any site as potential building blocks, ready to switch to another composition like the universal pattern parts of Dom Hans Van der Laan.

Monasteries can be described as a hybrid patchwork of components, which are both timeless and adaptable to new emerging needs. Religious communities modified their residences with practical, psychological and spiritual motives (Krüger, Toman 2008; Lawrence 2001). Detailed rituals based on a monastic rule define monastic life but are amenable to adaptations (Bales 2001). Therefore, both the rituals and the people who create, perform or change them are an important factor in the existence of monastic heritage. These people live inside or outside the cloistered walls. Monasteries also focus on global society in order to survive despite a self-imposed enclosure. However, spatial surroundings are equally important in the evolution of a monastic site.

At the sites emerges a symbiosis between the inner and outer, resulting in blurring boundaries and a complex stratification. It is difficult to say what is giving form to what. Therefore, it is important to visualise the social and spatial network, what shapes or is shaped by this heritage in the past, present and future. To compensate for the aspect of fixed pattern pieces, we introduce the draping technique to the reinterpretation of (religious) heritage. Threads connect the monastic site to its context, and vice versa, creating a malleable woven fabric. If we can link these threads and fabric to viable pattern pieces at decisive nodes, we can reactivate heritage supported by old and new stakeholders. In the meantime, we reduce the need for large amounts of money or time in order to avoid large interventions.

### **Monastic cases – moulage through involvement**

Three cases were carefully selected from the monastic inventory of Limburg. The threatened habitation of a religious community, opposing locations, partial protection, difficult-to-measure values and varying involvement of stakeholders determined the criteria in choosing these particular sites: Mariënlof Abbey in Borgloon, the Friars Minor of Sint-Truiden and the Vault of Achel in Hamont-Achel. To study them thoroughly and with sense, we built a time factor into the analytic process. In order to reinterpret, we need to develop a relationship with this heritage and its context, both spatial and social. The organisation of diverse student design studios in the masters programme in interior architecture of the University of Hasselt opened the gates of the monasteries, both literally





FIG. 2. Achel chapter room.

and symbolically. Moreover, the preparations of, discussions during and subsequent processing of these classes helped to develop the moulage technique.

In the studied case of the Vault of Achel (Fig. 2), you see a large isolated volume arise at the end of a wide lane. High brick walls surround a seemingly large green estate of which one can catch a glimpse through gates and treetops. People come from all over to taste its locally brewed Trappist beer and to enjoy the silence while walking or cycling on the surrounding paths. It is difficult to assess where one can enter the site, how far one can penetrate the outer layers, if it is desirable to pray in the visitors' chapel or even to attend mass. The spatial and social organisation of the abbey is a mystery to outsiders. The enclosed nature of the place is specific for vaults and monasteries in general. However, even from the inside it is a challenge to grasp the complexity of the apparently chaotic collection of buildings and gardens.

Circulation (Lauwers 2014) is a key word in the reinterpretation process of this underused heritage. It is bound to rhythm, which is defined by rituals of daily and spiritual life. Rituals show us the unwritten manual of a site. They can fluctuate, be adapted or even be entirely replaced. However, they are necessary to read, understand and eventually pass through the different layers of a monastery such as the Vault of Achel. The search for a recovered balance between open and enclosed is the most important challenge of the abbey's relaunch. What are the spatial and social rules for entering the premises? During the 170-year history as a Trappist monastery, the site underwent profound changes that were partly or fully implemented. Greatly varying ideas about how to live in a religious community, strong sustainable growth, which was estimated far too ambitiously, two devastating world wars and secularisation generated a fragmented whole, an inefficient circulation and interrupted rituals.

By comparing drawings of earlier architects like Pierre Cuypers and Jos Ritzen, complemented by the results of separate master studios with different teams and our own imposed studies, we have tried to make the typological pattern pieces recognisable. Presentations of these drawings to a diverse range of stakeholders helped us to detect and map the invisible wires that link the monastery to the outside world and vice versa. As researcher-designers, we first stirred up the puzzle of typological elements and next connected both old and new attraction points with a sustainable string, on a spatial and social level. Subsequently, we have suggested carefully selected addressed nodes or moulage-actions. However, the only way they can get tested as catalysts or be implemented is through (figurative) ownership by stakeholders or involved parties. Latour (2005) highlights the importance of ‘to make things public’. People can be concerned about the same ‘things’ without necessarily sharing the same opinion. What is needed, he argues, are ways to make people assemble and debate over their matters of concern.

Therefore, our goal is not to promote an ideal consensus about the moulage suggestions, but rather to achieve a natural and sustainable dissensus. We try to launch a discussion, which can be both antagonistic and constructive (Mouffe 2007), and to stimulate re-appreciation just by showing the broadly shielded site as it is with its characteristics, including weaknesses and possibilities, to representatives of the Order’s Motherhouse, the municipality, the regional government, the surroundings and the visitors. Well-founded knowledge of large and small partners can lead to dialogue, unexpected allies and even co-creation of the necessary rituals supporting the reinterpretation process. These adapted rituals have to relate to today’s society and to the sacred origin of the site. They can help to repair the rumpled support base and circumvent the present lack of resources by creating a time zone for experimenting. This is the start of a slow but efficient process. Therefore, it has the potential to resonate in a significant effect and should be seen as an advantage.

Emotions are important and inevitable. Increasing concerns about maintenance and adaptation costs paralyse the reinterpretation process. Drawings, which clear the different pattern pieces (Fig. 3), conversations to detect the needed network to near and distant surroundings and suggested moulage-actions (Fig. 4) give new enlightening insights with respect to the original chaos. The re-organisation of the existing circulation through the enclosed gardens, which are historical zones of monastic cultivation and experiment, is a key step. As researcher-designers, we do not claim a master plan but we try to create a catalyst by pointing out a crucial node and seam for a careful re-launch of the Vault of Achel.

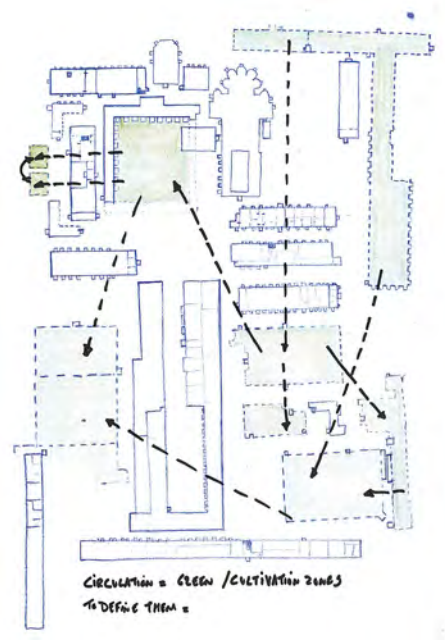
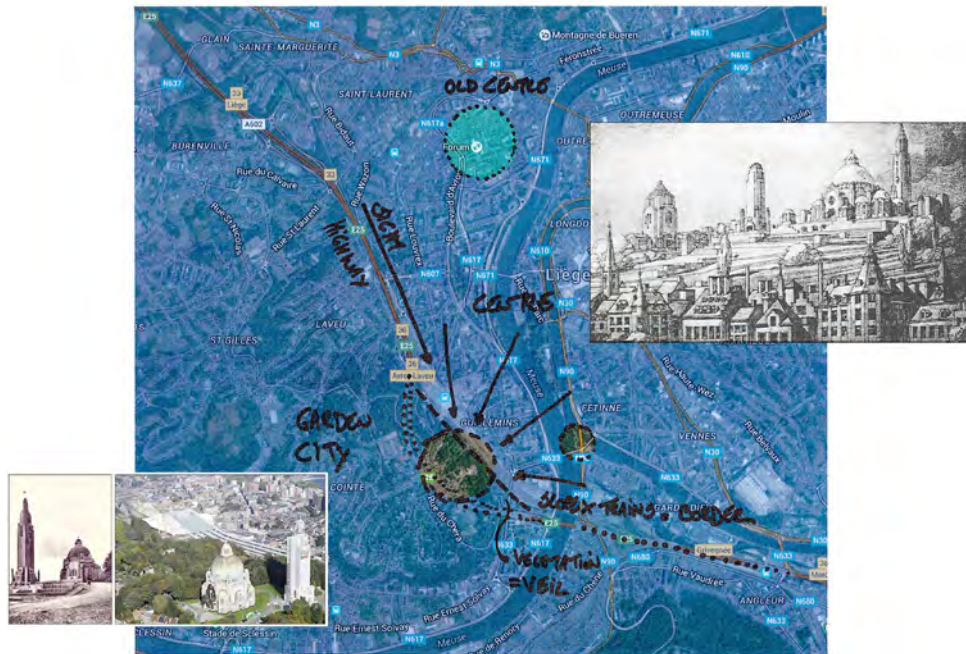


FIG. 3. Achel pattern pieces.



FIG. 6. Liège: concept diagram showing city relationships.



### A monument hidden in plain sight

In addition, there is a link between the secluded and semi-finished Vault of Achel and at least one of the cases we visited during the EAAE workshop in October 2015. Originally intended as a monastery, the Mémorial Interallié in Liège has a relatively short but turbulent history. This eighty-year-old monument is situated on a hilltop dominating the city and seems to be unapproachable, both literally and symbolically. It was built to commemorate the uprising of the town against the first dark and crushing forces of World War I, but the site has lost its connection to today's life. Countless modifications were implemented during its design and construction phases. None of the initial plans remains recognisable. Even the building site was changed in the twelve-year process. Moreover, the political forces, which changed dramatically in the 1930s, repressed the significance of the monument. International relationships shifted and original allies became sworn enemies, sometimes for decades. Thus the site development lacked direction from the start and the search for a *raison d'être* continues to this day.

A dead-end road, with a peculiar meaning: a small street with a high wall of houses on both sides abruptly ends in a green square, once the garden of a 19th-century villa which was demolished in order to remember. At the left-hand side a massive block emerges from the hilltop. The asphalted path appears to bend towards heaven in the form of a firm though slender tower, whose roots fade out like a stone veil, cascading to a paved plaza. This structure is visible all over the Belgian town of Liège. However, the path to the site is hidden behind the wide railroad tracks of the Liège-Guillemins station, a green wall and the surround-

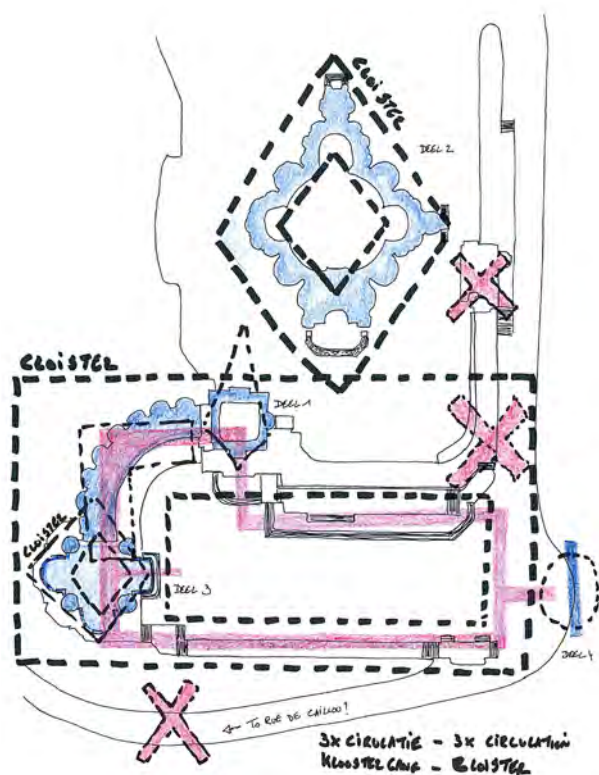


FIG. 7. Liège: concept diagram/pattern drawing.

processions to the site's church, which was conceptualised but never realised as intended, nor used as a place of pilgrimage. Nevertheless, the people of Liège refer to this large building as a basilica despite the polygonal form of the construction and the absence of a Catholic honorary title.

In 1923, the first of Smolders' proposals for the site was situated at the estuary of the Ourthe in the Meuse at an indeterminate former site of the World Expo in 1905 (Fig. 6). It combined a basilica with the previously mentioned monastery, a civil monument and a charity museum in a rhombic composition with water basins, two towers and a triumphal arch. The architect suggests a layered and mixed design programme. This way, the memory of war, suffering, resistance and victory would be highlighted at all times, touching both the daily and sacred aspects of life in the middle of the expanding city centre. The rhombus was a translation of the cloister pattern, a circulation zone linking every sacred and profane element at the Mémorial. He won the competition with a far too expensive project. Therefore, the project was transferred to the described hilltop and reduced to being a religious and civil memorial, shrinking to a more realistic scale in the process of an immense economical and political crisis.

The path of the pilgrim route was abandoned and the principle of a diverse programme was limited step by step. Even the Valhalla or temple idea of the monument – as meeting point of the recent past, the present and the forecast future at the top of long stairways connecting city and ceremonial platform – was overturned. Subsequently, the actual site lacks

ing garden city. At first sight, the memorial seems to be forced upon its location and neighborhood, built fast on confounded emotions (Fig. 5).

Nevertheless, original drawings by architect Jos Smolders show sloping hills with a meandering stairway climbing to the top via memorial plaques and smaller monuments (Van Gheem 2010). The memorial is draped over the hillside in multiple layers. Smooth and aligned plateaus with cypresses invite the passers-by to stroll to the plaza, enjoying new views over the city at every corner on the way, in a warm Mediterranean atmosphere. At the same time, the welcoming route is designed to organise

the link to daily life that would make it a 'death' monument or tomb according to Aldo Rossi (1966) and Bart Verschaffel (2012). At the same time, it is not a classic grave as described by Adolf Loos: a triangular pile in the middle of the forest. The developed pattern pieces are an eclectically chosen combination, which is forced by the terrain to respect the context as it is draped over the existing slope. A composition of identifiable pattern pieces, based on the spatial aspects of a monastic structure, can ensure an emotional anchoring point.

However, the Memorial Interallié is an island on both spatial and social levels. The wires to its surroundings are cut or were never developed properly. We analyse the pattern drawings (Fig. 7) in the same way as with the monasteries described. Using the method based on the patterns of Dom Hans van der Laan, we recognise several circulation zones, which are connected in a large but interrupted embrace. Although the original monastery is deleted, the site is organised as a collection of (partial) cloisters. Validating and regenerating these circulative corridors is essential for the survival of the monument. It is not only visitors that have to find their way to the panoramic tower, its memory stones and its dead-end esplanade. The people of Liège, its garden city and railway area in particular, have to be convinced of the place's spatial and social benefits towards their daily lives and special moments. Adapted, contemporary or new rituals are needed to catalyse a reinterpretation that puts them back into life in general with respect to the spirit of the location and without a fully developed, fixed master plan or heavy interventions.

However, to create sustainable new rituals, a base of old practices is required. Emotions are essential in the process of integrating a site into both daily and extraordinary existence, if we are capable of recognising them. Notwithstanding its underuse, the Vault of Achel shows that the combination of pilgrimage and daily facilities can be an attractive lead towards the future because of the intrinsically sensitive nature of religious or sacred heritage. Therefore, we propose the following moulage-action: to wipe out the dead-end and (re-)link the site with the city, and to complete the originally intended horizontal circulation at the Mémorial as we try to optimise the circulation in the Vault. The appreciation of the forgotten Rue de Caillon and a temporary divided stairway as a live enactment could start an oppositional movement – accessibility increases without loss of the site's stratification or complexity. The green slope is both node and seam. Moulage not only includes the search for meaningful pattern pieces. As in the case of Achel, we suggest an interaction with the spatial and social surroundings using narrative drawings to detect the required cuts, seams and nodes. The potential of the generated emotions, which are linked to aspects of the surrounding life, are essential in order to survive.

Again, the monastic cases indicate that as a researcher-designer you cannot impose this outcome on an underused or threatened site. It takes time and patience to change an attitude to an undervalued historic construction. You need to act proactively and to make your hands dirty in the field without removing yourself from the invigorated process of reinterpretation. You have to be in the middle of the interactive flow of life. Even restoration is an indelible decision or step: being neutral during the preservation of an historic sacred or religious heritage site is impossible. Looking for a small but realistic moulage-node to tackle the task is a respectful way to buy time to support the existing site or to develop new rituals in order to pursue sustainable ownership.

Or, as Bob Dylan put it in 1964: 'The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast / The slow one now will later be fast / As the present now will later be past / The order is rapidly fadin' / And the first one now will later be last / For the times they are a-changin'.'

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## MUTATION DES VALEURS PRIMITIVES, RELANCE DE NOUVELLES. MÉMOIRE ET RÉUTILISATION DU PATRIMOINE À VALEUR POLITIQUE-COMMÉMORATIVE

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L'accélération actuelle des changements technologiques modifie notre vie quotidienne à tel point que nous ne pouvons manquer de nous interroger sur notre perception de l'architecture. Ces changements ont également un impact sur notre vision du patrimoine culturel, qu'il s'agit de ne pas sous-estimer.

Notre vie est actuellement caractérisée par une absence de sensation tactile: nos communications et nos échanges de connaissance et d'informations sont soumis à ce manque de matière. Le calcul intensif des *big data*, l'*internet of things* et la technologie des *clouds* expriment la particularité de ces changements et font partie de cette *automatisation intégrée* (Stiegler 2014) conditionnant le contexte du patrimoine culturel qui fait partie de cette économie de 'data'.

Aux changements des paramètres de lecture et d'interprétation de l'architecture historique dus à l'évolution de la pensée esthétique et des visions historiographiques s'est donc ajoutée une nouvelle approche technologique du patrimoine. Avec les développements très récents dans le domaine de l'exploitation, celle-ci semble parfois davantage utiliser les témoignages du passé pour leurs performances qu'être l'instrument de la préservation elle-même (Silberman, Purser 2012). La puissance 'séductrice' des outils numériques de simulation change les systèmes de valeurs et implique de nouvelles perspectives en ce qui concerne la relation entre image et psyché (Buongiorno, Pinazzi 2012).

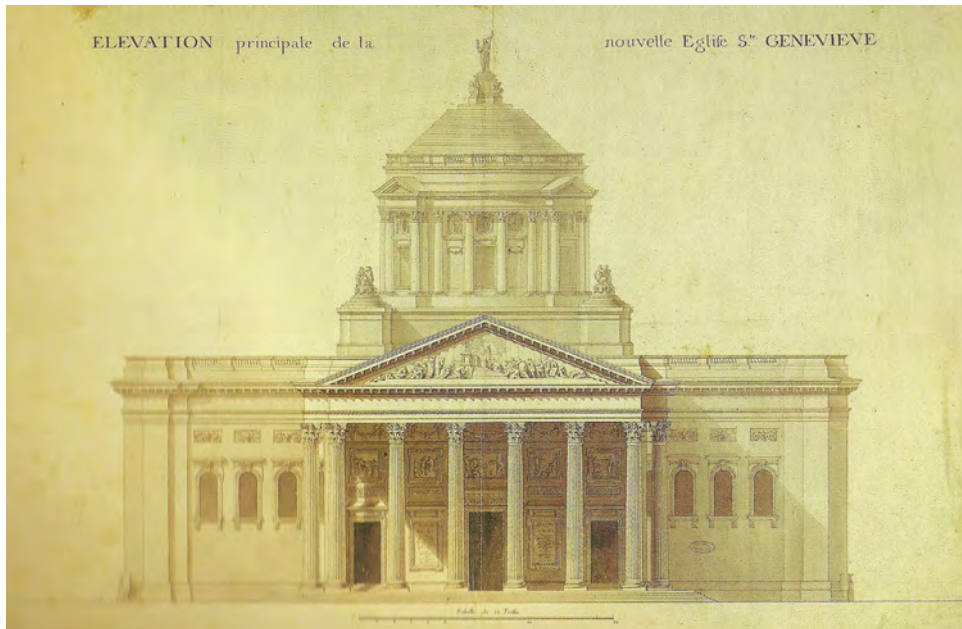
D'autre part, il est bien connu qu'à partir de la seconde moitié du XXème siècle, les changements globaux de la société occidentale se sont traduits, en ce qui concerne l'architecture ancienne, par la réutilisation du patrimoine architectural (Bercé 2000). Parallèlement, les architectes contemporains, avec les modifications institutionnelles et économiques, résultant des bouleversements de la globalisation, ont trouvé un large espace d'action dans le domaine de la restauration et de la conversion des bâtiments anciens. Or, tout en étant utile à la restauration et à la conservation de certains bâtiments du passé, la pratique de la réutilisation, largement répandue dans de nombreuses villes, n'est pas toujours une garantie pour la reconnaissance et la conservation de leur potentialité 'narrative' et de leurs valeurs de mémoire collective.

Le workshop nous a mis face à plusieurs sujets: les sites visités et leurs conditions d'utilisation, de conservation et de signification étaient différents. Ils illustraient également des solutions différentes et, très clairement, une lecture différenciée des valeurs symboliques qui a substitué aux valeurs originelles celles qui, au cours du temps, se sont condensées sur l'oeuvre en créant un autre système.

Dans la perspective d'une conservation, il paraît juste d'aborder le problème de la réutilisation du patrimoine bâti en considérant, en premier lieu, l'architecture comme un événement physique chargé de significations que nous, 'sujets modernes', lui reconnaissons, plutôt que comme une chose matérielle à transformer tout court et selon l'objectif



FIG. 1. J.G. Soufflot, *Élévation principale de la nouvelle Eglise de Sainte-Genève, 1764* (Archives Nationales, *Le Panthéon. Symbole des Révolutions*).



de la seule remise en utilisation. Cela signifie comprendre le patrimoine architectural à réutiliser en l'interprétant comme porteur de significations multiples et dynamiques au lieu de le considérer comme un objet pour lequel il faut avant tout trouver des solutions d'adaptation à une nouvelle utilisation.

Cette approche nous paraît focaliser l'attention sur deux points. Le premier concerne la valeur symbolique elle-même; le deuxième, le processus du projet qui est l'outil avec lequel on parvient à transformer le patrimoine en lui conférant un système de valeurs différent.

Pour ce qui concerne le premier aspect, il faut bien s'entendre sur la signification de la valeur symbolique. Elle peut, en effet, avoir différentes significations elles-mêmes sujettes à des déclinaisons particulières: par exemple, la valeur symbolique peut avoir été donnée spécifiquement à une certaine architecture dès sa construction ou alors, l'édifice peut l'avoir acquise dans un deuxième temps, au cours de sa vie, par exemple suite à une série de changements d'utilisation<sup>1</sup> (Marino 2012) (Figs. 1-2). Dans le premier cas, nous pourrions parler de patrimoine symbolique intentionnel; par contre, dans le deuxième cas, la valeur symbolique est de type historico-évolutif.

Toutefois, généralement, on pourrait être amené à considérer la valeur symbolique comme une valeur susceptible de contenir toutes les autres valeurs (historique, artistique, etc.). Comme celles-ci, elle représente certainement une réalité abstraite ou absente, mais qui par sa signification originelle (*συνβαλλω*) a la puissance sémantique de recueillir et d'incorporer plusieurs valeurs. Néanmoins, nous ne pouvons sous-estimer le caractère particulier de ce type de valeur qui, simultanément, réussit à condenser l'imaginaire avec le réel ou l'attention que dans le passé une certaine culture de la conservation a

FIG. 2. Paris, vue récente du Panthéon avant la restauration en cours (photo de B.G. Marino, 2011).



accordée aux valeurs de la préexistence en relation à la psyché de l'individu<sup>2</sup>.

Aujourd'hui, on assiste au changement soudain des paramètres qui règlent les valeurs qui, d'autre part, sont de plus en plus difficiles à enfermer dans un grille sans prévoir une mutation de leur signification même. En fait, au lieu d'une grille, il faudrait parler d'une matrice tridimensionnelle susceptible de prendre en considération les changements et la perception de valeurs données dans le contexte où celles-ci sont examinées.

Le deuxième point que nous avons évoqué concerne le processus et le concept du projet en lui-même: considérer le bâtiment comme ressource plutôt que comme 'obstacle'; considérer le préexistant à la fois comme une occasion d'interpréter les valeurs primitives et d'en proposer de nouvelles; travailler sur l'édifice avec l'intention de conserver ce qu'il consigne mais avec la perspective d'une possible élaboration de

ses instances. En d'autres termes, il s'agit d'un processus de focalisation des valeurs qui sont liées au passé, mais qui existent grâce à notre activité de reconnaissance.

Cette sorte de ligne argumentaire nous conduit à une approche basée sur l'inversion des termes et des objectifs de la conservation/adaptation: c'est la réutilisation qui doit s'adapter à l'édifice et à sa gamme des valeurs et non l'architecture historique au nouvel usage. Certes, des facteurs de pondération tenant compte des mécanismes socio-économiques doivent être pris en compte mais, si l'on doit agir dans le domaine de la conservation du patrimoine, il faut que l'on conserve, en la restaurant, la *chose* et non un objet (Bodei 2014) ou *quelque chose*.

D'autre part, il ne faut pas croire que la conservation implique une sorte de cristallisation des valeurs<sup>3</sup>. Au contraire, depuis longtemps, la conservation du patrimoine en vue de son utilité à la collectivité suppose sa transformation afin de contribuer à la vie sociale et elle est considérée comme un puissant moteur de développement économique et même culturel (Déclaration d'Amsterdam 1975). Ainsi, le projet devient l'outil de transformation qui permet l'accroissement de l'identité de l'architecture préexistante, c'est à dire qu'il devient possible de partir de la/des valeur/s symbolique/s que le témoignage architectural exprime avant d'être soumis au projet de restauration et d'avoir la possibilité de faire évoluer la/les même/s valeur/s tout en en accumulant d'autres. Ce faisant et en d'autres termes, on ne risque pas de comprendre et de fixer une valeur symbolique comme si elle était donnée d'une manière définitive et, donc, de la 'sacraliser'. De la même manière, comme on le voit, il s'agit d'accumulation des valeurs: cela signifie élaboration et transformation, en incorporant les significations de l'architecture dans l'état où elle se trouve, et certainement pas leur élimination. Dans ce sens, le projet de restauration, qui devient un

FIG. 3. Ans. Fort de Loncin. Vue des couvertures métalliques éparses et plongées dans le terrain après l'explosion (photo de B.G. Marino, 2015).

FIG. 4. Ans. Fort de Loncin. Vue de l'intérieur du musée avec l'installation d'outils (photo de B.G. Marino, 2015).

Next page:

FIG. 5. Liège. Église du Sacre Cœur (Mémorial Interallié): des graffitis recouvrent le monument (photo de B.G. Marino, 2015).



processus incluant et non excluant, conserve/transforme le bâtiment en vue de sa réutilisation et de sa mise en œuvre dans la vie contemporaine. De cette manière, il réussit à instaurer un cercle vertueux de propositions de nouvelles valeurs qui vont se sédimer, comme l'architecture du passé l'illustre physiquement à travers le palimpseste matériel des événements et des significations historiques.

Après ces brèves considérations sur les questions qui entourent le rapport entre les valeurs et la réutilisation en vue de la conservation du patrimoine historique, abordons le sujet de la relation entre la conservation de l'architecture et sa valeur symbolique politique et/ou commémorative.

Les cas belges du Fort de Loncin et celui du Mémorial Interallié à Liège sont des exemples très révélateurs de la complexité et de la signification sociale de leur conservation et de leur usage. Bien qu'ils soient liés à un même événement, celui de la Grande Guerre, et jouent donc a priori un même rôle, celui de 'monuments', ils posent des questions différentes. Cette différence réside dans le changement du concept de la mémoire et dans sa perception de la part de la société contemporaine.

Le Fort de Loncin, 'Nécropole de la Grande Guerre', a été le théâtre d'un bain de sang durant la bataille entre les Allemands et le contingent militaire des forces alliées,



qui s'est terminée par une explosion enterrant des centaines de militaires belges et permettant l'avancement des patrouilles ennemies. L'organisation du musée et l'esprit avec lequel le lieu est décrit et présenté nous permet de percevoir l'idée de mémoire dans le cadre contemporain. En plus d'être un véritable lieu de documentation historique, le site fait l'objet d'une mise en valeur touristique. Le musée, comme l'explique la brochure d'information pour la visite, offre l'occasion de découvrir des objets rares, curieux ou étonnants et de voir des mannequins en uniforme, armes d'époque et objets personnels retrouvés. Les parties souterraines du fort, qui ont subsisté malgré les explosions mais en portent les traces à travers leurs fissurations extraordinaires, présentent à travers leur enfilade des pièces à l'organisation spartiate, la vie quotidienne des patrouilles prêtes au combat.

A l'extérieur, les coupoles métalliques éparées et enfoncées dans le terrain témoignent des effets de l'énorme explosion et l'on perçoit le sens de l'enfouissement des hommes restés piégés là-dessous. Les débris métalliques, le site, la nature qui l'entoure et la présence de la matière authentique évoquent l'événement tout en laissant place à l'imagination: des associations d'idées surgissent et rendent la mémoire active en entraînant la réflexion, avec la perception physique/visuelle de ce qui s'est passé et de ce qui continue à vivre (Fig. 3). Ce n'est pas le cas des autres endroits. A l'intérieur,

l'installation d'outils et objets destinés à rendre plus vraisemblable le cadre de vie des soldats paraît aplanir le récit de la chronique de l'événement. Plutôt que de servir de support à une action mnémorique, ces mises en scène empêchent de saisir la vraie signification qui aurait été évidente avec les objets demeurés sur place, sans rien ajouter pour 'faciliter' la lecture, en laissant agir, sur la perception et sur la mémoire, l'entité authentique de la situation retrouvée. Cette représentation à la saveur de 'disneyfication' est particulièrement évidente dans la simulation acoustique de la détonation qui a provoqué la tragédie et pose la question de l'authenticité des valeurs (Marino 2006; Houbart, Dawans 2012) (Fig. 4).

Cet exemple illustre donc la question de la conservation d'un patrimoine historique à connotation politique et commémorative. La réutilisation ne peut qu'être liée à ce qu'il est, c'est à dire presque un sanctuaire dont la valeur symbolique est vraiment donnée, il faut le dire, par la conception que la collectivité peut avoir de ce type de *monument*. Malheureusement, des dynamiques de type économique imposent parfois l'utilisation de stratégies de représentation basées sur la stimulation de la curiosité, sur l'*étonnant*, plus que sur l'émouvant. De cette façon, l'événement, même s'il est rendu plus 'réaliste', semble loin, archivé; et tout cela réduit la possibilité d'actualiser l'expérience et de réfléchir sur le sens des lieux et des temps, en vidant le contenu original du monument comme *monito*.

Si le Fort de Loncin est un monument symbolique commémoratif *non intentionnel*, en revanche, le Mémorial Interallié de Liège est un *monument* par excellence. Il naît comme monument international après la Première Guerre Mondiale et se présente comme un sanctuaire du sacrifice collectif des Alliés<sup>4</sup>. Sur la colline liégeoise de Cointe qui surplombe la Meuse, il apparaît, aujourd'hui, isolé dans l'espace et même dans le temps. Ce monument, tout à fait de type *intentionnel*, a été conçu comme un symbole de la résistance de la ville de Liège et sa valeur symbolique réside dans l'essence et dans les motivations de sa réalisation. Au-delà de ses caractéristiques de style, le seul contact avec la réalité réside paradoxalement dans différents signes de dégradation apportés par les graffitis qui ont couvert de manière considérable des surfaces entières (Fig. 5). La cérémonie qui s'est déroulée il y a deux ans, en 2014, à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de la Grande Guerre, ne suffit certainement pas à maintenir le monument encore très présent dans la vie contemporaine. Dans ce cas, un projet de réutilisation qui aurait l'intention de conserver l'architecture doit préserver les valeurs symboliques et commémoratives de ce monument et par conséquent, devrait et pourrait partir de l'esprit duquel procède cette architecture. Cela veut dire recouvrer la signification pour laquelle le Mémorial s'est installé là en surmontant la ville: l'esprit de la participation à un destin commun peut probablement devenir un élan pour faire évoluer les valeurs. Regarder les instances et les exigences de la collectivité liégeoise, qui sont complexes et liées à une situation problématique d'un point de vue socio-économique, peut donner l'occasion d'identifier une réutilisation qui puisse permettre de conserver la valeur originelle et même d'en relancer de nouvelles. Renouveler dans le contemporain, la valeur symbolique de l'union, d'un travail commun, telle peut être la clé permettant à la nouveauté et à la transformation de s'unir au préexistant, lui permettant de pérenniser sa matérialité en cohérence avec sa signification.

Les considérations exposées ci-dessus nous amènent à considérer les questions qui relient la conservation du patrimoine architectural à la mémoire<sup>5</sup>. Cela fait partie du tissu élémentaire du projet de restauration et ce dernier représente l'instrument de la pos-

sibilité concrète de lui donner une actualisation, une forme vivante et active. Face aux différentes instrumentalisation qui menacent et utilisent la mémoire (Karnerer, Mertens 2013), il faut être conscient de la manipulation rendue possible par une intervention sur l'architecture du passé. Il faudrait agir dans un cadre théorique et méthodologique fondé sur l'évaluation complexe des valeurs qui prennent très bien en compte le concept de la mémoire comme facteur dynamique. Le projet de conservation doit, ainsi, se concevoir dans l'esprit d'une mémoire active et reconstructive (Ricoeur 2003; Jedlowski 2002; Gessa Kurotschka, Diana, Boninu 2010).

Pour le projet, être l'un des vecteurs majeurs de cette opération signifie travailler dans un cadre de compréhension des dynamiques sociales et surtout, ne pas agir pour maintenir le patrimoine comme un 'temple immobile'. Il faut considérer l'architecture du passé comme un 'seuil' – dans les termes employés par J. Derrida (Marino 2016) – qui doit être conservé mais transformé et multiplié.

Cela nous semble le plus grand défi de la conservation, mais aussi, une responsabilité de l'architecture contemporaine.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Le Panthéon est un exemple emblématique de monument-symbole (Marino 2012).

<sup>2</sup> En particulier, par rapport à ce sujet on peut voir Marino 2010. Des études spécifiques sur la relation entre le subconscient et la conservation et les espaces urbains ont été menées dans les années 1970 dans la "Rivista di psicologia analitica" et dans le "Giornale storico di psicologia dinamica" (avec Paolo Aite, Antonino Lo Cascio, Aldo Carotenuto e Marcello Pignatelli) et durant un séminaire en 1975. Ce sujet remonte à Alois Riegl, cfr. Choay 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Dans la culture de la conservation il y a une longue tradition concernant le rapport entre usage et conservation de l'architecture historique. Riegl lui-même affirme qu'il n'y a pas d'incompatibilité entre valeurs d'utilisation et d'ancienneté (Riegl 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Liège fut durement touchée par les combats de la Première Guerre mondiale et elle fut choisie comme siège du Mémorial réalisé par l'architecte anversois Jozef Smolderen. Il est un symbole international qui reconnaît le rôle central de Liège dans le conflit (Barlet, Hamal, Mainil 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Voir les théories de Riegl, en particulier la dialectique entre les valeurs de remémoration en relation aux valeurs d'ancienneté (Riegl 1990).

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## CHANGES AND CONTINUITY IN MATERIAL AND IMMATERIAL VALUES: EXPERIENCES OF ACCIDENTAL CONSERVATION

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Building changes arising from new functions and the need to innovate and to express modernity are certainly not exclusive to our age. They occurred throughout our past and they were very often undertaken in the name of altered political conditions, the loss of original functions, or society changing and new cultural horizons gaining ground.

In this paper, brief descriptions of some transformed buildings, selected examples without any claim to be exhaustive, are taken into consideration with the purpose of highlighting the range of variance in the impacts of change. However, the constraints on intervention have also continued to change, creating profound mutations observed up to the present time, when laws and rules relating to the preservation of architectural heritage are well-established and widely used.

An incessant process of modification of the limits emerges, where the culture of conservation continues to assume a significant and recognised role; one that is often not relevant enough to direct the paths to be pursued in the adaptation proposals of architecture.

### Single-cell churches and adaptation

This is especially true in the case of single-cell churches, which, after the many changes of ownership that followed the suppression of convents and monasteries, were frequently acquired by public administrations and made available to the community for new functions.

That is what happened to the convent of San Domenico in Foligno over the period when it was not used for religious purposes. First, it was used in 1848 to billet troops advancing on Rome. From 1870 it became an army stable, then a gym, and later a warehouse. New proposals were put forward in 1973, with a project carried out around 1978 to convert it to its present use as a theatre<sup>1</sup>. The model for the project was the complex of St Nicholas in Spoleto, which had been transformed into a theatre, exhibition and conference centre in the 1960s<sup>2</sup>.

The continuing secularisation of Western society, increasingly apparent in recent decades, has led to progressively reduced participation in religious observance and participation, and as a result, the loss of function for churches and their abandonment (Acquaviva 1981: 85–136, 233–290). This process has also led to a crisis in vocations to clerical religious life, resulting in fewer people to look after church buildings and convents everywhere. This abandonment has sometimes had unpredictable consequences and profoundly altered existing buildings.

The former church of Santa Margherita in the municipality of Montecatini Terme probably dates back to the 13th century, when the monastery of the Hermits of St. Augustine was founded. After the suppression of the Augustinian Order by the Grand Duke of Tuscany Pietro Leopoldo, it was sold in 1789 and before that it had been used as a warehouse (Cecchi 2007; Civai 2007). A photograph from the 1970s shows that the roof was





FIG. 1. Montecatini Terme, Italy; nave of the former church of Santa Margherita (Archivio fotografico della Soprintendenza per i Beni Architettonici, Paesaggistici, Storici, Artistici ed Etnoantropologici per le provincie di Firenze, Prato e Pistoia, 20-12-1973).

missing, but this condition was the result of an adaptation (Fig. 1). The top of the walls are protected by roof tiles, and the interior of the church functions as an orderly service courtyard, with trees, a hut and a parked car. In 2003 a series of small brick warehouses was constructed, probably to serve the adjacent buildings. In the apse, closed off by a wall, a house of three floors was built (Fig. 2). On the second and third floors you can see the remains of a groin vault, demolished to build the top floor. On the second floor appears an entablature: it would have been located at the opening to the apse on top of two pilasters and at the springing of the crowning arch. These architectural elements were executed in 'pietra serena' sandstone, probably dating from the late 15th to early 16th centuries. In the space of the nave, the remains of the medieval church are visible: the opposing wall features squared masonry and lancet window openings. There are also niches for confessionals of a later date. A portal was widened to admit cars with the intervention in the façade carried out in brick. In the same wall, the strengthening interventions using transverse iron ties with an anchor plate on both sides of the wall are clearly visible.

The former Church of San Giovanni del Fosso is located in the ancient centre of Perugia; it was probably founded in the 13th century and then profoundly transformed between the 16th and 17th centuries by an intervention that reversed the orientation and raised the original sandstone walls with visible brick masonry (Siepi 2015 [1822]). In the 1970s, after deconsecration, it was used first as a carpentry workshop and then as a dwelling. In the refurbishment, a new brick and cement floor was built at an intermediate level of the space of the church to provide two levels. (Figs. 3-4).

Knowledge of the presence of frescoes came too late to avoid their destruction. They were cut in half, irrevocably damaged by the insertion of the new floor. Moreover, on the same side at the upper level, the plaster on the wall was removed to expose the stones underneath, destroying that part of the frescoes which continued at this level. On the lower ground floor, the external face shows a large fragment of fresco, while on the opposite wall there are limited fragments, of which the lower section represents real and imaginary animals, and the upper a cycle dedicated to John the Evangelist, which has a large horizontal gap in the upper part. These are important frescoes dating from the first half of the 13th century, in which the oldest known image of the griffin, symbol of Perugia, is depicted (Scarpellini 2015).

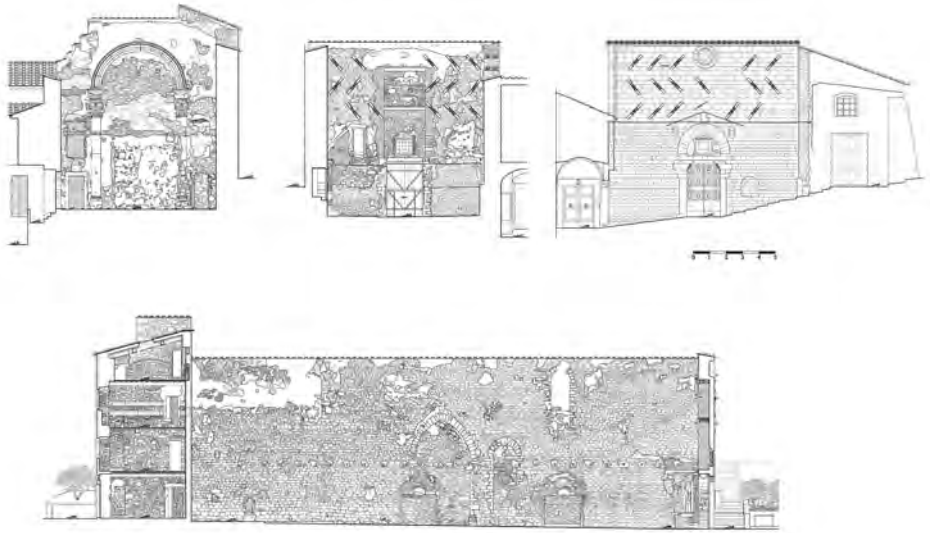


FIG. 2. Montecatini Terme, Italy; former church of Santa Margherita, sections and view of the façade (drawings by A. Caccamo A. and A.L. Ciuffreda, 2007).

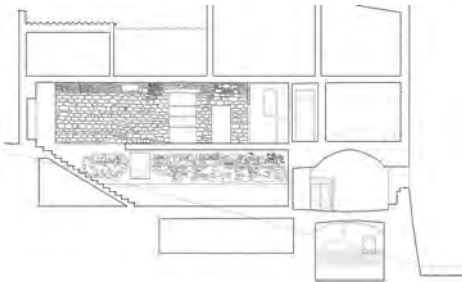


FIG. 3. Perugia, former church of San Giovanni del Fosso, longitudinal section (drawing by A. Bellucci, L. Mancini and E. Pallaracci, 2013).



FIG. 4. Perugia, former church of San Giovanni del Fosso, view of the remains of the medieval frescoes (photo by A. Bellucci, L. Mancini and E. Pallaracci, 2013).

### Continuing functions and changes

There are churches of the utmost importance that have been used continuously over the centuries, only marginally affected by mutations of their character, but where changes were induced by society. The Basilica of Assisi is a building that has undergone few changes since the Middle Ages (Rocchi 2002). The Franciscans have always taken care of it, but its meaning in today's society is strongly changed; the large number of visitors who go through it each day are attracted by its architectural importance and the remarkable cycles of frescoes preserved there, rather than being animated by religious reasons. It has established a kind of reuse without deliberate intervention, changing the prevailing meaning as a place of worship into a museum. The experience of visiting the building is certainly closer to that found in a museum as opposed to that of a place of worship.

Mass tourism has also profoundly changed the significance of churches like the cathedrals of Florence and of Siena, in which there are limited time slots for worship, involving a few dozen people, and through the remainder of the day they are visited by thousands of people, who pay for a ticket and have to queue a long time for access. This latter condition contributes significantly to accentuating the cultural significance over the religious one, strengthening and making predominant their perception as museums, without it being expressed by particular design choices – this without taking into account that mass tourism brings tourists from very different cultures, in many cases ignorant of the most basic meanings of the iconography of Christianity.

### **Meanings in the light of old and new functions**

The reused churches in Maastricht examined during the EAAE workshop were: the Dominican church transformed into a library (Dominicanenkerk Selexyz Bookstore); the Church of the Crusaders, which became part of a hotel (Kruisherenhôtel); and a church that belonged to a Franciscan complex, now used as a consultation room and offices of the Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg<sup>3</sup>. These three present particular difficulties, being churches with a basilican plan. Among these, the hotel and the library are devoted to uses of a private nature. The reuse function of the archive is a public one and is most closely related to its traditional functions, in that it involves uses such as conferences and concerts, museums and temporary exhibitions.

These buildings have in common the insertion of new metal structures in the nave and aisles to create additional levels. It is hardly a coincidence that the archive manifests more limited additions, creating open spaces rather than closed volumes in the aisle, while upstairs the height of the furnishings has been kept below the springing of the vaults. In the remaining aisle and in the nave, volumes of limited size have been built, although in the nave they cover the lower part of the lancet window (Fig. 5).

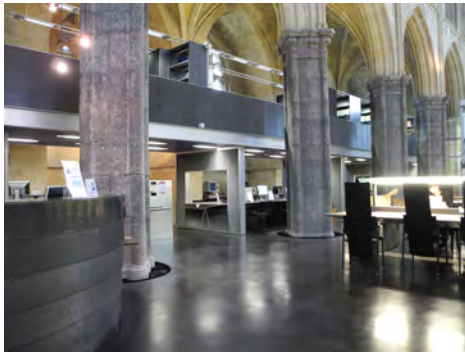
In the former Franciscan church, the colors of the new structures and flooring were carefully chosen to match accurately the gray of the stone pillars. The floor is raised, perhaps to conserve the original flooring and at the same time to obtain the space for the passage of services.

In the apse, separated by a wall, a below-ground volume has been obtained for a small conference room. The choice of the below-ground level is perhaps explained by the intention to separate this space from the nave, in that, being used for consultation and study of documents, it requires complete silence. The levels are arranged so that a perimeter corridor is created, and the insertion remains below the level of the apse windows. The top of this space serves as a skylight and as a surface on which to lay the gravestones that were originally in this part of the church. The corridor created between the new volume and the perimeter wall of the apse is set up with panels on the inner side. The basement area required an emergency exit and this was achieved by breaching the wall between two buttresses. The excavation has deleted all archaeological remains, and the foundations were exposed to the height of several metres, significantly changing the structural conditions.

In the Bookstore Selexyz, the steel structure in the nave is close to one series of pillars and is joined with the other built in the adjacent aisle (Fig. 6); they are at the same level, but the one in the aisle is too high because it blocks the view of part of the vaulted system. The bookshelves also hide part of the vaults; however, an attempt was made to keep them lower on the inner side to maintain a wider view towards the nave.

FIG. 5. Maastricht, former Franciscan church, Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg.

FIG. 6. Maastricht, former church, Dominicanen Selexyz Bookstore (photo by L. Giorgi, 2015).



In the Kruissherenhotel, the church became the entrance hall, restaurant and coffee bar; here a metal longitudinal structure extends throughout the nave and a second structure, with a walking surface at a lower level, is located in the aisle. In this case, the longitudinal series of pillars of the basilican plan are more visible, but the new volume inside the nave obstructs the overall perception of the space of the church.

Certainly the original perception of the basilican space, characterised by particular constructive choices, materials and architectural decorations, and therefore the main part of the architecture, has deeply changed in both churches, but especially in the Kruissherenhotel. In the original buildings, the continuous space had at the time codified functions – the space of the faithful, that of the celebrant and of the religious in the choir, together with the chapels. With the view that passed through the arches of the naves, everything was visible and understood. This condition was partly maintained in the church used for the archive, while it seems very compromised in the churches used as library and hotel. In these cases, the original space becomes a sophisticated box where new levels and volumes have been inserted. It was also necessary to distinguish the access points with a new design that signaled the change of functions. This issue arose in more complex terms in the Kruissherenhotel, where the way to the rooms would have been counterintuitive; now there is a long tunnel, very prominent from outside, running through a whole aisle and bringing the customer (possibly also the faithful or a visitor) near the reception desk. The entrances to the rooms and into the service areas adjacent to the church, through walkways and passages by breaching the wall (Fig. 7), were obtained from the first floor of the new central structure and by a steel and glass lift that rises up the clerestory, close to the vaults of the nave.

The lift in the nave offers a surprising view, an unusual condition that commonly occurs from scaffolding during restoration works; however, that steel and glass tower that stands in the unitary space of the nave raises many doubts. This is a change of great importance, one that breaks the unity of the space in the nave, a feature that has been retained through time, through even the most profound changes wrought in churches.

Of course, someone could say that these interventions are mostly reversible. But considered admissible, the fragmentation of the space in the nave up to the level of the vaults brings into question the importance of its great unitary space, marked by a series of bays covered by vaults. It looks like the first step towards allowing the division of the basili-



FIG. 7. Maastricht, former church of the Crusaders, Kruissherenhotel; the new connections with the church resulted in new openings breaching and transversing the chapels (by <https://www.designhotels.com/hotels/netherlands/maastricht/kruissherenhotel-maastricht> [Accessed 19 June 2017]).

can plan, to have separate spaces determined by the spans, lit on opposite sides by windows (single-light, mullioned, trefoils), to the point where perhaps the idea of building luxury apartments gains ground. And there will always be someone willing to propose, with more or less subtle arguments, that this approach takes into account the tangible and intangible significance of the church, which by then has been reduced to a simulacrum of itself. In designing for the reuse of churches, all remaining aspects of the archaeological, whether evidence of existing buildings or of the transformations of the extant churches, should be evaluated. These need to be investigated in order to avoid damage from the foundation of any new structures. And if archaeological remains are discovered, we should ask ourselves how to preserve or to enhance them.

The reuse of the churches poses a further and very relevant issue of the enrichment of their chapels through works of art commissioned by patrons. This has a particular and fundamental meaning in each church. Funding by wealthy families has almost always been decisive in the construction of these buildings. The works of art could be transferred to some museum or repository, but many works would not be moved, and in any event the

loss of such works would mean an impoverishment of the churches and a loss of their meaning. It would result in the dismantling of a fundamental source for reconstructing the history both of patronage and of the families concerned.

### Temporary uses

If, apart from contingent events, the functions in the churches have usually endured continuously for centuries, and not even changes in the liturgy have questioned the overall system, the same cannot be said of military architecture, intrinsically linked to its reliability in time of war. When Fort de Loncin near Liège was hit and destroyed by a powerful bomb, it also established its military ineffectiveness and the overcoming of the solution that it proposed, the inadequacy of materials that did not guarantee protection despite the masses of concrete and massive thickness of iron shells – as it transpired, creating equally unhappy conditions for the storage of weapons.

The history of the changes of function in Fort de Loncin covers a relatively short timespan: about a century. It was built in the years 1888–91, destroyed in 1914, then abandoned, and so became a war cemetery and later a museum as a result of works that began in 2007 (Deghaye 2009–2010: 24, 26–27, 30). In museological terms the site has a double register: one didactic/narrative; another evocative/emotional. The first is found in charting the daily life of the military citadel, with the rooms used as dormitories, laundry,

kitchen, infirmary, handout etc. still intact, all furnished and equipped with dummies in historical costumes. The site also bears witness to the consequences of the explosion, leaving piles of rubble in some rooms, cracks in walls and the collapse of structures – and to all this, sound and lighting effects were added, recalling the drama of the moment of the explosion, when the structure collapsed.

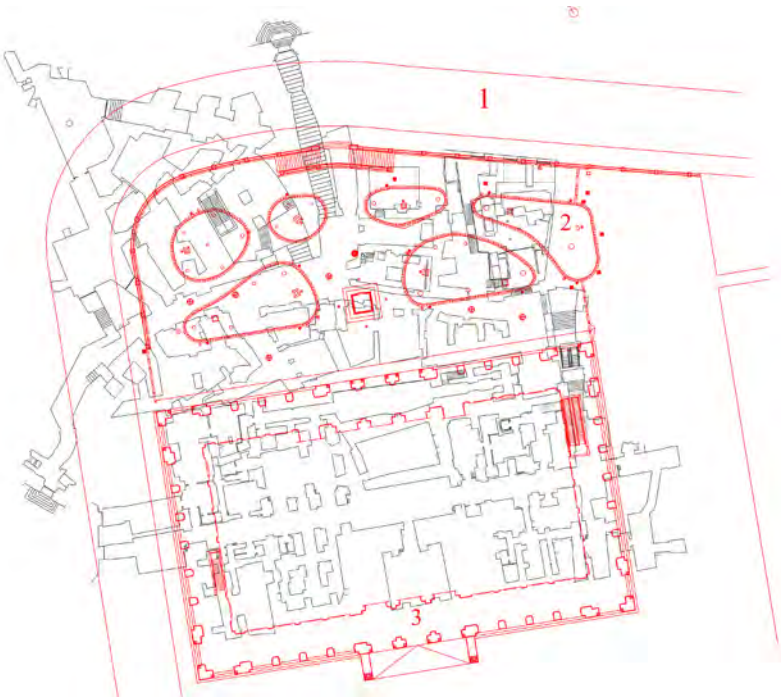
The most evocative parts are those encountered in the outdoor routes, crossing the huge remains of concrete and steel structures torn to pieces by the explosion of the powder magazine and finding a large rectangular slab, formed in concrete, where dozens of lacerated and twisted shoes are represented. These are the two images that symbolise with maximum effectiveness the violence of the explosion of the magazine and the drama of hundreds of dead soldiers. The fort, with its location in the countryside, maintains a relationship with the natural environment; the concrete masses of preserved rooms and the remains of the destroyed parts, emerge from the well-tended grassy ground, assuming the connotation of a proper park (Deghaye 2009–2010: 92–98). The museum exhibition pursues a clear narrative intent that effectively highlights the significance of the fort through different registers.

Much more complex is the case of the Rocca Paolina in Perugia, an intervention on an urban scale realised in the first half of the 16th century in an area of the city already densely built on for centuries. It was initiated by Pope Paul III in response to the difficulties of exercising control over the allegiances of the Baglioni family, then ruling Perugia. Moved by reasons of public order, in 1537 the Pope started the construction of a fortified palace (Camerieri, Palombaro 2002: 17; Camerieri, Palombaro 1988: 14). A section of the city owned by the Baglioni was expropriated, and the fortification built on top of the existing fabric. Control by the papacy was re-established in 1540. Begun following designs by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, the palace became more of a fortress, and was completed circa 1543 (Camerieri, Palombaro 2002: 10, 11, 19, 51).

A large section of the incorporated area and some of the streets can still be discerned in the layout of the fortress. The existing buildings, mostly dating to the medieval town, were emptied. Their walls were largely strengthened and additional walls inserted to support the vaults of the new structure, resulting in the basement of the fortress. On the one hand, the fortress expresses the political subjugation to the papacy by incorporating the Baglioni neighborhood; on the other, choices were made that celebrated the ancient origins of the town. Thus the Etruscan Porta Marzia was built into the perimeter of the new fortress. Constructed in stone, it was later dismantled and embedded in the brick outer wall above the entrance to the fortress, suggesting that the fortress was an intrinsic part of the ancient town. After the Unification of Italy (1861), because of the negative meaning related to the rule of the papacy over the city, the fortress was placed at the centre of large urban transformations, resulting in it being partially demolished and almost completely hidden. Over it was built a large building, today the site of public offices, piazza Italy; the fortress has been used as a substructure for both the Carducci Gardens and Independence Avenue, one of the main roads to access to the ancient centre of Perugia (Fig. 8).

The negative political significance of the fortress diminished over time. First, the possibility of access to the underground old town was recovered, after a long period of rubble removal (1932–1965). And then, since 1983, it was fully returned to the city, creating a significant pedestrian route through and within it and finding spaces for cultural initiatives (Banti, Ercolani 1992: 193–224; Bozzi 1992: 225–256). Today the fortress is an extraordi-

FIG. 8. Perugia, plans of the Rocca Paolina, underground (black) and top level (red) superimposition; on the Rocca the Independents Avenue (1), the Carducci Gardens (2) and a new public building (3) were built.



nary palimpsest, with evidence of many contradictory political intentions and different values regarding the significance of the construction and its relationship with the town, which are still visible in their complex layering.

### Market economy and new functions

At a time when the community is no longer able to guarantee public use of very important buildings through its secular and religious institutions, maintaining the interest of the common good through any changes in use, the solutions can only be found through the market economy. Certainly the management of public buildings is not possible without economic sustainability assessments. But assessments of the cultural and social aspects, as well as the common good, must assume an importance equal to that of the purely economic aspects.

An approach based entirely on market economy is inevitably reflected in the design choices. This can be seen in the reused churches in Maastricht, where in the Dominicanen Selexyz Bookstore and the Kruissherenhotel the growing importance of the purely economic aspects over the cultural ones has caused a major shift away from pre-existing meanings and values. Whereas in the past the function of a church could be considered almost permanent, or at least long-lasting, now the new functions closely related to the need to achieve economic results have a higher vulnerability and are more subject to changes. In this possible instability of use, there is a specific aspect that concerns the architects and the design for reuse. With new functions established on the basis of prioritising economic

FIGS. 9a-9b. A different way of interpreting the symbolism of the cross: [left] the thirteenth century Crucifixion in the apse of the church of San Francesco in Arezzo (A. Benci by <<https://www.google.it/search?hl=it&site=imgh-p&tbm=isch&source=hp&biw=1368&bih=574&q=crocifissione+san+francesco+arezzo>> [Accessed 19 June 2017]); [right] the table in the apse of the former church of the Crusaders, Maastricht, Kruisherenhotel (photo by L. Giorgi, 2015).



assessments, the architect excluded from these decisions will start his reflections on the design from a weaker position, having to consider functions determined in accordance with criteria unrelated to cultural content and the meanings and values of the artifacts.

### Conservation in reuse

When one links the use of the buildings to the preservation of their meanings, material and immaterial values, one inevitably creates ample areas of ambiguity. Empathy, indifference, even hostility towards their meaning varies according to the cultural or social vision of each person. Equally changeable is the capacity to understand them. In the name of shifting values and meanings over time, manipulation of architectural works has been unceasing. A meaning can be understood and interpreted for very different purposes, as is shown by the cross-shaped table in the apse of the former church of Dominicanenkerk (Figs. 9a-9b).

What we have inherited from past generations are not really values and meanings, or concepts related to the heritage, but concrete artifacts, architectural contexts, environments and landscapes in which over time values and meanings, tangible and intangible, have been captured and have changed. This changing of interpretation and process of transformation is expected to continue, in a future context made even more complex by the likely increase in the number of churches that will need to find new functions.

It is naïve to think that some particular sensitivity might emerge, nourished by mysterious knowledge and skills deriving from newly imagined design principles, that could (eliminating



uncertainties) introduce changes into our architectural heritage, bringing it into a better future. The reality, in contrast, is that the process involves many complex issues in which it is difficult to establish general rules and operational limits, which engender the uncertainties of many choices, and which ultimately determine the legitimacy of any modification. Abstract rules and limits may be ineffective, especially in a period when it is expected that the new functions of many churches will be linked to an increasingly aggressive market economy.

The first step of any project should be to produce accurate documentation of artifacts, something that is commonly advocated but rarely developed in satisfactory terms. Furthermore, the acquired knowledge should not be a passive element, but should be interpreted and strongly connected to the design choices. Knowledge has a key role in clarifying and defining more favorable limits for conservation, which are not felt as a constraint, but a cultural choice. The achievement of a high degree of knowledge scientifically based on the artifacts, always specific to each building, develops a sense of responsibility towards preservation and provides the tools to implement it. It offers to future generations the opportunity to better understand the choices of those who have gone before and creates the best conditions to ensure the preservation of the artifacts – something that is not an accidental outcome, but an intentional and pursued aim.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Auditorium San Domenico*. [online]. Umbriaccesibile. Available at: <<http://www.umbriaccesibile.com/citta-umbre/foligno/auditorium-san-domenico/>> [Accessed 21 June 2017].

<sup>2</sup> *Complesso monumentale di San Nicolò*. [online]. Wikipedia. Available at: <[https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complesso\\_monumentale\\_di\\_San\\_Nicol%C3%B2](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complesso_monumentale_di_San_Nicol%C3%B2)> [Accessed 21 June 2017].

<sup>3</sup> *History Franciscan monastery*. [online]. RHCL. Available at: <<http://www.rhcl.nl/en/discover/history-franciscan-monastery/>> [Accessed 21 June 2017].

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## THE ANCIENT CHURCH OF ST. AUGUSTINE AS 'AULA MAGNA' OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO

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### Abstract

The Church of St. Augustine, at the border of the so-called 'high town' of Bergamo, is a very particular example of Gothic architecture from the 13th century belonging to the monastic order of Eremites of St. Augustine. It is a single-nave church, with transversal pointed arches supporting the roof and lateral chapels along the walls; the façade, in brown sandstone, has two very high pointed windows and a little rose window (Fig. 1). The church and its monastery were so important that they were included inside the perimeter of the walls built by Venetians in the 16th century, so that the final rampart to the southeast was built enlarging the ambit of the walls to include the church and the adjacent cloisters.

When in 1797 all religious orders were suppressed by the French occupancy, the monastery became a military quarter for the French, then Austrian, and finally the Italian army until 1966, when the church and the monastery were at last ceded to the municipality 'for cultural purposes'. After twenty years of discussions, the larger cloister was eventually restored and adapted for the university, which has here the lecture rooms and the public library of the department of Human Sciences. In September 2015, again with the support of the City Council, the old church was put to a new use, becoming the Main Hall of the University of Bergamo (Fig. 2).

The example of reuse of an ancient church belonging to another religious order, the Dominicans in Maastricht, also transformed at the beginning of the 19th century, is chosen in order to make a comparison between different approaches to the subject, both respecting high quality and architectural standards, although with different results.

### On the adaptation/reuse of religious buildings

The topic of reuse/adaptation of religious buildings is particularly delicate, because it is impossible to disregard some basic considerations. The intrinsic value of the building is not simply tied to a formal or spatial solution, more or less successful, or to the expression of a particular moment of the history of architecture: it also resides in a particular expression of symbolic values, which are closely linked to the architectural form, in all religions and in every time. Even the decoration, which could be seen as supplementary to the built architecture, is rather closely linked to the spirit of the space itself and the emotions that it wants to suggest to those who enter it. This gives rise to very clear differences between religious buildings belonging to different beliefs: just think of the lack of representation of human figures in Islamic mosques, or to the sobriety of evangelical churches compared to the widespread representation of the figures of saints in the Catholic churches. In one sense, this was the feeling of the 19th-century restorers (see particularly Viollet-le-Duc at Notre-Dame in Paris) who cared to restore even the paintings and the sculptures that had

FIG. 1. Front view of the former church of St. Augustine in Bergamo at the end of the restoration works.

FIG. 2. The new Main Hall of the University of Bergamo from the entrance (photo by BS|A).

FIG. 3. San Galgano abbey, the church.

FIG. 4. St Patrick's Cathedral on the Rock of Cashel, Ireland.



disappeared from the façades of the churches, to attain the aim of completeness in the image of the monument.

Despite the new situation where (for various reasons) the religious building is alienated from the faithful community that motivated its construction, in no way can it be considered an empty *container* ready to accommodate any new features, even with respect to changes that may be necessary. It also retains the imprint of the 'sacred', at least part of its symbolic vocation that improper uses serve only to hide, without being able to erase completely – sacredness that these places might retain more strongly when the restoration has been unable to (or rather did not want to) fight the signs of aging, leaving a partial ruin or making more difficult the task of transmitting the architectural perception of the building. These places (and these spaces) continue to transmit an extraordinary message, with even greater force than before: see, for example, San Galgano Abbey in Tuscany, Italy (Fig. 3), St Patrick's Cathedral on the Rock of Cashel in Ireland (Fig. 4), both in open country

FIG. 5. Igreja do Carmo (now Archaeological Museum) in Lisbon (photo by B. Kaufmann, NL).

FIG. 6. Perspective view of the interior of St Augustine church, from the laser-scanner survey (lab S.A.B.E., UniBG).

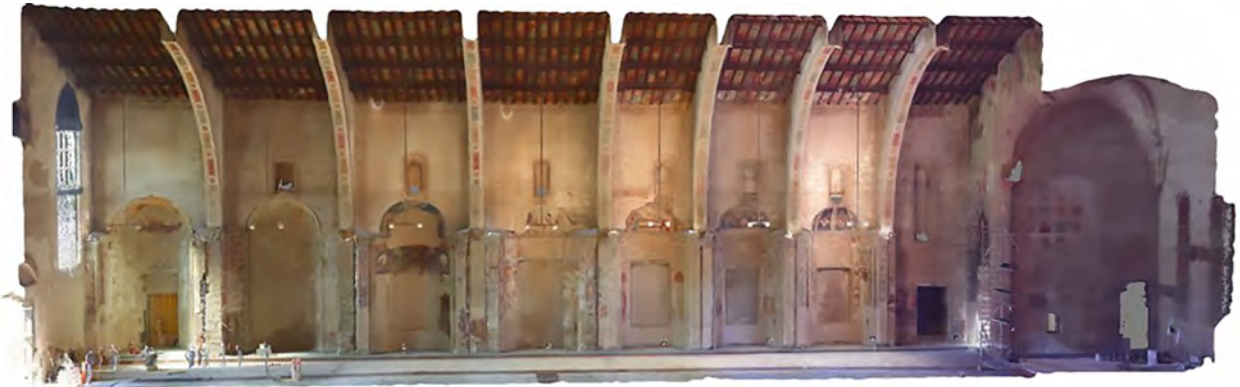


and surrounded by nature, and also the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the centre of Lisbon (Fig. 5).

Is it then possible to adapt these spaces to a new function, whatever it is, just to ensure somehow keeping them (if not strictly speaking conserving them) through the necessary maintenance: a function that properly takes advantage of the obviously rather special spatial characteristics of buildings that were born to host a liturgical assembly, in which many people regularly attend a religious rite; where they must be engaged by the functions performed by the celebrant and be in a condition of concentration and meditation, or also of mental isolation from the surrounding world? There are not many uses that approach this provision. For example, a concert hall could equally demand isolation, concentration, public space and of course good acoustics. Nevertheless, some of the examples observed in Belgium certainly prompt us to conclude that not all abandoned churches can be easily transformed into concert halls, since even this kind of final use, unfortunately, is not much in demand nowadays.

The restoration project by A. Bellini and M. Sita, BS|A Architects (Bellini 2015) described in this paper is in some ways a fortunate coincidence: what was once a magnificent place of worship was also part of a large monastic complex that in its heyday was mainly dedicated to the teaching mission carried out by the Augustinian Order. The restoration of the larger cloister, made available by the City of Bergamo for the university, has finally allowed its transformation into a university site for some courses in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The idea of turning the great hall of worship into the Great Hall of the entire university is an almost natural but valuable consequence, strongly backed by the former Dean Prof. Paleari. It was completed at the end of his term with the cooperation of city administration, representing an important chance for the university, the whole town and also for the monument itself (Fig. 6). In this way, the second life of the church will ideally be in continuity with the first one after a long period of abandonment, at the same time having the opportunity for an accurate conservation campaign to protect wall painting and ancient artefacts still existing in the church.

FIG. 7. Longitudinal section (perspective view) of St Augustine church, from the photogrammetric 3D model (lab SABE, UniBG).



### **The church and the monastery of St. Augustine**

A first core of the church was built in the early Middle Ages, but when the Eremites of St. Augustine established their monastery here they started the construction in 1290 of a new church that was consecrated in 1347 and dedicated to the Saints James, Philip and Augustine (Schiavini Trezzi 2007). The plan is still apparent in the church of today, showing a unique nave articulated in eight bays by transversal pointed arches, supporting the roof and resting on rectangular pilasters on the long masonry side walls. The nave terminated in three rectangular chapels, the main central one representing the presbytery (Fig. 7).

The church and its monastery were so important that they were included inside the perimeter of the city walls built by Venetians in the 16th century, so that the final rampart built to the southeast supported the church and the adjacent cloister (Foppolo 1977). The monastery was then expanded by a new, wider cloister hosting the philosophical school of the religious order, open to the young people from the rich families of the town.

When the Augustinians installed themselves in the monastery after a short period of decline, deep transformations took place: both in the complex, between the late 15th and the late 18th centuries (such as the new cloister that hosted the school); and in the church, with the construction of many chapels on the two side walls. They were larger and deeper on the south side, but limited in thickness on the north side because of the presence of the oldest smaller cloister. They were built by the richest families of the town, which left some of their legacy to the convent to ensure special prayers after death, and bear witness to the power gained by the convent during the centuries.

After the suppression of religious orders in northern Italy in 1797 (during the French occupancy, as a remote effect of the French Revolution) the great convent became a military quarter for successive armies that occupied the city (Cappellini 1977), from the French to the Austrian and finally to the Italian army until 1966. In the beginning the church was used as a riding school, but around 1880 it was also subdivided into two levels by a wooden floor supported in the middle by a double row of wooden columns;

FIG. 8. Some layers of frescos on a pillar on the right side of the church (photo by BS|A).

FIG. 9. The excavations under the floor level and the vast graveyard found (photo by BS|A).



the ground floor became a storehouse and the upper floor contained archives. Some ideas on giving a new proper use to the church were proposed as early as 1933, with the bishop Bernareggi's wish for a diocesan museum, and a first project was carried out by L. Angelini. After the passage of the ownership of the complex from the State (military property) to the City of Bergamo, some limited intervention took place, consisting mainly of the removal of the intermediate floor and provisional repair of some architectural elements of the left window on the façade.

### **The restoration works**

The real restoration works started in 2005 with the preliminary project, after agreement between the university and the city, and were concluded only in 2015 with the opening of the academic year in the new Main Hall.

One initial step was a detailed classification work carried out in 2007–2008 on the frescos of the chapels and of the choir; this showed many different layers superposed and many problems of fragmentation. The preliminary consolidation consisted first of fixing the borders and cracks, avoiding possible detachment of the mortar, and then cleaning the surface of dust and other deposits and fixing the original colour (Fig. 8).

Then a long and detailed archaeological campaign (2007–2010) took place, revealing a vast graveyard occupying the floor of the ancient church, where many of the richest families of the town had been buried (Fig. 9). In addition, the traces of the first smaller church were detected.

Finally, a difficult consolidation operation was undertaken (2010–2011) concerning the stone façade, which showed very deep degradation in some elements, such as the rose window or the light columns of the large lateral windows – very close to disaggregation and requiring a careful and attentive consolidation with some especially designed techniques.

Only in July 2014 could the works properly related to the reuse/adaptation of the building start, concerning among other matters the heating and cooling installation

FIG. 10. Posing the heating/cooling system under the floor (photo by BS|A).

FIG. 11. Posing the paving floor in natural grey limestone from Ardesio (photo by BS|A).

FIG. 12. The podium and the chair table of the Main Hall (photo by BS|A).

FIG. 13. The glass box entrance on the main door (photo by BS|A).



(Fig. 10), the choice of the flooring material and design, the choice of the lighting systems, the furniture, seats and audio system for conferences and so on. All these aspects can differently influence the final result, both in terms of comfort for the users and in terms of the perception of the architectural and historical value of the building. Anything that is destroyed in this phase can never be replaced, and everything that is added to the existing building can dramatically modify the architectural value of the space.

In fact, some crucial issues appeared in this phase: the ducts for air treatment had to be run under the floor, but to respect the archaeological remains this demanded a special design; the humidity and temperature controls were required to prevent sudden variations of the indoor air conditions, to avoid possible damage to painted surfaces. In addition, the paving of the floor over the heating system is designed to allow the future recovery of all the remains without any destruction. The stone employed in the floor is a natural grey limestone from Ardesio, in the surroundings of Bergamo, set out following a geometrical contemporary scheme without any final polishing (Fig. 11). The

lining of the furniture of the hall was chosen in a simple dark colour, harmonising with the floor and not contrasting with the remaining decoration of the walls, and the top table and the podium are made in clear wood, showing a very simple but contemporary aspect (Fig. 12). A glass box entrance was built to protect the interior conditions, inserting a very light element that leaves the view of the façade from inside complete (Fig. 13). In order to hide the additional technological elements, whenever possible, a very powerful LCD projector for conferences was placed over the entrance box, while the screen beside the top table is rolled to the bottom instead of to the top, completely disappearing when not in use. Finally, the lighting system suspended from the roof (all using warm LED lamps) was carefully designed in order to diffuse the light all over the paintings, on the walls and on the tiles under the roof, without being intrusive in the perception of the space.

As a result, the new main hall appears a comfortable space, rich in displaying the traces of its long history and of the people that used it through the centuries; its quality does not reside in the richness of the materials employed, but rather in the 'quantity of history' that can be read in its walls and roof.

### **'Selexyz Dominicanen' in Maastricht**

Some comparison with the case of a church reuse/adaptation that we had the opportunity to observe in Maastricht (NE) during the workshop could be interesting in order to discuss different approaches to the topic and the quite different results. Although not everything has to be accepted in the field of an adaptive reuse of historic religious buildings, nevertheless – in principle – some more freedom could be allowed in choosing the adaptations needed for the new usage (or better still, a new use that requires non-intrusive adaptation), but only if the intrinsic value of the monument is respected.

For this discussion, the case of the Dominican church in Maastricht, transformed into a bookshop, will be examined in particular.

Many analogies can be found with the St. Augustine case: both churches belonged to religious orders that strongly supported the study and the preservation of the culture of the past. Moreover, both convents were suppressed by the post-French Revolution governments, and the churches were reused in a very utilitarian way – although the Dominican church had been restored at the beginning of the 20th century by the architect Sprenger and then used as a public library, becoming then a post office and finally a bicycle depot.

The project of the bookshop shows a good collaboration between the restoration architect, SATIJNplus, and the interior architect, Merckx+Girod, which had to deal with the requirements of the client, respecting at the same time the character of the site. In 2007, *The Guardian Online* included the bookshop in its top 10 bookshops in the world, defining it 'possibly the most beautiful bookshop of all time'; the project also won the 2007 'Lensvelt de Architect' interior design award.

The winning choice was to insert a modern steel structure to accommodate the bookshelves, providing some intermediate floors, in order to attain the requested commercial area. Nevertheless, the structure occupies only half of the main nave and one of the two lateral naves, obtaining a sort of negation/revisitation of the original symmetry (Fig. 14). On the left, the full volume of the nave and the choir with their cross vault system is completely appreciable; on the other side, it is possible to 'walk through' the space



FIG. 14. The interior of the bookshop in Maastricht with the steel-structure shelter.

FIG. 15. The staircase and the way to the top.

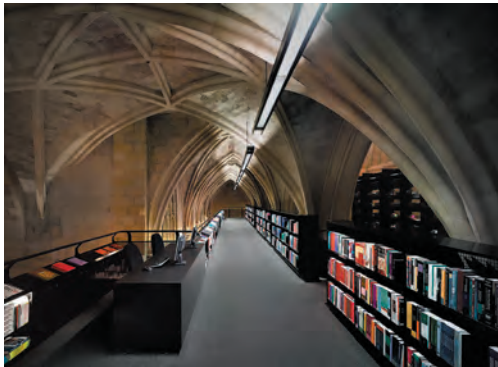
FIG. 16. View of the vaults of the lateral nave from the second floor of the shelter.

FIG. 17. View of the main nave towards the choir.

FIG. 18. The choir from the top, with the cross-shaped bar table.

Next page:

FIG. 19. The rusted-iron box at the entrance, from the exterior.



(Fig. 15), approaching the vaults closely from an unusual and interesting perspective (Figs. 16-17). Moreover, from the top it is possible to enjoy a sort of bird's-eye view of the nave.

Nevertheless, at this point a shocking vision appears as one looks towards the apse: in the choir, now adapted as a cafeteria, beside some



small sitting places all around the choir, a big bar table in the shape of a cross occupies the centre of the space (Fig. 18). That kind of 'joke' does not seem to respect the spirit of the place, and definitely appears out of tune.

Finally, a new access to the bookshop has been created at the front of the church, with a sort of rough rusted-iron box (Fig. 19), looking very modern but also 'old' as regards its material appearance. It represents a diaphragm, passing from the exterior busy commercial space through to the more quiet and meditative interior space, preparing one for the surprise of the vaults and columns of the church.

## Conclusions

The two different approaches to the problem of reusing an historic religious building can be usefully compared and discussed, but in addition, some common points can be underlined together with relevant differences.

St. Augustine's in Bergamo suffered a long period of abandonment and, after a quick demolition of inserted intermediate floors, needed a careful intervention to preserve its rich and stratified history and decoration, the dominant feature in the final appearance of the space. The richness and the variety of the paintings established the character of this wide space, where the furniture and the flooring play a role of defining and controlling the space without imposing their presence.

In the Dominican Church of Maastricht, the past restorations (and earlier spoliations) gave to the space a very severe and essential aspect, where the dominant elements of the Gothic construction are naturally underlined. The new functional structures do not erase this perception, but try to lead the visitor to a better understanding of the space, while still working as book storage and display. Despite the criticism that can be addressed to some lapses in respect for symbolic aspects, the result is very interesting.

Both cases cited show the important role played in the restoration and reuse project by some usually disregarded aspects such as furniture, flooring, lighting, etc.; or, more accurately, by what is called 'interior design'. The definition of adaptive reuse as an emerging discipline can take great advantage of the skills of interior designers, but only if they are aware of the same principles that rule the conservation project.

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## DEFENDING DEFENCES. A PARALLEL BETWEEN TWO CASES: LONCIN AND BUCHAREST

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Historical sites are places loaded with valuable community memories, cultural significance and local identities, narrated in different timeframes and contexts. Military historical sites bare a strong intangible component within their space because the story behind the massive walls recites a powerful narrative of a troubled moment in the history of its community. How can this emotional heritage influence a place? Does it create a visual translation of the intangible for the present times by revealing parts and aspects of the past in a certain sequence and by concealing parts of the storyline at the same time?

The diverse layers of history are often visible, but sometimes they get partially lost, something that might cancel the connection between the community and the site. Most of the military fortifications that comprise Bucharest's defence belt are presently susceptible to that eventuality. This paper proposes an analytical comparison between the Fort of Loncin and the forts of Bucharest, based on a couple of similarities but having different outcomes: they were all designed by the same general (Henri Alexis Brialmont), within the same timeframe (the design of the Bucharest forts followed right after the Fort of Loncin was completed), yet the historical context and the contemporary use are different.

The Fort of Loncin was built according to the plans of General Brialmont between 1881 and 1884. During World War I, instead of surrendering to the Germans in Liège on 6th August (Kaufmann, Kaufmann 2014), General Gérard Mathieu Leman decided to move to Loncin and organise a new defence from there, since the Belgians were losing ground quickly. Despite his efforts, 'the remaining forts fell one after another. Leman commanded the Fort of Loncin until 15th August, when its magazine exploded' (Zabecki 2014: 765) and killed 250 men (Donnell 2007). The Fort of Loncin failed the test of the new 420mm-calibre German weapons because the building system and materials of the fort were not suited for the new military technology<sup>1</sup> (Kaufmann, Kaufmann 2014) (Fig. 1).

Since then, the fort has remained a place of strong memories and devastation, since the shattered concrete shells are still visible now as part of the surrounding natural landscape, and through tourist signs and pathways. The present image of the fort tells the narrative of the site almost entirely on its own; perhaps not in detail without hearing the guide's fascinating stories, but enough to make any visitor realise that the intangible component is dominant and powerful. The spirit of place is still vivid. Perhaps in this case the question of adaptive reuse is difficult to address, since the specific moment when the fort became a place of memory is distinguishable from the contemporary additions to the landscape.

While addressing the question of adaptive reuse, the main focus has to be on preserving the intangible value, the authenticity and the significance of the use by keeping in mind that context, mentalities and subjective memory can transform the original narrative and dilute the intrinsic value of the place. The significance is preserved by addressing a range of value systems and components that are, to a large extent, embodied in the fabric of the place. Any alteration of components can disturb the delicate balance of the



FIG. 1. Detail from fort Loncin (photo by M. Lazăr, October 2015).  
 FIG. 2. Fort Loncin (photo by M. Lazăr, October 2015).  
 FIG. 3. Fort Chitila (photo by M. Mureșanu, November 2015).  
 FIG. 4. Fort Chitila – main access (photo by M. Mureșanu, November 2015).  
 FIG. 5. Fort Chitila – detail (photo by M. Mureșanu, November 2015).

heritage site and potentially lead to loss of significance and spirit of the place, and can alter its structure and embodied meaning (Norberg-Schulz 1980). In the case of the Fort of Loncin, the meaning of place is strongly related to Norberg-Schulz's theory, namely that embodied meaning refers to the people's perception and interpretation of space. Here the layers of the concept of *genius loci* are both historical and contemporary and include

both the anthropic and the natural space. Two important aspects that define the sense of place, according to Norberg-Schulz, are character and authenticity, which rhyme well with the principles of conservation that underline the importance of preserving and enhancing the message and values of cultural property (Fielden 2003). Fielden's definition of conservation includes the necessity of preventing decay while managing change dynamically (Fielden 2003: 3). This allows the adaptive reuse to be integrated in the conservation process while keeping in mind the Venice Charter's principles (ICOMOS 1964).

The idea of adaptive reuse may or may not imply a profound intervention *in situ*. To what extent does this concept reveal, conceal or alter significance? The Fort of Loncin is a place of collective memory and the museum offers authentic images from the past, preserved in time, contemporary images and installations meant to support the narrative (Fig. 2). We might consider adaptive reuse only as a process or a methodology used to find a solution that is balanced enough to preserve the spirit of the place, as well as to make the heritage more accessible, and to safeguard traces of the past for the future generations. But at times, adaptive reuse and conservation of heritage can be less convergent, and the idea of reuse can transform and damage the identity of a place.

Such examples of questionable adaptive reuse can also be found close to Bucharest, where some of the remaining forts surrounding the city are rented by private businesses in order to convert the spaces according to their specific needs. Restricted public access is, in most cases, justified by trade safety.

In the case of Bucharest's lines of defence, although they are the creation of the very same General Brialmont, the present outcome is opposite to that of the Fort of Loncin. Between 1884 and 1895, Brialmont designed 36 military fortresses – 18 forts and 18 batteries, equally spaced from each other, the distance representing the small calibre cannon range of those times<sup>2</sup>. The 72-kilometre perimeter encompassed the Romanian capital at a safe distance (Bergheş 2012). After 1886, only a few years after the construction of the forts began in Bucharest, some of Brialmont's designs were updated due to the evolution in military technology and weaponry. Thus, only a few forts – Chitila, Mogoşoaia, Otopeni and Jilava – were completed according to the original plans (Bergheş 2012) (Figs. 3-5).

The forts and batteries surrounding Bucharest were built using brick, stone and a small amount of concrete to construct the large vaults. Unfortunately for the defence buildings of the capital, the 20th century began with a financial crisis, followed by World War I. The army generals analysed the situation and concluded that the fortifications were scarcely equipped, some construction works on the forts were not completed and some were already in bad shape due to poor embankment works, while some forts and batteries were isolated or barely accessible. Bucharest had expanded quite rapidly since 1884 and in 1914 the military forts were too close to the city and thus obsolete or risky to use. Therefore, in 1916 the defence system of Bucharest was no longer operative and was partly abandoned<sup>3</sup> (Mihăilescu 2013) (Figs. 6-10).

Some of the buildings remained in use by the Romanian military as storage for vehicles and ammunition<sup>4</sup> and some were used as training camps for the army. More recently, some are managed by private businesses and some were abandoned altogether. There is one exception to the rule: Fort 13 Jilava was transformed into a military prison in 1906, and into a civilian political prison a few years afterwards. Consequently, it became a symbol of the oppression of citizens opposing the Communist regime, and a symbol of rebel-

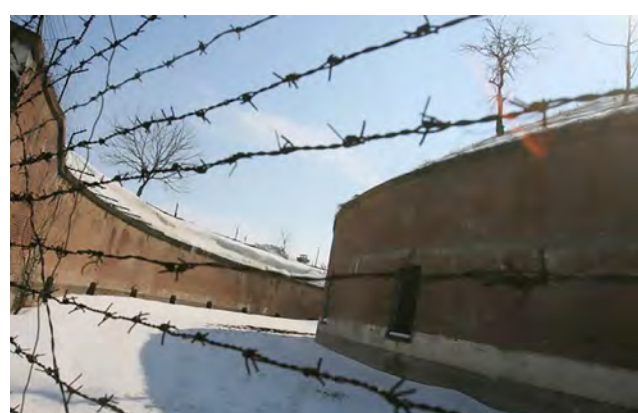


FIG. 6. 3d Scene of Battery 4-5 (by A. Diclescu and A. Prelipcean, November 2015).

FIG. 7. Battery 4-5 (photo by M. Mureşanu, November 2015).

FIG. 8. Battery 4-5 - entrance detail (photo by M. Mureşanu, November 2015).

FIG. 9. Drone preparation to photograph Battery 4-5 (photo by M. Mureşanu, November 2015).

FIG. 10. Wall detail of Battery 4-5 (photo by M. Mureşanu, November 2015).

FIG. 11. Fort 13 Jilava by Lucian Munteanu published in Adevărul, 2 January 2013 (by <[http://adevarul.ro/news/bucuresti/marturii-fortul-13-jilavainchisoarea-politica-sfarsit-sute-oameni-elitei-culturale-politice-postbelice-1\\_50e42e44596d72009162384e/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/news/bucuresti/marturii-fortul-13-jilavainchisoarea-politica-sfarsit-sute-oameni-elitei-culturale-politice-postbelice-1_50e42e44596d72009162384e/index.html)> [Accessed 4 April 2016]).

lion. Many important political figures of the liberal parties were imprisoned there, a large number perishing due to the inhumane detention conditions.

Fort 13 Jilava, much like the Fort of Loncin, is a place of strong painful memories, though regretfully of a more recent history. The decision regarding its further fate was postponed, in the sense that it was abandoned for many years, as the people were not prepared to handle the overwhelming emotional inheritance. It finally became the Research Center for Recent History and opened for visitors on February 12, 2016. At present, it is a place that educates about painful history and about cultural values, and is no longer an obscure and abandoned site (Fig. 11).

The future of the other forts and batteries is uncertain, since up to the present time they have not been addressed as cultural sites. Most of them are not open or accessible to the public. The ones we could visit while conducting this research were in fact abandoned and secluded (Fort Chitila and Battery 4-5). Is this because there was no glory added to their existence? Is empathy the reason why only Fort 13 Jilava became a memorial site, benefiting from the interest of those that want to sense the experience of a Communist prison? This is the most likely explanation. The spirit of the place, the emotional charge and the narratives are the key elements in preserving the traces of history, and as a direct consequence this leads to the conservation of built heritage.

A number of forts and batteries surrounding Bucharest, built in the 19th century, have no intrinsic value that is recognised by the community, as they were military sites that failed their past purpose, with the one notable exception that has strong commemorative value. Can we discuss adaptive reuse in these cases, then? Would it benefit the community to make use of these forts? They certainly have a high architectural potential for tourism or cultural events. But seemingly, their anonymity and seclusion, as well as the lack of interest from the community and local administration, might continue to keep them in a derelict state that for now only attracts adventure-seekers, the homeless and underage gangs.

## Conclusions

The significance of an inherited object can morph. In the case of Fort 13 Jilava, it shifted from being a place of terror and political oppression to a place with commemorative value loaded with an emotional narrative. In the case of the Fort of Loncin, it shifted from a war zone to a commemorative site and, even if the narrative is different, we can make out the similarities: both are places of collective memory, tell a powerful touching story from the past, educate about the values of the space and preserve traces of history.

The significance of the place is deeply embedded in the fabric and in the landscape of the two forts. In both cases, the memories of the sites are still present. Clear images as layers of the past can be observed, as well as images of the present that sustain the narrative of the place. The other forts surrounding Bucharest are a palimpsest of images collected over time, but without a narrator they are hard to decipher. In these cases, the derelict buildings conceal the significance of the space.

What are the effects of intervention on such places of collective memory? In the cases of Loncin and Jilava, the intervention allows a better understanding of the place and its history; it preserves important collective memories that are relevant for the future; it educates. They become places of remembrance and reflection. In the absence of the intervention, the emotional narrative and spirit of place might fade over time and the places could become less meaningful or lose value. Preserving the spirit of the place through the intervention is, in these cases, a balanced application of the concept of adaptive reuse.



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> At least according to the standards of the new century, concrete without any reinforcement was considered vulnerable in the face of the new weapons, even if it was, paradoxically, a relatively new material. 'From 1888 to 1914 no serious upgrades to the fortresses had been made, including new armaments or reinforcement of the concrete. In the October 1912 Otchakoff trials against concrete like that used in the forts of the Meuse, the following effects were noticed: 15cm shots caused the concrete to shift, affecting the rotation of the turrets, 28cm shots significantly affected and slowed the rotation of the turrets. Lt. Gen. Deguise of the Antwerp forts, who observed the Otchakoff trials, recommended reinforcing the vaulting of the Brialmont forts with a metallic revetment; nothing was done' (Donnell 2007: 52).

<sup>2</sup> The range was two kilometres.

<sup>3</sup> The decision was made following a plan voted in 1914: 'The Plan for supplementation, transformation and reform of military equipment, ammunition and war arsenal'.

<sup>4</sup> This led to a series of explosions and some of them were destroyed.

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## ADAPTIVE USE AND REUSE: A TIME-SPECIFIC PROCESS

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### Abstract

Reuse, in its different forms and meanings, is one of the crucial topics currently being explored from a cross-disciplinary perspective. This paper, considering the status of the speculation on the topic, introduces the concept of adaptive reuse as a time-specific strategy for keeping the building active, both from a material and immaterial point of view, mediating the relationship with the past and its different layered meanings. The conceptual framework is built around the idea that the built environment is always time-specific; it is planned and realised according to specific needs in a specific timeframe. In this perspective, every further adaptation is meant to keep the architecture updated to be suitable for the new timeframe: adaptive reuse is intended as a process that uses different tools and tactics to keep the buildings active.

Reused buildings merge the values of the original construction and of subsequent adaptations. The evaluation of the adaptive reuse process relates to the capacity to add a new layer of sense to the existing significance and to the quality of reusability that the intervention achieves (Fig. 1).

### Preservation strategies

The building sector, in the contemporary debate about the concern of the uncontrolled exploitation of resources, has been engaged in the last few years in much speculation, research and propositions, all aiming to address strategies for framing a new building ecology. Among research for new materials and techniques, the reuse of existing buildings is a key issue that enables us to consider the question from a broader point of view. If the preservation of existing buildings makes sense in terms of reusing resources and assets, a more complex evaluation of the practice of reuse is – alongside the tangible, intangible values that are, though immeasurable – valuable and worth preserving. The EAAE workshop *Keeping alive the spirit of the place* explored how we can evaluate, understand and transmit these values once the physical context needs to be transformed.

Preservation is linked with the idea of rescuing something from the danger of decay, damage or destruction. In order to preserve an existing building it is necessary to keep it inhabited, occupied, active. The adaptive reuse of a building is one possible preservation strategy and it has been a considerably growing practice in the past few years in terms of number of interventions made and cultural debate<sup>1</sup>.

Different strategies, tools and approaches can be adopted according to the importance of the different aspects to be protected – for example, material features or symbolic meanings – and the interpretation that is given to the conservation practice. The debate on conservation, preservation and the different modalities of realisation is one of the most interesting architectural discourses of the last few decades; positions taken are re-



FIG. 1. Venice (2014).

flections of an evolving relationship with our heritage and history. ‘Every history, after all, has to establish relationships of engagement and detachment, insight and overview, which connect it with the past it describes, and every subsequent reading of a history (or, to change the scene, every visit to a historical monument or a museum) effectively requires a return to these same issues’ (Salber Phillips 2004: 125).

The intention in re-using an existing building to accommodate new functions, meanings and activities needs to establish to what extent the intervention wants to relate to the existing. The graft of the adaptation into ‘the already written, the marked “canvas” [...] becomes a “package of sense” of built up meaning to be accepted (maintained), transformed or suppressed (refused)’ (Machado 1976: 49).

From the 1970s, building reuse has been explored in practice and theory within different frameworks. Various terms have been used to describe reuse strategies: ‘altering’ (Scott 2008), ‘remodelling’ (Machado 1976; Brooker, Stone 2004), ‘retrofitting’, ‘converting’ (Cunnington 1988; Powell 1999), ‘revitalising’ (Jäger 2010), ‘rehabilitating’ (Highfield 1987), ‘refurbishing’ and ‘adapting’ (Robert 1989). ‘Adaptive’, more than the other synonyms, underlines the ability of the building to be flexible, open to change and capable of an active role; buildings have always been modified in order to host different inhabitations over time: they are able to accept different adaptations.

From the 1970s, building reuse has been explored in practice and theory

Among the different disciplines involved in the preservation process, interior architecture/design has played a fundamental role in being able to build (not only) physical connections in between spaces, people and objects. The tools and methods of this discipline are able to draw connections to the social context, being flexible enough to be malleable to specific situations, to promote social innovation, to raise awareness about values and beliefs and to question the borders of established ways of living, working and consuming. In this perspective, reuse implies a context; to build on buildings, to consider the transformation process as a palimpsest where layers are added and merged with previous ones.

### Timescales and updates

The term *genius loci* was introduced by the Norwegian architect and theoretician Christian Norberg-Schulz (Norberg-Schulz 1980) to describe what he considers the main ingredient of the immaterial experience of architecture. In this perspective, the site is the characteristic that better defines the distinctive traits of the building and lends coherence to the hierarchy of components. A building occupies a specific position, has its own identity and

needs to be understood in terms of its relationship to context. The context has to be intended in a broader sense: not just physical (the position in relationship to other buildings or landscape, its orientation, etc.) but also social, political and economic. The aspects that are linked to the materiality of the site (building materials, construction techniques and technologies, for example) decay but do not change dramatically; analysis of the broader context is more complicated and needs to acknowledge how economy, politics and society have affected/do affect the building.

The built environment is always time-specific, as it has been designed and built according to a time specific idea/need, but the lifespan of a building is often longer than the purpose for which it has been built. In light of the passage of time, buildings need to be updated to survive societal changes that affect their form, role and meaning. Buildings are part of a process and have '[...] to be understood in terms of several different time scales over which they change' (Groak 1990: 15).

The idea of a continuous time-specific built environment links us with the concept of grades of reusability: the writing or rewriting of the building as a time-specific usable asset enables us to conceive of it as flexible and fluid.

The idea of the built environment as invariable, permanent, steady, as historical witness conflicts with two important considerations.

The first relates to the understanding that radical and deep transformations are underway in our society (in terms of demographics, access to communications, organisational structures, awareness of the environmental issue, legislation) so it is anachronistic, and probably anti-economic, to conceive persistent structures: use and reuse should take reference from conceptual models that are incomplete, imperfect and elastic, capable of withstanding continuous innovation and adaptation.

An architecture of time incorporates not just present or sensory and mental experiences, but makes present instants in past or future times; to create an eternal and real present by remembering the past and making the future of the architecture become the basis for a continuous time experience (Quiros, MaKenzie, McMurray 2011).

The second consideration questions the certainty that the value and the significance of the 'cultural experience' can be read thorough the preserved materiality of the site: it is necessary to acknowledge that architecture cannot be dissociated from what happens inside the building and that changes according to different timescales.

'Architecture is not simply about space and form, but also about event, action and what happens in space [...] architecture cannot be dissociated from the events that happen in it [...] event is an incident, an occurrence, [...] events can encompass particular uses, singular functions or isolated activities. They include moments of passion, acts of love and the instant of death' (Tschumi 1981: X-XI).

From this perspective, adaptive reuse is not just a possible strategy, but a necessary continuous process that is able to update buildings. In order to keep alive the spirit of the place/time, what is the capacity of the intervention to accept further modifications and what is the grade of reusability that the intervention established with the previous state? The following two sections, *To live is to leave traces* and *Grades of reusability*, introduce two themes linked with the idea of considering time as a key ingredient of the design process.

FIG. 2. Florence (2011).



### To live is to leave traces<sup>2</sup>

Every period has to face transformations that affect lifestyle and therefore the built environment. If the last decades in Europe have been significant in terms of experiencing social and economical changes, we need to acknowledge that the reuse of existing buildings is a practice as old as architecture, one that has always been put in place privileging the *now* over the *before*. Buildings, even important ones with an high symbolic significance, were built and then transformed uninhibitedly over time as the occupation needs changed, to allow a continuous reuse: for example, we can see clearly on many buildings the different window patterns – the traces of what changed on the inside according to different time spans (Fig. 2).

Churches traditionally rose from previous existing ones: not only was the same site used and reused again, but the practice of recycling existing architectural elements by incorporating them into new buildings without any modern concerns about authenticity was also broadly diffused.

Richard Sennett argues that from the 18th century we moved from the concept of wholeness to the one of integrity (Sennett 1990); this shift has modified our perception of the building environment ‘from structures which extended an existing continuum of urban fabric to discrete objects, objects with an integrity which would be destroyed by change or addition’ (Groak 1990: 154–156).

The 20th century faced new concerns about the existing built environment: in addition to earlier patrimony, we inherited industrial heritage, which quickly and over a short period of time became redundant, deprived of content and meaning, an empty container. In the 1950s Michael Rix, a historian from Birmingham University, started using the expression 'industrial archaeology', claiming that buildings do not have only a material value and that official architecture, representative and celebratory, is not the only architecture able to unveil the layers of history. Significance, remembrance and commemoration are embedded and perceived also in buildings that were designed to fulfil a specific function – such as the industrial ones – and are still today an important reference for the community, even if the functions they have been designed for are no longer relevant.

If we investigate the etymology of the word 'heritage', we realise that its Latin roots are linked with the word 'heres' ('heir' in English), which has an extensive meaning linked with the idea of a legacy that includes both material and immaterial values, without any economic content.

Reflection on the opportunities to reuse a heritage with immaterial values has encouraged thinking on the overall topic of preservation. Introducing time as a key ingredient, an approach to heritage should encourage the acceptance of further modifications. Every consecutive adaptation adds a new layer of sense to the existing significance and emphasises the idea that buildings are valuable as 'memory spaces' and 'cultural experiences' more than as integral entities. Relationships and equilibrium between the previous and the new intervention depend on the cultural values taken into consideration. The questions raised in the workshop on *Adaptive Reuse of Heritage with 'symbolic value'* focus on the significance of the inherited object and the impact that interventions have on it.

### **Grade(s) of reusability**

Opportunities and strategies for adapting the (historical) built heritage depend on many different factors that are partly cultural and partly structural, acting as constraints or opportunities in the reuse process: the form and structure, the historical and contextual meanings, the sustainability opportunity.

Time operates as a factor that can either weaken or strengthen the building's characteristics: on one hand it triggers an unavoidable decay and damage arising from everyday use, decelerates its social utility, negatively affects its economic life; on the other hand it transforms the particularity and the historical qualities into values, activating opportunities for preservation and reuse.

A building may have played different roles at different times, not only in terms of occupation but also as a reference for the community with regard to its role as a site of significance, remembrance and commemoration (symbolic value, place for past important events, etc.). According to Mark Salber Phillips, historical understanding 'is inconceivable outside of the affective and ideological engagements that give the past so much of its meaning, or the formal structures that make representation possible' (Salber Phillips 2013: XI).

The material aspects of buildings are valuable in terms of economics – the construction techniques, the materials used, the artefacts – recognisable and protected by law and regulations: according to the different national laws (for example 'Planning for the Historic Environment', 2010 by the Department for Communities and Local Government in England or 'Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio', 2004 by Ministro dei Beni e delle

FIG. 3. The Selexyz Dominicanen, Maastricht (2015).

FIG. 4. Kruisherhotel, Maastricht (2015).



Attività Culturali in Italy), a grade of value is stated together with the compatible intervention typology that defines what is or is not modifiable, renounceable, removable, reusable. As a consequence, we could say that an initial grade of reusability of the building is set by law. The debate around the opportunity to reuse a building has focused mainly on function, concentrating on the slippery territory of the identification of the compatible functions while very little attention has been given to its immaterial legacies, disconnected from the sphere of economics and thus difficult to evaluate. In that regard a number of buildings have faced musealisation as a neutral choice, able to keep the narrative alive with very little intervention; in many cases that choice, being unable to direct activity and occupancy, has led to further ageing of the building.

The way we read and understand the stratified meanings embedded or interpret and intervene through adaptations affects not only the current building/environment, but also the future grade of reusability. The intervention can be temporary or reversible, in order not to affect future decisions, or decide to what extent to allow the 'existing' to play an active role.

### **Recognition of the cultural experience: three churches in Maastricht**

Which aspects of a building should be preserved in order to enhance the recognition of its cultural experience when the site, according to the actual timeframe, has no connection with the original function it was designed for?

This is the case for buildings where everything, from structure to decoration, is linked to the message of religion. These buildings are affected by a strong decrease in religious practice and structurally present formal constraints due to the specific traits of the typology. Today's reuse process is very controversial, but in the past these buildings have experienced continuous change due to discontinuity of use and a radical shift in the perception of their usefulness and meaning.

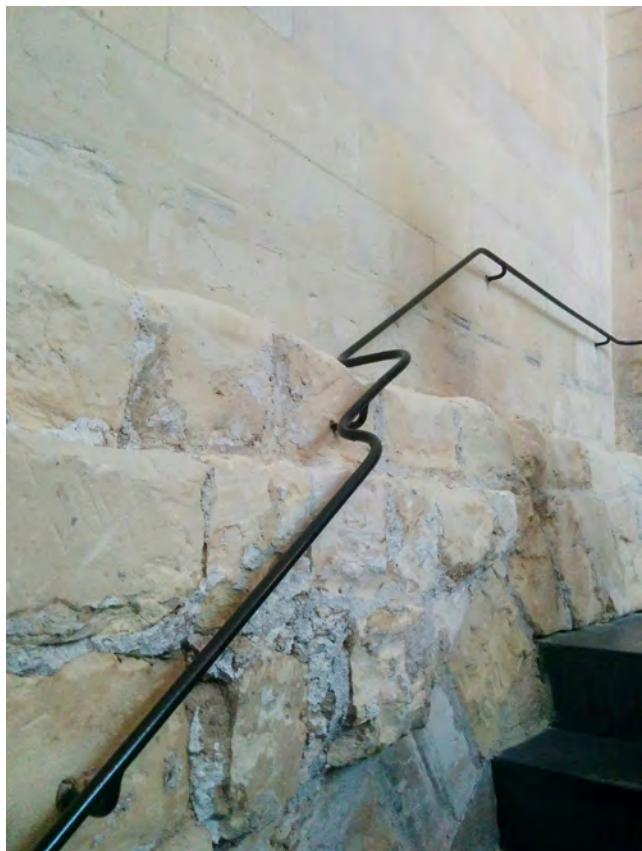
The EAAE Thematic Network on Conservation, Workshop V proposed for discussion three different case studies of adaptive reuse of religious buildings, all in the city of Maastricht and all realised over the last 20 years: the Selexyz Dominicanen bookshop (2006), the Kruisherhotel (2005) and the Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg (1996). In the following section these three interventions – with different outcomes, yet produced by the same temporal and cultural context – will be investigated in order to understand to what extent the meaning of the building is embedded in the intervention and its effect.

The Selexyz Dominicanen, inaugurated as a bookshop in 2006, has undergone different adaptations since the Dominicans were ousted at the end of the 18th century: a military depot, a school, the city depot, an exhibition space, a celebration hall, a multicultural space, a postal service, the city library, a bicycle storage and finally, a bookshop. The actual design resolution by Merckx+Girod stresses the differences between the content and the container, addressing an independent and reversible intervention. The project interprets the spirit of the place and the spirit of the time in a conservative way while inserting a separate, independent function. The connection to the existing site has been interpreted as a restoration plan that preceded the insertion of the library (Fig. 3). The traces left from the previous occupations have been erased; the different layers of meaning are not considered valuable enough to be retained. In terms of grades of reusability, the approach put in place by Merckx+Girod is more typological than site-specific. The new inserted function is fully contained within the compact intervention: the books and the shelves, the vertical connections and the lighting system are all incorporated into a large-scale object that could literally be disassembled and moved into another similar space. The project guarantees a high grade of reusability for further modifications, being conceptually and physically detached from the context. Since the restoration of the building was the starting point of the adaptive intervention, the significance of the building has been interpreted literally in terms of materiality. The intervention led the discussion on what a compatible function means today, allowing a religious church to be occupied by a commercial space. The actual use of the interior, being at the border in between an open/public and private space (as in all retail environments), facilitates a broad experience of the building by different types of visitors.

A similar approach, though adopting a completely different language, has been used for the conversion of the church and convent of the Crutched Friars into the Kruisherhotel, even if the story of the building has been quite different due to the lengthy inactivity of the site. During the French Revolution the Crutched Friars were driven out of the monastery, which was temporarily transformed into a storehouse and military barracks. At the end of the 19th century the complex had undergone a restoration process, been put into use as a National Agricultural Research Station and then



FIGS. 5-6. The Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg.



left empty. The city of Maastricht had a plan to buy the complex and transform it into the Academy of Fine Arts, but had to abandon this plan due to the enormous conversion costs. At the beginning of the 2000s the city accepted a proposal from a luxury hotel company to change it into a hotel, under the condition of a 'reversible intervention'. The new contents – reception, restaurant, bar and shared workspace – are all contained inside a new structure, independent of the existing one (Fig. 4). Compared to the intervention at the Selexyz Dominicanen, this intervention occupies more space relative to the existing building: the volume of the church is filled with new functions and the experience of the original spaces is denied.

These two projects, though with two different outcomes, explore similar strategies that are more typology-specific than site-specific, inserting new objects into a restored and untouched context. In this case, due to the choice of the designers to dramatically distort the proportions of the original space, the significance of the inherited object is preserved in an instrumental way in order to add value to the inserted function. For the character of the inserted function, a hotel, the effect of the intervention does not contribute to the feeling of shared ownership that is achieved in the Selexyz Dominicanen.

The third example is the Regionaal Historisch Centrum Limburg, situated in a former Franciscan monastery dated 1234, and in a church less than a century older. Similar to the two previous case studies, from 1632 the complex was reused in a number of different ways: as an arsenal, an orphanage, a military hospital, a barracks and a prison, a sauerkraut factory and finally an archive and library. The first adaptation of the church into an archive and library dates back to the end of the 19th century; since then, the complex has undergone further works up until the opening in 1996. This last intervention acknowledges both the existing building and its new functions, exploring circulation patterns achieved through the merging of new insertions with the existing, and is at the same time both site- and time-specific. Traces of previous use, structure and materiality are experienced through the new narrative, and new needs are adapted as new layers (Fig. 5).

The building has been recognised as capable of receiving adaptations; the new space is perceived as perfectly fitting its new 'active' role, both structurally and metaphorically adding value to the cultural experience of the site and embodying the passage of time (Fig. 6).

### Interior strategies for immaterial legacies

Adaptive reuse, intended as a continuous process of using and reusing existing structures, environments and buildings is the preservation strategy that allows heritage to play an active role. The term reuse can be misunderstood if focused on use in terms of function. Rather, opportunities for reuse must be explored through investigating how people use and sense a space, both in terms of perception and identification.

Reuse implies the re-semanticisation of places together with the ability to keep traces of a relationship to past timeframes. The projects described are responsible for constructing new interpretations, narrating new stories, writing a new plot. Adaptive reuse is the process that can mediate the relationship with the past and its different layered meanings. These buildings' role, organisation and form are at once mirrors of the past and bearers of societal transformation. The practice of interior architecture/design encompasses a complex network of knowledge, thanks to its culturally and politically situated nature; it is an interdisciplinary space in which many discourses and actors embrace diverse instruments and methods of enquiry. Dealing with strategy, business and politics, interior architecture/design today invents new frameworks that can engage, interpret and foresee alternative processes of intervention.

Interior architecture/design, dealing with the idea of reusing and re-interpreting the content, and thus the significance of the existing heritage, becomes the preferred discipline – able to read, decode and reveal/conceal visible and invisible, tangible and intangible layers that live under the skin of architecture.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Stirling prize winners in 2013, 2015, 2016 were all building re-use projects.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin 1999.

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## PERMANENCIES AND DISAPPEARANCES

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At different times a church has been transformed into a bookshop, a library, a barracks or a stable, a cinema, an auditorium, an hotel or an archive, a furniture shop, a bar, a club, a museum or even a tourist information office. And many secular buildings have been transformed during the past centuries. Several memorial places are now abandoned because the values that they evoked are no more and nobody knows what their future will hold.

The problem is simply that the combinations of the 'original' uses of a building or site with its successive modifications and their consequences for its spaces, structures and architectural features are really infinite. So where does the scandal really lie in the case studies we visited in Liège, Hasselt, Genk or Maastricht? For centuries, buildings conceived and constructed for particular functions have been afterwards reused (or misused!) for different purposes. One could also argue that the history of architecture could or should be rewritten as an immense history of reuse and adaptations or, perhaps, of conservation and restoration (allowing for some differences about the terms) (Glendinning 2013; Jokilehto 2002; Gonzales 1999). But the consequences of the changes wrought on the buildings are so different that it would be almost impossible to embrace them into a systemic 'ex-post taxonomy'.

What, therefore, should our attitude be today towards these transformations of the past? Why do contemporary changes provoke our indignation and ethical, political or technical controversies? The interior spaces of some reused buildings have sometimes remained as they were before and their 'built matter' and external appearance have survived almost unmodified, so that they could seem still to be 'original'. However, what does 'original' mean exactly? Does it refer to 'the first ones' on the site? And who really knows what these were? Are we perhaps ready to erase the traces of everything that happened after the first construction? On the other hand, are those traces still significant for our present society? Despite the apparent permanence of some fragments of the supposed 'original' situation, in reality several meanings, symbols and atmospheres of those buildings have been definitely lost. In one of the case studies in Maastricht, for example, a dining table in a coffee shop has replaced the main altar in the choir of the late-Gothic church of the Dominicans, which has been transformed into a bookshop. Its cross shape provoked the indignation of many participants. Nevertheless, the persons seated around it seemed happy and comfortable in that space (which can still be appreciated) while reading, drinking and conversing. In this regard we must also remind ourselves that the church already lost part of its previous sacred nature when the Lutheran Reformation transformed it into a completely different place. The Protestant liturgy had moved the focus of the church from the Blessed Sacrament kept in the tabernacle on top of the main altar, where the daily repetition of the holy sacrifice of the mass took place, towards the pulpit where the

FIG. 1. The Augustijnenkerk in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, with the benches now facing the pulpit.

FIG. 2. The Bonifatiuskerk in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, transformed in arts & cc.

FIG. 3. Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome: originally the mausoleum of Emperor Adrian, now a museum.

FIG. 4. The decorated vault of the apse of Francesco Saverio's church in Genova: reused as central university library, now abandoned but still full of books.



'liturgy of the word' takes place as the real centre of the reformed faith (Fig. 1). A similar deep transformation occurred in many Catholic churches during the 16th century, in those countries that embraced the Reformation of the time, so that they had not been perceived, used or experienced as they were beforehand. In another church we visited, the silence of the space of prayer and worship seemed to be preserved within the quiet new environment of an archive. Nevertheless, the symbolic meanings and the previous use of its spaces (their orientation, paths, functions) have been completely changed, forgotten and denied, even if with architectural solutions of high quality. On the contrary, in the last case study, the space of the ancient Gothic naves, the built matter, the meanings and the

ways of using the church have been totally distorted and privatised by the new hotel's function, exacerbated by some design choices of doubtful quality.

And the world is full of even rougher and more radical but sometimes random transformations of analogous religious buildings (Fig. 2).

### **For a brief 'phenomenology of changes' in architecture**

A 'use' is always necessary, as Vitruvius already affirmed (*ratio utilitatis*) and the protagonists of the treatises' tradition confirmed. Also, many other scholars and architects underlined its importance through the centuries until the restoration charters of the 20th century: Athens in 1930, Venice in 1964 and so on (ICOMOS 1964, 1994, 2014). Architecture, on the other hand, has been always built to answer people's needs and has never been conceived only to be contemplated or simply interpreted. Buildings must be used, otherwise they have no meaning and utility for their communities and can thus fall into decay, be abandoned and even collapse. This applies to the monuments that lost their 'original' uses, and for this reason we ask ourselves what we could/must do with them. Alois Riegl (Riegl 1903) and Gustavo Giovannoni (Giovannoni 1945) had said that a new use is necessary and welcome in these cases, but it should be compatible and not distort or destroy the characters of the buildings. The question regards the limits of their transformation, especially taking into account their 'symbolic values'.

The mausoleum of the Roman Emperor Adrian was abandoned and degraded after the fall of the Roman Empire (Fig. 3). It remained 'unused' for centuries until the Popes reused it as a jail and a defensive fortress. In 1527, the Pope took refuge here during the siege by the Germans and afterwards, as a result, the building hosted one of his protected residences. After the end of the temporal power of the Papacy, the birth of the Kingdom of Italy (1861–71) and of the Republic (1946), the mausoleum has become a museum.

In the past, as already mentioned, many churches in Europe have been – several times, and for different reasons – abandoned, deconsecrated and then restored, rededicated and reused as churches. At other times the transformation has been radical and irreversible and the new uses have been completely different from the previous ones. For example, in the 1930's the church of the Jesuits' Collegium in Genoa was transformed to host the central library of the University (and is now abandoned). A 'technological machine' made of metal shelves (designed by a famous architect and now protected, as is the church) completely filled its nave, hiding the decorations on the walls and the frescoes of the apse that – as an ironic consequence – are now unexpectedly visible from the base of its vault (Fig. 4).

Santa Sophia in Istanbul was built as a Christian Latin church and after the fall of the eastern Empire of Constantinople it had been used as a mosque. Now it is a museum, but perhaps it will again be a mosque in the near future, according to some declarations by Turkish leaders. The ancient structures are still there, the astonishing space with its games of light seems to be the same as the original and some plasterwork and stuccoes has resisted time. But the Christian decorations have disappeared, replaced by the calligraphy of the Quran's verses. The Gothic Cathedral of Sainte Sophie, from the Lusignan period, in northern Nicosia (Cyprus), was built as a Christian Latin church in the 12th century when the Crusaders arrived here, escaping from the Holy Land. At the end of the 16th century, the Ottomans defeated the Venetian rulers of Cyprus and as a result the church is now the Selimiye Mosque. The carpets placed on the paving with a different 'orientation' from the main axis of the cathedral, as a result of its new religious status, immediately indicate the

FIG. 5. Islamiye Mosque: former Saint Sophia's Latin cathedral in northern Nicosia (Cyprus).

FIG. 6. The 'Albergo dei Poveri' in Genova: a 17th-century hostel for the poor, reused many times for different purposes.

FIG. 7. A 19th-century power station in Dordrecht, the Netherlands, refurbished as a social meeting point hosting several cultural institutions.

FIG. 8. The 19th-century water tower refurbished as a luxury hotel in Dordrecht, the Netherlands in its setting.



new way of using its almost unmodified spaces (Fig. 5). The ancient decorations have been erased; altars and paintings have been removed. The *mihrab* (the niche indicating the direction of Mecca – Quibla) and the *minbar* (the pulpit) from which the imam pronounces the Khutba (sermon) have been inserted in the ancient naves. Also, the never-completed exterior is almost untouched and still recalls its Christian origins. Over the centuries and all over Europe, many convents and monasteries have been transformed into military barracks, jails, hospitals, public offices, private residences and even factories, as consequences of changes in the political, social and religious order in each country. Some of them nowadays host schools, archives, libraries or residences, hotels, resorts, museums and even ministries (such as the Collegio Romano in Rome).

If we look at secular buildings, the story is not so different. A hospital from the 17th century is now a museum (centre Reina Sophia in Madrid), whilst the 'Albergo dei Poveri' (hostel for the poor) in Genoa was transformed into a hospital, then a sheltered residence for the elderly and is now partly reused for university purposes (Fig. 6). An abandoned electric power station has been converted into a museum like the Tate Modern in London, into a School of Architecture like in Delft or into a cultural centre as in Dordrecht and in many other places, whilst a 19th-century water tower is now a sophisticated hotel (Figs. 7-8). A complex built to host a jail has been adapted to the needs of the Faculty of Law in Hasselt or of the School of Architecture, or of new social housing, like in Florence (Fig. 9), but also in 'hotels de charm'. The Columbia 'belle époque' hotel now hosts the new central Library of the University of Genoa and others hotels have been transformed into private luxury residences.

### **Material/immaterial (tangible/intangible): conflicts and contradictions**

Looking at this virtually endless collection of examples, we must notice that sometime the use of the building is the same as the previous one. Nevertheless, the ways in which it is managed and lived in are completely different. In some cases, the changes of use have been realised by modifying its built matter, whereas in other cases almost nothing has been physically transformed, apparently in appearance at least. Many times the existing spaces have remained as they were before the changes and have been simply used for different purposes or in different ways. At other times, the change of use involved the modification of the buildings' spaces. In some situations, the changes required the addition of new elements (structures, spaces, finishes, decorations). In the emblematic case of the Egyptian obelisks in Rome, Pope Sixtus V transformed them from relics of paganism into the symbols of the triumphant Christian faith by adding bronze crosses on top. In other cases the changes required painful subtractions of existing elements (demolitions, dismantling, removals).

At this point one question is inevitable: how can we distinguish the real differences of our present interventions from these past examples and where can we set nowadays any fundamental limit/boundary between what is 'acceptable' or 'forbidden' in the adaptation of an existing building to new uses? What has happened in the past is definitely consumed and metabolised by the passing of time that we usually call 'history', even if we should more appropriately speak about different attempts at the reconstruction of history. At the end of this brief tale, are we sure we are less 'barbarian' than



FIG. 9. The ancient jail of 'Le Murate' in Florence, converted into social housing.



those who provoked the collapse of the Roman Empire, or than those who suppressed monasteries and transformed them into military barracks or factories? If yes, why do we continue pursuing controversial reuses and transformations? Where is the real space for ethical issues in our attitudes and behaviours? Are we simply dealing with stones, knowing that each stone of course has a story, or are we really engaged with their known/unknown meanings and values for the future and not certainly for a definitely consumed past? Furthermore, in which measure are symbols, meanings, memories – that is, the ‘immaterial or intangible’ side of what we inherited – really embedded in the material of a building/site? The ‘immaterial’ often needs the ‘material’ to be conserved and transmitted. But how long will be the ‘intangible’ be perceived, understood, and appreciated as a result of the conservation of its ‘material’ substrate, or independently from that action? The answer is not easy and cannot be conclusive because it has to do with the passing of time (i.e. of ourselves), the sense of individual memory (very short) and the collective memory (that is always in some way artificially built and can also be manipulated or invented) (Ricoeur 2000). Stones are always necessary and can be helpful for the transmission of the ‘intangible’, but they will never suffice to ensure that values, symbols, meanings and memories can pass through the generations. Transmission is mainly a matter of domestic and public education and instruction, and achievable rather through the example of our behaviour. It is true that stones last longer than human lives and for this reason they can ensure that something will pass from any period to the following ones, realising a sort of continuity of our civilisation. Nevertheless, it can also happen that the values embedded in those stones are no longer comprehensible and accepted by a new generation. Yet we know that if stones resist, remain and persist, they could be in the future rediscovered, re-interrogated and again valued and appreciated. We thus find ourselves within a sort of a ‘circular or doubled or mirrored game’ within which we are definitely responsible for our choices, especially if they condemn something to disappearance.

### **Values assigned, perceived, accepted or refused**

The Pantheon, a simple example, was built as a pagan temple dedicated to the divinities of the Roman religion. It was abandoned after the fall of the Roman Empire and only after some centuries was converted into a Christian Latin church dedicated to Saint Mary of the Martyrs. It survived so long thanks in part to its massive masonry structure but also due to the persistence of paganism at the beginning of the Christian era and also due to the substantial abandonment of Rome. When in the 7th century the Pope saved it by consecrating those walls to the new faith, with that incredible central space, its symbolic meanings were irreversibly changed even though most of its surviving built matter was maintained. On the other hand, no one belonging to the previous religion was there to complain! Nowadays, something strange happens in this place – not less impressive than that which the changes in the churches of Maastricht provoked in our perceptions. We were shocked by their new uses because they seem to be the result of a loss of significance and a lack of respect for some (positive!) symbolic values we considered embedded in those buildings. Despite this, we silently accept that every day thousands of distracted tourists enter and come out of the Pantheon, with no care, silence or respect for the place, as though it were a simple ‘attraction’ and forgetting that it is even now a consecrated church; a space of worship, prayer and encounter with the supernatural (Fig. 10).

FIG. 10. The Pantheon in Rome: an officiated Catholic church invaded by distracted tourists.



Once again, where does the scandal of change lie nowadays?

If a problem really does exist, we should first of all try to clarify what exactly it comprises and whom it may concern. The reality is that over time everything changes: uses, needs, symbols, values, perceptions, reactions and also the goals of our actions (individual and collective). History changes, life changes, past and future change if seen from the present point of view. It thus seems that we have to face some radical and unsolvable contrapositions between forms, spaces and built matters, on one side, and on the other side, between these and meanings, symbols or values that are never eternal or definitely fixed.

During past ages something of the pre-existing world has been conserved or transformed, but it was not as a result of the application of a theory, a doctrinal attitude or a fixed and written rule. More realistically, it happened for the unstoppable and unforeseeable forces of history and of human needs, opportunities, constraints, resources, resilience, traditions and so on. The reuse of existing buildings has never been an explicit problem, at least until the 18th to 19th centuries, from some very specific cases aside. A culturally conscious statement of interest in the buildings that have been more or less conserved did not exist. Their destiny, between conservation, transformation or destruction, was rather determined by their symbolic values, which had to be confirmed, reinstated, vindicated or denied and erased from time to time, depending on general historical reasons or on the pragmatic opportunity they offered in terms of satisfying new needs.

What limits could we thus pose to our present needs/desires in reusing existing abandoned or underused buildings, considering what happened in the past?

### The reasons of the presumed 'scandal'

What is the real substance of the present conflict in this field? Perhaps we are not sincere or totally aware whilst discussing it! The world has deeply changed since 18th and 19th centuries, according to many protagonists of the so-called 'conservation movement' (Glendinning 2013). We know that what was 'normal' or 'common' for centuries can no longer be approached in unconscious ways, because it is now a 'doctrinal' if not a theoretical problem and we certainly cannot go back to the past. While this may be the case, it is not sufficient to explain the present conflicts and doubts linked to the reuse of existing fabric. We visited some buildings in the Netherlands, recently reused, that show how transformations do not exclusively belong to the past. Nor is this an issue just for the Netherlands or the Anglo-Saxon and northern European countries. Rather, it applies to the entire world with different depths, impacts and reactions.

Unfortunately, a sort of curtain seems to hide the true issues. A kind of perverse oblivion seems to play an ambiguous and dangerous role in our disputes. What is in fact the 'built matter' in our conceptual and doctrinal perspective? Certainly it does not simply coincide with the walls of a building. We also know that symbols and meanings belong to men, to humankind or even to smaller social groups and communities. They also inevitably change, in time and space, even if sometimes in unconscious or unreflective ways. This is especially true in our 'liquid', fragmented but in some respects also 'democratic', pluralistic, multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and globalised world (Bauman 2000). Nobody thus seems to legitimately have the right to say 'yes' or 'no' to any request for transformation of existing buildings. History will decide about them, in the future, if such a thing as history still exists (Augé 2003; Hobsbawm 1994). In the meantime, we inevitably have to say 'yes' or 'no', primarily in cultural terms, to the demands posed by our societies. It is our responsibility as scholars, teachers, professionals, administrators and citizens.

We also have to remember that every social, political and cultural change expresses its effects on the built environment, and this can also imply the disappearance of the losers, the only ones who can 'perceive' and suffer the scandal of the reuse of their symbolic buildings at the time when it happens. Afterwards, it is only a matter of artificial (cultural, political, social) reconstruction of past stories obtained through intervention on the stones of the buildings involved. So, once again, where does the real scandal lie today?

Thinking furthermore about the many intentional memorials, like the one in Liège, or many other monuments and cemeteries dedicated to the victims of past wars in Europe and around the world, we must also remember that the so-called 'law of the *damnatio memoriae*' (damnation of memory) ruled for centuries and still seems to govern human behaviours. It operates every time a sudden change or a revolution radically modifies the *ancienne régime*, the pre-existing order of a society. At the end of these recurrent iconoclastic periods, what remains as significant of the previous world? Why should we conserve those traces if a truly shared table of values does not exist any more? Furthermore, many other 'silent transformations' (Jullien 2009) are constantly investing our communities and environments. Several Catholic churches in Italy, for example, have been assigned to Orthodox communities (after recent immigration waves from Romania, Moldavia or Russia). They are still places of worship, prayer or meditation in the honour of the Christian God, while reflecting the different forms that faith has historically assumed. Nevertheless, some people feel insulted and disgusted by these changes even though the new users have not substantially modified anything of the existing buildings — not to speak of the

reactions to a unused Catholic church in Venice that has been provisionally assigned to the Muslim community to be used as a mosque. All these events perhaps mean that the real problem arises from a deep and sometimes unconscious background of our individual and social lives. This is a crucial and discriminating point of the question! It is not the physical and material changes per se that provoke uncontrollable reactions and refusals, and not only the formal or evidently symbolic ones. The negative reactions come perhaps from the most hidden, profound and darkest recesses of our minds, souls, hearts and viscera. On the other hand, we are not completely rational beings, and perhaps this is a good thing but it has also some uncontrollable or undesirable consequences (depending on each particular and sometimes irreducibly egoistic point of view)!

### **‘Positive’ – ‘negative’**

The workshop was asked to reflect on how to preserve ‘material/tangible’ and ‘immaterial/intangible’ values of some existing buildings, positive or negative, whilst reusing them. Nevertheless, there is also another aspect in which the counterpoised terms emerge. It is the evaluation of the results of any reuse process. In this regard, we should at least clarify in which ways we could assert that the values embedded in a building/site are positive or negative: for whom, on what basis and conditions and for how long? We must also recognise, for the reasons we mentioned before, that it is not enough to answer this question. The same applies to the evaluation of the outputs of any reuse intervention. We know, in fact, that values, meanings, symbols, memories – individual and collective – as they are and as they are perceived, change over time and can be reasons for joining, but also for dividing, the people involved. We should then also examine the real meanings of the terms ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ within different dimensions: individual–collective, private–public, superficial–profound. Lastly, we have to consider that some interventions are the result of deliberate processes and design choices, whereas others seem to be a consequence of random sequences of uncontrolled events. In any case, we should never forget that the quality of any intervention is almost indefinable, but it is surely linked to the quality of the adopted materials and constructive solutions, the spatial organisation and the depth and clarity of thought that supports any choice.

In the end, we must also remember that ‘time always matters’ and that distance from events changes our perceptions of them and the evaluation of their consequences and results. Only the future will thus decide if an ‘adaptive reuse’ sic we now carry out will be acceptable to those who come after us, even if it could be too late to regret the losses. We now sometimes complain about what happened in the past and about what we lost throughin the decisions of our ancestors. But those transformations have already happened and cannot be changed. We are responsible for our choices and we are free to do anything we want – but no longer in unconscious ways, as sometimes happened in the past. One profound difference between the present and previous ages now exists because we risk living in a never-ending present, with no memory and thus with no future, ruled by an immediate pressure to consume what we have at our disposal, which is also what we inherited.

We should really understand that what we now change in radical and irreversible ways, or what we definitely destroy, will be lost forever!

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## ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION OF ATMOSPHERE: AN ATTAINABLE TARGET?

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*'I enter a building, see a room,  
and – in the fraction of a second  
– have this feeling about it  
(Zumthor 2006: 11)*

To respond to the questions posed by the workshop, we feel it necessary to start from its title and ask ourselves what it is that gives the symbolic value to a church or a factory that is the object of our reflections: is it their being made of stone or reinforced concrete, and therefore related to the materials from which they are built; to their shape; to their age; or to the ritual that takes place every day in them and to the lives that the workers lead there? And, since we are dealing here with adaptive reuse, when the ritual and the work are expelled from those walls and replaced by other uses, what is left? Often we react to a shocking event by trying to halt time, keeping everything in an unreal and comforting still image. This happens, for example, when one preserves the room of a person who has died suddenly just as he left it: one tries in this way to maintain the 'imprint', something ineffable which lies beyond the materials, the forms and the things contained in it. It happens in the museums of memory and in the concentration camps where they scrupulously keep the poor furniture and the things that belonged to those who lived and died there. So it seems that bare walls are unable to retain the lives that took place inside them; they can only contain that which unfolds there gradually. In this sense, architecture seems to be changeable and always contemporary. Those walls, of course, allow a different kind of transmission, the intellectual sort, to take place: it passes through the historical and archaeological analysis and the interpretation of striking signs and traces. Our analytical readings, which are objective and conducted with scientific rigour, are increasingly effective in reconstructing a detailed and complete picture of the past state of a building. Thanks to these, it is possible to reconstruct the ways that people lived and built. But are we sure that this work, as detailed as it is, can lead us to understand every aspect of a building? The doubt arises when, often in front of adaptive reuse interventions, impeccable from the viewpoint of planning a new function and sometimes even from the viewpoint of protecting the building's historical heritage, we feel that something has gone wrong. When we enter these buildings, only in a few lucky cases do we find that the spirit of the place, that set of intangible elements that had impressed us on a visit prior to the transformation. The quality of the new design in these cases is insufficient to compensate for the loss of symbolic power, and the prevailing feeling is one of betrayal. Having said that, let us try to move from a feeling of loss to the description, if possible, of what we have actually lost.

Our current reading instruments of the historical heritage are not able to restore the architecture in all its complexity; they work by reduction, analysing many aspects but leaving out the very ones which could answer our question about betrayal and loss. We

have no tools, for example, to understand architecture when it is irrational, linked to feelings, emotions and perception. To speak of the ‘spirit of the place’ and, I would add, the ‘atmospheres’, means to refer to all that resists quantification and consequently, to that which our culture, for decades now, has decided to eliminate from our readings of architecture (see the reviews “Ambiances. International Journal of Sensory Environment, Architecture and Urban Space” and “Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology”). Our analytical readings increasingly refine our sensitivity to the widespread and lesser heritage, allowing the creation of new tales about objects that build up our memory (consider, for example, history seen from the point of view of material culture, and the enhancement of rural architecture or the museums dedicated to peasant lifestyles). On the other hand, the renunciation of the ‘humanistic’ reading (which captures the symbolic, aesthetic, artistic, iconographic and other aspects) has gradually led to a dangerous drying-up, whose failures we are beginning to see today. Until a few decades ago, those who worked in the world of preservation, even if they did so from a technical and scientific perspective, had had a formation heavily steeped in the humanities, a formation that inevitably compensated for and served as a counterpoint to the favoured specialisation. Today, the sum of experiences that form us both at school and in daily life are heavily weighted toward technological and scientific aspects and we must make an effort to turn our gaze elsewhere.

In this sense, the question “how do you recognise the symbolic value and the spirit of a place?” clearly shows the contradiction – the question presents words like ‘recognition’, ‘value’ and ‘spirit’ while lacking familiarity with the tools necessary to discuss them. To define the value and describe the spirit we cannot use the normal cognitive tools that pursue objectivity through analytical procedures.

Add to this the fact that, for decades, we have thought of architecture and our heritage as a ‘material object’ to be preserved carefully in the belief that by preserving the matter we would also have protected the rest (the values, spirit, the aura). I think this is not enough. Despite the articulation and complexity of the disciplines devoted to the study of historical heritage, our view of architecture is simplistic because it excludes items that come from sense perception ‘in which are rooted above all our involuntary vital experiences’ (Griffero 2016: 13) and which are still waiting for a proper philosophical discourse, despite the works of non-philosophers as Christian Norberg-Schulz and his studies on ‘spirit of place’, Juhani Pallasmaa and his reflections on architecture and senses, or Peter Zumthor and his *Atmospheres*. Let us then think about what we have set aside in these decades of technical-scientific ‘explanations’: the ‘comprehension’ of things. To comprehend means ‘to grasp the meaning’. And not, therefore, to explain, describe or analyse, but, as one reads in Webster’s Dictionary, to contain within oneself, to embrace, to enclose, to welcome in the mind, in the intellect, but also to penetrate the soul, the feelings of the other until we understand each other – until, in some cases, we are invaded, overwhelmed, modifying the initial state in which we found ourselves.

The concept of comprehending, which emerged in the context of 19th-century historicism as a different way of reading the world from that proffered by the positivist explanation, then had a strong psychological connotation due to the concept of *Einführung*: it meant essentially to step into the shoes of another. That prerogative is to be found also in the concept of *Stimmung* that Alois Riegl used to connote the ‘age val-

ue'<sup>1</sup>. What characterises this late 19th-century position is the belief that one finds oneself before a transfer of feelings and sensations that only the subject can experience and that through *Einfühlung* fill the object. Therefore, 'the object is empty, the subject fills it with meaning and feeling (or, if you will, the object is dead, and the subject infuses life into it). The sense (the feeling, the pathos) is all on the side of the subject, and in the empathic process is transferred – as in a game of communicating vessels – to the object that had none' (Pinotti 1998: 350). The most recent reflections on aesthetics propose a more complex understanding of the relationship between subject and surrounding reality that is synthesised with the concept of 'atmosphere'.

These aesthetics studies that come from the tradition of phenomenology do not pose questions about art and artistic judgment, but about the way we 'feel in the world', by offering a different reflection on the themes of perception. They have been the focus of debate in recent years but have been studied for the most part with the analytical tools of neuro-aesthetics<sup>2</sup>. The phenomenological studies, instead, offer an approach to perception that is neither experimental nor merely observational, but lived and affective and, furthermore, far from 'the embrace, here considered deadly, of semiotics and hermeneutics' (Griffero 2010: 11). To take this step one must take the responsibility to 'not leave vagueness (but stay in it in the right way)' (Griffero 2014: 1).

Speaking of the atmosphere of a place is similar to speaking about the emotions. We all know what is melancholy, angry, sad, but we cannot define them exactly. In the same way, we understand but we cannot explain exactly what happens in some situations: when we enter a room and feel a tense or relaxed climate, when we feel the obvious contradiction between a tranquil day and our gloomy mood. We grasp it in the charm of the light and colours in a space or in the influence that music has on our mood. And so: 'despite this undoubted familiarity with atmosphere and with the fact that it can also be in contrast with cognitively verifiable data, the question "what is an atmosphere?" is still [...] not answered satisfactorily' (Griffero 2014: 2). Let's try to proceed in a phenomenological manner: 'Perceiving an atmosphere, therefore, means grasping a feeling in the surrounding space [...]. It means being gripped by a *something-more*, and it is precisely this "something-more", exceeding real factuality and which nonetheless we feel with and in it, that we can call "atmospheric", seeing in it an excess with respect to the place and, if you like, a great part of what "resists a representational attitude" (Franzini 2006: 72)' (Griffero 2014: 5). It is to feel the presence of an indistinct me and, at the same time, of something else. To better understand, we use the examples of Gernot Böhme that distinguish two different atmospheric experiences: 'ingressive' and 'discrepancy' atmospheres. In the first case, the atmosphere is 'a state of mind which is not yet mine, but which is offered to me in a certain way. Atmosphere is a space into which you enter. Of course, this space is not a metric space [...]. But it is still a space to the extent that you can enter it, be in it, and be wrapped in it [...]. I'm here and I feel emotionally disposed in this or that way' (Böhme 2010: 83–84). It is a matter, therefore, of feeling, as it arrives; a certain state of mind from a particular place. Atmospheres are 'states of mind indefinitely extended in space (quasi-objective)' (Griffero 2013: 15–22).

In the second case, the discrepancy is the experience of feeling a strong difference between my state of mind and the atmosphere of the place where I am: 'Oppressed



by grief I can, for example, experience a *serene* spring day as clearly discrepant with respect to the specific way I feel' (Böhme 2010: 84). In this case, 'despite the personal mood of sadness in which I find myself, I am impressed by the serene atmosphere surrounding me, struck, thus, by a tendency to change my mood. Even though this tendency in some way stops or is perhaps even rejected, the sadness it is nevertheless changed, it becomes more focused in me and may even in some sense become foreign to me, since I am still impressed by the serene external atmosphere' (Böhme 2010: 85).

My attention is focused not on my sensations but on the 'feeling itself' that is present in every perception because it is the 'most original stage of the lived experience', but unfortunately it is usually underrated compared to rational knowledge. It relates to the 'direct communication', 'immediate-current, intuitive-sensitive, still pre-conceptual communication' that we have with appearances, that is, 'with things on the basis of the changing way in which they present themselves to the senses' (Griffero 2016: 10). What is taken into account is not the object nor the subject but how we 'feel' in a given situation and place: 'The atmosphere thus has to do with the margin of "objectivity" and "exteriority" guaranteed by the fact that in any case one is speaking of spaces, environments, of the world, but at the same time is inconceivable outside of subjective biases, of that emotional sphere that expands from the perception of our body in the environment' (Vizzardelli 2010: 22–23)<sup>3</sup>.

The classic aesthetic, writes Böhme, in its historical development has taken into account only three or four types of atmospheres: the beautiful, the sublime, the picturesque and the aura of which Walter Benjamin writes (Benjamin 1966 [1936]). The aura, in particular, interests us because it has often been used as food for thought within our discipline. It is a 'unique and unrepeatable atmosphere, perceived involuntarily, of a moment of authentic life, of something distant and inaccessible that in a sense returns our gaze' (Griffero 2010: 84). Interesting is the interpretation of the aura as a foreign concept to the 'trace', 'understood as the appearance of a closeness, no matter how far away the source is, controlled by the subjective activity ("in the traces we do our thing; in the aura it takes hold of us" writes Benjamin)' (Griffero 2010: 85). In this sense, the relation between trace, authenticity and aura loses that evidence that allowed us to formulate the equation: conservation of the trace = conservation of the aura.

The last element to be highlighted is that the philosophy of the atmosphere is not a philosophy of art but a theory of sensible knowledge, and as such does not have judgement as its aim. It is a powerful tool for understanding which, for example, is able to speak of the phenomenon of 'aestheticisation of the world' that traditional aesthetics, relegating it to the category of kitsch, has refused to describe and therefore to effectively critique.

### **Description and production of atmospheres**

The description of a place made using the description of the atmosphere must express 'how you feel' and in this sense we are faced with the rehabilitation of so-called 'first impressions', those 'involuntary experiences of life that, as "quasi" servomechanisms withdrawn both from doubt and from the selective or conceptual whim, serve as an overall response (emotional, motivational and values-related)<sup>4</sup>. The first impression that can even vary with the progress of understanding or of the analytical knowledge of

the place, but that undoubtedly has an ability to affect any further perception (Griffero 2010: 32–35).

Let us take for example the Dominican church in Maastricht, one of the objects visited during the workshop<sup>5</sup>. We can imagine that on entering the church before the changes undergone during the 20th century, we probably would have felt pervaded by silence, by the sense of the sacred, by solemnity and majesty, we would have been fascinated by the light that filtered by the great windows – or maybe on the contrary we would have felt oppressed, crushed by the height of its vaults. Such an atmosphere, whatever it was, was altered when, deconsecrated, the church changed functions several times. But during all those transformations – with no design intent – each time, we probably would have felt upon entering it a new, different atmosphere in which was contained the feeling of the loss of the sacred building and feelings related to the new, different spaces. Currently, the adaptive reuse, with a strong design intent and which transformed the church into a bookstore, gave the building the decor that it had lost, with a quality project, with attention to detail, good materials and the original spaces partly preserved. What about current atmosphere? From the images of the church, I received the impression (strengthened by talking with others who visited it) that the church was betrayed.

Of course, the place always has its own atmosphere. Nevertheless, the workshop topic asks us to interrogate the possibility of intervening in a place and, despite the inclusion of a new function, of maintaining its symbolic values. From a conservative point of view, I believe that an operation of reuse cannot be reduced to taking into account only the building in the original state (the former church) and the new spaces. In this case, after removing traces of many uses and fitting in the new function, the result would be the simple juxtaposition of two diversities. I believe, instead, that it's important trying to start with the building with all its historic traces.

Designing, undoubtedly, means producing atmospheres. In conservation, it means to allow, facilitate, the 'stratification' of the atmospheres, not their substitution.

To start from a place and its own atmosphere, one that includes the complexity of material and emotional stratifications (not from an abstract and stereotyped idea of the former church), the design of the new functions and spaces have a chance to blend with existing ones without concealing them. In this way, the new spaces and new functions have the possibility of approaching the existing ones without overwhelming them. The result will blend in, enter into dissonance or even dominate, displace. It will be a dialogue or a confrontation, but will not delete a part of history and, with it, the symbolic value of the building. I think that this result has been achieved in cases where a deliberate conservation of the signs of history and degradation that can reveal the meanings of events and the passage of time on the buildings has been pursued. I think, for example, of the efforts made in the reuse as public library of the Church of Escuelas Pías de San Fernando Lavapiés, in Madrid, the transformation into university facilities of the bakery of Caserma Santa Marta in Verona, or the Belvedere in the Villa Reale in Monza. But is it possible to go beyond this? Perhaps preserving the 'material traces' is not enough to ensure the preservation of the 'spirit of the place'. Preserving the material is necessary but not sufficient.

Some designers have tried to reflect on producing atmospheres within their projects. (Zumthor 2006; Holl 2000). Peter Zumthor has even tried to list the elements that combine

to create atmospheres: 'The body of architecture', that is, its physical presence<sup>6</sup>, 'material compatibility', 'the sound of a space', 'the temperature of a space', 'surrounding objects', 'between composure and seduction', 'tension between interior and exterior', 'levels of intimacy', 'the light on things'. When the project concerns a pre-existing building, designing produces atmospheres that come into relationship with the existing ones. By not taking this aspect into account, the project will have a random outcome from this point of view. So, to preserve the atmosphere of a place, the spirit of place, it is necessary to understand the intangible elements that, merged with the materials and the signs of time, make of a place what it is. I refer to everything that is not limited to vision, but involves listening to sounds, feeling the temperature, the smells, the warmth of the sun filtering through the windows. It is a real embodied experience (Pallasmaa 2005: 31–34).

Think of being in a building from which you perceive the sound of the crowd gathered in the square and the nearby cathedral bells. If at the end of an intervention of reuse, sounds will be unable to penetrate inside, we have preserved a totally dumb wrapper. If the project fails to take account of this, the intervention would fail a part of its intent and probably those who will walk around in the building will feel these objects and materials as strangers, new, disconnected from the atmospheric continuity with the past, and they will need a rational medium to be able to reconnect with them (the study of the traces, the historical explanations, the reconstructions through models, etc.).

The function has an important role. In the case of the church of Maastricht, the chosen function of a bookstore has its own atmosphere, one that we find in many similar places: it must arouse certain feelings related to the use of the book merchandise to make it more marketable. To do this, it inserts itself into a context that refers to high culture, to the intellectual nature of a library. The church in this conception is reduced to a background, decoration, it fails to assert its presence and to resonate in harmony (*Stimmung*) with those who enter. A bookshop is certainly a function that is an integral part of contemporary rites and rituals and, in this sense, it contains a deep ambiguity in the *mise-en-scène* of references to the depth of thought-culture, and to the slowness of reading (with lots of places to pause, soft lighting, staging reminiscent of reading rooms), while the objective of the operation is strictly and solely commercial (Griffero 2010: 85–86). On the other hand, the bookshop does not have enough authority to replace the church, as happened in the past with places which while undergoing a change of function saw the original symbolic value substituted or juxtaposed with a value that was just as strong: such is the case with monumental buildings converted into museums, auditoriums, libraries, etc.

In conclusion, using the approach of the aesthetics of atmosphere on architecture does not mean disregarding the analytical approach. It means rather supplementing it with an additional contribution which would see it as a 'generator' of feelings and which adds comprehension to the explanation conducted in a scientific spirit. Gernot Böhme writes that what we always expect from aesthetics is an expansion of language, and in our case this means expanding our ability to make linguistically accessible the irrational aspect of our relationship with the city and particularly with its architectural heritage (Böhme 2010: 253). An approach of this type, however, has a dual function: to design, by governing wisely, also the production of atmospheres and to equip ourselves to recognise and make communicable the *mise-en-scènes* of those who produce the atmospheres for concealment (primarily advertisers). In this case one can build the tools for a critique, based on the recognition of the fact that 'alongside the value in use and

exchange value' there exists 'a real value of *mise-en-scène* of the goods' (Böhme 2010: 253). That *mise-en-scène* value prevails in the case of our bookstore. That the project has kept every surface, its transformations and stratification, the signs, the traces; that we have come to the realisation of the new function with a thorough process is not enough: these aspects are appreciated only through a learning path, through a story, an explanation of the facts, in short: through reason. Only if we enter the field of gnosis, therefore, do we manage to appreciate the historical and artistic testimony as such. All this cannot emerge at the level of the 'first impression': at this level, that is, at the 'pathic' level (Griffero 2013), it is the bookstore that has prevalence.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Which is the proper tool of the subject, that uses it to 'give a new slant on the outside world' (Griffero 2010).

<sup>2</sup> In the last twenty years, for example, many scientific books have been published in Italy on the relationship between beauty, arts and the mind. Many more are the philosophical books about aesthetic experiences.

<sup>3</sup> We find in these concepts what James Gibson calls 'affordance': that is, something that relates to both the environment and humans and that involves their complementarity. And it is not only, as is often meant, (reducing the complexity of the term) a physical characteristic that pushes towards a certain type of use (*the affordance* of a handle is to grasp it). It refers not only to physical properties that can be measured: the affordance 'is both physical and psychic, and yet it is neither the one nor the other. An affordance is directed in both directions, in that of the environment, and in that the observer' (Gibson 1999: 206–208).

<sup>4</sup> Furthermore: 'The first impression is an emotional involvement of one's own body that, interrupting the usual observational and pragmatic flow, puts itself forward, precisely because of this immediacy it has to represent for the subject a much better identity certificate of the cogito and even more so of the objective facts, which as such are not strictly speaking more ours than others' (Griffero 2010: 32).

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately I have not personally seen the church and I take my impression from photos and videos.

<sup>6</sup> 'We are sitting in this barn, we have these series of beams, which in turn are hidden under other materials and so on. I have a sensory perception of this space. And I find that this is the first and largest mystery of architecture, the fact that it collects objects and materials in the world to give life to this space' (Zumthor 2006: 21).

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## THE 'CHANGE IN MEANING' OF BUILT HERITAGE BEARING SOCIAL VALUE. THE CASE OF THE FORMER PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL 'LEONARDO BIANCHI' IN NAPLES (ITALY) AND THE MINING SITES OF GENK (BELGIUM): ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES

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'When we speak of the modern cult of monuments or historic preservation, we rarely have 'deliberate' monuments in mind. Rather, we think of 'artistic and historical monuments' [...]. This designation, which may have expressed quite a valid point of view from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, may lead to misunderstanding today, due to the widespread contemporary conception of the essence of artistic value' (Riegl 1996 [1903]: 69).

Riegl's admonition, which warned his readers at the beginning of the 20th century of the change in the conception of the essence of artistic sense, is ever more valid today: two hundred years after the industrial revolution produced its first results, we can undoubtedly add an enormous amount of 'unintentional monuments' to the category of 'cultural heritage'. The intended use of these buildings, designed to meet social and business-related needs, reflects the reasons behind their preservation and transmission to future generations.

During the 19th century, industrial progress and the emergence of the middle class in Europe led to the spread of new types of building in the countryside and in the cities designed to meet the functional needs of the emerging middle class. Over time, these artefacts have become 'material evidence of civilisation', not only for their historical or artistic features, but also for a number of intangible values determined by their role within the social, economic, and political frame.

Thus, compared to half a century ago, the concept of cultural heritage places further emphasis on protection, promoting the spirit of places, that is to say their living, social, and spiritual nature.

The abandoned industrial sites of Genk (Belgium), analysed during the workshop, and the former psychiatric hospital of Naples 'Leonardo Bianchi' may seem to be two distant examples, but they have both played a significant social role within their local contexts (Figs. 1-2).

Both settlements were built between the late 19th and early 20th century, constituting a figurative and material testimony of that period. As for their typological aspects, the anthropomorphic plan of the Neapolitan hospital and the more compact one of the Belgian mining site can be defined as 'paradigmatic' cases, because of their high specificity responding to specific functional programmes.

The process of abandonment that both have gone through, due to different causes, of course – the end of the coal-based economy in Belgium and the Italian law requiring the phasing out of mental hospitals in the second half of the 20th century – resulted in a significant loss of their intangible value as the two settlements were deprived of the unique



role they had played for about a century and have been relegated to a mere material entity in a dismal state of disrepair.

The Flemish town of Genk, at the borders between Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, has based its fortune on the mining economy, since the discovery of large coal deposits in the early 20th century. With the development of the mining activity, Genk had attracted numerous factories that processed materials from the mines of Winterslag, Zwartberg and Waterschei, at the edge of the region<sup>1</sup>.

Genk's urban and economic development was directly proportional to the development of the industrial sites in the urban area, to the point that with the closure of the mines in the 1980s, Genk underwent a deep economic crisis due to unemployment and to the lack of its main means of income and subsistence.

The industrial crisis led to the abandonment of industrial plants, which became 'ghost sites' for a long time. They were excluded from the urban social fabric, waiting for an architectural project that would give them a new role.

The quarry of Winterslag, a suburb north of Genk, was the last of the big mines to be closed, in 1988. It was the

only witness of nearly a century of industrial history and, more generally, of the very identity of the Belgian town, with its heterogeneous complex of galleries, warehouses, and factories.

Similarly, the psychiatric hospital complex 'Leonardo Bianchi' of Naples is an 'urban void'<sup>2</sup>. The site requires a restoration project to preserve the structures that have housed it, about thirty years after its disuse as a municipal psychiatric hospital. The former psychiatric hospital needs to recover its 'social' value and be given a new role, also taking into account the nearby airport and the green areas to be regenerated north of Naples' historic centre.

The original intended use of the 'Leonardo Bianchi', invalidated by two Italian laws dating 1978 and 1994 that initiated the gradual dismantling of mental hospitals<sup>3</sup>, constitutes a highly symbolic intangible element that cannot be overlooked in its restoration project, just like the distributive, technical, and formal aspects of the artefact.

Built at the beginning of the 20th century, the 'Leonardo Bianchi' complex of Naples<sup>4</sup> is located in the Capodichino district, on a hill north-east of the city, at eighty-five meters



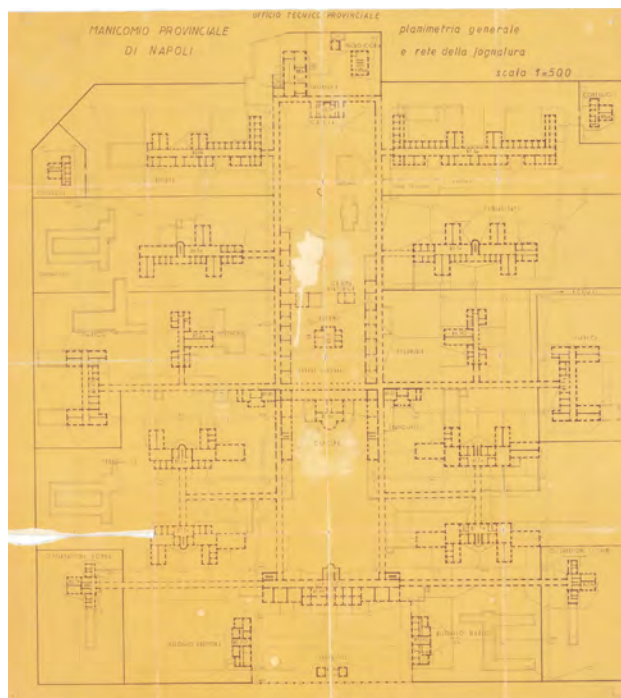
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FIG. 1. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'. The Main Kitchen.

FIG. 2. Genk (Belgium). C-Mine. The main hall.

FIG. 3. Naples (Italy). Aerial view of the Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'.

FIG. 4. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'. A plan.



above sea level, near the city's airport, in a large square area of about twenty-two hectares, rich in green areas. The main façade overlooks the wide road of Capodichino, from which the hospital can be accessed.

The former psychiatric hospital is composed of a main building and twenty-nine pavilions, distributed in a green area and interconnected by internal routes, following a clearly anthropomorphic layout (Figs. 3-4). The complex was built between 1899 and the 1950s. It hosted several services and functions that contributed to make the structure self-sufficient and autonomous from the rest of the city. In addition to the hospitalisation wards, the asylum had facilities enabling the institution to sustain itself, such as workshops, laboratories and also areas to grow fruit and vegetables. Mentally ill patients would get some sort of benefit out of their work; they would be constantly guided by nurses and then 'rewarded' with tobacco or money. In only twenty years, the structure also became equipped with a copious scientific library (approximately eight thousand volumes, two thousand booklets and numerous scientific publications) and some research labs. The hospital had a typologically complex layout, capable of responding to the multifunctional needs which typically pertain to the utopian concept of 'self-sufficiency'. The Capodichino hospital became fully operational in 1909, when it was directed by Professor Leonardo Bianchi, hence its name.

The main building is accessible through two monumental ramps, one with steps (inaccessible today) and one with a carriage road (Figs. 5-6). The two ramps meet at the institute's main entrance floor, at about ten metres above street level, where there is the main pavilion, on which the architect focused most of his figurative attention. The ground floor housed the pharmacy, the packaging area, the reception halls and the



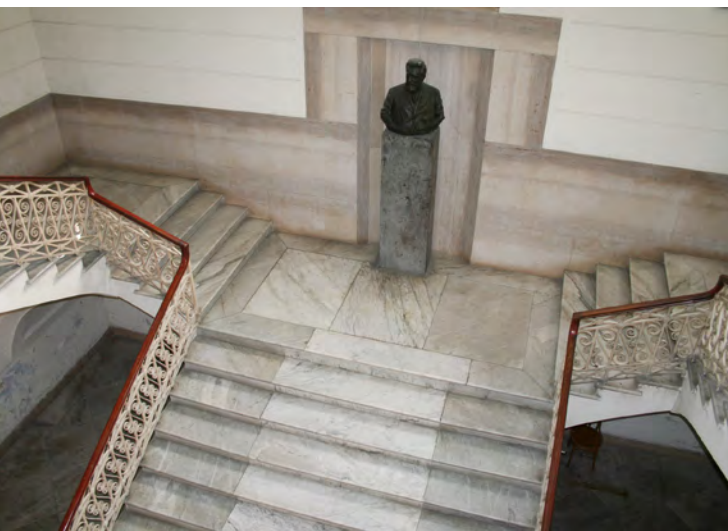


FIG. 5. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'. The front of the main building (photo by R. Picone, 2015).

FIG. 6. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'.

FIG. 7. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'. The staircase of the main building (photo by R. Picone, 2015).

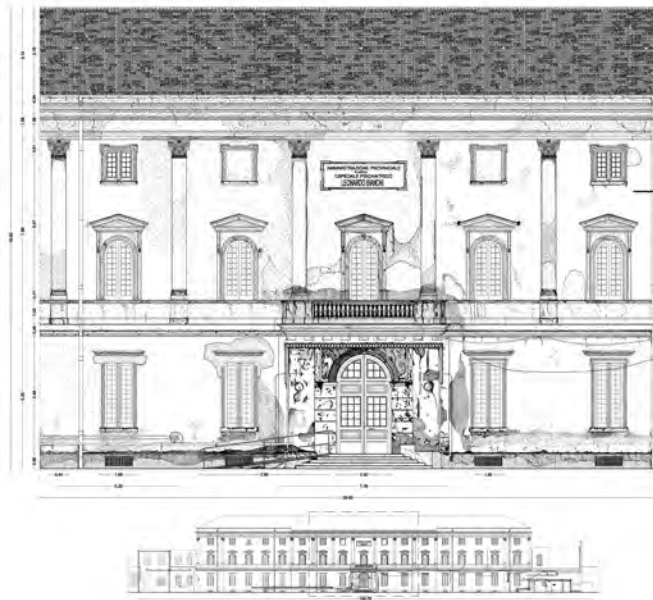


FIG. 8. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'. Materic prospect of the main building (University of Naples Federico II – Department of Architecture. Laboratorio di Restauro, professor: prof. arch. R. Picone. "Progetto di restauro dell'ex ospedale Leonardo Bianchi", A.Y. 2005/2006. Students: M. D'Auria, D. De Pascale, M. Di Giuda, M. Greco).

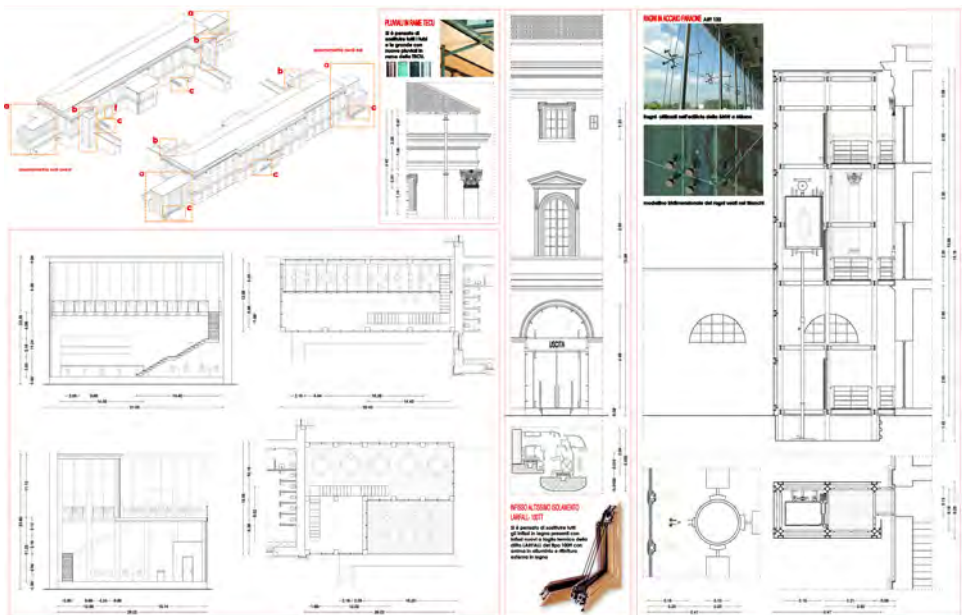


FIG. 9. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi' (University of Naples Federico II – Department of Architecture. Laboratorio di Restauro, professor: prof. arch. R. Picone. "Progetto di restauro dell'ex ospedale Leonardo Bianchi", A.Y. 2005/2006. Students: M. D'Auria, D. De Pascale, M. Di Giuda, M. Greco).



FIG. 10. Naples (Italy). Psychiatric hospital 'Leonardo Bianchi'. A patient of the Hospital (1930's).

nurses' classrooms. On the first floor the offices of the Directorate could be found, together with the Secretariat, the accounting offices, a large meeting hall, the library<sup>5</sup> and the research laboratories. The second floor housed an extensive archive as well as the accommodation for doctors on duty and for nuns, who supervised the general services and the women's ward.

In 1920, under the direction of Prof. Michael Sciuti, a general reorganisation of the complex took place. The buildings that once housed patients were divided into wards for men and for women: they were symmetrically located and divided at the centre by the general services area. The areas were arranged to rationalise the hospital's work according to the severity of the patients' conditions: there was a ward for the observation of new patients, one for those affected by serious illnesses, and another one for patients with minor ailments who were also able

to work. Other areas housed the wards for the observation of the chronically ill and for those affected by contagious infectious diseases, the geriatric ward and the one for ergo-therapy, the ward for impulsive patients, the semi-mentally disturbed, and for criminals, who were under constant supervision. There was also a care centre for minors and a leisure centre. At the end of the main building, there was a pavilion used as an isolation unit. In that year, the hospital records attested the presence of 1,609 patients (939 men and 670 women) in a somewhat gloomy and unhealthy atmosphere that is still palpable when visiting the site (Jelardi 2004).

During World War II, the structure endured frequent shelling and air raids, as well as the occupation of the Anglo-American troops in 1943, which greatly damaged it. The hospital suspended its activities throughout the war and in the immediate post-war period. It was only after 1950 that the hospital resumed its regular activities, which continued until the facility closed in 1995.

In 1981, the wire guards used to prevent patients from escaping and to ensure their safety were removed: from a morphological point of view, this freed the windows; the only areas of the hospital that there were still barricaded by wire guards were, and still are, the rooms next to the side stairs.

In the same year, as a result of the damage caused by the earthquake that violently struck Naples in 1980, the walls south of the central offices were damaged and left without finishing, as they still appear today. In 1992, the patients were forced to abandon the building because of the new law requiring the closure of mental hospitals to be replaced by rehab foster homes. The slow divestment process lasted until 1995, when the complex finally ceased to exist as a municipal mental hospital.

Almost nothing of the huge 'Leonardo Bianchi' hospital complex is currently in use, except some buildings hosting the local health units' archives and the buildings of the so-



FIG. 11. Genk (Belgium). C-Mine. The new front (by <http://www.51n4e.com/> [Accessed 15 March 2016]).

called ‘Sciuti Pavilions’, which are currently used as a standalone mental health centre; the rest of the site remains in a state of advanced decay and neglect (Figs. 7-9).

Walking along the long marble-floored corridors today, looking at the high arches of the rooms and stairwells with elevators protected by iron cages, one can still perceive all the suffering and the madness that must have lodged in these places. The rooms are still furnished with beds and nightstands. The historical images of the hospital hanging on the damp walls show the patients within the structure and the doctors at work, providing a very realistic glimpse of what it meant to live in a mental hospital (Fig. 10). This evocative power is an intangible heritage that bears witness to a phase of the history of medicine and of the city of Naples itself that must be preserved, just like the industrial plants in Genk and all those sites that have been a social, economic, religious, political expression of our civilisation.

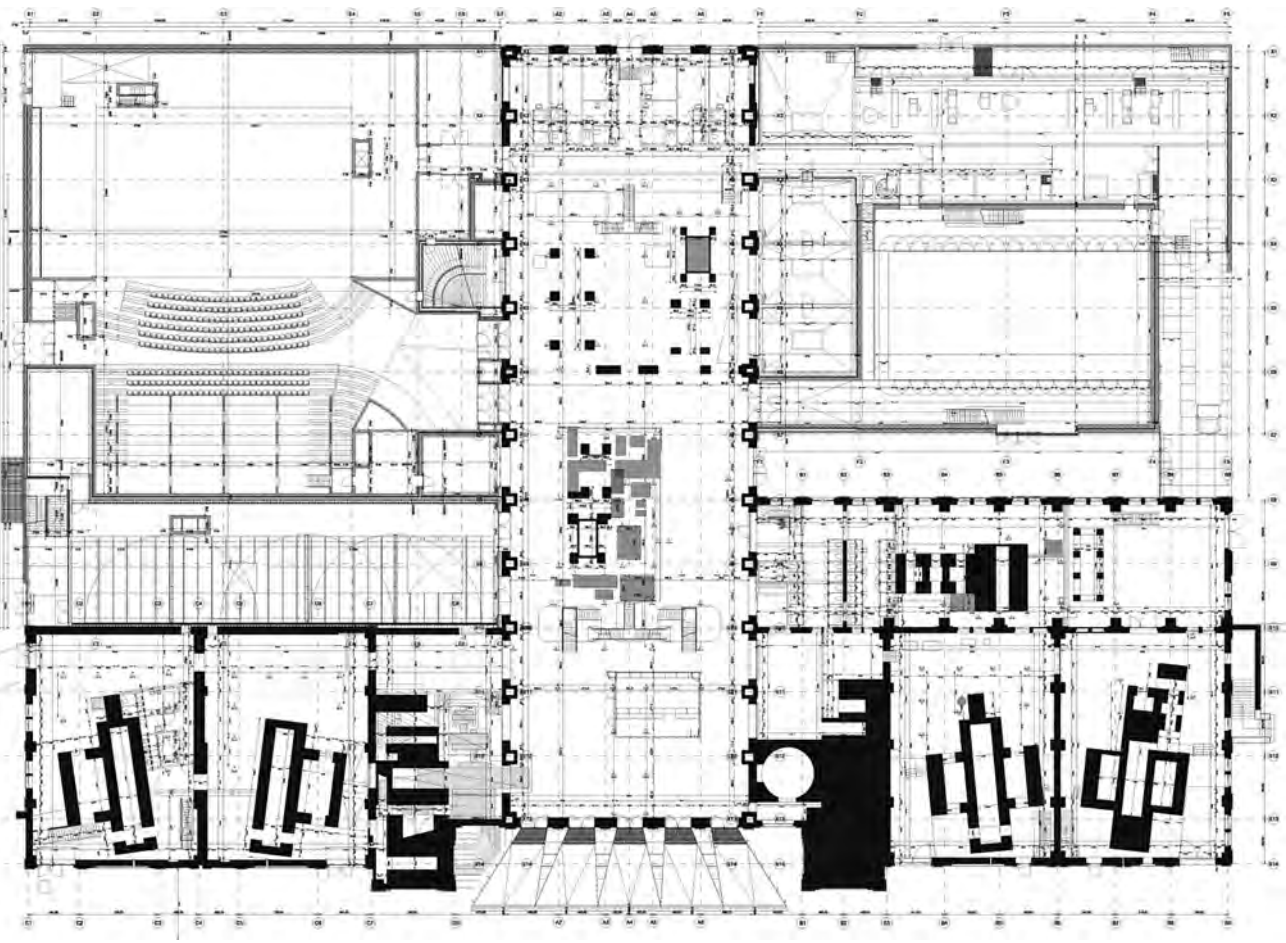
Its restoration has to ensure that the preservation of the physical facilities is allied to a programme aimed at recovering the site’s lost identity and intangible values as a testimony to future generations of the social value that the hospital had in the past. All the more so when, as it often happens, the intangible assets to be recovered surpass in value the historical and artistic importance of the building itself. The problems underlying restoration concern not only the conservation of material, but also the transmission of the *genius loci* that has characterised the history of the artefact, or part of it. But how can we combine the rehabilitation of such sites with the transmission of their material and immaterial values? What are the limits and opportunities involved when reusing this type of ‘sensitive’ heritage?

The concept of sustainable development, which now dominates most of the interventions on built heritage, is based on the idea of conferring a new purpose and ‘meaning’ on existing architectures on both the urban and architectural scale of contemporary cities. The preservation of the intangible values of the site is an important aspect of the oper-

FIG. 12. Genk (Belgium). C-Mine. The project plan (by <<http://www.51n4e.com/>> [Accessed 15 March 2016]).

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FIG. 13. Genk (Belgium). C-Mine (photo by A. Pane, 2015).



ation of reuse, even more so when the restoration concerns symbolic buildings where the 'spirit of the place' is a value to be preserved. This statement holds true even when the social, political, religious or memorial value of the site is related to the more odious aspects of life, as in the case of mental hospitals.

Our contemporary society has been marked by numerous traumatic events that have greatly changed the notion of memory over time. From the First World War to the Holocaust, from the atomic bomb to the genocide of the Balkan wars, and the deep sociopolitical changes of the second half of last century, collective memory has in fact taken the form of an inevitable conflict between 'memory' and 'oblivion', between the

commemoration of an event and the cancellation of an often controversial past (Sulfaro 2014).

It is therefore necessary to envisage a restoration project aiming at both the identification of a new use – one that should respect the building’s social value – and the enhancement of the site, also in connection to its users. ICOMOS has recently established the need for conservation of the intangible values of built heritage through the enactment of several measures and actions aiming at ‘taking into account the intangible values (memory, beliefs, traditional knowledge, attachment to place) and the local communities that are the custodians of these values in the management and preservation of monuments and sites under the World Heritage Convention of 1972’<sup>6</sup>.

Since the 2004 Declaration, which focused on the preservation of ‘context’ defined as a set of physical, visual, natural, social and spiritual practices, ICOMOS has pushed in this direction, until the recent 2008 *Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place*, enacted on the occasion of the 16th General Assembly in Canada. The ten points approved by the assembly and targeting administrators and stakeholders invite us in the first place to ‘rethink the spirit of place and identify the threats to the spirit of place’, in order to ‘safeguard and transmit the spirit of place’ also through the use of information and multimedia technologies to educate the population and safeguard collective memory.

In Genk, the recovery of industrial facilities in the Winterslag mine area has become the pretext for the construction of a new cultural centre that has kept alive the memory of the industrial vocation of the city and, at the same time, has given centrality to the adjacent neighbourhood. The ‘C-Mine’ project, completed in 2010 by the Brussels design studio 51N4E, has re-elaborated the buildings of the power plant of the coal mine, in order to create several auditoriums, halls, and meeting spaces, spaces for technical support and for the administration offices.

The Genk city administration has abundantly discussed the use of the city’s abandoned sites. In recent years, new industries have been attracted to the region, providing new capital and jobs and starting a dynamic process which has led to the rehabilitation of the city’s former mining sites, now reused to host commercial, social, cultural and educational activities, such as the ‘C-Mine’ (Figs. 11-12). Since 1988 numerous master plans, drawn up by architects in collaboration with the city government, have attempted to place the surface buildings of Winterslag’s quarry into a new economic reality, largely supported by the European ‘conversion funds’. In the new cultural cen-



tre new artefacts coexist with the pre-existing ones, including the old mine machinery in the common areas of the cultural centre. A terracotta-coloured concrete wall connects the different components of the project, and the new halls are structured in a way that recalls the original function of the industrial plant. The former engine room on the ground floor is used as an anteroom from which all other areas can be accessed.

C-Mine is an important attempt to reconnect the architectural scale to the landscape, through a vast and complex revision of the industrial context that has provided the city of Genk with a meaningful forum for creativity and contemporary culture.

However, the recent closure of the Ford car plant, the largest employer of the region, has created a new crisis. Once again, the problem is how to redevelop the brownfield site, which has limited architectural value, though it still is an important place for the city's collective memory (Fig. 13).

In Naples, the closing down of the 'Leonardo Bianchi' hospital has not yet been supplanted by an equally valid alternative, which could offer the city a new service, similarly to what has occurred in Genk, without forgetting the building's original vocation.

The complex is currently a huge urban void, located in a highly strategic area of Naples, close to Capodichino international airport. The former hospital is also in some way a post-industrial structure, like the mine site in Genk, since the asylum was an actual place of production, where the patients were engaged in work activities supported by suitable machinery, the conservation of which is in itself an objective to pursue. Within the complex there was a shoe workshop, a laboratory for matweed and sorghum and a printing and bookbinding store, but also a tile factory, a carpentry shop, a mechanic's workshop, a tailor's shop, a bakery and a large kitchen, which was the heart of the central building and the main point of aggregation of the hospital. A veritable 'city within the city', with plenty of resources for its subsistence.

The structure of the pavilions, also built between the late 19th and the early 20th century, reveals the use of construction techniques and materials that was innovative at the time, such as *polonceau* frames, iron ceilings with brick vaults, etc., that give the structure a remarkable testimonial value for its materials and construction techniques, combined with the use of traditional elements like wooden trusses.

Today, following a number of academic studies, a project should start, pursuing the dual objective of:

- 1) restoring the complex itself – taking into account the balance between the built heritage and the green areas – and its transformations and construction techniques;
- 2) improving the former mental hospital site by giving it a new multiple functionality that would reconnect it to the context of the nearby airport, to the city and the neighbourhood. This aspect also concerns the reuse of the site's green areas, which could become urban gardens and spaces for the community.

The process of recovery of the entire site, however, cannot limit itself to the restoration of its physical structure. It should mainly focus on the preservation of the strong symbolic value inherent to its original intended use. Although mental asylums represent a controversial page in the history of medicine, the Leonardo Bianchi hospital has the right to be remembered as an intangible testimony of civilisation.

According to the current urban policy of Naples' administration, the institute is supposed to be transformed into a university campus, although the complex could lend

itself to many different uses, both for its size and for the rational and well-designed positioning of the halls inside the boundary fence and the relationship between its built spaces and green areas<sup>7</sup>. Recently the city, the region and the provincial institutions have also tabled the proposal for a Philosophy Museum, to be hosted in the central pavilion of the former hospital. This would be the first step of a programme aimed at transforming the former mental asylum into a multifunctional space hosting several cultural institutions in the city of Naples, alongside facilities to welcome tourists and local residents.

From a wider perspective, the Leonardo Bianchi institute is a potential hub between the hilly area of the Metropolitan Park of Naples' hills on the west and the fragmented agricultural land surrounding Capodichino Airport on the east, playing a strategic role within the context of a receptive infrastructural network linked to the civil airport of Naples. Such a geographical proximity cannot be neglected if one wants to put forward a sustainable project that integrates the former psychiatric hospital into Naples' urban fabric, thus creating a network of connections between several urban areas.

The final goal is the creation of a new environmental and urban polarity, which could be attractive both to Naples' historic centre and its urban outskirts.

Playing a strategic role in the context of an infrastructural network at regional level, the 'Leonardo Bianchi' complex could help redevelop the airport area, which in recent years has expanded due to an increased flow of incoming tourists visiting Naples. This will be possible by first enhancing the typifying architectural, material and identity-related characteristics of the Neapolitan mental hospital complex. The respect for these values will be 'encouraged' by a restoration project that is technically circumspect and culturally aware, seeking to safeguard the architectural palimpsest and the memory of the site's historical role, while making it attractive for the city of today. This requires the implementation of a project that respects the memory of the place and values its specificities at the same time.

A similar challenge was faced in the case of the Genk mining complex in an appropriate and successful fashion. Genk sets an example for the management of Naples' former mental asylum, which remains, however, a different and more complex case given its pervasive historical heritage, its extensively degraded and compromised context (also from an environmental perspective) and its high demographic density.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Holbrook 2013.
- <sup>2</sup> See: Fragola 1917; Catapano 1977; Silvi et al. 1995; Villone, Sessa 2010.
- <sup>3</sup> Laws requiring the phasing out of mental hospitals in Italy: L. 180 del 13/5/1978 (called *Legge Basaglia*) and D.P.R. n. 93 del 22/4/1994 (*Progetto Obiettivo 'Tutela della Salute Mentale 1994-'96'*).
- <sup>4</sup> Miraglia 1874; Miraglia 1881.
- <sup>5</sup> The library is currently under the protection of the *Banco di Napoli* bank.
- <sup>6</sup> The 14th General Assembly on the theme of the preservation of social intangible values of monuments and sites (ICOMOS 2004).
- <sup>7</sup> MIBAC 2010.

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## CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE. A SPECIAL CONSERVATION FOR INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

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### Reuse and associated risks

As discussed during the EAAE workshop, the reuse of religious structures is becoming an urgent problem, especially in situations where a large number of buildings were devoted to religious use in the past and now have to cope with a drastic reduction in religious practice. In the case of S. Maria Addolorata Church, there is an additional problem in that the church is part of a psychiatric hospital, closed under the Basaglia law, and now looking for a new use.

The text below consists of a series of reflections stimulated by observations from a range of professionals, not necessarily related to conservation, but which cast light on the complex issues of conservation and intangible heritage.

### The church in Pratozanino

S. Maria Addolorata was built in 1928 as the church of the Cogoleto psychiatric hospital, which was established to accommodate 3,000 patients. The neo-Gothic design adopted new structural solutions that were very innovative for the time. The internal organisation is very special: the upper section is divided into three aisles, with a series of hanging arches without columns below, while a unique open space is created at ground level. This arrangement was intended to give a better visual control of patients who attend religious services, avoiding the obstructions that columns could introduce. As soon as the construction was completed, the hospital directorate asked Gino Grimaldi, patient and painter, to decorate the church walls. This is among the first instances of art therapy in Italy. Grimaldi decorated two altarpieces, the two opposite sides of the transept, the three lunettes at the entrances and furnishings for the altar, using very special subject matter: beside sacred themes, many elements come from the reality of the asylum, well known to Grimaldi: faces, persons, written references, phallic symbols. His technique is also special. It is based on overlapping images and uses several different colors and materials. The high artistic value of these paintings was recognised in 1992 by the superintending authority. When in the 1990s the Basaglia law closed Italian psychiatric hospitals, this area was abandoned. Now the Deposits and Loans Fund (CDP) state agency owns the estate and is trying to find an use for it. While several projects have been studied, none has been chosen as yet, and the site is now being preserved while waiting for a future use. The abandonment has led to various conservation problems, both in the church structure and in the paintings. A conservation workshop on the painting has been established by the Postgraduate School of Architectural Heritage and Landscape (SSBAP) University of Genova with Cogoleto Town Council, the CNR-ICVBC Research Institute and ten other local not-for-profit associations. This is a special 'yard of knowledge', and it is part of the '*Di cantiere in cantiere*' project ('From a restoration yard to the other one'), funded by Compagnia di San Paolo, a major

European Turin-based bank foundation, as a part of the *Intiner@ 2013* programme. This was the first attempt to counteract advancing deterioration. The principal problems were twofold: the overlay of incompatible materials, including the application of lime layers to concrete, led to decay and the loss of material; in addition, deterioration of the paintings was due to adverse environmental conditions attributable to lack of occupancy and, consequently, of maintenance. The aim of the workshop is to avoid more loss of material and to increase knowledge in preparation for a complete restoration. The other concern of the project is the future use of the church, which has an undisputed architectural and artistic value. The complex also has social significance, embodies collective memory for the Cogoleto township and for the Liguria region and is of importance with respect to the evolution of the approach to psychiatric illness.

How is one to maintain and preserve this heritage of intangible assets – to make them available to the public without risking ‘disneyfication’? A possible option is to make of this site a museum of outsider art (there is as yet none such in Italy), but the question is raised of whether this is sustainable in a country that already has a very high density of museums. Other innovative solutions are being considered (multifunctional facilities, use of digital communication).

## Reflections

Reflections based on an archaeological context; in the quest for possible uses for the site, an interesting inspiration comes from Daniele Manacorda, an archaeologist, who said about possible uses of archaeological areas: ‘shows, fashion events, activities related to leisure are often attracted by the consumerist “landmarks” of antiquities. At the same time they are turned away from these places by improvised vestal guardians of this culture, who believe – often they are well intentioned – that the remains of ancient times must be protected not only by such physical utilisations but also and mainly from those cultural utilisations’ (Manacorda 2011: 94). This observation applies also to Pratozanino psychiatric hospital, which is similar to an archaeological site. In fact, this hospital is now closed and will never open again; it is a memory of the past. It is very rich in immaterial heritage, difficult to understand.

Here one wonders: what difference is there between physical utilisation of a place and cultural utilisation? What is involved in the first one? And what in the other? Why do some people insist that it is even more necessary to protect places from this ‘cultural utilisation’?

The old basic answer to this question is ‘for each category of sites there is a well-defined set of acceptable utilisations’. A Greek theatre is allowed to accommodate a Greek tragedy, even a Shakespeare play, but not a karaoke show nor a boxing match.

Another possible answer is ‘utilisation should be compatible with conservation’. You cannot stage a rock music concert in this ancient castle because this kind of audience and event could damage the building. You can have a piano concert there, because it is safer, as the people remain seated, and you also can expect a very calm attendance.

I prefer the point of view of Manacorda, one that in my view transcends both the above: ‘there is no escape from this impasse unless a different point of view is chosen: it is not important the type of social use that is made of an archaeological site or an historical building. What is really important is the meaning that users give to that site: the original

meaning and the meaning that is added on. Not a unique, shared, monotonous meaning, but a set of several different non-conflicting meanings' (Manacorda 2011: 94–95).

This statement immediately raises a new question: how can we obtain the most original meaning of a place and be able to put it side by side with others that can be added, without contradicting the original one? There is much talk in restoration about materials compatibility, where new materials are added to historical ones. Knowledge of the historical materials is important in this discussion. Similarly, we have to deal with the immaterial heritage incorporated into physical heritage, and we should talk about compatibilities between different meanings. The question is: how can we preserve the memory of the material but also the immaterial heritage related to it?

In the workshop many of these issues have been linked to each other. A significant issue is the memory of painful events: we saw this in Fort de Loncin, where a terrible massacre occurred, and in the Interallied memorial. A similar issue arises in the Cogoletto hospital church, with the memory of the terrible condition of mental disease. How difficult is acceptance of this contact with pain, fear, sadness for a tragic event? Among the cases seen in Belgium and in the Netherlands, in my opinion, the Fort of Loncin is the most relevant example in terms of showing the transmission of values. What are the reasons? This is discussed in the paragraphs below.

Reflections based on a design 'of the new'; the contemporary designer Peter Zumthor declares in his book *Thinking Architecture*: 'Each new construction involves the intervention in a particular historical situation. The quality of the intervention depends on the ability to equip the new elements with properties able to establish a meaningful relationship of tension with the pre-existing ones. To find its place, the new elements should stimulate us to look at the existing ones in an unusual way' (Zumthor 2011: 14). This seems not to be the case in the restoration works we saw in the Maastricht churches. In the best case – the church that houses an archive, the church becomes 'even a pleasant background'; in the worst case (the luxury hotel) the background becomes a 'disturbing element'.

If we refer back to the intervention in the Loncin fortress, we can better understand Zumthor's claims; here every new element that has been added, has a significant relationship with the existing ones, so there is a stimulus to look at the existing ones in an unusual way.

I believe a good building should manage to soak up the traces of human life, and so acquires a particular richness. In particular I'm thinking of the 'patina' that time deposited by on the materials and also the countless scratches just scratching the surface, of the gloss of cracked paint that as become dull, of the edges that usury has honed. But if I close my eyes and try to avoid these physical footprints as well as my first thoughts, I find out a new different feeling: a sense of awareness about time flowing, an idea of human life happening in different places and different spaces and all together all this gets a different meaning. The aesthetic and practical values of architecture become then secondary [...] Architecture is exposed to life. Its body is sensitive enough, it can develop a quality able to guarantee the feeling of past life (Zumthor 2011: 18–19).

Reflections based on a poetic text (vague, indefinite, stimulating curiosity); Italo Calvino in his *American Lessons* (Calvino 1993: 61) reports that poet Giacomo Leopardi sees the beauty of an artwork – in this case the beauty of poetic language – in vagueness and indetermination because they leave the form open to a variety of contents. At first glance Leopardi's statement seems obvious. Things and artworks that touch us closely

are complex; they have many levels of meaning, perhaps infinite levels, overlapping and interweaving themselves; they change according to the different ways we consider them. But how to achieve such depth and multiple layers in the building that the architect has to realise? How can vagueness and openness be designed? Is there an intrinsic contradiction in this? Calvino concludes: 'This is what Leopardi therefore requires from us to let us enjoy the beauty of the indetermination and vagueness! It's a very precise and meticulous attention he requires in the composition of each image, in meticulous detail of definition, in the choice of objects, lighting, atmosphere, to achieve the desired vagueness'. He concludes with the seemingly paradoxical statement: 'The poet of vagueness can only be the poet of precision'. The detail may not be visible, but it creates the atmosphere. 'What I am interested in Calvino's point is not only an invitation to the patient, meticulous and precise work that all of us know, it is the circumstance that the diversity and richness of the things are expressed by the things themselves, where we are able to recognise things and to defend their rights' (Zumthor 2011: 22).

Why can the Maastricht church (now Kruisherhotel) be considered a failure? For me a very good explanation comes from the words of a contemporary architect who expresses how one feels entering a site like this: 'Again and again I come across buildings built with the attempt and the explicit desire to produce original forms – and I am irritated. The architect who constructs objects of this type, despite being absent, speaks to me unceasingly through every detail of the building, always saying the same thing, and I quickly lose interest in it. The good architecture is intended to accommodate the man, to let him live in it, experience it, and *not to stun him with the chatter*' (Zumthor 2011: 27).

Reflections based on a movie; the film *Dancing, dancing* by Ettore Scola takes place in a single ballroom. There is no spoken dialogue or scene changes; there is only the music and people in movement. We always see the same room, with the same people who enter it to dance. Time passes, dancers grow older. People in action is the core point of the film. However, the atmosphere comes from the ballroom, with its tiled floor, the woodwork, the ascending staircase with a lion's paw on the side – this creates the intense atmosphere of the film. Or vice versa, is it people who gives this unique atmosphere to the space? (Zumthor 2011: 18). People and spaces: as people give a meaning to space, capturing the meaning of a site includes capturing the spirit of people who designed, manufactured, modified that space. But at the same time, as it appears in this film, we must also include people who have used that space, and it is clear that in the case of religious buildings the use is a special one. This applies completely to the Pratozanino church within the psychiatric hospital. In this case we also have to deal with people that use the area today, after the closure of the psychiatric hospital.

### **Closely related tangible and intangible heritage**

We used to say 'there is much work inside this object' (the work in things), when we admired a well-finished object and imagine the care and skill of the craftsman who created it. The concept that our work is really hidden inside the things that we succeed in creating forces us to reflect on the value of an artwork. Our work really is within these things – but how? 'Sometimes, when an architectural construction touches me in the same way as a piece of music, a literary work or a painting, I am tempted to believe it' (Zumthor 2011: 9). Behind these claims, the man appears again, the one who produced, the one who built.

Beyond the producer, there is also a thinker, a believer (values and meanings in things). And this heritage must not only be preserved and stored, it has to be transmitted to new generations. Restoration must be the guardian of this task.

I believe that restoration should use the same care and attention to the preservation of material evidence and to the conservation of the meanings of intangible heritage. I believe that the same importance that is given to material stratification should be accorded to the stratification of intangible heritage (the values and meanings that change over time). This is what has been done in the case I discussed in this workshop, the Pratozanino church, but the same concepts equally apply to the Liège mausoleum, for example.

I must step back to these concepts. First, I ask: 'In this restoration, did we do everything possible to make the spirit of the place perceivable?' On a positive answer, the second question should be 'is the current use a good one?'. In restoration, a choice has to be made:

- 1) Partial transmission of material heritage
- 2) Complete transmission, or at least as much as possible
- 3) Complete transmission of material heritage (or at least as much as possible) and transmission of the intangible heritage too.

ISIS destroyed Palmyra, the Buddha temples were destroyed: in these cases the physical destruction is complete, but paradoxically there is an exaltation of the spiritual meaning of the architectures. The case of the church converted into an hotel in Maastricht is the opposite: materials are kept but the spiritual aspect is totally destroyed.

Certainly the use of an asset is a prerequisite for its conservation and lack of use is a likely way to degradation, but we should consider how the asset is being used. Some kinds of use may create problems for the construction (static failures, surfaces' rapid deterioration...). Sometimes there are hidden damages that are even more subtle and insidious. This is precisely what has occurred with the Maastricht churches: the apparent physical preservation hides a far deeper destruction on the intangible plane. In my opinion, this problem is even more severe in the case of such religious buildings. These cases examined in Maastricht show once more that a preservation of material assets cannot be separated from the preservation of intangible heritage attached to it. The ways of valorisation and communication could be various, but the main thing is that both tangible and intangible heritage are preserved.

## Conclusions

Paolo Torsello in his book *Figure di pietra* sets out three criteria as the basis for a responsible restoration:

'First criterion. The restoration is to prolong the life of the building in its material consistency, with all the technical means at our disposal and acting so that the work itself is as solid, as protected and as healthy as possible, provided that such an action is not inconsistent with the second criterion. Second criterion. Restoration must ensure permanence of the signs that characterize the building in its general configuration and even in its smaller parts, independently of any judgment or preference of a historical nature and aesthetics, as long as such action does not come into contradiction with the first criterion. Third criterion. The restoration is

to ensure the usability of the building in all cases where it can carry out a function related to housing properties, provided that this does not contradict the first and the second criteria' (Torsello 2006: 158).

This is necessary, but not enough, and the examples in the EAAE Workshop have amply demonstrated it.

In the church of Maastricht (Kruissherenhotel) it cannot be said that all the techniques useful for the preservation of the property have not been put in place and it cannot even be said that they have not preserved the signs (on the ceiling we can still admire the frescoes and stucco; in the sideaisles we can still see the side altar). And according to some experts, even the third criterion has been respected: no gym was built inside the church, a gym that could have jeopardised the still-present stucco. From the physical point of view, the church does not currently at more risk than if it were a church still used for worship. So what is wrong? What is the meaning that current users give to that place?

- The added meaning is incompatible with the original meaning, or perhaps for many current users this place only means 'hotel' (the rest is just background);
- There is not significant tension between the existing and the added materials (unless you consider 'tension' the hassle felt when on seeing a corner bar on an altar);
- There is a set of details, but dumb ones that do not arouse curiosity;
- The church is not the guarantor of the reality of its past life;
- There are no signs of the people who once lived here;
- There is a contradiction of meanings, in this respect between the two uses (present and past);
- In a word, the intangible heritage that has characterised this place cannot be grasped.

People usually give meaning to the space they live in, but in the Maastricht church converted into a hotel, people are just customers. The traces of the intangible heritage of the past have been totally erased.

The tangible and the intangible heritage must be kept together. Moreover, the process of becoming aware of this particular heritage (both tangible and intangible) must be learnt not only by the designer and the patron, but also by the whole local community. In this way people can feel part of a virtuous process that can address the technical, human and financial resources, according to these basic directions: 'From the short time of the individual project to the long times of the study, planning, care and management of the existing, with a necessary and indispensable attention to "before the", "during the" and "after the" intervention from the individual (person-artefact) to the whole (community-heritage-environment) [...] from the material to the immaterial, acting, management and appropriation of cultural heritage and not only, or primarily, on its current level, from the pursuit of pure efficiency to the effectiveness pursuit of any action, both physical and intangible' (Musso 2009: 35).

This identification with the monument is part of its intangible qualities and must be respected when changes to use and/or fabric are being considered. While accepting that these monuments have multiple levels of meaning, we can never fully understand them. It is important when reading or interpreting them that we leave a place for the imagination, as this too is part of their intangible function. The intervention should ide-

ally add to the place's cultural significance. The intervention must endeavour to marry the tangible and intangible elements of the programme in the same way that the existing fabric does.

Protection of the intangible heritage that underlies our architectures, acts on the collective conscience – it is also a way to preserve the material heritage at the same time. While meditating on the conditioning that the so-called 'collective consciousness' operates on restoration choices, Settis observes: 'It is precisely on this path – the dissemination of knowledge by means of appropriate communication techniques – that the road to a recomposition of the public interests and the work of specialists may be practicable. A better image of the heritage can appear, a less trivial and more authentic one, targeted to every layer of the history of an artwork: from the time of its initial production to the reception phase, the yards, the restoration intervention, the task of conserving it in the future' (Settis 1987: 54). In these situations the designer cannot act alone while deciding on the nature of the intervention. It is the duty of conservation professionals, once the extent of the threat to the monument has been identified, to ensure that this is communicated to the user groups through the sharing and dissemination of knowledge. Any solution must be as inclusive as possible, and the responsibilities of each participant clearly identified. Prior to design intervention, and even before concept stage, there must be a dialogue with the place, through a fully professional conservation appraisal, and with its users and stakeholders in determining the programme. The designer must have an understanding of the place and an empathy for it and for the needs of its users. The designer must be aware of the importance of its intangible qualities.

We are the temporary custodians of this heritage and our present term of custodianship of these monuments is short.

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# CONSERVATION VS ADAPTATION: THE ROLE OF RIEGL'S<sup>1</sup> HISTORIC VALUES IN FORT DE LONCIN IN LIÈGE, BELGIUM, AND IN THE FORMER CASA DEL FASCIO IN PREDAPPIO, ITALY

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## Aims of the paper

This paper adopts a mainly theoretical approach in exploring the relation between the reasons for commemoration as they change over time and the strategies to preserve and restore the places where memories are embodied. It will analyse the events that led to Fort de Loncin becoming a monument in the public mind, highlighting how perception has changed since the end of World War I, while in contrast, the former Casa del Fascio was abandoned to the extent that its survival is uncertain.

In so doing, the paper will use as an interpretative tool the theories of Alois Riegl as they relate to historical, commemorative and documentary values of architecture, to explore how these values relate to restoration choices and strategies.

## Introduction

The workshop held in Liège and Hasselt in the autumn of 2015 focused on concepts of conservation and of adaptation to new use of historic architecture. During the stay in Belgium and the Netherlands, the visit to some specific study cases provided the researchers with several cues to developing the discussion.

In the abstract prepared for the workshop, I raised the problem of the political/commemorative value of the former Casa del Fascio<sup>2</sup> in Predappio, Italy, which was the main reason that has led to its current state of neglect.

This paper offers an oblique interpretation of the workshop experience in an attempt to understand how it can relate to issues of reuse in this rationalist building. To this end, the paper focuses on an analysis of this work of Italian architecture in juxtaposition with an analysis of Fort de Loncin, near Liège. These two architectures differ not only in the time and location of their creation and construction, but in their purpose as well. Their value derives mainly from the historical events they originated from and those in which they were implicated, values which are linked to their role as memorials and which determine, to a great extent, their current conservation state.

## Some brief information about the monuments and their past and present uses

Fort de Loncin (Fig. 1), located seven kilometres from the centre of Liège, was once a restricted access military site and is nowadays open to the public. It was part of the defense system established in Belgium during the last decades of the 19th century, mainly as protection against attack from Germany. The fort was designed by Alexis Brialmont, a Belgian politician, as part of the 'entrenched encampment' of Liège. Together with another eleven fortifications, the fort established a strategic defense system for the city which was well known throughout Europe<sup>3</sup>. The building, in the form of an isosceles triangle

FIG. 1. Fort de Loncin, entrance.

FIG. 2. The former Casa del Fascio, the main room (ballroom).

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FIG. 3. Deleterious effects on the reinforced concrete floors of the seepage from the roof.



(300x235x235 metres), was built between 1881 and 1884. It was largely destroyed about thirty years afterwards, during World War I. This span of time is, in terms of technical and technological development in the military field, incredibly long. The fort is constituted by a perimeter fortification made of solid walls in un-reinforced concrete 1.5 metres thick, a new experimental technique that turned out to be completely inadequate (as well due to flaws in its realisation). The outer perimeter is partially sunken in the ground and further protected by a trench. In the internal part blockhouses and gun emplacements, covered with two metres of un-reinforced concrete, were supposed to protect the fort.

The fort was inaugurated in 1884 and was considered one of the high achievements of the Belgian defense system. However, on 15th August 1914 – during the Battle of Liège, one of the opening battles of the Great War and one in which this fort was a key factor – the building was destroyed with a single shot. The cannon responsible was the Big Bertha, firing shells which were of a calibre that did not exist when the building was inaugurated. The covering of the ammunition depot was perforated and the twelve tons of explosive stored there exploded, destroying the fort almost completely. The event resulted in the place being transformed from a military installation into a memorial of heroic resistance. The actual resistance was quite short, having lasted for just a few days, but the toll in lives it exacted was significant, since 350 soldiers of the garrison's 550 died there because of the explosion. Most of their remains were never found. The commemorative value has partly faded with time, and the location is visited today by a consistent number of tourists, mainly war enthusiasts, curious about the life conditions of soldiers in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The former Casa del Fascio (Fig. 2) was created for completely different, purely civilian, purposes. They were based on the example of the Socialist People's Houses (a very popular typology before and even after the end of the fascist regime), and represented one of the most advanced topics of architectural research in the fascist period. The casa built in Como to the design of Giuseppe Terragni is by far the most important example and is currently used as headquarters of the local Guardia di Finanza, the Italian financial police.

The former Casa del Fascio in Predappio was built from 1934 to 1937, based on the design of the engineer Arnaldo Fuzzi, to celebrate the *grandeur* of the fascist regime and of its founder, Benito Mussolini, in his birthplace, Dovia. This little village, previously a suburb of the medieval town of Predappio, with Mussolini's advent became Predappio Nuova, and later became the new administrative centre (Delizia, Di Francesco,



Di Resta, Pretelli 2015). The building is composed of two L-shaped wings, with the main entrance placed where they touch. Due to the two raised levels and the cellar and to the length of the wings, the building appears significantly big in this little town in the Romagna region<sup>4</sup>. The building was constructed using mixed techniques, partially in reinforced concrete and partially in brickwork. It followed the lines of early Italian rationalism, after the decision of the regime to abandon eclectic shapes in order to define a true fascist style (Nicoloso 2008). The innovations of the building range from the floors, constructed with modern, experimental techniques, including beams cast in different forms, the flat roof and the advanced electric and heating plants. The building was used for a short period, from 1937 to the end of World War II, when it miraculously survived the bombings and the actions of the Resistance directed against the building representing the memory of the regime and its *Duce*. After the end of the war the building had various inadequate uses – a store, warehouse or hosting small crafts shops – gradually decaying as it was abandoned. With the passing of time, the conservation problems of the building (now public property,) increased so that today it is completely abandoned and has several serious issues. The roof coverings are not impermeable to water, causing severe damage to the reinforced concrete floors (Fig. 3), through the decay of the reinforcing iron bars and the window fixings with metal covering completely oxidised and non-functional; finally the installations, at the time technologically advanced, are now completely lost. This was a consequence of the *damnatio memoriae* that covered not only fascism and its leader, but the masonry, floors and windows of this building as well, bringing it to a level of decay just short of ruin and destruction. The abandonment and decay of this building are directly dependent on the symbolic value it carried during fascist times. The building nowadays belongs to the Municipality of Predappio which plans to use it as an information centre on fascism and its history.

### **What does history mean in the case of historic monuments/documents?**

#### **How can restoration cooperate with history to preserve these monuments?**

The two monuments differ, as already said, in their history, goals, use and current function. These differences can be used to understand how we deal with historic heritage. It appears clear that the attitude towards these buildings does not depend on their architectural quality, but much more significantly on the perception of their history, their origin and on past events.

FIG. 4. The ruins of the Fort de Loncin after the explosion with German soldiers.

FIG. 5. One of several memorials commemorating the heroism of the Belgian soldiers in Fort de Loncin.

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FIG. 6. Visitors are interested in the proofs of the past, from personal care to habits linked to food and toilets (pictured, toilets rebuilt for this purpose).



The historic debate about monuments appears to ignore any specific consideration of the value of architectures as physical elements important because of their technological and artistic values. On the contrary, the needs and historic events that brought about their construction – or as in the case of the Fort de Loncin, their destruction – and to which each of these buildings bears witness, determine their understanding by contemporary people and thus their conservation.

Alois Riegl believed that the relation between humankind and the products of its past is not based on purely rational thinking<sup>5</sup>. In his *Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen, seine Entstehung* (Riegl 1903), which underlies this paper, he defined this relation as a 'cult' based on memory of mankind. The meaning of the word 'cult' is explained in the following passage: '...and now we recognise a third category of monuments in which the object has shrunk to a necessary evil. These monuments are nothing more than indispensable catalysts which trigger in the beholder a sense of the life cycle, of the emergence of the particular from the general and its gradual but inevitable dissolution back into general. This immediate emotional effect depends on neither scholarly knowledge nor historical education for its satisfaction, since it is evoked by mere sensory perception...'<sup>6</sup>. In the cases of Fort de Loncin and the former Casa del Fascio, several decades after their construction and events that concerned them, the monuments still represent a memory with a strong historical value. However, this is not the only value of these buildings.

Fort de Loncin can be certainly considered one of the *Lieux de mémoire*, as they are defined by Pierre Nora (Nora 1984), similarly to how Alois Riegl would have described them<sup>7</sup>.

The resistance, explosion and destruction that characterise the history of Fort de Loncin (Fig. 4) are among the traits that help to define it as *Lieu de mémoire*. In this regard it is probably significant that the remains of many soldiers of the garrison were never found. The single artillery shot and the deaths derived from it transformed the fort, which



was just a strategic stronghold, into a military sanctuary celebrating the Belgian resistance against the enemy. From that moment onwards, because of the sacrifice of those men, in the popular collective consciousness the fort became a memorial to the fallen and a celebration of the war effort of the small country to resist invasion by the enemy (Fig. 5). This function is still performed nowadays, thanks to the ceremonies held here annually. It is relevant to note that destructive events such as that which befell the fort, sudden, violent and due to human action, are considered by Riegl the hardest in our memory to accept. But in this case the destruction itself changed the meaning of the building, linking it to resistance and the heroism of the Belgian soldiers, and thus it is the element that enormously increased the value of the building.

Still, as time passed, there has been a change in the role of the building with respect to memory. Guided tours are today giving less and less relevance to the role of the fort as a memorial of the heroic Belgian resistance to the enemy (a role that was voluntarily overestimated, considering its actual brevity). On the contrary, a more important purpose appears to be that of documenting the culture and habits of military life at the beginning of the 20th century, as witnessed by the conserved spaces that can be visited by people interested in the evidence of technological and daily life presented in the fort. Referring to Riegl's considerations, the historic value of the monument is becoming more important than the role of memorial, i.e. of its Intentional Commemorative Value<sup>8</sup>, assigned to the building after World War I.

Following the above, some observations can be made. There is a proportionally inverse relation between the value of a relic as historical evidence and its value as memorial. It is a relation that changes over time, as temporal distance increases from the historical events that determined the creation of the memorial, with the change in (and fading of) popular moral and patriotic values. As the ideals of nationalism fade and the ideological value of the fort is lost, its role as a document of past times becomes more important.

Because of their remoteness in time, the moment of the construction and the practical aspects of military life of the past (now considered somewhat exotic), the historical value as described by Riegl increases.

As the Austrian author points out, this change in perspective modifies the strategies of conservation, that aim to preserve the historical value of the building as compared to its value as a memorial<sup>9</sup>. Visitors are interested in those proofs of the past, showing details of soldiers' lives, from personal care to habits linked to food and toilets (Fig. 6); in brief, in every aspect of everyday life in the fort.

In the same way, the former Casa del Fascio in Predappio appears to be a *lieu de mémoire* in Nora's definition, but a negative one. The place is linked to memories of events for which Italy is unwilling to recognise its own responsibility. The political weight of the past and its condemnation prevented the building from being used after 1943 and brought it very close to complete collapse. It is important to highlight that the main characteristic of the architecture was its monumentality, mainly due to its huge size compared to the other buildings of the area, but to its layout as well, with the *littoria* tower (the tower bearing the identification of the fascist party) rising from the horizontal plan of the building, and to the use of noble materials. This monumentality somehow added a disincentive to the preservation of the building.

In this case, the original function as a place assigned to social activities was obscured by the negative symbolic value. Its value as memorial, intended by its creators, acted against the building, and was responsible for its actual condition.

After more than seventy years, it appears fundamental that a discussion take place, encompassing as many aspects as possible of the historic period from 1922 to 1943, the era of fascism. Indeed, despite the prevalent purely ideological evaluations that refer just to ethical, non-scientific and non-historic opinions on the regime, there is also a movement that considers Predappio to be a destination for nostalgic pilgrimage. Over 70,000 people every year visit the town to celebrate the dates of the foundation of what they consider the Mussolini myth. To oppose this, the idea has emerged of creating a documentation centre about fascism inside the former Casa del Fascio. In this way it would be possible to explain how fascism won power and how it managed to keep it for more than twenty years; how this dictatorship had great popular support despite the repression that always tried to eradicate any form of disagreement. Architectures such as the former Casa del Fascio were instruments of regime propaganda, and were very effective in building consensus in the population because of their artistic values.

The intervention to restore the former Casa del Fascio and to install in it a documentary centre about fascism is intended to create a more elaborate and complex reflection on the regime, instead of the present widespread nostalgic feeling among the visitors to the little town in the Romagna region. This architecture, in particular, can be considered very important on the basis of the formal and technical choices made, but it must be seen also as an instrument intended to create consensus, to convince people forcibly of the existence of a shared popular culture during a period in which the fascist regime was trying to build a national fascist culture. It is not by chance that both this building and the Ministry of Popular Culture, presiding over the political choices of the regime, were born in those same years. The historic value of the monument is nowadays an evolution of the intentional original role of the building.

Even the historians who recently evaluated the opportunity of realising a study centre of fascism in the building appear to focus more on the symbolic location of the monument than on its physical importance as a building. Its location in the town where the dictator was born appears thus to be the main characteristic of the building.

In these conditions, an important contribution to save the architecture would be to help to transform it from an Intentional Commemorative Monument to a Historical Monument<sup>10</sup>, so as to reduce the negative charge of the place. Making it functional again, coupled to an intervention that would preserve its characteristics, could save the building.

This purpose also would certainly encourage ‘the knowledge of cultural heritage ... [ensuring] the best conditions for the community to use and enjoy the public holdings [including] the promotion and support of conservation of cultural heritage’<sup>11</sup>. In other words, obtaining a real, effective enhancement of the building, as Italian law requires.

## Conclusions

It seems to me that the theoretical tools that Riegl produced more than a century ago can still be very useful in analysing certain cases where it is difficult to understand how we can act to preserve the monuments, using common interpretative tools about history of art and of architecture. Also, even if it is difficult to accept the last step in his theory, namely the death of monuments in relation to the prevalence of age value, we can profitably apply his Theory of Commemorative Values<sup>12</sup> and their relationship to understand in which way we can steer preservation policies, and in which direction to address restoration works in those cases where it seems difficult to organise effective preservation of a monument such as Casa del Fascio. It could seem curious that, after more than a century, we have not developed more effective tools. But this is quite comprehensible if we consider that the essay by Aloïs Riegl was, as Lamprakos (2014) wrote, unusually in this field of studies, the introduction to a draft preservation law. It means that, in Riegl’s mind, the essay would have (as it has had) tremendous impact on the discipline of preservation and on legislation in Habsburg Austria (and, later, in several countries in Europe), leading to the better preservation of monuments and their modern cult.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We believe that Riegl’s value-based theory about preservation of monuments can be useful in analysing some contemporary cases and to improve preservation itself. On this specific subject, see Lamprakos 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The Case del Fascio were built for cultural, welfare, communal and recreational purposes, on the example of the already existing Socialist People’s Houses. On the topic of Case del Fascio, see Portoghese, Mangione, Soffitta 2006.

<sup>3</sup> In Italy there were two entrenched encampments, one to defend Venice and the other to defend Rome (Zanlorenzi 1997). Other were realised in Europe.

<sup>4</sup> Romagna is the region of Predappio and Dovia, Predappio the medieval town; Dovia was one of its suburbs, then became the new fascist town.

<sup>5</sup> As M. Lamprakos wrote, ‘He [Riegl] argues that the monument is defined not by fixed, objective criteria, but rather by the perceptions of the viewing subject’ (Lamprakos 2014: 420).

<sup>6</sup> Riegl 1982 [1903]: 24.

<sup>7</sup> ‘In its oldest and most original sense a monument is a work of man erected for the specific purpose of keeping particular human deeds or destinies (or a complex accumulation thereof) alive and present in the consciousness of future generations’ (Riegl 1996 [1903]: 69).

<sup>8</sup> Riegl 1982 [1903]: 38.



<sup>9</sup> It ends up incentivising the conservation of the material data, compared to the renovation of the monument. To be true, in this as in many other cases, the rediscovery of the historical value promotes the reconstruction of some aspects of the life in the fort. See Fig. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Riegl 1982 [1903]: 34, 38.

<sup>11</sup> D. Lgs. 42/2004, art. 6. This is the fundamental law in Italy to preserve historical and artistic heritage.

<sup>12</sup> Riegl 1982 [1903]: 31–38.

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## PRESERVING THE 'SPIRIT OF PLACE' THROUGH A 'MATERIAL CONSERVATION': THE INTERESTING NEAPOLITAN CASE OF THE 'SACRED TEMPLE OF SCORZIATA'

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### Introduction

The theme proposed for the fifth EAAE Workshop, held in Liège and Hasselt in October 2015, concerning the 'adaptive reuse' of heritage with 'symbolic value', is certainly of great interest for the restoration/conservation disciplines, from the perspective of its theoretical aspects and of contemporary operational practice.

It should be noted that the lengthy internal debate within the discipline has regarded the issue of 'use' – the function to be assigned to the building to be restored – as being within the primary goal of conserving all its stratifications for transmission to future generations, thus referring to a 'compatible' use rather than 'adaptive' use.

The latter approach constitutes the core of an emerging discipline, established with its own theory in the 1970s, 'challenged and propelled by economic, ecologic, cultural social and politic concerns' in which various strategies coexist, each one emphasising a different key issue (Plevoets, Van Cleempoel 2013: 15, 22). In the last decade an innovative school of thought, built on the contribution of a number of writers (Brooker, Stone 2004; Scott 2008; Klingenberg 2012) promoted a new 'interior approach', exploring the sensitive relationship between the existing building and new interventions. It was based in particular on the consideration of a building's 'intangible aspects' or 'soft values' (Plevoets, Van Cleempoel 2013: 29) as the main inspiration for the concept of adaptation (Plevoets, Van Cleempoel 2014: 74). This approach, although sharing some common ground with restoration and conservation theory, differs from that perspective in that it does not exclude the hypothesis of transformation and alteration of the inherited building in the adaptation to new uses.

'Use' also assumes a central role in contemporary architectural restoration, but only in the sense that it influences significantly the main operational decisions, since its requirements are always subordinate to those of 'conservation' and the reverse cannot hold. If the primary purpose of our intervention on the architectural heritage is its conservation and the technical-scientific process is its 'restoration', 'reuse' is to be considered a 'tool' – an efficacious one – but not an 'aim' (Carbonara 1997: 375; Carbonara 2009: 29).

Following this solid theoretical approach and aiming to transmit cultural values to the future, the project must ensure minimum intervention, respect for material authenticity, distinguishability and reversibility in cases of new additions. Moreover, it must ensure aesthetic/formal, mechanical and chemical/physical compatibility of materials and of technical solutions adopted, both in relation to structural safety aspects and in functional adaptations (services, accessibility requirements, etc.) (Pugliano 2012: 639).

It should be remembered that these elaborations on the sensitive relationships between 'use' and 'conservation' derive from an articulated argument within the history and theory of restoration, developed at least since the origin of the discipline, in the modern sense, during the 19th century (Choay 1992).

Although in this paper it is not possible to undertake an historic survey on the theme, it seems nevertheless useful to recall the most significant aspects of the theoretical contribution embodied in the main Charters of Restoration, starting from the Athens Charter (1931).

Thus, the Neapolitan case study of 'Sacred Temple of Scorziata' is investigated and related to the interesting themes that emerged during the Belgian workshop experience, after a brief reference to the notion of 'use' in restoration/conservation theory and to the sensitive relationship between 'use' and 'spirit of place'.

In particular, providing a new contribution to the reading of the religious complex, the paper examines its existing values and historical/architectural characteristics together with its long history of use and decay.

Finally, starting from the deep historical/critical knowledge of the sacred building as a guide to the technical/scientific choices in the conservation/adaptation process, a reflection is carried out on the influence that new uses could have on its significance as well as on the material conservation of the ancient fabric, suggesting some 'compatible' solutions and emphasising the relevant role of the quality of the future design in this approach.

### **The notion of 'use' in restoration/conservation theory**

By the 1930s, the 'culture of restoration', through the cited document of the Athens Charter, identified the importance of 'use' in conservation practice. It recommended 'to maintain, wherever possible, the occupation of the monuments that ensures its vital continuity, as long as their historical and artistic character would be respected with the modern use' (International Museum Office 1931), thus recognising the choice of the original use as a guarantee of conservation.

As a result of critical debate following the great transformations that occurred in Europe during the first half of the 20th century (mainly due to the effects of the two world wars), the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964) suggested for the first time that the restoration project could assign new functions to architectural heritage, also with a change from the former use. However, this operation would be allowed only in the case of a modern use that was 'compatible' with the material conservation of the historic structures – considering, moreover, in a very contemporary approach, the importance of utilisation for socially useful functions.

These developments were confirmed and enlarged in the European Charter of the Architectural Heritage and in the Declaration of Amsterdam (Council of Europe 1975). These outline the new concept of 'integrated conservation', which after more than forty years is still completely embraceable. This concept was identified as one of the main purposes of urban and territorial planning and seen as the result of the combination of restoration techniques with the correct choice of 'appropriate' functions, also taking into account the economic and social needs of local communities.

The importance of the role played by local communities in the conservation process is also reaffirmed in the most recent ICOMOS 'Québec Declaration on the preservation of the spirit of place' (2008). It, in turn, defines the other main topic of the Belgian workshop, highlighting the relevance to heritage preservation not only of material values, but also of immaterial components that, taken as a whole, constitute 'the spirit of place', conceived as 'the physical and the spiritual elements that give meaning and value to place' (ICOMOS 2008). This approach emphasises the importance of the tan-

gible and intangible elements 'in the preservation of the identity of communities that have created and transmitted spaces of cultural and historical significance, regarded as an innovative and efficient manner of ensuring sustainable and social development throughout the world' (ICOMOS 2008). For these reasons, the document considers that the 'spirit of place' must be taken into account in all legislation concerning cultural heritage, and in all conservation and restoration projects. Moreover, the Declaration identifies the relevant role of local communities in this process 'that must ensure not only the safeguarding of the spirit of the place but, more importantly, the sustainable and social development of the community', recognising that 'the spirit of the place is transmitted essentially by people and that transmission is an important part of its conservation' (ICOMOS 2008).

### **The relationship between 'use' and the 'spirit of place'**

As also emerged during the workshop, it should be added that 'the spirit of place' (i.e. the significance, the symbolic value of the historic fabric) is embodied in its stratification and, for this reason, the tangible and intangible components are closely related. Therefore, only the conservation of the material components can ensure the preservation of the immaterial ones.

This issue, founded on the recognition of the importance of preserving the significance of the building/place, was the starting point of the reflection on the complex conservation/adaptation process, carried out during the workshop experience, and also through the visit to some interesting Belgian case study sites.

Moving from this central topic of the workshop, three main questions were discussed in relation to three typologies of buildings/places with different symbolic values (religious and sacred, social and commemorative). The first concerned the elements that define the 'significance' of the inherited object; the second, the focus on the permanence of the significance embodied in the fabric through the adaptation work; and the last, the effect generated by this intervention on the building significance that could be revealed, concealed or altered.

On the basis of the themes that emerged during the workshop discussion, especially within the 'religious and sacred buildings' group, the present paper aims to relate them to the Neapolitan case study of the 'Sacred Temple of Scorziata'.

### **The 'Sacred Temple of Scorziata': values and historical-architectural characteristics**

Located in the ancient centre of Naples, this building represents an interesting subject for analysis because, despite its current condition of abandonment and advanced decay, the complex still preserves the 'spirit of place', thus constituting a basis for a stimulating reflection on the impact that the adaptation to new uses could have on its significance as well as on its material conservation. The paper also underlines the urgent need for the restoration of this ancient building with a 'compatible' use that can ensure the preservation of its material and immaterial values and reinsert it in the present time, also taking social needs into account.

The religious complex presents historical and architectural value together with a high symbolic value, closely linked to its long history and to its original social and charitable use. It is situated in a wide area between two roads of the early Greco-Roman urban plan.



FIG. 1. The church and the seminary of the 'Sacred Temple of Scorziata' in the ancient centre of Naples (photo by G. Pugliano, 2016).

FIG. 2. The decayed condition of the buildings. In the foreground, the precious eighteenth-century stone balustrade submerged by rubbish bins (photo by G. Pugliano, 2013).

FIG. 3. Internal devastation of the church as a result of the recent fire and continuous vandalism.

FIG. 4. The partial collapse of the only vault of the church.

Of ancient foundation, it has an important subsequent stratification deriving mainly from the 16/17th centuries. It was created for the education of young women of noble birth (built on a pre-existing development), as a result of the will of Giovanna de Scorciatis, a Neapolitan noblewoman, from whom its name derives. Consisting of a church and a seminary (Fig. 1), the building is listed under the Italian preservation law and maintained its original purpose for a long time. Its recent abandonment caused the current state of decay. During the last few years in particular, the structure was subjected to theft, vandalism and to a fire (Figs. 2-4), becoming one of the best-known cases of decay among Neapolitan historical sites, despite its inclusion in the municipality work list of the *Grande Progetto Unesco*, financed by European funds.

In moving from the methodological approach based on the fundamental role that the historical-critical knowledge plays as a guide to the technical and scientific choices in the conservation/adaptation process, the paper provides a new contribution to the reading of the religious complex. This is particularly difficult because of its articulated stratification together with the advanced state of decay. Comprehensive interpretation of the structure, supported by a careful survey and use of non-destructive techniques, is the necessary condition for the development of a culturally and technically aware design proposal, based on the recognition of the existing values.

The non-recognition of the characteristics of its heritage is a common theme in the history of the complex and of its decay. Analysis of the literature on the complex confirms this with the only two recent essays (Boccardo 2004; Menafro 2007) providing specific contributions on the topic, complementing the citations in the guides to the historic city (D'Engenio Caracciolo 1623: 125; Celano, Chiarini 1970 [1856–60]: 186, 708–710; Galante 1985 [1872]: 113–114). This state of affairs could be explained by the true nature of the complex, one that is composed, for the most part, by buildings of contextual value apart from the church itself, which in addition has artistic value.

Thus, the design choice for the block of the Scorziata, prepared by the distinguished scholar Roberto Pane in the 1970s, seems emblematic (Pane 1971: 156–157, 166–170). Despite his research and the guiding concepts based on recognition of the historical value of the entire urban context, the proposal provides for the conservation of the church and part of the building immediately adjoining its façade, with the demolition of the remaining structures and the creation of green spaces (Fig. 5).

The 'Sacred Temple of Scorziata' was founded in 1579 by the above-mentioned noblewoman, following several losses within the family. Located overlooking the current Piazza San Gaetano (the ancient Greek agora, then Roman forum), the charitable institution arose with the donation of her properties. It had the spiritual support of the Theatine Fathers, among the most fervent and active orders of the Counter-reformation in Naples. The Fathers had settled a few years earlier in the nearby monastery of St. Paul, triggering a building ferment in this urban sector (Boccardo 2004; Menafro 2007). The institution was essentially based on the principle of seclusion, with the assignment of an existing chapel, by public ordinance, entitled the 'Sacred Temple of Scorziata' (Boccardo 2004).

The 'Sacred Temple' continued its activities without interruption for more than four hundred years. In the 1890s it was included in the list of the Public Institutions of Charity and Assistance, with the protection, supervision and control of the Italian State. Since 1972, these competences were transferred to the Campania Region, which

FIG. 5. The design choice for the Scorziata block in the text on the ancient centre of Naples, realised under the direction of Roberto Pane (Pane 1971).

FIG. 6. The state of pre-existing buildings, then incorporated into the 'Sacred Temple,' as depicted in the sixteenth-century map of Antoine Lafréry (1566).

FIG. 7. The complex of the 'Sacred Temple' in the seventeenth-century map of Alessandro Baratta (1629). Note the absence of the church built in the late seventeenth century.



in early years of the 21st century extinguished the institution because it was inactive in the social field and not able to achieve the institutional objectives. In addition, it did not have the financial resources for the restoration of the property to ensure public safety. Thus, under a Regional Council Decision in 2011, its entire movable and immovable property was entrusted to the City of Naples, with the obligation of assignment to social purposes.

The current status of the complex, as deduced by a careful site analysis and the comparison of the data acquired with some historical maps of the Neapolitan city (Figs. 6-7), is the result of a series of transformations. In the second half of the 18th century it was subjected to a complete reconfiguration (including the addition of more levels). Interventions were also carried out in the 19th and in the 20th century, mainly after the earthquakes of 1930 and 1980 and the World War II bombings.

Despite these changes, the original layout is discernible in two cores (both in use for the seminary), dated, at least, to the 16th century and sited, respectively, on the borders of two ancient Greco-Roman roads.

The church presents a part dated to the second half of the 17th century, identifiable in the pre-existing Chapel of SS. John and Paul, as deduced from historical documents and from its absence in the first 17th-century map of Baratta. The building is also formed by an expansion realised during the second half of the 18th century, with the enlargement of its area and the creation of the new façade with the addition of the precious stone balustrade (Fig. 2). Moreover, the intervention provided reconfiguration of interior decorations and the addition of two levels onto its roof.

The structure was subject to other restoration works in the 19th century, involving the removal of the 17th-century flooring and the realisation of contemporary flooring, now itself degraded, and interventions to the interior plaster surfaces. Moreover, some consolidation works were carried out in the following century, after the various disasters

mentioned. However, these were only partial operations and did not ensure structural safety or an effective conservation of spaces.

It should be emphasised that the current state of decay and abandonment of the religious building was mainly triggered (as was the case with many other Neapolitan religious buildings) by the effects of a widespread spoliation of liturgical furnishings and marble facings following the earthquake of 1980, in addition to the structural damage already mentioned. Finally, more recently, the precarious conditions of the horizontal and vertical components, made worse by water seepage, have caused collapses in the church, with the partial loss of the vault of its nave (Fig. 5).

The survival of the building is now dependent on its restoration, since the current state of decay threatens its material and immaterial values, and in consequence the loss of the 'spirit of place'.

A recent draft proposal for restoration, now stopped for bureaucratic reasons, was prepared by the Naples Municipality. As a current owner, the municipality has included the monument in the above-mentioned action plan for the historic centre, approving a preliminary design in 2013. The intervention, planned for the whole complex, provides new types of 'social functions' for the former seminary (social housing, cultural centres, kindergartens, associations for women, gathering spaces, temporary accommodation for reception of foreign students, scholars, etc.), and for the Church, an exhibition-recreational function.

The decision to re-establish social functions, which the municipality is, in any case, obliged by law to ensure, appears acceptable in the light of the original social use (obviously reinterpreted according to present needs) and should guarantee better preservation of the fabric while satisfying the needs of the local community.

It is to be hoped that this operation can really ensure not only the social use, but also respect requirements for compatibility with the material values of the ancient complex, since only the fulfillment of this goal makes it possible to ensure the transmission of its original significance, one mainly related to religious and sacred values, and thus to preserve, as a whole, the 'spirit of the place'.

### **New uses and influence on 'the spirit of place' of the sacred complex**

As highlighted during the workshop – in which this aspect was much discussed – the quality of the future design, in this circumstance, will play a central role.

In particular, the question of new uses for the church presents more difficulties when compared to the possible solutions for the former seminary. Religious buildings are special cases in conservation terms and their typology is specific to their ritual function, presenting large open areas, high volumes and rich architectural detail that give it significance but also make reuse difficult.

The structure, built in Neapolitan yellow tufa, delimits a space with a rectangular plan and lateral niches which host small altars. It includes a more ancient core. This is the transept, separated from the nave by an altar in masonry. The nave is covered by a barrel vault that has partially collapsed, as already mentioned. The building has significant material degradation and structural problems caused by the various events cited, as well as by the addition of the two levels on its roof that further overloaded the previous system. Consolidation works in the 20th century have further aggravated the situation with partial and dangerous interventions in reinforced concrete.



FIG. 8. The Gothic church of the former Dominican convent in Maastricht converted in bookstore (photo by G. Pugliano, 2015).

FIG. 9. The medieval church of the former crossed friars convent in Maastricht adapted to a luxury hotel (photo by G. Pugliano, 2015).



The only entrance is through a small churchyard, delimited by an important stone balustrade but actually submerged by rubbish bins. The interiors were completely devastated by a recent fire, while water seepage and continuous spoliation of marble decorations, paintings, liturgical furnishings and flooring have made the church a 'wreck' that awaits a rebirth, based on its long history and immaterial values.

The restoration design must therefore reveal the original significance of the monument, embodied in its architectural/artistic features and thus preserving its memory and identity. It must also be linked to its role as the site of a social institution, part of the wider activities related to charitable purposes and religious assistance realised in the Naples of the 16th century.

The intervention, as emerged during the workshop, must be founded on the capacity to listen to the building and allow it to reveal its layers so as to communicate the essence of the place. The building's significance, nevertheless, can be extended only with the in-

volvement of all technical and material elements in the design process. The effect of the intervention should aim at conserving as much as possible of the material values as a guarantee of survival also of the place's cultural significance. A careful balance is necessary between conservation and change, one which reveals the sense of the pre-existing palimpsest, giving new values while preserving the old ones.

In the case of the 'Sacred Temple' it is possible to plan a space hosting, together with temporary exhibitions, a permanent small museum dealing with the history of the building and with the Neapolitan charitable institutions, renewing the memory of the women who lived, prayed and worked in seclusion in this place.

The main operational questions are those related to the structural and functional problems as well as those related to the formal/aesthetic issues, posed by the many gaps in the decorative schemes and by the large hole in the collapsed vault. The quality of the design will be fundamental, and will depend on the correct choice of materials and techniques, based on the concepts of compatibility, distinguishability and reversibility. Where new material is required, the best solution seems to be to use wood, for its intrinsic characteristics, as demonstrated by some recent interventions such as the Escuelas Pías de San Fernando in Madrid and the Oratory of San Filippo Neri in Bologna.

Finally, another issue which must be carefully addressed in the restoration project of the Scorziata will be the correct implementation of the reversibility concept. Two workshop case studies in Maastricht, the Dominican Church and the Crutched Friars Church, illustrate the issue (Figs. 8-9). The two interventions – the first converted into a bookstore and the second into the lobby of a luxury hotel – demonstrate the difficulty of achieving this goal, illustrating the danger of leaving a strong imprint on the monument that we want to preserve.

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## SACRED ARCHITECTURE AS SPACE OF THE PRESENT TIME. RECENT EXPERIENCES IN CONSERVATION AND REUSE OF THE CHURCHES IN THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF NAPLES

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### **Spaces of the past for contemporary uses: the reuse of churches from a growing perspective**

The transformation of cultural heritage consisting of churches has been a very common occurrence over the centuries, resulting from changes in liturgical regulations – for example, those post-Vatican II, from modifications of the religious orders, from new urban developments, from socio-economic reasons, or from environmental factors such as earthquakes (Coomans 2012). The acceleration in the reuse of religious buildings connotes, as is known, the post-revolutionary French history of the late 18th century with the wide secularisation of society and consequent changes in the use of religious buildings (Russo 2005). Such transformations as these increased further during the first decade of the 19th century, arising from the suppression of religious orders in the Napoleonic Age. Radical changes in use connote the fate of the sacred heritage in a large part of Europe, with adaptations for military purposes, for theatrical uses or, in extreme cases, with demolitions.

Despite the repeated variations in use, church architecture stands as a highly significant cultural heritage in the European urban space for multiple reasons relating to tangible factors – pronounced dimensions, accentuated visibility, recognisability of the architectural type – and to immaterial aspects that are embedded in its symbolic significance for collectivity. The intertwining of these factors ensures its diachronic resilience even while those contexts undergo deep urban transformation, as is well demonstrated by the events related to the Collegiate Sainte-Croix in Liège.

Generally preserved within urban renewal, religious architecture is a privileged observatory for measuring the impact of social change on built heritage. The modification of relationships within the spiritual sphere and a general tendency to reduce the 'sacred' as a value in itself seem key factors underlying the European phenomenon – with analogies in the United States – of the gradual alienation of centuries-old 'redundant' religious architecture. In the absence of continuous use and constant maintenance over time, religious buildings become increasingly mute testimonies of a concluded historical cycle, relics of places of assembly for urban or rural communities, for the dissemination of constructive and decorative skills and for the intertwining of spiritual and secular powers.

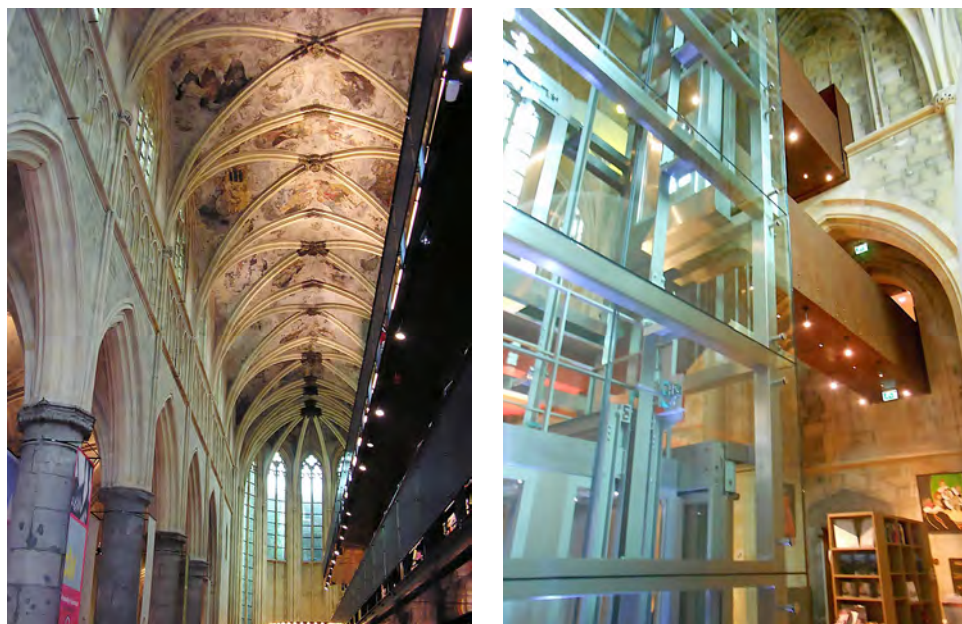
Within this growing phenomenon, while the causes that trigger it seem multiple and variable, they are generally not generated by whatever historical, architectural and decorative values the building may possess. Likewise, the problem is common to artefacts differing in scale and dimension, as well as location (central or peripheral) in the urban landscape. Due also to the weight of economic contingencies, the symbolic meaning of the architecture cannot invert, in the majority of cases, the process of alienation.

FIG. 1. Maastricht, Dominicanen Church. The furniture for bookstore reuse has obliterated the unitary perception of vertical Gothic spatiality.

FIG. 2. Maastricht, Kruissheren Church. The use of glass is not sufficient to reduce the invasive impact of the elevator in the nave.

Next page:

FIG. 3. Palermo, SS. Salvatore Church. The Baroque spatiality is confirmed by the concert hall reuse (Franco Minissi, 1959-1964).



In the absence of a broad assessment of what has been carried out in terms of reuse in the churches of Europe, observations and reflections on the dynamics and impact of interventions in a context such as the Netherlands, taking Maastricht as an urban case in point, can highlight relevant issues. We can start from the results of transformations observed.

The analysed cases – the Dominican, Crutched Friars and Franciscan churches – are all identifiable as spaces of vast dimensions conceived in Gothic form, tripartite in plan, with wide aisles and divided by pillars. The pronounced height of the interiors has favoured their fragmentation with the insertion of balconies, walkways and elevators, especially in the first two examples (Figs. 1-2). Such a potential for adaptability and flexibility to a wide spectrum of choices of use, as far as possible guided by a reversibility criterion in the insertions, results indeed in a deep alteration of the space of their interiors, now conceived as fascinating ‘containers’ of the new elements. In all the mentioned cases, the contemporary design develops new paths in the pre-existing space and leads the observer to unusual visual perspectives – sometimes bringing the observer very close to architectural details – in a way that is far from the formative and perceptive ideas connoting that architecture as it was intended.

### New uses for churches and chapels. The historical centre of Naples as a crucial observatory

The strong identity in the urban landscape, together with a widespread attribution of 'art values' to religious heritage, ensures a slower process of 'laicisation' of buildings for worship in the Italian context: also evident is a trend towards the coexistence of 'mixed' uses – sacred and profane – within the same building.

The Italian Episcopal Conference issued a guideline document about this topic in 2012 – *Le chiese non più utilizzate per il culto* ('The churches no longer used for worship') – where the priority is to keep 'as much as possible the original use of places of worship even if it failed the original specific purpose'. When the liturgical use is no longer practicable, conversion for social purposes is considered the most appropriate way of ensuring the preservation of the building. Recourse to associations, migrant communities, services and commercial sectors, voluntary and cultural organisations is considered the primary choice for reuse programmes, while the sale of church is intended as the *extrema ratio*.

This approach to Italian religious buildings, together with a long tradition in the transmission of architectural heritage to the future, and taken in conjunction with the regulatory provisions (Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape 2004), frequently leads to interventions that reuse religious architecture for social, educational and cultural purposes. Specifically, where they are used as halls for concerts and performances, the dialectic between existing and new parts has to mitigate the often conflicting values inherent in the reuse itself.

Among the examples where the contemporary intervention seems balanced and compatible with existing architectural significances in spatial and figural terms, we can mention the results, not so recent but still of remarkable interest, achieved in the reuse of the 18th-century church of SS. Salvatore in Palermo (Fig. 3), restored by the museographer and architect Franco Minissi in the late 1950s and adapted as an auditorium (Ceschi 1966; Vivio 2016: 179–183). In this case, the original longitudinal axis is rotated by 90°, thus reducing the distance between the sound source and the public. In addition, the design by Pier Luigi Cervellati for the 18th-century Oratory of San Filippo Neri in Bologna, adapting it as cultural meeting hall (1997–1999) (Cervellati 2000) is a significant example of the ways of weaving a dialogue between existing and added parts. More recent interventions, transforming religious architecture into meeting places for cultural purposes, can also be found in the church of San Domenico in Foligno, now an auditorium (Franco Antonelli, 1982–1996) and in the church of San Francesco al Prato in Perugia (Signorini Associati, R. Vetturini, from 2014) or, with a higher level of invasiveness, in the Carmine church in Parma (P.P. Moretti, R. Cantarelli, 1998–2008).

Within this national scenario, the historic centre of Naples, a UNESCO heritage site with more than 600 buildings devoted to worship dating from the early Middle Ages, is a paradigmatic and very significant observatory for measuring the evolution of the phenomenon of the alienation of religious architecture. Together with bigger religious build-



ings, a microcosm of small sacred spaces survives in the historic centre of the city. If the former, thanks to their size and visibility, are most frequently the objects of attention and, consequently, of intervention by stakeholders, the latter are too often inaccessible despite the preciousness of spaces and of decoration. Abandonment or incompatible use notwithstanding, the many guild seats or chapels of aristocratic patronage prove to be places full of a centuries-old experimentation through the expressive power of ornament or research in the articulation of façades or of interior spaces. We can mention the expressive power of stucco decorations (such as in the caryatids supporting the dome of the SS. Salvatore and Santa Maria Mater Dei Church) or the sense of movement captured in the external façades (such as in San Biagio dei Caserti or Santa Maria della Colonna churches) or even of the interior spaces (as in the tiny chapel of San Gennaro a Sedil Capuano). The small size of the spaces, by contrast, gave rise to fine architectural articulation and decorative schemes that represented the most up-to-date developments.

Recent research has highlighted that a statistically significant proportion of closed churches (close to 50 per cent) are those belonging to religious confraternities (Alabiso, Campi, di Luggo 2016: 49). Such pervasive obsolescence stands in contrast to their listing within UNESCO's inscription for the city. The reasons lie in the historic changes in the city's social structure and associated understandings. Since the Middle Ages, collectives such as corporations or charitable organisations, and also wealthy aristocrats, created their own sacred space as the appropriate setting within which to confirm their standing, and to manifest their role within the urban context. When that role weakened to the point of exhaustion, its tangible symbol lost its function, and so the reason for its maintenance.

Recovery of religious functions in the 20th century has been unable to repair this splitting process between 'clients' and forms of architecture, so that today we deal with two main consequences: on the one hand, a heritage made up of almost 140 micro-architectures, empty, silent and degraded despite UNESCO recognition, or, on the other hand, used in the most incongruous ways.

Facing this emergency and the real risk of loss of a conspicuous built heritage, the Curia of Naples prepared a Call in 2011 – 'Jubilee for Naples' – in order to entrust the unused spaces without charge to associations, professional bodies and orders so as to activate new functions. This initiative, derived from an optimistic forecast, has had few results mainly because the beneficiaries find it impossible to bear the costs of the restoration works.

Nevertheless, when seen against the extremes of redundancy or incompatibility of use, and despite missed chances, in rare cases there has been experimentation with uses different from the strictly religious option – artistic and musical events, exhibitions or bookshops – reflecting a national and international tendency that is increasingly widespread.

In more than one case, the long-term effects of the Napoleonic suppression, which involved the devolution of ecclesiastical properties to secular institutions such as universities, have seen the inclusion of uses related to education in buildings that would otherwise remain closed: in the ancient centre of the city, for example, the Church of Santi Marcellino e Festo (Fig. 4), owned by the University of Naples 'Federico II', is continuously used as location for conferences and scientific meetings. Similarly, the Pappacoda Chapel, a very significant architectural monument of the early 15th century, is the venue for events

FIG. 4. Naples, Santi Marcellino e Festo Church. The use as an academic conference hall is not meditated in architectural terms or well combined with the furniture design.

FIG. 5. Naples, San Giovanni Maggiore Basilica. The Early Medieval apse forms the background scenography for the large meeting hall.

FIG. 6. Naples, *Matri divinae gratiae Dicitum* Chapel. The small space reused as antiquarian bookshop.



of the Istituto Universitario Orientale (Eastern University Institute), after a dramatic phase of deterioration and theft that led to access being closed off with a concrete wall. In these cases, as well as in the 17th-century Church of Santi Demetrio and Bonifacio, reused as an academic lecture hall, the adaptation of the interior space has been carried out with minimal interventions, especially focused on furniture and enhancement of accessibility, without alteration of the spatiality of the monument.

The reactivation of community uses in the basilica of San Giovanni Maggiore, whose original structure dates back to the 6th century A.D. and which is probably built on the ruins of a pagan temple (Foglia 2014; Buccaro, Ruggiero 2016), is quite recent (Fig. 5). Significantly restored between the 17th and 18th centuries, the basilica suffered considerable structural damage in the earthquake of 1980. This was followed by a programme of interventions which started in 1987. In this case, the logic pursued in the restoration was based on strengthening and a thorough recovery of decorations, excluding contemporary language in the integration of the old parts. Reopened to the public in 2010, the basilica has been entrusted by the Curia of Naples to the Professional Order of Engineers with the aim of combining its use for worship with cultural events. In the medium term, such a choice, as well as the work carried out in nearby Pappacoda Chapel, demonstrates the very positive effects of the intervention on the whole surrounding urban context, which had been previously characterised by deep environmental degradation.

If in most circumstances the reuse of Neapolitan churches is for hosting concerts, far less frequent is the insertion of new uses in the dense heritage of smaller chapels, largely in the ownership of confraternities. The reduced dimensions do not seem to encourage re-opening for public use and assembly, causing, therefore, their irreversible degradation. Two recent experiences in the reuse of small spaces for commercial use are exceptions and could have been positively replicated in other similar situations. In the first case, in 2014 the *Matri divinae gratiae Dicitum* Chapel, an early 20th-century artefact, has been subject to restoration and reuse as antiquarian bookshop (Fig. 6). Similarly, in 2010, the Chapel of Santa Maria della Luce, founded in the 17th century and given free of charge by the Curia of Naples, has been reused as a laboratory for the conservation of artistic works.



The experiences quoted make clear that the strategy adopted by the Curia of Naples has proved innovatively open to the transformation of use as a means of safeguarding. Nevertheless, the economic background and the investment driver by the private sector – organisations and associations – have proved to be inadequate to give a convincing answer to the problem as a whole. Consequently, reuse interventions still remain occasional and not capable of transforming each experience into a node of an urban scale system.

### **Reuse and dialectics between old and new in the stratified urban context**

If the above-mentioned cases can be seen as attempts to reactivate through uses that are compatible with the architectural values of the artefacts, at the same time the approaches taken still appear to be far from considered and distinguished contributions in architectural terms. The potential of 'building into the built' is better exemplified in two recent experiences in the churches of Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli and Santa Maria Donnaregina. These two cases, unlike the previous ones, express a more careful experimentation with respect to the potential of the reuse process, although with very different results.

The relationship that Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli Church has with the site is particularly interesting (Fig. 7): documented at least since the 9th century, it is located on Caponapoli hill at the northern limits of the portion of the Greco-Roman nucleus of the city that corresponds with sections of the city walls of the 5th and 4th centuries BC and later Roman buildings. Defined in its current plan from 1517, expanded by side chapels and enriched by marble decorations, the church underwent progressive decay after the early 19th-century suppression and the significant damage caused by the 1944 bombing raids.

The design strategy that has guided the restoration of the church can be articulated in two phases, both connoted by the tension of combining the preservation of existing architectural elements with reuse options that were extraneous to worship and that were obtainable through the inclusion of contemporary forms within the ancient ones.

A first design (U. Carughi, G. Muselli, 1990) had experimented with the possibility of reusing the Renaissance church for theatrical performances: this objective led the idea of a complex 'machine' arranged in the aisle so as to form an inclined surface consisting of seats (Carughi, Muselli 1989; Carughi 1990: 112–139). In order to insert this, it was intended to cut into the nave floor, creating a rectangular opening through which the pre-existing archaeological remains could be observed. The new 'cavea' with steps would be moved by a hydraulic mechanism with the possibility of opening at an inclination or 'closing' horizontally in the middle of the aisle (Figs. 8-9).

Intended as a 'theatrical machine' reminiscent of 15th- and 16th-century devices into existing spaces, the solution would have given new meaning to the void through the 'interlacement between "sacred values" and "profane values"; stable values, deriving from its history and the values of mutation, belonging to real life; religious and secular representation' (Carughi 1990: 126). This is achieved by making the variation in inclination the means for a 'reversible' change in the perception of the space.

The described design was not realised but a version was executed approximately twenty years later with the reopening of the building in 2011 and with different solutions. Revising

FIG. 7. Naples, Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli Church. The poor condition of the interior before the beginning of the restoration (Carughi 1990: 115).

FIG. 8. Naples, Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli Church. The model shows the wooden 'cavea' when elevated (Carughi 1990: 125).

FIG. 9. Naples, Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli Church. The 'cavea' would have transformed into a wooden floor when closed (Carughi 1990: 125).



the previous solution, in this second phase the choice is even more explicitly aimed at establishing a very strong perceptual relationship between the architecture and the archaeological substrate (Fig. 10). It reaffirms the rectangular void (9.65 x 5.15 m) in the middle of the aisle. The void is surrounded by benches resting on structural glass and steel walkways (Castagnaro 2016: 152–154). The benches, by rotating, can be arranged in the direction of the altar and, as noted by Renato De Fusco, fill the centre of the nave similar 'to the choir of the ancient English cathedrals' (De Fusco 2011: 23). A glass balustrade runs around the void affording an immediate understanding of the 'stratigraphic' memory of the place. The result is, therefore, an addition to the building's values, enriching it with new significances through the contemporary signature. This is achieved without altering the spatial values and the intrinsic perceptual characteristics of the Renaissance architecture.



FIG. 10. Naples, Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli Church. The interior with the 'archaeological vacuum'.

FIG. 11. Naples, Santa Maria Donnaregina Church (Diocesan Museum). Note that the combination between old and new elements in the apse is solved in a good adaptive way.

Completed in 2007, just after the restoration of the church in Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli, the adaptation of the Baroque church of Santa Maria Donnaregina as a Diocesan Museum and hall for cultural events, contains suggestions of some interest too (Fig. 11). Unlike the previous case, the contemporary project is set into a fine Baroque composition and maintains, for that reason, a 'silent' dialogue with the pre-existing. This is especially evident in the way the apse is adapted to situate performances by superimposing a wooden floor on the existing paving. The insertion is raised about one metre so as to constitute a 'stage' whose edge is closed towards the nave by the 17th-century balustrade. Reusing the side chapels and the adjacent rooms as a museum, the intervention has promoted the consolidation of a vibrant cultural venue in the old town centre, open to elaborations of themes and works of the past in a contemporary way.

## Conclusions

If reuse is intended as an instrument rather than as a goal of restoration design, any choice for intervention should be highly site-specific and related to a broader set of objectives. The issue of adaptation of churches to new uses is an extremely difficult challenge to which we might respond with an integrated knowledge system and with the awareness of the need to respect stratified identities and historical values, together with spatial and figurative significances.

The response to a widespread and exponentially expanding design issue should be the outcome of a process that addresses the interpretation of architecture in its historical, constructive, expressive, spatial and contextual significances: complex in that it requires 'processual' research about the historicity of the building, brought up to date and in the awareness of the tools specific to architectural restoration. This calls for a process that can interrogate the building with patience, to understand its attitudes, values, characteristics and intrinsic weaknesses.

The comparative analysis between what has been carried out recently in the Netherlands with reference to buildings of great value in the city of Maastricht, and the work carried out in Italy, in some buildings of the centuries-old centre of Naples, shows that the quality of the project should be measured, firstly, from the level of balance between old and new. The role of historical knowledge is of crucial importance for reuse design: because of this, the higher the level of understanding of the significances of the architecture on which we intervene, the more it will be interpreted in a balanced way in its particularities rather than as an undifferentiated container.

When one looks to criteria to guide design choices, the results in the examples mentioned show that reversibility of intervention is, in itself, unable to ensure due respect for the existing building. This emerges, for example, by comparing what has been executed 'reversibly' in Dominicanen Church of Maastricht and, on the contrary, 'irreversibly' in Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli Church in Naples. Quite differently, understanding the historical and evolutionary interpretation of the building as a driver for contemporary design choices, can ensure adaptive, not functionally ephemeral and culturally based outcomes.

Finally, it is evident that any choice relating to reuse can only be part of a process of comparison between alternatives, whose primary goal is the absolute respect for the 'vocations' of the architecture we restore, for its testimonial value and for the material of which it is made.

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## THE PROJECT AS RE-SIGNIFICATION BETWEEN 'LIEUX DE MÉMOIRE' AND 'LIEUX D'HISTOIRE'<sup>1</sup>

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A presupposition of abandonment is 'forgetting'. On the contrary, remembering is associated with conservation, as we tend to preserve (as an instinctive action in everyday life) the things to which we assign value. Better still, knowing is part of conservation activities, according to Cesare Brandi's well-known definition of restoration<sup>2</sup>.

The joint action of memory and history leads to the acknowledgement of the value of a place as *lieux de mémoire*, to use Pierre Nora's words<sup>3</sup>. In places that have a social significance this value may be correlated to both the form of memory that the site produces in the subject (by measuring its abandonment, for example) and to the collective memory that it inspires (such as former military forts, industrial sites, monuments commemorating war-related events).

All the cases we studied as part of the workshop – the Fort of Loncin, the Interallied Monument, the C-Mine site – relate to a specific memory experience. Equally specific is the experience of transmission of this memory in an architectural conservation project, since to quote Paul Auster, 'The history of memory is a history of gaze: and it remains a history of gaze even if the things that must be seen are no longer there'<sup>4</sup>. This gaze, endowed with a power of recognition, acts as a project itself as it chooses how memory will be transmitted, that is, the characteristics with which the project will become an act of re-signification of places.

For each of the *lieux de mémoire* we visited, the project deals with a peculiar re-signification of the role of memory and of history, through the balancing of the 'material, symbolic, and functional' values involved. In this relationship the restoration project focuses its conservation efforts on the material and immaterial values it contains: the symbolic place of the Interallied Monument, the material place of the Fort of Loncin and the functional place of the C-Mine.

### **The symbolic place: matter as a representation of history**

The Interallied Monument presents itself while generating the memory of a social and collective event, the First World War. Its own existence finds its reason for being, in what we could define as an act of 'voluntary memory'. We come into contact with an architecture that reveals the instances expressed by Victor Hugo in the famous chapter '*ceci tuera cela*'<sup>5</sup>; that is, that the encounter with more or less epic experiences does not end with its representation (be it textual or iconographical) but requires a material consistency that translates it into stone (Fig. 1). A place that is seen as a monument exercises and exorcises memory, commemorates it, and elevates it to the dimension of history by resorting, for example, to the metaphor of the 'sacrifice for one's country' where the death of an individual is elevated to historical necessity.



FIG. 1. The Interallied Monument. Exterior (photo by E. Sorbo).

Italian war memorials bear witness to this condition by reason of their proximity in time to the events and their purposes. These large-scale architectural complexes built by the fascist regime to commemorate the dead of World War I constitute an extreme example (with regard to their size and diffusion throughout Italy) of the construction of a place with the express purpose of creating a place of memory woven into the fabric of history. Of a different nature compared to individual Risorgimento monuments or war cemeteries, they accommodate multiple instances that mark them as multi-faceted subjects of social and collective memory. Their presence on the territory was part of the complex system of representation of power that Benito Mussolini put in place to affirm the ideology of a heroic Italy, willing to sacrifice and above all victorious. It is no coincidence that their very foundation was promulgated by institutional acts such as the decree of 10 March 1929, establishing a central office for the care and honouring of the war dead (Ufficio Centrale per la Cura e le Onoranze alle Salme dei Caduti di Guerra – COSCG), coordinated by the extraordinary commissioner for the honours to the war dead (Commissario straordinario per le Onoranze ai Caduti in Guerra) General Giovanni Faracovi. The general was given the unprecedented and daunting task of gathering the remains of dead soldiers (suffice it to say that the cemeteries hosting the remains after the war numbered nearly 3,000).

What makes Italian war memorials both substantially different and unique is the desire to combine the characteristics of war cemeteries with those of memorials: places where naming the dead would trigger the evocative power of memory and inspire a feeling of compassion infused with national pride. Thanks to this dual purpose, these places today associate the memory of the Great War with the memory of the fascist regime in Italy. In these repositories of history and memory, symbols play a vital role. A telling example is the Monumento alla Vittoria in Bolzano, whose perception by some

FIGS. 2-3. The Interallied Monument. Interior (photos by E. Sorbo).

FIG. 4. Église du Sacré-Cœur from the Interallied Monument (photo by E. Sorbo).

FIG. 5. Église du Sacré-Cœur. The flight (photo by E. Sorbo).



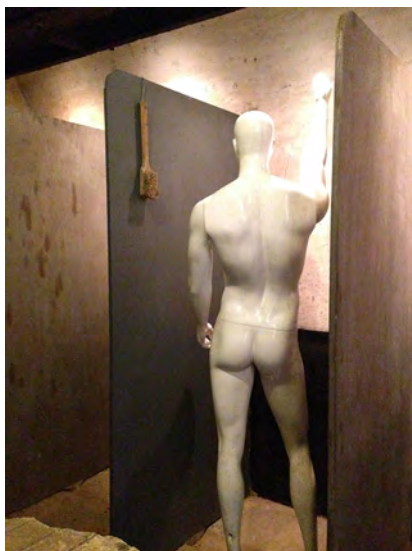
as symbolising the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the annexation of the Trentino Alto Adige to the Kingdom of Italy<sup>6</sup> has led to several acts of vandalism.

In this complex landscape, all operations that can be ascribed to the material care and maintenance of these sites, or more precisely to the accumulating signs of aging that affect them, is a highly symbolic issue that balances the qualities of 'perpetuity', 'individuality', and 'monumentality' sought by General Faracovi and the political history of Italy.



FIGS. 6-7. The Fort of Loncin. Interior (photos by E. Sorbo).

FIG. 8. The Fort of Loncin. Exterior (photo by E. Sorbo).



This balance between the preservation of the traces, as a physical act of material care, and that of their meanings, as memories, is the main focus for the conservation process.

From this point of view conservation (or rather the transmission of memory) of symbolic places, of which the Interallied Monument and other war memorials are clear examples, is an architectural project that turns into a social and political act. It bears reference to a well-defined context and effectively enables an approach to preservation that is close to the dimension of sculpture. A space that expresses a commemorative instance in stone will not lend itself to possible reuse, since its very existence – perpetuated with conservation efforts aimed at saving it from oblivion – is based on the collective function it fulfils (Figs. 2-3).

This is particularly true in the case of the *Église du Sacré-Cœur*, a civil monument commemorating World War I that was completely destroyed by World War II bombings. Rebuilt and reopened to visitors in the 1960s, it is an emblem of the close relationship between oblivion, the collective dimension, acknowledgment, and conservation. In this case, the acknowledgement of its collective role is in its transformation, as seen in the support for a fresco where the flying birds are the metaphor of the collective appropriation of an object, the significance of which can only be grasped in its re-appropriation (Fig. 4).

Conservation begins where the text/architecture becomes the source of a new artistic creation, opening a new horizon where the restoration intervention is, in effect, the re-semanticisation of the text on the façade. Such intervention is in line with the notion of recognition proposed by Cesare Brandi. It is Marcel Duchamp's act of estrangement that reinvents everyday objects as artefacts. The façade becomes a place of urban design, the message to be reinterpreted: the flight (Fig. 5).

### **The material place: The experience of history**

The conservation project for the Fort of Loncin is based on the evocation of the experience of confinement and military life, and aims to elicit in visitors the sense of taking part in a moment of history (Fig. 6).

The objects preserved inside the fort become a story in which the protagonist is the activity of evoking and making visitors participate in an experience of an architecture-machine, an expression of the myth of the invincibility of technique, that was built to remain as a war-machine but that fell down, set against the human sacrifice of the men buried inside. Every object recollects the memories of the bodies, of the personal experience of the soldiers. In this way architecture in itself has become a material memory of a failure. It is the extreme example of the irrationality of war, a nearly mythical figure in its desire for a future and a role (to defend and to combat) that failed. Its temporal condition is that of waiting for those who came here to live again the story, and in this sense it becomes a ruin, insofar its very existence represents the loss of meaning.

All military forts are architectural structures characterised, on the one hand, by a cumbersome physical presence due to the sheer size of their insertion in the landscape and which makes them impossible to ignore, and on the other hand by their utter lifelessness, due to their outdated, obsolete and, in some contexts, anti-historical architecture. This set of factors makes them mutilated architectures. There is a gap produced by the loss of purpose, further aggravated by the absence of that recognition described by Cesare Brandi. Being an expression of the war machine, they are deprived of all evocative powers and made evanescent. Military forts guard the territory like huge fossils, the witnesses of a past that declares its anachronism. They come back to contemporaneity like tales dissolved in our memory but not in time. They are fully implicated in the relationship between form and function, where the form itself, having lost its function, is lifeless and reduced to an image that repeats itself, or to matter that degrades over time. And yet the evocative power and the social role of military forts in the present consist precisely in pointing to the anachronism of war and issuing a warning for the future, by displaying the product of war technology only as a form for its own sake, devoid of meaning (or of the reason behind their creation).

The precision that is typical of military engineering has returned them to us endowed with a catalogue of building techniques that neither the abandonment of men nor the joint action of time can tame and/or destroy.

This condition challenges our memory, the result of the abandonment discussed above, since conservation intervenes on the 'spolia' of what we wish to forget: a military garrison, a time of famine, death within its walls. Conservation, as in Fort of Loncin, works by recovering in the display of its techniques, its conquest and its role: the mass of the non-reinforced concrete walls; the triangular plan that shapes the landscape; the careful design of the wiring and plumbing systems, where even the showers today allow visitors to picture themselves participating in the life of the garrison; the telephone; the ventilation system (Fig. 7).

This encounter with materials, with the door smashed through the force of the explosion, the furniture, the rough surfaces, the marks on the walls, always conceals an invitation to make contact and to observe the action of time, emphasised by deterioration. However, the challenge posed by conservation reclaiming a social role for the fort is also an encounter. Between conservation and non-conservation, the identity of the building

FIGS. 9-10. The C-Mine. Exterior (photos by E. Sorbo).

FIG. 11. The C-Mine. The Labyrinth (photo by E. Sorbo).

Next page:

FIGS. 12-13. The C-Mine. Exterior and interior (photos by E. Sorbo).

FIGS. 14-15. The C-Mine. Interior (photos by E. Sorbo).

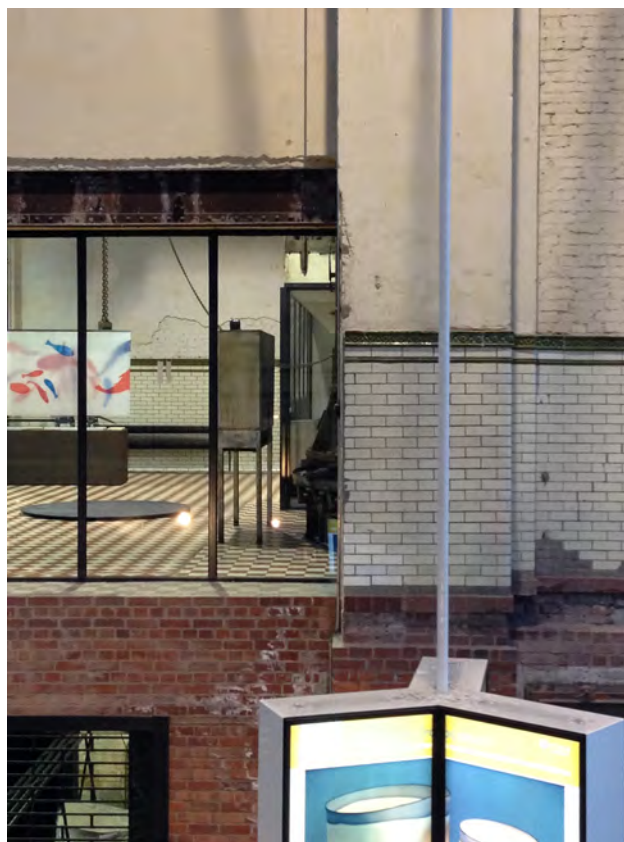


is in the representation of the bitter harshness of these places. The project becomes meta-conservation, in which even the signs of degradation produced by moisture tell a story, a time, as if they were exhibited in a museal context.

Each sensible thing, each gaze is a project in some sense because it revives this architectural structure in the collective context of a museum without distorting it, but recognising the value of the architecture and of the pain that has infused its fabric (Fig. 8).

### **The functional place: 'Les petites madeleines'**

The C-Mine is a production site not only because of its connection to coal-mining but also because of its location in Genk, which was at the centre of an architectural revolution at the beginning of the century (Fig. 9). This small town of 3,000 inhabitants developed into the populated city of today. The mining centre generated the urban dimension of the city and aggregated a community whose identification with it culminated in the re-appropriation of the mine through acquisition by the town council in 2001. The project reflects the status of this place as a centre around which a community took



shape. As a repository of different cultural and social values (107 ethnic groups were represented in the mining community), it fits in the context of Genk by focusing on creation. The role and the position it has assumed in relation to the city inspired projects for new places fostering social interaction, with spaces devoted to: educational activities; working relationships – as in the rooms reserved for the creative economy and the new jobs that were truly regenerated; reinvention with artists' residences, creative workshops, cinema, design, music and theatre (Fig. 10).

The conservation project in this case consists of the creation of a management system that reintegrates this structure in a social role for the community (Fig. 11).

Memory and history act proactively, cementing past and future in the strategy of reuse (Fig. 12).

Thus the spaces become the material memory of the place. Objects are mobile recollections that participate in the spirit of the place, '*les petites madeines*' (Proust 1913) of a voluntary memory of things and an involuntary memory of the collective events and the experience they evoke<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 13).

As in the case of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the strategy of reuse (as a *site de creation contemporaine*) involves its physical conservation as a source of a 'new creation', where a place traces (and is modified by) the experiences within and vice versa<sup>8</sup>. The objects, the machines, the wiring and plumbing systems, the floors and the roofing become the matter of the project in a new framework where documentation of materials is an artistic endeavour and thus the 'image' to be preserved (Fig. 14).

This is an example of the estrangement of objects that by losing their 'use value' (to refer to Alois Riegl's categories) retain their 'relative art value'<sup>9</sup>. By way of example, Man Ray entitled his famous plaster cast of the Venus of Milo fastened with ropes the 'Restored Venus'.

This is to emphasise how the estrangement from the world of relation to which an object belongs, its detachment from its being in the world, makes the object enter a space devoid of time that generates beauty<sup>10</sup>. Time enters the architecture not as something experienced or lived but as an object that is represented even though it is physically present.

Between conservation and form there is an echo of the experience of *arte povera*, in which material is an aesthetic element. This point of contact finds its paradigm in Lawrence Weiner's 1968 work, *A 36x36 Removal to the Lathing or Support Wall of Plaster or Wallboard from a Wall*, where the artist performs the demolition of a layer of plaster and that square (36x36) is the very expression of bare matter which already contains the act of demolishing. The material thus stripped of its being in the world becomes an artistic fact and therefore image.

The objects, the tangible memories of the C-Mine in this context become scattered fragments of history turned into an aesthetic model. In this sense the space, and the technique that defines it, becomes a pure image of itself and thus creates an experience of disconnection from time, producing beauty. Recalling the long *Corderie* in the Arsenal of Venice, the space transcends itself and accommodates a multifaceted action of reuse that turns it into an aggregator of experience (Fig. 15). The visible fixtures, the chipped edges of the plaster, the oil stains, the long machines that become tables for the restaurant, make up the new place of the project, where the tangible memories are preserved in the formulation of a pop icon.

## The metamorphoses of the place of memory

The power of the *lieux de mémoire* of welcoming metamorphosis lies in the interstitial space between history and memory, or rather between the immutable event and changing interpretation. Without this power of recognition of memory, which to all effects is the struggle against the oblivion of history, there would not be any sense of belonging in the present, 'for if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieux de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalise death, to materialise the immaterial – just as if gold were the only memory of money – all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications'<sup>11</sup>.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> '*Lieux de mémoire* are created by a play of memory and history, an interaction of two factors that results in their reciprocal overdetermination. To begin with, there must be a will to remember. If we were to abandon this criterion, we would quickly drift into admitting virtually everything as worthy of remembrance. One is reminded of the prudent rules of old-fashioned historical criticism, which distinguished between 'direct sources', intentionally produced by society with a view to their future re-production – a law or a work of art, for example – and the indiscriminate mass of 'indirect sources', comprising all the testimony an epoch inadvertently leaves to historians. Without the intention to remember, *lieux de mémoire* would be indistinguishable from *lieux d'histoire*' (Nora 1989: 18).

<sup>2</sup> 'Restoration is the methodological moment of recognising a work of art in its physical consistency and its dual aesthetical and historical polarity, in view of its transmission in the future' (It: Brandi 1963: 34; Engl: Brandi 2005: 48).

<sup>3</sup> '*Lieux de mémoire* are simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux* in three senses of the word – material, symbolic, and functional' (Nora 1989: 19).

<sup>4</sup> Auster 1997: 159.

<sup>5</sup> 'Ainsi, durant les six mille premières années du monde, depuis la pagode la plus immémoriale de l'Hindoustan jusqu'à la cathédrale de Cologne, l'architecture a été la grande écriture du genre humain. Et cela est tellement vrai que non seulement tout symbole religieux, mais encore toute pensée hu-

maine a sa page dans ce livre immense et son monument' (Hugo 1831: 144).

<sup>6</sup> Pisani 2011.

<sup>7</sup> 'At the end of the last century, when the decisive blow to traditional balances was felt in particular the disintegration of the rural world, memory appeared at the center of philosophical thought, with Bergson; at the core of the psychological personality, with Freud; at the heart of literary autobiography, with Proust. We owe to Freud and to Proust those two intimate and yet universal sites of memory, the primal scene and the celebrated petite madeleine. The transformation of memory implies a decisive shift from the historical to the psychological, from the social to the individual, from the objective message to its subjective reception, from repetition to remembrance. The total psychologisation of contemporary memory entails a completely new economy of the identity of the self, the mechanics of memory, and the relevance of the past' (Nora 1989: 15).

<sup>8</sup> 'We propose a simple, "light" response, one sticking close to the word "installation" and to the extremely limited budget. To utilize what exists, not to transform it, to make the most of the building's physical and aesthetic qualities. To preserve the enormous freedom of the spaces without partitioning them off, so as to permit the maximum spatial freedom and fluidity. To create porosity: to hear the rain, to see the light and the sunshine come in, see the city, to increase the number of entrances so as to be more open and more welcoming. To consider the space as a place to inhabit' (Ruby, Ruby 2010: 101).

<sup>9</sup> Riegl 1903.

<sup>10</sup> Bettini 1954.

<sup>11</sup> Nora 1989: 19.

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# ADAPTATION OF POST-INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE TO NEW CULTURAL FUNCTIONS: THE EXAMPLES OF GENK AND ŁÓDŹ

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## Introduction

The 1960s and 1970s brought significant interest in possibilities of preservation and protection of historical buildings and architectural complexes through their adaptation to new functions. Post-industrial architecture includes a special group of buildings, which only recently have been recognised as important cultural heritage which needs to be protected (Ashworth 2015: 26; Council of Europe 1993). The change in approach has resulted from a number of factors. First of all, economic transformation leading to reduction of traditional industry, thereby depriving numerous buildings, embedded in the landscape of many European and American cities, of their original functions. Another significant issue is a currently common concern about loss of local cultural values, being a consequence of secondary processes, such as globalisation, integration and homogenisation (Lewicka 2010; Gospodini 2004), as well as a social need for continuity resulting from it (Dubois 2002; Poullos 2011). According to *The New Charter of Athens: Vision for Cities in the 21st century* of 2003, developed by the European Council of Town Planners, continuity of city identity is a factor which plays a prominent role in urban development and, at the same time, an important value, which needs to be strengthened in the dynamically developing world. In addition, it was diagnosed that the fundamental problem of modern cities was the lack of consistency, not only in a physical sense, but also in relation to continuity over time.

What is, at the same time, clearly visible is greater democratisation and pluralisation of perception of socially important artefacts from the past<sup>1</sup> (Nora 1989: 14; URBACT 2006: 17), no longer confined to objects relevant due to their historical values, but including 'ordinary' buildings such as factory buildings (Plevoets 2014). Post-industrial heritage is also regarded as an important element of identity, which should be 'explained to future generations' (URBACT 2006: 19).

Significant changes in the approach to the issue of protection of historical architectural sites have been visible since the 1960s (Ashworth 2015; Poullos 2011). Consequences of differentiation of perspectives of looking at the past as well as a method of protecting buildings and architectural complexes are interestingly presented by Gregory Ashworth. He distinguishes two basic paradigms or philosophies of preservation and heritage (Ashworth 2015). If a building which has been regarded as a historical monument is to be protected from destruction, then it is not an important element from the point of view of current development and transformations taking place in the city, and a place and space associated with it are 'frozen' (Ashworth 2015). However, in the case of the heritage paradigm, a building, complex or place is regarded as an important 'medium of historicity', which, however, also has to satisfy contemporary social, economic and political needs. It is therefore not only about preservation of the artefacts from the past, but also about using them in the present (Ashworth 2015: 31).



These days, apart from the meaning associated with preservation of tangible values, a social context and preservation of intangible values of the sites recognised as cultural heritage (ICOMOS 2008: 5; Duckworth 2010: 8; URBACT 2006) is equally important (Council of the EU 2014) to their significance for sustainable development. Ensuring the physical survival of a building, even if its function is altered, may lead to a revival of the local community – not only economically, but potentially also psychologically, since architectural heritage reinforces the sense of rootedness and belonging, and thus self-identification and self-awareness (Rossi 1982: 130–131; Litak 2011: 256–257; Lewicka 2012).

### **Creative dialogue with the history of the place in C-mine in Genk**

For the city of Genk in Belgium, such a role is played by a coal-mining complex built in the early 20th century and converted by the project 51N4E architects into a regional cultural centre in 2008–2010.

An element clearly communicating the past of the place and evoking its original function is a huge steel pithead towering over the entire complex. Connecting it with the building, which was partially destroyed and preserved as a ruin, however, seems to build too literal connotations. Red steel designer chairs<sup>2</sup> ‘scattered’ at the square are a clear sign of transformation of the place and adoption of a new function, no longer associated with hard work, but dedicated primarily to contact with art and relaxation.

Modernity has been discreetly marked in the main building of C-mine. It is still dominated by red brick as well as characteristic shapes of windows and mullions. New, fully modern structures, not repeating forms from the past, harmoniously correspond with the historical objects thanks to the rhythm of façade divisions and the colours of materials. A modern feature on the façade is a ‘portal’, inviting and leading to the interior, which, according to the concept of the architects, ‘filters the public from the square into the foyer’<sup>3</sup>. Such a solution may reveal certain associations with the project in the Kruisherhotel, a 15th-century monastery in Maastricht converted into a hotel. In both cases, the design concept and approach to the original historical architectural substance have been manifested, even in the method of developing a new entrance. However, in the case of Kruisherhotel a kind of sculpture or artistic installation, strongly contrasting with a stone Gothic façade, was designed by artist Ingo Maurer. An entrance tunnel, lit inside with the light gliding along copper surfaces, resembles an entrance to a different, futuristic world. Inside, the principle of contrasting materials and modern design language is also applied, while dignity and economy of form and colours is contrasted with modern splendour and luxury<sup>4</sup>. However, in the case of C-mine a decision was taken to create a harmonious correlation between modern interventions and original architectural tissue. The impact of unusual, spatial forms of the entrance is eased by the material used and by the colour, which refers to water tanks placed on the roof.

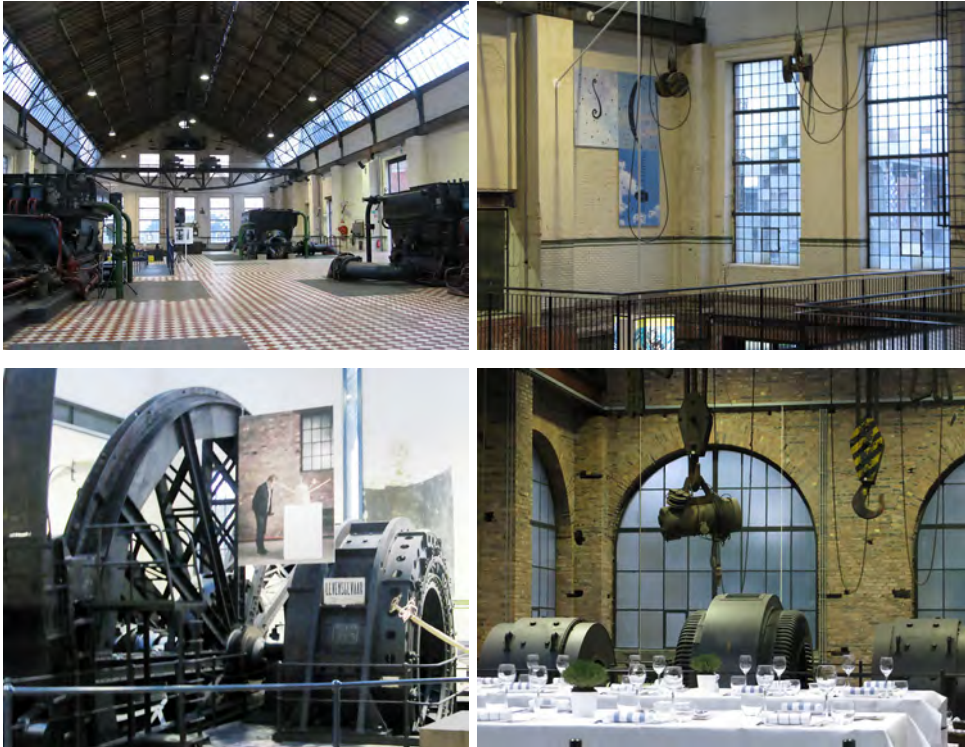
A former machine hall now serves both as a foyer and as an axis to the complex as a whole. A kind of labyrinth is created through the architects’ concepts. Allowing multiple routes ‘like in the city’<sup>5</sup>, through a combination of new construction and retained original infrastructure’, they smoothly lead to newly added auditoriums. On the second storey, new tiling on the floor, modelled on the original and producing a distinctive white and red pattern, is an important link, harmoniously bonding architectural past and present.

In the architectural field, integration of the various historic layers, old and new, is based on the principle of conscious and yet discreet co-existence. We cannot speak in

FIG. 1. C-mine Cultural Centre in Genk, the main space on upper level (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

FIGS. 2-3. C-mine Design Centrum in Genk. In the exhibition section, pieces of contemporary art installed among old machines break convention and create unusual, eye-catching meeting points of the past and modernity (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

FIG. 4. Unusual decor of the restaurant in C-mine in Genk (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).



this case either of unification or of making strong contrasts. However, meanings created in the present are not independent here; rather, they engage in a continuous dialogue with the past (Fig. 1). While building new cultural meanings, the original articulation and function of interiors is not blurred; it can still be easily deciphered. Most rooms located on the first floor seem to have been left by labourers a moment ago. Tatty machines, plaster dilapidated here and there and traces of paint peeling from the walls create a convention in which history is stopped in time. Such constructed narration emphasises that this is a 'real' building with a history and reflects its multi-layered past.

At the same time, the spirit of authenticity is contrasted with contemporary artefacts. Introducing a new function to 'preserved' rooms with original installations results in surprising and unexpected combinations. In the exhibition part, pieces of contemporary art installed amidst old machines break with the convention and create unusual, eye-catching meeting points of the past and modernity (Figs. 2-3). Such intervention can be regarded both as respecting the existing site, creating the spirit of authenticity and also as a kind of experiment. The architects consider experimentation to be an important part of the creative process (51N4E 2011).

This kind of intervention, aimed at giving a thrill by unconventional communion with the past, reaches its apogee in the restaurant, where snow-white tablecloths and elegant place settings contrast with machines still smelling of grease (Fig. 4). It is almost the embodiment of a surrealist vision based on a casual combination of elements derived from different realities (Breton 1945). In this case, however, dazzling with astonishing combinations is an element of a simple game with the participant, the game geared towards an immediate effect and without a broader intellectual context. Such a solution is satisfactory mainly for seekers of new sensations.

Unexpected meetings and combinations are a characteristic feature of the present time. This element is also embedded in the very idea of adaptive reuse, in which a traditional principle of 'form follows function' is rejected. This is hybridised architecture, resulting from the combination of different meanings and history. According to the Japanese architect and theorist, Kisho Kurokawa, while 'the architecture of the machine age expressed the function', contemporary architecture – being a symbiosis of different cultures and elements of modernity and tradition – expresses the meaning (Kurokawa 1994). In C-mine, renovation of the building and its installations helped to preserve parts of the premises in a seemingly intact state, but 'place memory', understood as a feature of the place (Lewicka 2012), is modified and reinterpreted by the removal of the original function and the new, if only artistic, interventions. The closest to the original 'place of memory' would be a self-reflexive museum, but considering the vast scale of adaptive reuse that would be entailed, along with the economic significance of such intervention, it is not possible. The infrastructure has potential, but to attract modern mass audiences, it needs additional stimuli (Heathcote 2014).

Post-industrial buildings with large and airy interiors are relatively easy to convert and adapt to the various office or commercial functions, and so on. However, post-industrial buildings are seen as particularly attractive places for cultural activities as well as incubators for artists<sup>6</sup>. They are associated with greater flexibility and creativity: inspiring relationships between new functions and stagnant places. Introducing a cultural rather than a commercial use generally seems a better option: a kind of elevation of the place. A cultural offer is also associated with the idea of taking action on behalf of the community and is perceived as one which can make good use of existing space without the need for radical interventions (Dubois 2002; Rauti 1989).

### **A cultural centre in former factory buildings: the case of EC1 in Łódź**

Cultural centres, contemporary forums for citizens (URBACT 2006: 17), created in former factory buildings are a phenomenon also popular in Łódź since the beginning of the 21st century. Formerly the second- and currently the third-most populated Polish city, it was particularly strongly affected by the process of de-industrialisation. The development and prosperity of Łódź were entirely related to industrialisation and the heyday of the textile industry in the 19th century. The political transformation of 1989 brought radical changes in Łódź's economic base. As a result of de-industrialisation, many factories and plants, inextricably linked with the city image, closed down. Some of them have been given a chance of a second life by the introduction, as in the case of C-mine, of a cultural function into historical architectural tissue. These interventions take various forms: from macro-projects, such as conversion of Księży Młyn (a 19th-century working-class housing estate) into a model creative district within the city, to micro-projects located in different

FIGS. 5-6 . Off-Piotrkowska project in Łódź, Poland. Spontaneous building reuse as a centre of creative industries (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

FIG. 7. Łódź Art Centre in Poland. Post-industrial buildings from the 19th and 20th centuries, formerly serving as weaving mill's warehouses, functioning as a place of exhibition of modern art, as well as concerts and theatre workshops (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

FIG. 8. Łódź Art Centre in Poland. 'A spontaneous stage' for artistic activities, often initiated on the spot. Intervention in the existing architectural tissue was limited to the minimum (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).



parts of the city. Interesting examples, well embedded in the concept of urban revival through creative and cultural industries, are found in Łódź Off-Piotrkowska (Figs. 5-6): projects that give the impression of spontaneous and uncontrolled building reuse and alteration of architectural heritage, namely Łódź Art Centre (Figs. 7-8) or Wi-Ma – existing in a zone of alternative activities and operating in the post-industrial spaces.

The greatest undertaking of this kind is, however, the EC1 project, involving the revitalisation of Łódź's oldest power plant, built in 1907, and its conversion for cultural and artistic purposes (City Council in Łódź 2007). As in the case of C-mine, the municipal authorities are heavily engaged in the project. In 2008, a special institution 'EC1 Łódź – the City of Culture' was established. It consists of the municipal authorities (supervised by the Mayor of the City of Łódź) and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (since 2015). EC1 is an important part of the project for the New Centre of Łódź, concerning the revitalisation of an area covering 100 hectares located in the very centre of the city. It involves the reinstatement and augmentation of destroyed urban tissue in the area. The components include the creation of a cultural and artistic centre, a new commer-

FIG. 9. EC1-Wschód in Łódź, Poland, dedicated to a cultural and artistic function (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

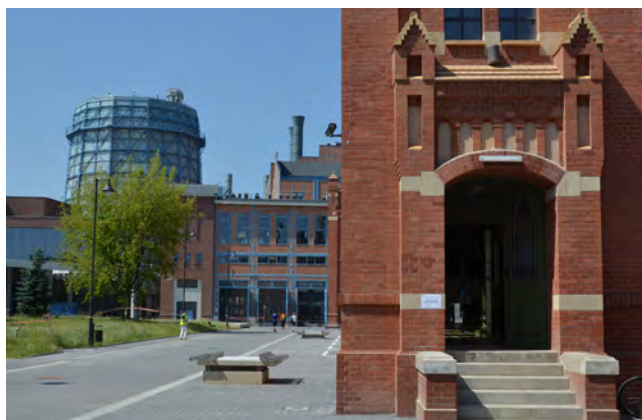
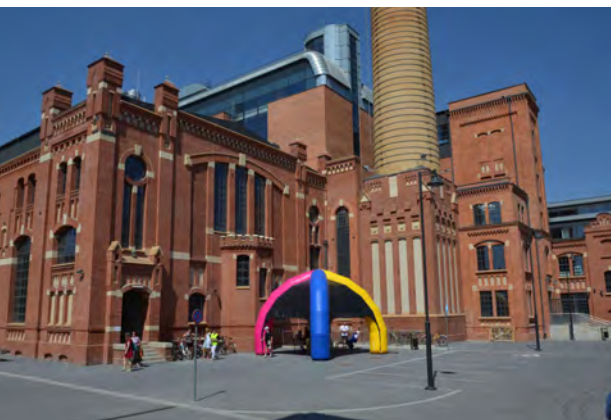
FIG. 10. Entrance to EC1-Wschód in Łódź, Poland. In the background a view of EC1-Zachód, which will house the interactive Science and Technology Centre (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

Next page:

Figs. 11-12. Renovated hall of EC1-Wschód in Łódź, Poland, the main space dedicated to artistic and cultural events (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

FIG. 13. One of EC1 buildings before renovation (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

FIG. 14. The same building after renovation (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).



cial and residential space, reconstruction and modernisation of the railway station Łódź Fabryczna, and revitalisation of historical architecture from the 19th and early 20th centuries. The modernisation and adaptive reuse of EC1 and the reconstruction of the areas adjacent to the station is the first phase of implementation and is still underway. Analysis of existing buildings and the creation of a urban concept for this area were made in 2007 by a Luxembourg architect and urban planner, Rob Krier. The considerable size of the area and the presence of a number of buildings intended for modernisation and conversion, as well as certain functional differentiations, led to division of the project into two basic parts, EC1-Wschód (Fig. 9) and EC1-Zachód. EC1-Wschód will have a cultural and artistic function, including a part housing the National Centre of Film Culture and a modern planetarium. EC1-Zachód will house an interactive Science and Technology Centre dealing with the preservation of the industrial heritage and documentation related to the past history of the Łódź power plant, among other matters (Fig. 10). A modern and rich interactive educational programme based on preserved infrastructure and the history of the place<sup>8</sup> is to be introduced. In addition, as a part of National Film Culture Centre, EC1 will house three screening rooms, a modern library, an Image and Sound Theatre and *inter alia*, clubs for toddlers and senior citizens and a youth centre<sup>9</sup>. The project is very ambitious, with significantly expanded functions.

The whole has not yet been completed, but the space already opened gives some idea of the manner and direction of activities. First of all, in the course of the intervention, historical premises have been carefully 'arranged' and 'renovated' (Figs. 11-14). Aestheticisation of the old factory halls means that they have partially lost their original



character and special atmosphere that inspired the famous American film director, David Lynch. During his stay in Łódź, Lynch became interested in a disused building of the power plant, and the World Art Foundation, founded on his initiative among others, was instrumental in converting the former power plant for cultural purposes. This idea was the impetus for the municipal authorities to create a cultural district in the area, which was then expanded in the form of the New Centre of Łódź. However, emerging disturbances and disagreements with the municipal authorities led to withdrawal of some initiators from the project. A major part of the functional programme, however, has been preserved.

A new part, designed by Polish architects from the MTT Architecture Group, was added to a renovated historical building of the power plant. Although to some extent matching industrial forms and the atmosphere of the surroundings, it is assertively modern (Fig. 15). The character of the extension corresponds with a discourse on the revitalisation of EC1, in which although the continuation and preservation of the historic tissue is mentioned, it is equally important to create a new meaning and contemporary function and to underline its role in the (economic, reputational, social, etc.) revival of Łódź, as well as building a new identity for the city. It has been assumed that EC1 and the New Centre of Łódź in general will play a similar role in the revival of the city as that played by the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, designed by the architect Frank Gehry. This famous architect has also designed a festival and congress centre for the New Centre of Łódź (presented in 2009).

A certain duality is clearly visible in discussions on the EC1 project: on the one hand, the investment is presented as a priority for the city, radically improving its functioning; on the other, it is not certain if Łódź needs such a large new exhibition and cultural space



FIG. 15. A new part, designed by Polish architects from MTT Architecture Group, was added to a renovated historical building of EC1 power plant (photo by J. Sowińska-Heim).

and whether the city can afford to maintain it. This uncertainty is the more marked since in other areas of Łódź, world-famous cultural institutions such as the Łódź Film School and the Museum of Art have been in existence for a long time. The museum was the first institution of this kind in Europe, and in the 1930s had a permanent exhibition of the modern art collection. In 2008 it received a new venue in a historic weaving mill dating from 1895–1896. This building is a part of a complex belonging to the 19th-century industrial empire of Izrael Poznanski, which at the beginning of the 21st century was converted into a shopping and entertainment centre, ‘Manufaktura’, and the five-star Andel’s hotel.

The main intention of EC1 is to create new safe public space and to strengthen the position of Łódź as a cultural centre (City Council in Łódź 2012). However, the discourse created for EC1’s promotional needs has all the hallmarks of arrogance towards the rest of the historic part of the city, especially the historic centre, the four-kilometre Piotrkowska street, as well as towards important cultural institutions already operating in Łódź. The project assumes ‘creative use of the unique, historical tissue from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries’ and hence ‘preservation of essential elements of the urban structure, constituting the identity and history of the area’ (City Council of Łódź 2012). At the same time a district is to be developed ‘which will determine the character of Łódź for the coming years – as a city of creative industries’ (Deloitte 2015) and which is ‘an opportunity to create new identity’ (City Council of Łódź 2012). A desire to concentrate all the important functions of the cultural centre in one place and the artificial creation of a new urban centre seems to be too far-reaching (City Council of Łódź 2007). All the more so, in that this area around the disused power station EC1, dead for so long, has not played a significant role in the urban space and in citizens’ awareness.

Apart from the shopping centre, ‘Manufaktura’, the function of a new forum in gathering citizens on a large scale has not been achieved by any of the cultural centres created in former factory buildings. Established in the converted buildings of one of the most important 19th-century industrial complexes (referred to above), it is the most popular and most socially recognised symbol of Łódź and the changes taking place in it. Its predominantly commercial function is combined with a cultural amenity, including concerts, festivals and fairs. As mentioned before, in 2008 a new branch of the Art Museum in Łódź (named ms<sup>2</sup>) was opened here. For a shopping-service-entertainment centre like ‘Manufaktura’, the coexistence of commercial space and the museum with a famous collection of modern

art should bring reputational benefits and raise the profile of the space and, at the same time, reaffirm its role in bringing together the most important functions in Łódź. For the museum, it is a problematic neighbourhood<sup>10</sup> (Jedliński 2009). The marriage of modern and contemporary art with commerce arouses controversies and emotions. The tension arising from the spatial context in which ms<sup>2</sup> is placed is often mentioned by the current director, Jarosław Suchan, in his speeches. Noting the negative aspects of the location, perceived by some as a kind of profanation (Skłodowska, Suchan 2008), he stresses that the offer formulated by the Museum cannot be regarded as an object of consumption (Łupak 2013).

Due to its location in the very centre of Łódź and its popularity, 'Manufaktura' has become the most important place in the city. The creation of a market among the former factory buildings, now an important public space, was most important here, as it was in Genk. The idyllic atmosphere with fountains and cafés is, however, very far from the original character of the factory.

## Conclusion

In the two cases presented, although they differ with regard to their new functions and the degree and scale of the interventions in the existing architectural tissue, heritage has been reinterpreted through the prism of contemporary needs and trends in order to create space that appeals to a contemporary recipient-user (Ashworth 2015: 32).

Both the C-mine and EC1 projects are based on the creative conversion of architectural heritage for a new function, through which new cultural significance is added, while the original articulation and significance of the building can still be easily deciphered.

Since the collapse of traditional industry, buildings and sites of great public significance, distinctive landmarks in the architectural landscape of the city, have been threatened with degradation. At the same time, however, previously closed enclaves can be opened and integrated into living urban tissue and converted into public sites. It is important to create new public spaces, attractive to a wide social spectrum<sup>11</sup>.

Conversion of the architectural heritage to new functions is today associated not only with the preservation of characteristic urban landscapes and recognised historical buildings, but has become an important component of sustainable development of the city for social, ecological and economic reasons. In the 1970s, the number of projects involving conversion of existing buildings began to grow rapidly. In the 1980s the funds devoted to existing structures accounted for more than half of the budget for all building investments (Jessen, Schneider 2003: 11). Bringing historical buildings into a lively discourse with the present undoubtedly has many dangers, such as creating over-simplified narratives concerning the past, dressed in a contemporary mode. At the same time, a factory that is already a 'relic of the past' becomes an object triggering and provoking a variety of assessments, gestures and attitudes towards history (for example, as the expression of exploitation of workers by capitalists or as a sign of progress and development) (Smith, Shackel, Campbell 2011). It enters into 'semiotic circulation' and thus becomes a carrier of meanings (Pomian 1990: 42), a culturally interpreted artefact (Barthes 2008). Architectural heritage is no longer just a place or buildings, a form and style, but an event (Rewers 2005), a process in which new values and narrations are negotiated and created (Smith 2006).



What seems to be the greatest challenge is an attempt to preserve the spirit and essence of the place. Given the variety of heritage-related aspects, such as history, collective memory (of the community), architectural value, touristic attractiveness and economic profits, a boundary between creative interpretation of the past/preservation of the spirit of the place and trivialisation or commercialisation becomes obliterated.

Modernisation and conversion of an industrial building is perceived these days not only as saving a material testimony of the past, but also as an attempt to save intangible values associated by people with architectural objects. Historical buildings are an important element creating bonds and social identity; shared history and experience of the place participate in building memory and experience of continuity, 'sameness' (Jacobson-Widding 1983). An important aspect is a kind of valorisation through emphasising cultural value, thus confirming relevance and significance of former workplaces (a mine, a factory), with which generations of families from the local community were linked. By introducing a new function to the buildings, their important role for the city is still present.

An ICOMOS document clearly highlights the need for: 'safeguarding the tangible and intangible values of cultural heritage sites in their natural and cultural settings and social context' (ICOMOS 2008: 5; Duckworth 2010: 8). What seems to be a perfect intervention is the action aiming at adding new cultural significance, while the original articulation and significance of the site can still be easily deciphered. As pointed out by Ada Louise Huxable: 'Preservation is the job of finding ways to keep those original buildings that provide the city's character and continuity and incorporating them into the living mainstream. This is not easy. It is much simpler to move a few historical castoffs into quarantine' (Huxable 1965: 13). A wise and thoughtful dialogue between the past and present can bring positive results and lead to creation of new values. The very idea of the city contains the unity of the past and the future (Rossi 1982: 131), while urban tissue becomes a metaphor for society (Rykwert 2013) as well as the processes and transformations which it goes through. Introduction of a new function inside the historic walls, an unusual meeting of tradition and modernity, is an inseparable part of the complex and fascinating process embedded in the lives of cities (Rossi 1982; Jacobs 1961: 255; Dubois 2002: 70), where the past becomes an integral, open and dynamic part of the present.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Earlier, the significance of testimonies of the past was determined and archived by well-known families, clergy and state authorities. The situation has radically changed since the 1960s, and culture has ceased to be the domain of privileged classes.

<sup>2</sup> Design by Carmela Bogman in cooperation with HOSPER.

<sup>3</sup> 51N4E, *C-mine*. [online]. 51N4E. Available at: <<http://www.51n4e.com/project/c-mine#>> [Accessed 23 February 2016].

<sup>4</sup> The adaptive reuse of the whole project was developed in cooperation between architect Rob Brouwers with SATIJNplus Architecten and an interior designer, Henk Vos.

<sup>5</sup> 51N4E, *C-mine*. [online]. 51N4E. Available at: <<http://www.51n4e.com/project/c-mine#>> [Accessed 23 February 2016].

<sup>6</sup> Interesting examples include, among others, a printing factory in Beijing converted into a theatre complex to Origin Architect, Daoiz y Velarade, Cultural Centre by Rafael de la Hoz, or the famous Tate Galleries of Modern Art designed by Herzog & de Meuron.

<sup>7</sup> EC1 stands for Polish word 'elektrociepłownia' [power plant]; a number means that this is the first building of this type in Łódź. It operated until 2001.

<sup>8</sup> *EC1 Zachód*. [online]. EC1. Available at: <[http://www.ec1lodz.pl/EC1\\_Zachod,15](http://www.ec1lodz.pl/EC1_Zachod,15)> [Accessed 23 February 2016].

<sup>9</sup> EC1 Wschód. [online]. EC1. Available at: <[http://www.ec1lodz.pl/EC1\\_Wschod,13](http://www.ec1lodz.pl/EC1_Wschod,13)> [Accessed 23 February 2016].

<sup>10</sup> Actually, confrontation of the commercial and art space is willingly used today. In the official website of 'Manufaktura', presence of the museums is listed as the first, although they occupy a relatively small area.

<sup>11</sup> In the case of Łódź, it may seem paradoxical that the most frequently visited public space in the city belongs to a private owner.

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## THE DANCE OF DEAD THINGS

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#### Abstract

One of the most pressing concerns for our 21st-century society is the challenge of the huge stock of existing buildings that have outlived the function for which they were built. Their worth is well recognised, and the importance of retaining them has been long debated, but if they are to be saved, what is to be done with these redundant buildings? Whether these are edifice of character and worth, or ordinary straightforward structures that have simply outlived their purpose; demolition and rebuild is no longer seen as the obvious solution to the continuous use of the specific site. It is now a commonplace architectural approach to re-use, adapt and add-to, rather than the building being razed and a new structure erected in its place. This does present the problem of what to do with these buildings, too often it seems that the only possible solution is another gallery, however, a society can only support so many museums.

#### Introduction

C-Mine Cultural Centre, Genk, Belgium, by architects 51N4E.

Genk is situated in the heart of Belgium's Kempen coalfield, and is part of an enormous coal deposit that stretches to the Ruhr Valley. The area was exploited at an industrial scale for almost the whole of the 20th century, and over this period Genk grew from an agricultural village to become one of Belgium's most important industrial centres. Winterslag is a suburb of Genk; it was specifically constructed by the mining company to house their workers, and the homes and other buildings were situated around the pit-head. The mine itself extends over a vast area, with shafts up to a kilometre deep. The landscape is littered with the massive accumulated debris of the process of coal extraction; from the great slagheaps that tower over the horizontal countryside, to the forests of specially planted trees, a particular species of pine that groans under excessive compressive load, so warning those underground of imminent collapse. The Winterslag pit closed in 1988; it was the last of the great mines within this important coalfield.

Post-industrial Western society has the common problem of what to do with the obsolete landscapes and the buildings of production. The character and identity of each individual industrial development was predicated upon the technical principles necessary for optimum output and efficiency, and so each is different as it contains a direct connection to both the land and the process of production. A palpable anxiety has been created in the wake of the economic void of such massive and wholesale closures. These post-industrial landscapes contain historical and cultural heritage and if they are to have a sustainable and viable future, if their particular character is to be protected and retained, great care must be taken to ensure that their redevelopment is managed in a sympathetic manner.



FIG. 1. C-Mine Cultural Centre, Genk, Belgium (by Architects 51N4E). A collection of new developments and adapted buildings is situated around the perfectly preserved pit-head winding gear.

It is well recognised that the heritage industry is extremely productive, and these almost forgotten areas of production have proved to be a very popular source of entertainment. The C-Mine Cultural Centre is an attempt to replace the obsolete industry of heavy production of the area with the light industry of heritage tourism. This project, which was completed in 2010, reworks the heavy-duty structures into a cultural complex containing two differently scaled multipurpose auditoria, meeting rooms and spaces for flexible cultural programming and accommodation for technical support and administration (Fig. 1).

The masterplan for the brownfield site sets the series of buildings around a formal square, which is dominated by the pit-head machinery itself. The approach that the designers took was not to fight against, but to work with, the scale and character of the buildings and structures. The former machine hall was adapted to become the cultural hub of the redevelopment. The ground floor is used as the foyer from which to access all other spaces; it acts as a huge field that holds the collection of fragments and detritus of the industrial processes. These are interrupted with a small number of carefully placed interventions which serve to facilitate the needs of the new users, and thus the space has a consciously cluttered feel in which the contrast between the old and the new is deliberately highlighted. The first floor is much more serene and contains a feeling of completeness; the checkerboard terracotta floor which extends all the way across the immense space has been repaired, the obsolete machinery is carefully preserved and fenced-off and natural light which falls through the vast open-structured glazed roof is allowed to

stream across the whole space. It is from this elevated hall that the visitor can access the Mine Experience, the Café and the new roof terrace, with a unique view of the mine's slagheap!

This situation does beg the question: what is the point of protecting these buildings? They are obsolete, their useful life is finished and the need for these buildings has long passed. Why is it important to keep this industrial heritage? Undoubtedly, if it were not for the fact that the structures are legally protected they would long ago have been demolished. It could be argued that it has also become clear that it is one thing to cherish heritage and historic buildings, but another to hold value in structures that are in disuse and falling apart, despite that ruin's embodiment of the past and the area's identity. The buildings have become museums to themselves; they celebrate their own obsolete past. They are preserved for no other purpose than to exhibit the lost industry of the area. The quality of the conservation is laudable; Viollet-le-Duc would be impressed with the manner in which they have been preserved, almost to a state that is more pristine than could ever have really existed (Brooker, Stone 2013). They are too clean, too immaculate, far too sanitised to show what the working conditions were really like. It is quiet, the air is clean, the buildings are scrubbed and it is empty, devoid of workers and atmosphere. The museum does not attempt to conjure the feeling of the time of production, but offers a romantic, presentable, palatable version of the past. There is a nostalgic perception of this as a golden period of certainty, of full employment and of great social comradeship.

### **Post-modern attitudes towards obsolete buildings**

One of the fundamental characteristics of our post-modern society is the rise of individualism. Advances in communications, information and transport technologies have facilitated a revolution in the global flow of objects, information and people. This has led to a pluralism of worldview, an expansion of individual choice and a liberation of lifestyle (Gallent, Robinson 2013). This suggests that the global diffusion of culture and identity is incompatible with the traditional structures of the post-war period, which has inevitably led to more diverse and separated patterns of sociability. This has prompted a questioning of traditional forms of authority and of conventional ideas of citizenship, social contact and allegiance.

The past has traditionally been seen as highly structured and highly political. A definite hierarchical system existed, one which reinforced conventional patterns of behaviour. J.B. Jackson describes how the present was once a continuation of this past; that is, the re-enactment of the past modified by intervening events (Jackson 1980). The population of a community would be constantly reminded of its original identity and its ancient pledges. This relationship was given visual form with monuments and temporal form in a series of days of commemoration. The emphasis was on the continuity of history. A traditional monument is a reminder of something important: a great event, public figure or declaration. It is a persistent reminder of something specific within the hierarchy of the past. Thus through this dual process of tangible and intangible reminders, a population was continually reminded of their position within the organisation of that community, and so the monument had the double function of an aide-mémoire, but also a guide to behaviour and attitudes in the future, in that its presence determined the actions of forthcoming generations.

Many of these social conventions began to crumble with the fall of modernism and rise in the importance of the working man and working woman. The established metanarratives were no longer acceptable, and coinciding with the rise in economic prosperity of the mid-20th century was the emergence of the individual point of view. The pluralistic reading of society ensured that history was no longer seen from the privileged view of those in power. This meant that the customary frameworks of organisation that presuppose the privileging of various centres were no longer seen as the primary frameworks. These include traditional points of view such as: Anglo-centric, Euro-centric, gender-centric, ethno-centric etc., and has led to an attitude of general incredulity that challenges many historical narratives and has led to a new way of celebrating past events.

All histories are now seen as important and all narratives are viable and relevant; the basis of historical existence is no longer seen as a sequence of political events. All history is positional; it is dependent upon the position of the narrator of that history. History can therefore be regarded as a discourse; it contains facts, interpretations, bias and empathy. It can be argued that anyone viewing material from the past, however well informed, will only be able to understand it from his or her own position. Historical analysis is an act of translation; the historian (whether architectural, cultural, scientific, feminist, activist or any other of a myriad of other focuses) will not be able to view the material through any other lens than that of their own culture. Thus any history contains many different readings and interpretations.

Post-modernism has exacerbated this; society is now post-industrial, post-Marxist, post-Western etc. Lyotard's definition of the way that we live now describes this well: 'a social formation where under the impact of secularising, democratising, computerising and consumerising pressures, the maps and status of knowledge are being re-drawn and re-described' (Jenkins 1991: 60). Thus the old centres have been almost completely destroyed and so those without power and with little property are anxious to commemorate their own achievements. This reaction to the traditional hierarchy has had a profound affect upon the character of architecture. It is no coincidence that public buildings have begun to lose their monumental character and a huge number of museums are being created to celebrate many different aspects of society. One of the first examples of this pluralist attitude to the past is the monument to the unknown soldier, which again celebrates a different past – not the past that history books describe, but an acknowledgement of the ordinary person.

### **Nostalgia**

This idea of history as a chronicle of everyday existence describes a vernacular past, a golden age where there are no dates or names, just a sense of the way it used to be. Kerstin Barndt describes how '...the slippage between the historical saturation of the postindustrial landscape on the one hand and its embeddedness in geological time is highly suggestive and speaks of our postmodern condition, in which playful, individual appropriation ostensibly trumps the discarded master narratives of history, the nation, the collective' (Barndt 2010: 273).

These new ways of celebrating past events could be described as containing a certain sentimentality for the past or nostalgia. Nostalgia is a longing typically for a period or place with happy personal associations and is derived from the Greek *nóstos*, meaning homecoming and *álgos*, meaning pain. It is thought to have been first used to describe the anxieties shown by 17th-century Swiss mercenaries fighting away from home. It is in-

teresting that it has also come to mean a yearning for a golden age; it could be described as a time which begins precisely where the active memory ends (Jackson 1980). A golden age is an idyllic, often imaginary, time in the past of peace, prosperity and happiness, when society had an innocence and a simplicity that it has since lost – and importantly, it is a time without significant events. This sentimentalising over an obscure part of the ill-defined past has created a romantic idea of an industrial society; one which contained certainty, jobs for life and a real sense of community spirit. Whether this time actually existed is irrelevant; it is the yearning for the half-forgotten past that is fuelling the nostalgia.

It is interesting to observe that nostalgia always contains a sense of a break with the past, a period of neglect or forgetting. A discontinuity has to occur before reconciliation can be made. This interval of forgetting allows society to rediscover the past. A great example of this need to forget is that of the Hacienda Club in Manchester, UK, which was once described as the most famous nightclub in the world. It thrived in the steamy, crazy atmosphere of the late 1980s Manchester, but was actually constructed some years before this. The club was designed by Ben Kelly and constructed within a remodelled yacht showroom (In the middle of Manchester!). The interior had the almost cartoonish quality of a warehouse; a huge, pigeon-blue space with black and yellow hazard warning stripes. This somewhat ironic interior was initially not well received; Anthony H. Wilson, the Granada Reports presenter and owner of Factory Records, described it as a middleclass conceit, a playing-out of romanticism about the industrial and post-industrial city, and in the beginning many questioned why they would want to visit a nightclub that looked like the places that they worked in every day: how little they knew! (Stone 2014) The design was too early: it was only after the warehouses had closed, after all the factories had disappeared that the sense of nostalgia came into effect and the club became a place of pilgrimage.

This period of neglect and discontinuity and the subsequent return of history is of great significance for the post-modern society, as is the need to acknowledge a personal history in a time of individualism. One of the most important things that the ordinary ‘everyperson’ has to offer in the way of remembering is work. A reflection of this is the extraordinary rise in the number of industrial museums; that is, museums dedicated to the industrial work that once consumed the whole of the Western world. These are a contemporary celebration of the past as a remote, ill-defined period or environment when a golden age prevailed.

The official Basel website describes the city thus: ‘With over 40 museums in an area of just 37 km<sup>2</sup>, Basel is a city of art and culture par excellence and a must-see destination for any trip to Switzerland’<sup>1</sup>: I counted forty-three museums on the official website for the city! The majority of the museums are situated within existing buildings: the Museum of Paper is set within the walls of a ‘fascinating medieval mill’; the Museum of Cartoons – from the caricature to the comic; the Historisches Museum Basel in a converted church; Switzerland’s largest collection of musical instruments in the historic Lohnhof building; the Museum of Horse Power – coaches and sleighs of the 19th and 20th centuries, in a converted barn; the Museum for the Traditional House is one of Switzerland’s principal museums of domestic life and is situated within the converted home of a Basel silk ribbon manufacturer; the Museum of the Flour Mill in a mill; 2,500 teddy bears in the Spielzeug Welten Museum (and another Toy Museum is housed in the 17th-century Wettsteinhaus); a unique collection of items from funerary objects at the Sammlung Hörnli Museum; and



even a Shipping Museum (in Basel??). Basel, a city with a population of barely 160,000 (even the wider area of the canton contains fewer than 200,000 people) contains forty-three museums. The need of the individual to understand his or her own heritage and to acknowledge that their past has great worth has fuelled a massive tourist industry. Buildings of the nostalgic past are being indiscriminately saved with little thought as to their new programme or those occupiers. A society can only support so many museums, and so consideration needs to be made as to how else they can be used. Is the preservation and restoration movement little more than a means of promoting tourism? Could these buildings have been changed into anything other than a museum?

### **'Ruins-lust'**

The concerns of the population of the 21st century are radically different to those of previous ages, and a particular concern is the need for everything to be useful; the idea that it is possible for everything to make a contribution to society, for it to be productive. All things are considered to have some worth, and if they have not, then some useful purpose has to be devised. There is a need for nothing to be considered as completely obsolete; it can be adapted, recycled, upcycled. The 21st-century mantra 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' is highly appropriate to the remodelling of outmoded existing buildings.

It is displeasing to observe an empty building, to see a structure that is no longer in use, not so much because it is sad to see that it is obsolete, but because it is no longer making a contribution. It is offering nothing to the society, to culture, or to the environment. It is taking up room for no reason and giving nothing back. It requires support to prevent extreme decay and possible damage, but what is it giving in return?

The problem with this approach is that sometimes the most specific buildings, that is, those with the most character are those that were designed so specifically for their purpose that it is almost impossible to transform them into anything else. It seems that the only solution to the need to find a productive use for these extremely particular buildings is a museum – but is there another way, could these building be allowed to just decay? A Modernist building that has become a celebrated ruin is St Peter's Seminary, which, designed by the Glasgow practice Gillespie, Kidd & Coia, was consecrated in 1966 as a training college for Roman Catholic priests. It is a powerfully modern cast concrete or *béton brut* building set within the wild countryside of southern Scotland. It contains the traditional elements of religious buildings – cloister, chapel, refectory, cells – all of which are organised around an open court. These essential components are reordered over multiple levels in an unexpected manner, alternately engaging with or hiding the user from the surrounding landscape. The long residential block has an extraordinary stepped section, which allows internal balcony corridors to look down on the continuous space of the refectory and chapel below, and the dramatic cantilever of the classroom block reinforces the expressive character of the building. The beauty and character of building was commended; it won the RIBA Royal Gold Medal for Architecture. However, just half a century later, the buildings are now registered as one of the World Monuments Fund's most endangered cultural landmarks.

Its construction was somewhat misguided: by the time it was completed, the Second Vatican Council had decided to train priests in parishes and small houses among their congregations, rather than in isolated communities, and so even when it was brand new there were insufficient trainee priests to fill the building. In 1980, the Catholic Church

closed St Peter's down, and the building was used as a drug rehabilitation centre for a few years. Since 1987 the building has lain empty and has been allowed to become derelict.

The building was very exact. It responded completely to the needs of the users, so acutely that it has proven impossible to convert it into anything else. Most buildings have resilience, in that they are sufficiently robust to allow a remodelling to occur. An uncomplicated building may have a number of distinct lives and may undergo many quite simple transformations. For example, an English Georgian townhouse is basically a collection of large rooms, with a front door at ground level and a back door at the rear, and so it can accommodate many different activities; it is often said that almost 90 per cent of all human activity can take place within it.

St Peter's Seminary is far from simple; it is a complex collection of incredibly precise interrelated volumes, which are so specific, so exactly designed for their purpose, that attempts to provide the building with a new use have proven futile. Schemes to convert the buildings include proposals for a hotel and for domestic accommodation, but the inconvenience of the site, the cost of the proposals, and the very specificity of the building itself defeated these. It seems that the programme for the seminary was so exact, and the relationship with the site so acute, that it is impossible to convert it into anything else.

This begs the questions: is this a problem? Does the building have to be restored? Is it necessary for it to once again become productive? Could the seminary, in the rich tradition of pastoral landscaping, become a romantic and ruinous folly? Artists have appropriated the building; it is becoming a situation for graffiti and installations, and rock bands have used the evocative environment as backdrop for their promotional movies. This Brutalist masterpiece is a place of pilgrimage for architects, who stare in wonder at the exposed structure. Louis Kahn once described how a building only reveals its true spirit when it becomes a ruin; when it is being constructed it is too busy with the process of becoming to reveal anything, and when it is being used, it is too busy serving those who occupy it to notice, but when it is empty, when it has fallen into disrepair, when it has nothing but itself to show, then the very nature of the building is exposed and the true character of its existence is revealed.

A ruin could be regarded as an acknowledgement of the force of history, of nature, climate and culture. It is a sign of an obsolete society, a monument to a distant time of different priorities and values. The preservation of a building in a ruinous state recognises this. The seminary has become a memorial to a long lost culture of isolated education – but also, because it has been appropriated by young artists hoping to escape from the restrictive atmosphere of the well-ordered city and enjoy the freedom that the shell of the Modernist masterpiece can offer, it has also become symbol of the resilience and resourcefulness of a contemporary society. Walter Benjamin took this idea further when he claimed the connection between the ruin and the allegory, meaning that each concretises historical change. The allegory within art and architecture is conscious, self-conscious really, about the prospect of its own ruination. The intrinsic beauty of the art or the architectural object is always subject to the attrition that time brings, and this is highlighted when it transgresses the limits that history has set for it. Thus the allegory and the ruin communicate the inevitable obsolescence of the presence (Benjamin 1998).

Ruins are romantic. Throughout history they have been perceived as objective and subjective assemblages, in that a ruin provides a physical connection between man and



FIG. 2. Interior of the deconsecrated church of Sainte-Croix in Liège. Natural light pours into the nave, where neglect has already caused much damage.

nature. The mass of the ruin provides a degree of shelter combined with a relative transparency. It allows the viewer to both engage and disengage their imagination though the connection with the ruin and the disconnection with the intact structure. Pallasmaa regards this silent air as vital in generating remembrance: silence focuses our attention. Instead of our own existence, it makes us aware of our fundamental solitude (Pallasmaa 2005). Romanticism of the 18th and 19th centuries enjoyed ruins-gazing. There was a growing disenchantment with an overly materialistic society and the inevitable victory of nature over all things was something to be celebrated. W.G. Sebald recognised this in his description of northern Europe after World War II: 'At the end of the war, some of the bomb sites in Cologne had already been transformed by the dense green vegetation growing over them – the roads made their way through this new landscape like "peaceful country lanes"'. In contrast to the effect of the ca-

tastrophes insidiously creeping up on us today, nature's ability to regenerate did not seem to have been impaired by the firestorms' (Sebald 2003: 39).

### Sainte-Croix

So this brings the discussion on to the disused, deconsecrated church of Sainte-Croix in Liège. The foundation of a church on this particular site dates back to the 11th century. It was one of seven collegiate churches to be constructed in this period and ensured that Liège was one of the most important cities of the Holy Roman Empire. The Sainte-Croix, or the Church of the Holy Cross, occupies a natural promontory on the western periphery of Liège, originally close to both the river Sauveniere and the Legia, although both rivers were diverted in the 19th century. The building itself has undergone a number of transformations; it was rebuilt in the 8th and 9th centuries, again in the 14th and the present incarnation is mostly from the 18th century, although a substantial fragment of the structure was lost in the 19th century – and an even greater section of the collection of structures, all of the attached houses to the north, was lost to the city-centre highway in the 1960s. And so the church is now in a somewhat isolated position, although one street to the east does connect the church to the choir and to the south a row of 19th-century almshouses recollects the shape of the original cloister.

The building could be described as Gothic in style with a late-Romanesque octagonal tower. It contains an impressive central nave which is flanked by side aisles. The soaring internal space, still smiled upon by the statues of saints, is both majestic and serene. The

rigour of the warm stone structure is emphasised by the regular diagonal of the terracotta floor tiles, while the dust and cobwebs climbing over decaying decorated screens lend an uncanny quality to the place. The condition of the building is poor; decay, leakages and damage are all highly visible, so it is a challenge to find some useful occupation for the building (Fig. 2).

There are many examples of the adaptation of a church building for a new use: cinema, apartments, shops, art gallery, museum, library, archive, hotel, even a skateboard park. Obviously, it is possible to install many different types of function – but does it have to be so? This church is just one of many buildings that can no longer support their original programme, and given the immediate context around the structure it is proving to be almost impossible for a new use to be found. Why not let the building fall into ruin? Let it naturally decay; let nature absorb the very building bricks of its structure. John Ruskin regarded restoration, and by extension, adaptation, as a false description of the thing destroyed. He argued that it destroyed the spirit of the previous age and was merely a false description of the thing that was replaced. He called for care and maintenance, arguing that the ‘buildings belong partly to the generation that constructed them and partly to those who have subsequently occupied them, but the present generation has no right to tear it down or damage it, just care for it’ (Brooker, Stone 2013: 262).

## Conclusion

This begs the questions: is the fact that the building remains in its ruinous state a problem? Does the building have to be restored? Is it necessary for it to once again become productive? Could the church in the rich tradition of pastoral landscaping, become a romantic and ruinous folly?

A ruin could be regarded as an acknowledgement of the force of history, of nature, climate and culture. It is a sign of an obsolete society, a monument to a distant time of different priorities and values. The preservation of a building in a ruinous state recognises this. The seminary has become a memorial to a long-lost culture of isolated education – but because it has been appropriated by young artists hoping to escape from the restrictive atmosphere of the well ordered city and enjoy the freedom that the shell of the Modernist masterpiece can offer, it has also become symbol of the resilience and resourcefulness of the 21st century.

Things are often admired not so much for their beauty as for their association with a phase of our past; a retrieval from the original ideal condition. Over a century ago, Alois Riegl argued that all monuments have historical value since they represent a particular stage in the development of a culture, and that everything that once was forms an irreplaceable and inextricable link in a chain of development: ‘We call historical all things that once were and are no longer’ (Riegl 1996 [1903]: 70). Some sixty years later (1987), Jorge Silvetti developed this when he spoke of the relevance and importance of our historic buildings. ‘At the risk of sounding too partisan and biased, I would say that even in historic times documents were not always available, and buildings (monuments, vernacular constructions, and public works) are themselves important texts, often providing the first and most lasting impression of a culture’ (Silvetti 1996: 33).

Unburdened by notions of architectural importance, the building can reveal its actual significance as a monumental example of a widespread condition: that of abandoned religious space at the heart of a mature western city being given a new and romantic role.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See: *Art & Design Museums Basel*. [online]. Foundation Bayeler et al. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-xofl89DxM>> [Accessed 26 June 2017].

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## 'DIFFICULT HERITAGE': THE USE AND REUSE OF PRISONS, SITES OF MASSACRES AND OF OTHER PROBLEMATIC PLACES

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*The holes of oblivion do not exist. Nothing human is that perfect, and there are simply too many people in the world to make oblivion possible. One man will always be left alive to tell the story. Hence, nothing can be practically useless, at least not in the long run*  
(Arendt 1963: 212)

Philosopher Hannah Arendt, reporting on the Eichmann trial for the *New Yorker* magazine in 1963, disputed the possibility of 'holes of oblivion' in the future, into which the 20th century's horrific human experiences of fascism and totalitarianism might be consigned without the voice of one person 'left alive to tell the story'.

In recent decades, the reflection on memorialisation of horrific events of the 20th century has revealed how 'the holes of oblivion' mentioned by Arendt are not only a risk, but are often part of the complex relationship between public narratives of the past and national identities. The relationship between institutional policies and memory has been widely investigated (Tota 2001) demonstrating how, during the 20th century – and partially beyond – many heritage sites deliberately and selectively have edited out unwanted controversial narratives to reinforce national or community pride and to hide the less palatable parts of their history.

This essay analyses how conservation practices may contribute to avoiding these 'holes' and, through the presentation of some sites – from World War I memorial Fort de Loncin in Belgium, to other 'difficult' commemorative cases – reflects on how tangible elements, such as the material evidence of a horrific event, may play a fundamental role in the process of transforming a site into a place of memory.

### The 'dark' side of heritage

Over the past twenty years, there has been increasing academic and media focus on the 'dark' implications of memory. The term 'dark tourism' (Lennon, Foley 2000), for example, has been used to indicate travel to places of tragedy, atrocity, crime, death and human suffering, such as sites attacked by terrorists, concentration camps or sites associated with slavery. Thus, it encompasses tourist attractions that are often considered and classified as heritage sites, such as battlefields of the two world wars and camps of genocide, such as Auschwitz, or places related to more recent events, such as camps in Rwanda and Kosovo. According to some scholars, 'dark tourism' can be considered a part of the evolution of cultural tourism into heritage tourism (Roberts, Stone 2014: 13), a change that has a strong relationship with the evolution of the notion of heritage, as it included, over the 20th century, sites and place seen as *lieux de mémoire*, according to the noted concept

by Pierre Nora (Nora 1984). However, 'dark tourism' also includes destinations we cannot relate to heritage, such as scenes of crimes and celebrity car crash locations. In recent times, just to mention an international media event, the Costa Concordia shipwreck near the Tuscan island of Giglio (Italy), has become an incredible 'dark' touristic attraction.

Obviously, the approach of 'dark tourism' is based on, and emphasises, the tourist's perception of the heritage presented. And we should say that the tourist experience may have a powerful capacity to direct and influence the landmarks of cultural heritage and its narratives (Roberts, Stone 2014: 14), and – as a direct consequence – the approach adopted in preserving artefacts and sites.

However, even if some terms such as 'dark heritage' (Roberts, Stone 2014), 'difficult heritage' (McDonald 2009), 'dissonant heritage' (Sharpley 2009) and 'heritage that hurts' (Sather-Wagstaff 2011), have been coined, considering heritage related to violence and traumatic events as a separate category is controversial (Ashworth 2008: 232).

A relevant part of 20th-century heritage deals with evil. It concerns remnants of buildings and cities destroyed by war, bombing, battlefields, war cemeteries, war memorials and monuments. It also concerns genocide camps, sites of massacres, controversial monuments to tyrannical dictators, traces of terrorist attacks and rooms in which tortures have been perpetrated. In many cases, they are what remain of the troublesome pages of recent human history, such as the Holocaust, cruel dictatorships around the world, discrimination against religions, gender and ideas, and conditions of slavery, often representing still-open wounds for nations and communities. In this perspective, Gregory Ashworth has argued that focusing on 'heritage of violence' is prevalently a political strategy, a device for realising different social, political or economic purposes (Ashworth 2008: 232). The most important use of this kind of heritage, and the main reason for its intentional creation by public authorities, according to the scholar, is the creation and strengthening of group identity. People are encouraged to identify with a social group, place or ideology: heritage related to violence is likely to be a particularly effective instrument for achieving goals such as social cohesion, place identification or political legitimisation because of the powerful emotions it evokes (Ashworth 2008: 238).

### **One place, many narratives**

According to Ashworth, the interpretation of the heritage of war has oscillated between different approaches to violence, attempting to ignore, contain or emphasise it. Violence may be 'suitably sanitised and transformed into valour and sacrifice for a cause'; alternatively, an 'industrial heritage approach' may focus upon technical advances in hardware; a 'strategic/tactical approach reduces military actions to a game of move and counter-move'; while other approaches may use the violence 'to stress the horror, pity or just futility of war' (Ashworth 2008: 233).

It is possible to try to apply this analysis to the case of Fort de Loncin, a suggestive World War I fortress in Belgium which displays diverse narratives on the theme of the war.

On 4 August 1914, German troops crossed the Meuse just north of Liège and advanced into Belgium. As is well known, the initial German plan was to push on as quickly as possible towards Paris, but they encountered tenacious resistance from the Belgian army. The place of that resistance consisted of twelve fortresses that formed a semi-circle around the city and from which the Belgians managed to delay the German advance.

FIG. 1. Fort de Loncin, Liège (Belgium). Flamme de Souvenir.

FIG. 2. Fort de Loncin, Liège (Belgium). An internal view of the fort with daily household objects.



Fort de Loncin was the last fortress to surrender on 16 August. Today, the Belgian government has preserved this fortress, protecting the memory without erasing the evidence. Fort de Loncin, in fact, is now a military cemetery, a commemorative monument and a museum.

Following the scheme proposed by Ashworth, the military cemetery reminds the visitors that 350 out of 500 soldiers died for their nation during the siege; many of those soldiers were never found but are presumed to be buried under the main section of the fort. The resistance of those men adds a commemorative narrative to the place, expressed through the diverse monuments on the site, such as the *Flamme de Souvenir* (Flame of Remembrance), a bronze sculpture of a half-buried man raising a torch (Fig. 1).

The fortress also presents the technological advancements of World War I, which consisted of the experimental use of concrete, a new material, instead of traditional stone. Concrete meant that the fortress could be built in just three years, but no steel reinforcements were used, so the building was very weak against German firepower. The small museum housed inside the fortress offers an overview of the progress of the technology of killing, such as machine guns and artillery, and, in particular, the Big Bertha, the famous heavy mortar-like howitzer experimented with by the German army just to attack Liège. In addition to the technical/historical war narrative displayed, garrison life in the fortress emerges during the visit, thanks to writings, furnishings and daily household objects left inside the rooms of the fortress – quite irrelevant whether they are original or not – which establish a strict and emphatic relationship between the visitor and the dead soldiers (Fig. 2).

The last impressive interpretation of Fort de Loncin – apart from the painful number of crosses aimed at remembering the missing corpses still buried in the collapsed part of the



FIG. 3. Fort de Loncin, Liège (Belgium). Crosses aimed at remembering the missing corpses of the soldiers.

FIG. 4. Fort de Loncin, Liège (Belgium). The huge crater caused by the bombing.



fortress (Fig. 3) – stresses the sense of horror and futility of war, through the huge crater, scattered with massive lumps of concrete, that can be seen near the main gate (Fig. 4). Besides the crater and destruction in the central part of the fort, the tremendous force of that explosion is evident: huge cracks, roofs which shifted and are no longer aligned with the supporting walls, and collapsed rooms. Envisioning the dramatic moment is easy because it has not changed since the explosion.

### **Emotional incompatibility**

In the 1950s, Alfredo Barbacci, one of the protagonists of the Italian debate on restoration, argued that a new function that is too far from the original entails both tangible and intangible modifications, often sacrificing the integrity of the monument. It was, as is well known, the general approach to the theme of reuse of historical buildings in that period. However, Barbacci highlighted the interesting implication caused by commemorative reuse of ancient religious buildings after the two world wars. He disapproved of the transformation of the Romanic cloister of St. Stephen in Bologna into the ‘Lapidario dei caduti’ (Wall of Remembrance) of the First World War, and the occupation of the crypt of Santa Croce in Florence and San Domenico in Siena with the sarcophagi of the fascist revolutionary dead. According to the Italian architect, those commemorative and ‘adaptive’ new uses represent an ‘emotional incompatibility’; he wondered: ‘How is it possible that a Romanic cloister, which speaks the medieval language of the monks that commissioned it, the makers that created it, and of historical, religious and legendary events connected to it, can change its language and feeling in order to talk of the recent war? These *mixité*,

over layers and transformations of significances are unnatural, an abuse both of history and emotion'. Barbacci concluded that using monuments with new, unrelated – even if so noble – functions is inappropriate: 'Creating new works, aimed at narrating the modern event, is much more preferable' (Barbacci 1956: 176–177).

Although from the 1950s to present day, the debate of reuse has overtaken the notion of 'pure contemplation' of architectural heritage (Bellini 1985: 10–13), and some relevant theoretical approaches have been developed, such as the post-modern concept of 'double coding' (Jencks 1977), the 'stratigraphic' approach, and the idea of proposing a conservation project as a 'management of transformations', the problem of overlaying significances in a reuse project is still ongoing.

The problem, in particular, involves cases in which reuse projects regard places related to a period of violence and abuses, as these are generally not well accepted as places in which to perform 'normal' activities. Thus, in most cases, they may lose their original unwanted significance in favour of a new reassuring function.

Reconverting projects of prisons well describe the risk of losing significance in the change of function. Generally, prisons are sites in which, in themselves, 'dark' emotions are expressed, as they house 'micro-histories' of crimes, redemptions and, often, injustices and violence. Thus, former prisons are transformed into residential buildings, hotels, universities or office buildings, maintaining very little of their original significance. Beyond its essentially utilitarian and economic purpose, the design generally aims to cancel a prison's history and, in quite a compensative operation, to consign the building in a renovated, reassuring and comfortable appearance to communities.

When a place expresses a strong and controversial significance in terms of collective memory, the issue of reuse and, more generally, of its destiny, is more complex. The prison of Long Kesh/Maze is considered one of the 'iconic' sites of the 'Troubles', the internecine conflicts which occurred in Ireland from 1960 to 1998. Located on a former RAF airfield, the prison opened as an internment camp in 1971 and was the site of many protests and violent activities, such as a famous hunger strike by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1976, during which ten prisoners died. Recently, after its closure, Long Kesh/Maze became the focus of increasingly divergent opinions regarding the future of the site, including several attempts to eradicate the physical remains of the Troubles (McAtackney 2014).

Sometimes a prison or a place of torture releases such a strong feeling of suffering and atrocity that its reversion to a 'normal' use is made impossible. In those cases, commemorative functions are the only option. In this perspective, two houses in Santiago de Chile present two different approaches in representing the horrific Pinochet dictatorship. Villa Grimaldi, originally a private estate and at one point a restaurant, was seized during the 1970s and used as one of the clandestine detention and torture centres by the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional. Today the villa has been turned into a peace memorial park (Parque por la Paz), where traditional commemorative instruments are displayed: list of victims, photographs, monuments, educational facilities, etc. (Gómez-Barris 2010) (Fig. 5). Londres 38, a house which was originally an office of the Socialist Party, had the same history, but here remnants of installations, like pipes protruding out of the wall, broken tiles, burn marks on the parquet wood floors and other traces of the tortures establish a strong relationship between visitors and victims through a tangible documentation of the violence of the dictatorship (Klep 2013).



FIG. 5. Santiago de Chile. The entrance of Villa Grimaldi.

FIG. 6. Bologna (Italy). Memorial Museum of Ustica. Part of the art installation by Christian Boltanski.

FIG. 7. Capaci (Italy). The remains of the car of Giovanni Falcone exhibited in the XX anniversary of the Capaci massacre.

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FIG. 8. Bologna (Italy). The wide opening left in the wall of the waiting room of the Central Station.

FIG. 9. Florence (Italy). The sign of the destruction highlighted in the Torre dei Pulci façade after the restoration.

### Signs of violence as historiographical contents

Considering the chronological distance between us and the time of a tragic event, a terrorist attack or a war, and considering how that distance will grow wider and wider, our knowledge and awareness of those events will depend on indirect sources such as official evidence, administrative and legal acts, photographs, films and records. Including memorials, monuments and museums in the field of indirect sources aimed at reconstructing a neutral report of the events is really difficult, as they can be considered a fundamental part of those tragic events in themselves.

Most of the buildings and places mentioned have an aspect in common: one or more traces of the dramatic events that have occurred have been maintained. Elena Pirazzoli, in the field of musealisation, has wondered if objects may help, as in a trial, in testifying to the 'veracity' of the events; or if, in any case, that veracity is only 'supposed, presumed or simply demanded' by the visitors, and is, obviously, strongly filtered by a museum presentation (Pirazzoli 2011).

In this sense, just to mention two of the most representative Italian examples, the remains of DC9 (mysteriously shot down in 1980) performed as a permanent art installation by Christian Boltanski at Memory Museum of Ustica in Bologna (Fig. 6), and the temporary exhibition of the remains of the car of the magistrate Giovanni Falcone, killed by the Sicilian mafia on 23 May 1992 by a dynamite explosion placed beneath the motorway from Palermo Airport to Palermo at the town of Capaci, may describe the use of material remnants of a tragic event as suggestive historiographical documents (Fig. 7).



Obviously, this perspective includes also the signs of the violence: as scars, the holes caused by bombing, craters, cracks, openings in the walls and other material signs of a tragic event become the main sources in transmitting memory.

Some memorialisation processes following terrorist attacks in Italy demonstrate how preserving just a very little trace of that violence may be of great help in avoiding the ‘holes of oblivion’ mentioned by Hanna Arendt. In this perspective, the Central Station of Bologna (Italy) represents one of the most meaningful examples of this kind of approach. There, on 2 August 1980, a terrorist bomb by a neo-fascist organisation killed 85 people and wounded more than 200. The explosion destroyed most of the building and hit the train that was waiting at the first platform. The roof of the waiting room collapsed onto passengers, which greatly increased the total number of dead. During the months after the massacre, the families of the victims preferred to maintain the memory at the place, instead of creating a monument. However, the station had to maintain its function, so the destroyed parts and the platform were rebuilt – but in the new waiting room, the existing flooring, the crater left by the explosion, a wide gash on the wall and the clock stopped at the time of the bombing have been maintained to underline the interruption of the life of the victims (Pirazzoli 2011) (Fig. 8).

On the night between 27 and 28 July 1993, in Rome, two bombs by ‘Cosa Nostra’ exploded near the churches of San Giovanni in Laterano and San Giorgio in Velabro, wounding 22. The explosion caused the collapse of almost the entire portico of San Giorgio, the opening of a wide gash along the façade and several structural instabilities. The restoration should have responded to the need for documenting and testifying to the injury inflicted on the artistic and architectural heritage; the approach adopted was the reconstruction ‘where it was, as it was’, which, according to some scholars, created a distortion of history and cancelled part of the memory of the place (Carbonara 1993; Spagnesi 2005: 248). Despite the initial intention to adopt the same approach, the reconstruction of Torre dei Pulci in Florence produced different results. The building, seat of Accademia dei Georgofili, was destroyed in 1993 by another car bomb explosion that caused the death of five people. It has been restored highlighting the sign of the destruction in the main façade in order to maintain the memory of the event and transmit it to tourists and inhabitants (Cruciani Fabozzi 1993; Palermo 2003) (Fig. 9).

## Conclusion

This essay set out to outline the 'darkest' aspects of the heritage, dealing with 'difficult' and 'dissonant' building and sites such as prisons, camps, places of torture and massacres. Analysing the relationship of this particular heritage with the so-called 'dark tourism', the essay has revealed how the interpretation of heritage may oscillate between different approaches to violence, attempting to ignore, contain or emphasise it. The 'difficult heritage' is generally seen as a *lieu de mémoire*, as it represents a political and historical event (war, dictatorship, terrorism, etc.), and as it contains traces of past traumas, suffering, death and violence. However, the adaptation of a controversial building to new functions, both in the case of a memorial and of other new 'normal' uses, can imply the risk of losing part of its difficult, meaningful history. From this perspective, preserving tangible elements of that past may play a fundamental role in the processes of memorialisation.

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## MATERIAL HERITAGE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Architecture is usually an artefact that is designed and built for one or more functions, even if it is often the case that the structure itself holds a specific purpose: commemorative (e.g. triumphal arch), defensive (e.g. city walls), signalling, decorative, symbolic, etc. It is always difficult and risky to separate architecture from the function it was designed for, and it is likewise problematic to isolate it from its territorial context or from the historical and cultural context that produced it and modified it.

Besides having a location, a structure/form and a function (which together make a piece of architecture unique), architecture also has an 'expressive content' that may be more or less explicit. In this contribution, expressive content is regarded as one or more factors that derive from the intellectual or emotive sphere of the person that designed, modified or experienced the architecture and that enrich how it is perceived. Architects, users and spectators reciprocally influence one another through specific suggestions, thus transforming the building into a place for interpretation and, sometimes, debate.

Understanding the expressive content of a work of art is the hardest part of the judgement chain, because it is closely connected to tradition, which means it can change with time and in how it is perceived and interpreted. On the one hand it can be claimed that the expressive content is a part of the architecture, like a material sign or a physical trace. On the other hand it must also be considered that the expressive content becomes more evident, the richer the sphere of values and the cultural experience of the person addressing the architecture.

For example, a few markings intentionally engraved on ashlar can explain a past method of working stone on site, of organising the site and of conceiving the work (Fig. 1). It opens up interesting topics on some aspects of society and human nature. Human or animal footprints imprinted on the mixture for a brick give us a snapshot of a past technical and environmental context of production (Fig. 2). The linear, repeated traces of charcoal on plaster provide an explanation of how areas were illuminated in the past or what a building was used for (Fig. 3). These are just a few examples of what can be deduced from a piece of material data, but there are many other instances of immaterial data that still pertain to architecture: the light that comes in through a small aperture in a wall and hits the wall at a specific moment of the day to mark the passing of time allows us to appreciate the complex calculations for timekeeping that are so distant from our contemporary society. The perfect acoustics of a monastery room, which still today makes it suitable for polyphonic concerts, allows us to rediscover empiric notions of the past that we have often lost. The unusual shape of a door could suggest the necessity to introduce big cylindrical elements, such as wood barrels, and this gives us information about its past agricultural and economic life that might well not match how these buildings currently look.

FIG. 1. Walls of Aigues-Mortes in the Languedoc-Roussillon region, Gard department, France.

FIG. 2. Roman villa in the archaeological area Massaciucoli, Lucca, Italy.

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FIG. 3. Sant'Ampeio crypt of the church in Bordighera, Imperia, Italy.



In order to interpret what a building can tell us (about itself and the person who used it, designed it and modified it), we must not stop at what we 'see', but need to 'observe', moving from an often passive reception of external stimuli to a careful consideration of every detail that could lead us to unexpected reflections.

Observing is therefore, mostly related to the attention of the mind rather than of the eye and it implies the will to look closely at something, and to make choices. The art historian Erwin Panofsky (1962) stresses that 'when the observer focuses his attention on certain objects, he is, consciously or not, obeying a principle of pre-selection' because 'we are always interested in what we allow ourselves to be interested in'. For this reason we must find in ourselves the will and the interest to see a piece of architecture as a form of human expression, not just from an artistic viewpoint, but from many others also: technical, cultural, social, religious, political, military and many more.

### **How can one learn, and teach others, to recognise the expressive content of architecture?**

The answer lies in fostering and stimulating curiosity, through the observation and reconstruction of ideas and theories starting from hints, traces, symbols. We have a responsibility not just to ourselves, but (for professors and those with an educational role) also to the young generation, the protagonists of our future.

If it is true that the expressive content of architecture is richer, the deeper the set of knowledge and experiences of the person observing, then one of the main tasks of architecture professors is to unveil the complexity of architectural works through the learning process. A change in behaviour or perception could be achieved as a result of certain experiences that become more powerful, the more the observer is integrated with what he is observing. Starting a workshop by choosing a field of experimentation that interests (and therefore motivates) students could be the first step in encouraging an inquisitive attitude. In fact, according to the philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin (1999: 17),

it is fundamental to 'teach serendipity, the art of transforming the apparently insignificant details into clues that allow you to reconstruct the whole story'. In relation to the study of historical architecture, this can be achieved by deeply focusing the individual and varied problems that are normally interrelated on favouring the acquisition of an important experience: realising that, after many days and a lot of training, the same spaces, elements and materials, that have been already seen and 'understood' before, can be reinterpreted with a different viewpoint, thus enriching the meaning we attribute to them. This necessary step thoroughly shows that an exhaustive knowledge is impossible and that doubts should be treated as allies, the yeast of any critical activity, and not as constraints. Being conscious that any small and apparently insignificant detail bears a huge expressive richness, and can be interpreted in countless ways, enriches one's own sphere of sensory and cultural experiences, which in turn helps one recognise the expressive content of architecture.



### **Distracted knowledge and atrophy of the experience**

Several authors (De Martino 2002 [1977]; Jedlowski 1984; Galimberti 1999) have tried to examine and explain the cultural crisis we are currently experiencing. The incapacity to be inspired by and to reflect upon what surrounds us is an evident tendency that shows its consequence in all activities and, therefore, on restoration. The philosopher Walter Benjamin maintains that modernity is characterised by an atrophy of experience, which our modern age is trying to confront through the reproduction of artefacts (Benjamin 2011 [1936]). This is a characteristic of our age, where the distinction between something 'original' and its 'copy' is progressively losing its meaning. Today we witness the realisation of the scenario that had been prophesied by the German philosopher in the 1950s: material objects and cultural reflection have made space for a new relationship between man and building (and perhaps between men themselves), which is mediated by the various digital tools creating intriguing, immersive and interactive virtual realities. 'The advent of the digital era allowed us to immerse ourselves [in things] with unbelievable results: in creating images, the physical contact with matter is substituted by abstract linguistic operations, which characterise both the images and the models they are giving life to' (Indulgenza 2012: 20). However, as warned by the philosopher Massimo Cacciari (2011), it is not the technique that triggers a revolution, but the technical revolution itself grows in a context that demands it.

In fact, our era has transformed technique and technology itself into the end goal instead of using it as a tool, thus making the concept of 'authenticity' ambiguous, elusive (and perhaps outdated). Authenticity is no longer a solid base of reference when it comes to the conservation of a building. On one hand, this contributes in making the reasons to opt for preservation unclear (Choay 1995; Severino 2003) and on the other hand it leads



to an exasperated relativism. Do not forget, however, that the concept of authenticity linked to material substance is typically Western and does not correspond to a common feeling (Tomaszewski 2004; Dezzi Bardeschi 2004).

### **Why and when is it essential to be able to recognise the expressive content of a building?**

If a piece of architecture has conservation problems, whether they are due to degradation processes (caused by nature) or abandonment (caused by man), action must be taken against both causes and effects. In the case of a building that is still being used, the first questions we ask as architects are: what action should we take and what techniques should we use and why? On the other hand, in the case of a degraded (but still used) building, the first issue that arises is whether we should act and whether preserving the building is right and/or convenient from a cultural, social, political and economic point of view. The introduction of a hypothesis is strictly connected to a cost–benefit correlation, which aims to evaluate what is lost and what is gained in the case of demolition or redevelopment of a building. There are several studies investigating the economic aspect of this issue (among which: Shipley, Utz, Parsons 2006; Thomsen, Van der Flier 2006; Bullen, Love 2010) that connect it with the issue of sustainability (Bullen 2007; Ellison, Sayce, Smith 2007) or with the social role of architecture (Yildirim, Turan 2012). Different approaches maintain different planning solutions that go from the total demolition of a building which is no longer useful and/or important for the community to the most rigorous conservation of an architecture, which if it cannot sustain its original function, could be transformed into a museum for the interest it still bears.

The choice to preserve, as a voluntary act of slowing down the degradation process every building must face with the passing of time, is based on recognising a value in it, a value which could derive from identifying one or more aspects of expressive content. We have claimed that not all content is actually expressed by the building or is an integral part of its materials (e.g. constructive, material characteristics, colours, spaces, etc.). Instead, in some cases, the content evoked by the architecture is difficult to describe or express as something tangible. As proof of this, Benjamin warned us that ‘constructions can be welcomed by the community in two ways: through use and through perception’ (Benjamin 2011 [1936]: 34–35), which Benjamin respectively described as the tactile way and optical way, i.e. on a level of habit and attention. Drawing on the distinction made by the sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand, Benjamin analysed a possible synthesis and showed that experience acts as a synthesis between the contents of an individual’s memory and of the collective memory. There is various content (that we can also refer to as meaning), which does not necessarily manifest itself in the same moment: social, historical, cultural, religious or political. All meanings can be of value for one individual or a community, whether big or small. The more these meanings are evident and shared by the different players involved (and not just the architects, but also owners, administrators, users, etc.), the more felt and shared is the need to preserve the architecture.

While the conservation of matter can preserve the expressive content of architecture, the same cannot be done for the values it evokes. These values are guarded by men and are a part of the inevitable process of transformation of society and its individuals. This requires curiosity, attention, focus and the will to learn all the skills we are losing.

FIGS. 4-5. Fort de Loncin at Liège, Belgium (photos by S.F. Musso).



### Old buildings and new values

Our contemporary society is pervaded by a crisis of values, a relativism of choices, and history has lost much of its significance. It is therefore understandable that the future of cultural heritage is diversified and contradictory. On the one hand, there is still a vague sense of respect for physical objects, history and the spirit of a place. These inevitably lead to the musealisation of an artefact or of a given context, thus favouring the authenticity of matter, much like the Christian cult of preserving relics (Babelon, Chastel 1980). According to Andrzej Tomaszewski (2004: 34) 'the sources of the Western "materialistic" approach to the values of the historical monument lie in the Christian tradition' and in this manner architectural elements also attain the status of relics and their authenticity is decided entirely by their material substance. An example of this is the Fort de Loncin at Liège, Belgium (Figs. 4-5), visited during the workshop, or the Smelting Furnace of Tavernole along the river Mella in the Trompia valley (Italy). On the other hand, there are several cases of careless use of abandoned buildings that became an excuse to build new, often eccentric and excessive, projects. The historic building is no longer the soul of the project but an indifferent annexe: from Copenhagen's Gemini Residences in Denmark to the Kruisherhotel in Maastricht, the Netherlands (Figs. 6-7), visited during the workshop, not to mention the works by some famous stars of the architecture world that seem to be competing for who can be the most extravagant (Richardo Bofill, Herzog & de Meuron, Jean Nouvel and others). It is perhaps useful to quote the viewpoint of the historian Pierre Nora (quoted in Augé 1993: 41), who claimed that with our religious accumulation of testimonies, documents, images and all the 'visible signs of what was', we are actually trying to discover what makes us different and, 'in the image of this difference, the ephemeral spectacle of an unrecoverable identity'. During the workshop there emerged strongly the will and the need to preserve diversity, in different ways and sometimes in questionable ones. Indeed, diversity is an important condition of maintaining identity.

FIGS. 6-7. Kruisherenhotel in Maastricht, Holland (photos by S.F. Musso).

FIG. 8. Ansaldo Meccanica 1911, Genoa, Italy (Ansaldo Archive of Ansaldo Foundation).

FIG. 9. Fiumara Shopping Mall, Genoa, Italy (photo by C. Merello).



There are a few cases of *à l'identique* reconstruction, which go against every logic of conservation but which respect supposedly formal criteria of authenticity or memory retention. Even though the concept of 'false' does not exist in architecture, as it is intended in the arts, we cannot underestimate this phenomenon. Drawing on what has been written about the media society (Benjamin 2011 [1936]; Cacciari 2011), as one which tends to reduce the differences between the real and the virtual, the true and the false, we see with apprehension reconstructions in which the time elapsed from their realisation to today is deliberately compressed in order to give a primitive meaning to the work, linked to the culture and the social life of a supposed starting point. An example of this is the intervention to 'requalify' the area at the outlet of the river Polcevera, in Genova-Sampierdarena (Fiumara area), where between 1999 and 2001 the major part of 1,500,000 m<sup>3</sup> connected to the Ansaldo mechanical factory was demolished. This intervention, which was one of the largest in Italy

(168,000 m<sup>2</sup>), involved the planning of new structures with residential, managerial, commercial and crafts functions, as well as the creation of a central green area. Not much is left of the Ansaldo's historic buildings, which were enlarged from Taylor and Prandi's mechanical factories in 1846. In memory of the historic production of locomotives, just one locomotive from the early 1900s is displayed, placed in the green area. In addition, the shape and volumes of the new mall recall the demolished industrial buildings (Figs. 8-9).

Rural and industrial buildings as well as architecture from the 1900s in general are the elements of architectural heritage that are most in danger. In Italy, industrial heritage has only recently been inserted in the list of buildings that should be preserved, but its future is often at the mercy of the decision of one individual or of a small group of people, who in many cases do not actually see the importance of passing these buildings to future generations. In Italy most demolitions, supported by politicians, focus on disused industrial areas, which are not always enticing in terms of their location, size and/or built volume, with the eventual aim of redeveloping them.

England was the first country (in the 1950s) to show interest in the vast and complex industrial heritage, an interest which gradually spread to other European countries as well as to Canada and the USA. The issue of industrial sites and how to salvage the most significant ones was tackled outside Italy from the second half of the 20th century onwards – examples include the Gare d'Orsay in Paris, 1986, the textile factory of Terrassa in Catalonia, 1986, the Bankside power station in London, 1995, or the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, 1996. In Italy the interest in our industrial heritage is very recent and it follows the evolution of the concept of cultural asset as well as a shift of focus from monuments to landscapes and cultural landscapes (Fontana et al. 2005).

In Liguria, Italy, redevelopment of its industrial past is still far away, even though the role of industry was extremely relevant in the region from the 1850s to the 1950s in many sectors: mechanical, metallurgical, textile, naval, chemical and food production (Doria 2005; De Maestri, Tolaini 2011). A notable quantity of buildings, infrastructures and industrial complexes were progressively disused and abandoned due to the changing economic situation from the start of the 1970s. These complexes were often sited in strategic positions for the infrastructure, located along the coastline and rivers. Instead of active factories, there are now obsolete buildings as a reminder of a past that is becoming distant and which, on a few occasions, has triggered initiatives to 'reuse' the territory. In most cases, these initiatives do not involve the conservation of the buildings or of the technical, economic, cultural, institutional, territorial or logistical characteristics they still have or evoke. The list of (sometimes prestigious) demolished buildings is as long as the list of buildings that are still waiting, in an atmosphere of indifference, to be reused and to see their strategic and architectural potentials exploited.

Something is changing. It cannot be purely for economic reasons – that of course should be taken into account, or political opportunism – that we should not be trying to hide. Something is changing in the way we perceive and care about our past and its traces and, more generally, about time. According to the anthropologist Marc Augé (1993), history is accelerating and chasing us. The overabundance of events in the contemporary world implies an objective difficulty in identifying time, in giving a sense to our near past. And while we wonder about this, many abandoned buildings, which are priceless tools for studying the identity of a territory and understanding its physiognomy and its changes, are succumbing to a 'spectacular' adaptive reuse or a ruthless demolition.

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## CONSERVATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE: A CASE STUDY IN SICILY

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### **Adaptive reuse: a tool for industrial heritage conservation**

The enlargement of the ‘cultural heritage’ concept in both scope and boundaries has aroused interest in themes and objects hitherto neglected. The traditional principles of conservation have been infused by new concerns related to the fields of education, economy and enrichment of cultural life (Council of Europe 2009). Historic environments, objects and sites consequently have become appreciated and respected also by virtue of the meanings and uses that people attach to them, and the values they stand for. Their preservation appears an essential factor in supporting the sense of continuity and the identity of groups and communities.

Today, the relicts of the industrial past are also considered to be valuable heritage structures that should be saved as bearing special insights into the relationships between people and landscape in space and time (Jackson 1984). While having for the most part lost their original functions and become disused following the deindustrialisation process that Europe experienced in the second half of the 20th century, they still are full of historical, technological, social and architectural features, symbolic meanings and practices that recall and belong to collective memory and that should be identified, protected and maintained for the benefit of future generations (Dansero et al. 2001).

However, their conservation cannot be restricted to maintaining their existing state and retaining their material characteristics. On the contrary, specific measures need to be established to keep unchanged their immaterial significance and the cultural messages they bear. To this end, revitalisation strategies based on ‘adaptive reuse’ – i.e. the phenomenon of adapting heritage buildings for contemporary use – are indicated as the most effective for industrial heritage conservation (Austin et al. 1988; Clark, Wolkenberg 2013). They will help in improving the social, economic and environmental sustainability of broader areas, giving life back, reinforcing the self-consciousness of civil society and re-creating viable attractive places (Plevoets, Van Cleempoel 2011).

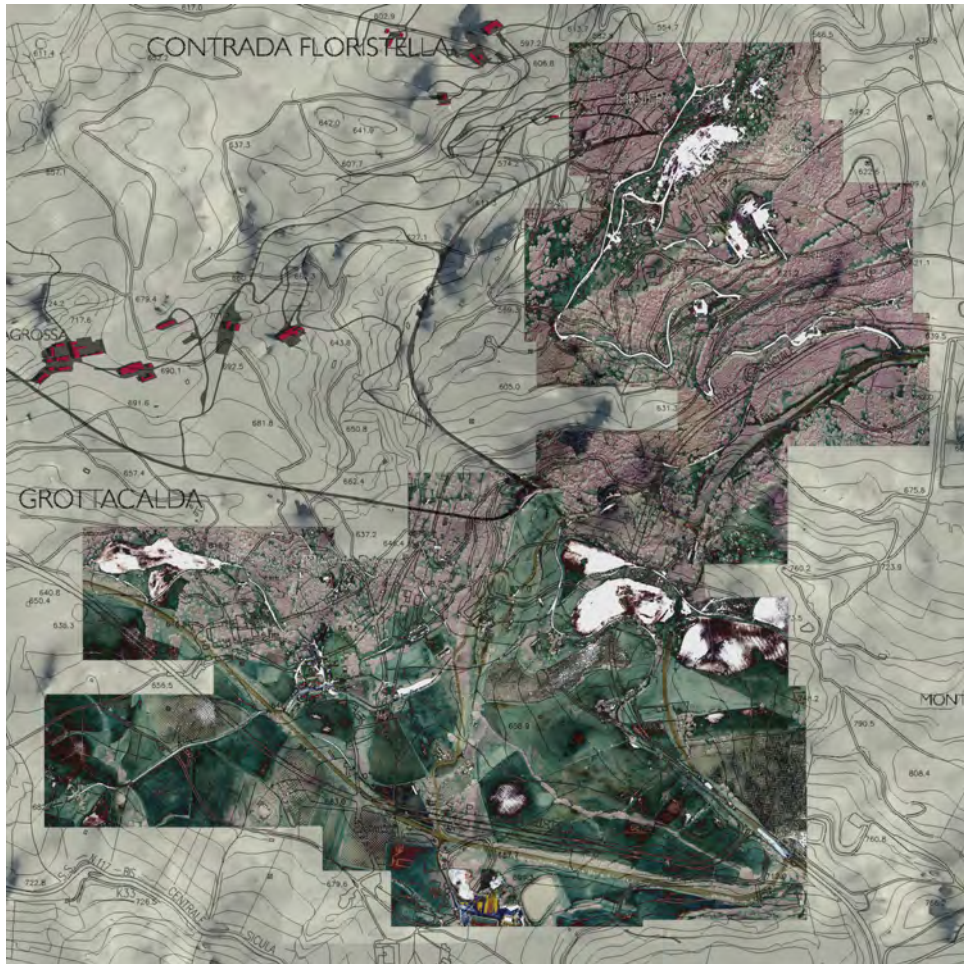
In recent years, adaptive reuse has acquired ever-increasing connotation, so as to be in the process of evolving into a proper discipline within the broader field of architectural conservation (Plevoets, Van Cleempoel 2012). Even if altering existing buildings for new functions is a longstanding practice, adapting heritage buildings for reuse still presents a great challenge for architects, designers and engineers, and for this reason, it has been the main topic of many conferences on architecture and conservation and consequently the subject of an extensive literature.

In this framework, the 5th Workshop of the EAAE Thematic Network on Conservation, which was held in Belgium from 13–16 October 2015, offered the opportunity to discuss the main issues currently facing the domain. Its ultimate aim was to build on and help guidance on urban and architectural strategies from the macro to the micro level, regard-

FIG. 1. The area of Floristella-Grottacalda mining site.

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FIG. 2. The railway system in Sicily at the beginning of 20th century and in the 1950s.



ing the conservation and adaptation of places. It also provided an occasion for debating the difficulties related to this procedure, especially when applied to 'sensitive' heritage such as the relics of the industrial era, a legacy strongly imbued with social and collective meanings, but sometimes characterised by limited (or not universally recognised) architectural value.

In the light of the numerous local case studies described and visited, some difficult questions were addressed: how to combine the reanimation of such buildings with the transmission of their material and immaterial values; what limits and opportunities arise in the adaptive reuse of this type of heritage; how can the spirit of place be preserved; what should be the outcome of the intervention?



All these crucial questions should drive any proposal for a sustainable adaptive reuse of industrial heritage, such as the Floristella-Grottacalda mining complex in Sicily, a site that is relevant principally as outstanding evidence of human genius and of an exceptional spiritual relationship between people and nature.

Nowadays, new opportunities for transformation and adaptation to current needs are being sought for these ruins of an industrial site used until relatively recent times, but finally abandoned. Immersed in a landscape of great complexity, enhanced by the stratification of the traces left by so many civilisations on the land, the obsolete industrial structures appear as the ruins of a productive past now remote and no longer legible. Therefore they deserve to be rediscovered, retrieved and reconnected to the real world: as a laboratory of materials and techniques; a valuable expression of the economic and social values that characterised the so-called ‘machine age’; but, above all, as the privileged bearer of intangible assets: among others, the record of the lives, beliefs and traditions of former workers, men, teenagers and children (the so-called *carusi*) working in the mines that were the real heroes of the rich, but tragic epic of the ‘yellow gold’.

### The Floristella-Grottacalda mining complex

One of the most relevant witnesses of the sulphur industry in Sicily, the Floristella-Grottacalda mining site, is now a dispersed set of artefacts belonging to different construction periods and typologies. During the era of mining exploitation, its mixed industrial and residential urban system was almost completely self-sufficient. Once a real town where productive and social life coexisted, this place nowadays shows only fragments of its glorious past: ‘industrial monuments’ cut off from the original landscape’s character and almost deprived of *genius loci*.

Located in the territory of Valguarnera (Enna), the site forms an equilateral triangle with two natural attractions, the protected Pergusa Lake and the Ronza forest and wildlife reserve (Fig. 1). In addition, it lies in an area with a dense distribution of archaeological structures and monuments, incorporating the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina, and the archaeological park and museum of Morgantina-Aidone. Until 1971, the Dittaino–Piazza Armerina–Caltagirone railway traversed this area for the transport of goods and workers (Fig. 2). Close to the now deserted Grottacalda train station placed at 647 metres above sea level, a wooded valley stretches for over a kilometre.



FIG. 3. The Floristella-Grottacalda mining site and its cultural heritage.

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FIG. 4. The Mezzena well.





The complex brings together the two like-named abandoned sulphur mines in comprising some 400 hectares. Of these, one half corresponds to Grottacalda, in private ownership, while the other half is Floristella, a Sicilian Region's property.

As documented in the archives of the Royal Corps of Caltanissetta Mines, Grottacalda mine began its activities in 1815, although investigations into sulphur deposits probably date back to the period between 1700 and 1750 (Archivio di Stato di Caltanissetta 2000). The landowner was Romualdo Trigona, prince of Sant'Elia, who in 1886 granted the mining rights to Trevella & Company, which retained possession for several years. In 1919, the Società Solifera Siciliana acquired the concession for extraction and subsequently, following its merger with the Montecatini - Società Generale per l'Industria Mineraria e Chimica (later Montedison), an important Italian chemical company, it obtained an indefinite license (Addamo 1989).

Unfortunately, the war caused serious difficulties for the business classes. Due to the frequent blackouts, dewatering operations became impossible. Therefore, a few years later, the Montecatini decided to stop extraction and to devote land to agricultural use. In accordance with an agreement between the company and the Grottacalda miners related to the exploitation of the higher reaches of the field, sulphur extraction continued until the license expired in 1963.

Today, all that remains of this important industrial activity is a vast and degraded inheritance (Fig. 3): masonry scaffolding, reinforced concrete winches located close to the *pozzo Mezzena* (a majestic well built in 1868), a number of *calcaroni* (round, fire-brick lined furnaces), several buildings which had accommodated the miners and the administrative personnel, the former power station, a movie theatre and the former railway station. In recent years, the current owners converted some of these edifices into farm buildings (Pirruccello 1999).

The commencement permission for the mining area of Floristella was granted in 1825, although sulphur was extracted earlier, following the discovery in 1791 of the method for manufacturing soda by the treatment of common salt with sulphuric acid. As already mentioned, the area was one of the most valuable in the region, not merely in terms of productivity, but also in terms of the quality of the sulphur.

Nowadays, Floristella still preserves most of the characteristics of the typical Sicilian sulphur landscape (Fig. 4). Like a large open-air museum, the vast mining complex pro-

vides a real 'stratigraphy' of different periods and related extraction and sulphur-melting techniques. Still to be seen are countless galleries and about 180 winches from where sulphur was extracted with the traditional system of the pick, and then transported to the so-called *calcarelle* (a kind of circular furnace with a diameter of 1.50 to 2 metres with a sloping floor), still in good condition, in the vicinity of wells and tunnels. One can see the remains of Gill ovens and of stonework scaffolding with winches (the oldest dating from 1868), and the ruins of service facilities built near the wells (an infirmary and housing for the miners, including the room used as a recreational club for the workers).

The imposing Palazzo Pennisi stands on a hill dominating the whole mining area of Floristella (Fig. 5). Built between 1870 and 1885, and initially comprising only the ground floor, it was the summer residence of Agostino Pennisi, baron of Floristella, and his family. Two additional floors were added to accommodate the director and employees' lodgings and the office spaces. It was conceived as an impregnable fortress, able to resist any attack by miners in the event of strikes and riots and for this reason, the many openings were provided with slits. In addition to the housing, offices, the service rooms, the octagonal chapel, the coal cellar, and several barns, it also hides some secret emergency exits and two small galleries providing escape routes in the underlying ridge. The sumptuousness of the building and its architectural connotation contrast with the austerity of the place, providing an immediate and exciting image of the social divide of that time. Over the years and with the exponential growth of the mining activity, the edifice then became the mine's headquarters.

Following the dismantling of operations, Palazzo Pennisi has been abandoned for a long time. Because of its pitiful condition, it has recently undergone consolidation work, in anticipation of being finally restored as a museum of industrial archaeology at some time in the future. Of great interest also are the structures to capture water at its source, the millstone of Pennisi and the so-called *via del mosto*: a path, initially envisaged to allow a quick connection between the winery and the palace, flanked by a channel made in *coppo* (Sicilian roof tiles), directly carrying the must, under gravity, into the manor cellars.

### **New perspectives on the Floristella-Grottacalda mining complex?**

Floristella was one of the last Sicilian mines to shut down, in the late 1980s. The abandonment of structures led to a period of great destruction, vandalism and theft. To overcome these problems, unfortunately common to all Sicilian sulphur mines, the regional government promulgated on May 15, 1991, the law n. 17 establishing in this area the Ente Parco Minerario (Park Mining Authority) in order to protect the natural and manmade landscape. However, this resolution did not halt its rapid decay (Fig. 6).

Even though a number of recovery actions have been carried out in the park, of great concern is the almost total indifference of local communities, who do not recognise its relevance to themselves and do not understand it. Partly privately owned, as already mentioned, and difficult to reach due to the absence of practicable roads and to the presence of barriers, this precious industrial heritage is moving towards complete annihilation and with that the obliteration of the memory of the place and of people who worked and lived there.

Nevertheless, in recent years there has been increasing awareness concerning the requalification and valorisation of the dismissed Sicilian sulphur mines, at least at the institutional level. This renewed attention brings with it the possibility of developing rea-

FIG. 5. The imposing Palazzo Pennisi.

FIG. 6. Neglected areas in Grottacalda.



soned and concrete actions towards safeguarding and promotion. The law proposing the establishment of the *Parco nazionale geominerario delle Zolfare di Sicilia* (Geomining national park of Sicilian solfatara) would certainly help. This initiative aims at strengthening provisions to ensure the preservation of Sicilian industrial heritage. It intends to implement the ‘subsidiarity’ principle that seems to be indispensable to enhance the specific cultural, economic, historical and natural values of the places involved.

In Italy, the experience of geoparks has now progressed to a respectable level of maturity, in particular with the foundation of the *Consorzio del Parco Geominerario Storico e*

Ambientale della Sardegna (Geological and mining park of Sardinia) and the implementation of other similar initiatives. The meaning and the contents of these realities are now concrete matters of record to which a proper management policy would necessarily refer. They reflect the recognition of the broader notion of cultural landscape, no longer limited to respecting cultural and natural values, but also considering the value of the human presence and of the world of work. This should not be seen as a new complication, but rather as proof of a wider and generalised awareness, which could become a powerful catalyst capable of triggering processes of growth and improvement of the quality of life in the places concerned. The establishment of the *Parco nazionale geominerario delle Zolfare di Sicilia* is part of this process and focuses on the creation of a kind of extended museum at the regional scale, seeking to improve natural and ethno-anthropological attributes.

Will this project (clearly based on a top-down approach) fully achieve its purposes? Will it succeed in facilitating that needed rediscovery of authentic local culture, required to preserve and affirm people's identity in the interests of overall socioeconomic development? Probably not, unless we first establish the *raison d'être* of such an industrial heritage, giving them back their 'sense of place', which has been lost, in the absolute conviction that only what is fully understood, including its true motivations and significances, can be properly maintained.

When envisioning new solutions for the Floristella-Grottacalda site – reaffirming its past and allowing its repossession by people – it may be useful to refer to already developed and fruitful experiences undertaken in the adaptive reuse of large-scale industrial heritage. One example of good practice is provided by C-Mine, a cultural and education centre established in the Flemish town of Genk, Belgium. This area was industrialised from the early 20th century, mainly through the mining industry. However, following the closing of the mines in the 1980s, around seven thousand miners lost their jobs. The city was then faced with the question of how to deal with the built remnants of the mining industry, and with its surrounding landscape, which was also deeply shaped by this activity.

In 2001, the municipality acquired the old coal-mining complex of Winterslag with the aim of restoring it and preserving the memory of its industrial past, and thus to integrate the area into the town's cultural and tourism interest. The project was started in 2005 and was completed in 2010, involving several organisations in a wide-ranging partnership. It reworked the powerhouse of the former coal-mining complex to create the future cultural infrastructure node for the wider area. The activities carried out on the existing brick buildings were focused on the existing horizontal layering (a 5-metre high base upon which stand top-lit machine rooms). Two new concrete additions extended the ground level to create an evocative hall including exhibition spaces, offices, a coffee bar, a restaurant, meeting rooms and access to two new theatres.

On the eastern side, the old offices of the complex – unfortunately in a derelict state – were left as a roofless ruin looking over the square. On the western side, which had previously been left as open ground, a new building was erected to host the Faculty of Media, Art and Design. The two towers of the former mine shafts were renovated to make them accessible as viewing points. Under the esplanade, an underground route was opened to the public, to allow visitors to walk through the galleries of the old mine.

Developed following a place-based approach, the C-Mine hub has therefore been built on four interrelated drivers: artistic creation, recreation, higher education and creative economy – an inclusive vision which has succeeded in bringing new life to the old settle-

ment by adding new layers of meaning, reusing them for new potentials through a patient search for functions based on sensitive design, so ensuring the continuity with the past while looking to the future. In a similar way, Floristella-Grottaacalda could become like C-mine in Belgium, a big 'square' where educational, scientific, creative and recreational functions meet and grow for the sake of local and global communities – a place, located at the centre of the island, which could reflect and celebrate its intrinsic multicultural character and attract artists and cultural creators, professionals and students to actively interact and share experiences.

However, the success of this kind of initiative depends not only on economic factors, will and management abilities, but also on other important factors: the quality of the restoration – carefully designed in terms of preserving the buildings' structures as well as their authenticity and originality, an appropriate adaptive reuse and enhancement activities carried out on the properties involved in the projects or thereto related. To this end, it is critical to focus on the issue of conservation of anthropological, natural, environmental, landscape, historical and architectural characters in the area. Finally, the present approach involves the so-called 'minor' heritage, incorrectly underestimated in the processes of knowledge acquisition, as was previously the case with respect to the most important buildings.

## Conclusions

These are the principles that should motivate the material and spiritual rebirth of the Floristella-Grottaacalda mining complex and of the whole territory. In an epoch dominated by changes brought about by globalisation processes and by the increasing risk of homogenisation, the only possibility of distinction and self-affirmation of unused sites lies in the recovery of their identity. Only by strengthening their endogenous characters will it be possible to find the basis for a desirable self-healing.

Many large Sicilian cities have been characterised for some time now by the existence of empty urban and peri-urban spaces. Areas mainly resulting from industrial decommissioning processes remained largely ignored by the urban development strategies that, at least until the mid-1990s, has preferred new expansion forms, mainly devoted to the residential sector (Trimarchi 2011).

These portions of the territory, made unproductive for purely economic reasons and now deprived of life, can become the ideal places where osmotic processes between past and present, between human activities and nature, between man and the city, could be reactivated. These sites could serve as a stimulus for a re-evaluation of the city as a whole, reconsidering years of segregation and zoning policies, redeveloping virtuous processes of local governance aimed at curing the many wounds inflicted on the landscape, places, and people's identity.

Industrial ruins have much to gain from a proper transformation and adaptation to current needs. As legacies of the industrialisation process, they are elements of great interest and, at the same time, a vital resource to be respected. The rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of these areas as part of a strategy focused on the reestablishment of the interactions between natural, urban and rural landscape, could constitute a worthy opportunity for territorial redesign, thereby helping to mend the peripheral fragmented tissues, partly compromised by the uncontrolled urbanisation of the last decades.

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## THE SPIRIT OF SOCIALISM AND CZECH POST-WAR ARCHITECTURE IN THE SHADOW OF PRECONCEPTIONS

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There has been an explosion of interest in the architecture of the 1960s and 1970s among the professional community in the Czech Republic. Dozens of books have been published in recent years charting the subject from various angles – ranging from in-depth monographs devoted to individual structures, biographic profiles and interviews with figures who were witnesses to the architecture of that time, to general overviews of the period in question<sup>1</sup>. Rich and multifaceted tales of a complicated era in national history, and one that continues to be shadowed by prejudices, are gradually being uncovered. The everyday reality of the conservation, appropriate reuse, renovation and conversion of the architecture from that era is, however, still hobbling well behind theory. How should we go about conserving the material evidence of that era and stripping it of the layers of negative associations with the state-socialist regime? What symbolic values, historical experience, and potential can we draw on?

### **The objectivity of time**

One of the sharpest disagreements lies in the different perspectives of different generations. However much it is a generally recognised norm in architectural history that the passage of time makes possible an objective evaluation of the moral and physical obsolescence or relevance of the work of one generation, in the case of work produced in the state-socialist era this is by no means true. More than forty years have passed and opinions across the professional community and the general public vary widely. There is notably a cool cautiousness among those who lived through that period and were negatively affected by the social atmosphere and personal experiences of the time. In the professional community, for example, there is an overt emphasis among the older generation on the work of opponents of the regime and on cosmopolitan approaches that defied standard production in the Eastern Bloc. The middle and young generations, by contrast, take a detached view of this work and react more to its distinctiveness of expression and raw poetics while also letting themselves be captivated by the retro or melancholy atmospheres of the unusual designs, and in many respects they also seek to rehabilitate work that is fundamentally local and apolitical<sup>2</sup>.

Is it at all possible to mark out a boundary between socialist and international architecture? Surveys and interviews with contemporaries indicate that even in the darkest years of the Cold War, Czechoslovak architects had access to published work in their field produced in the West<sup>3</sup>. After the political thaw in the early sixties they were even allowed, on certain conditions, to travel for study purposes abroad. In every era, moreover, there are artists who want to do more than just perform the job they have been given (by the client, but also by society as a whole). Brilliant works of architecture were designed both by members of the Communist Party and by dissidents expelled in 1971 from the Union



of Architects and therefore working 'underground'. Banned architects endowed with a strong will and exceptional skills could often, even in adverse circumstances, create altogether extraordinary works of architecture and the showpieces of socialism. And conversely, pro-regime architects, instead of taking advantage of their influential contacts, often executed only uniform series designs. Each work of architecture carries within it the specific features of the era in which it was created: a reflection of what came before it, inspiration from acknowledged models of work, the imprint of technological and economic opportunities, the ambitions of society and the existing legislative framework, etc. When we compare then, with a cool head, the transformations in post-war architecture in the West and the East, surprisingly the differences are few.

### **Conservation**

How then should socialist architecture be defined? Evaluations should certainly not be centred on one particular person or one group. Just as in other periods (which, however, with the greater objectivity of time receive a better assessment) the benchmarks of quality have only gradually begun to be formulated in recent years, based on reflection in the professional community and the references to groundbreaking, influential, artistically outstanding, and 'timeless' works in the professional literature. In open, cosmopolitan times it helps also to compare the work in one place to that abroad and anchor it in the overall context of architectural history. In this case, however, the direction of influence is more or less one-sided (West to East), because with the cyclical changes in the political climate of the Communist regime, work by influential Czechoslovak architects eventually fell out of favour and was inevitably banned from publication in the professional literature; consequently it is almost impossible to find any contemporary international awareness of this work in the press<sup>4</sup>.

A strong testament to the quality of work is also provided by the number of works inscribed on the list of cultural heritage<sup>5</sup>. Today the most important criteria are considered to be: the historical authenticity of the work; complexity; and the importance in terms of shifting the paradigm of architecture. Complexity in this sense can be interpreted as the whole ensemble of positive attributes of a work – for example, the quality of its integration into the urban space and public life, the level of refinement of artistic expression, sophistication of the structural and spatial design, the precision of structural details, the original design of the interiors, and of course the incorporation of works of art. Complexity in particular is a very important criterion in Czech post-war architecture, especially when we consider that: a) an architect was not an independent contractor and had to operate within the centrally planned system as an employee of one of the state design institutes, which operated as part of the state construction enterprises and whose work ranged from civil engineering and industrial projects to mass housing; b) in the 1960s and 1970s heavy emphasis was placed on interdisciplinary collaboration, especially among sociologists, psychologists, and artists<sup>6</sup>.

Modern architecture, however, should also be assessed in reference to the identity of a place and its ties to community life. Even structures seemingly unimportant and not very sophisticated everyday forms of expression deserve protection. It may sound absurd, but should we not hold on to the last (authentic, uninsulated) prefabricated buildings or the last surviving socialist-era grocery store? Although this architecture does not much meet the criteria of complexity and artistic quality noted above, in the case of cultural monuments the essential criterion should be the conservation of memory in tangible form.

The experience of it cannot be transferred to the space of a museum and converted to an exhibit. And in its rawness this architecture provides us with a true picture of the roots of our lifestyle, our views and ourselves.

The role of monuments (grounded in legislation, but generally 'just' surviving documents of our cultural roots) has, it should be noted, proven to be essential in the inhabited environment. Monuments are the reference points of our identity and shed light on the diversity of thought and skill of our culture; their singularity in a positive way interferes with the Enlightenment obsession with establishing order; and above all they define the fundamental questions about the relationship between quantity and quality that are very relevant today.

The Czech approach to architecture from the 1950s to the 1980s is in this respect quite inadequate. Although the protection of post-war architecture in the world is a key issue in professional discussions and work, in the Czech Republic the competent authorities have remained largely passive despite the repeated pleas of experts<sup>7</sup>.

While it could be said that at least some monuments have been listed and there is nothing to complain about, when we consider that post-war architecture accounts for around one-half of the country's building stock then some simple but uncomfortable questions must be asked, for instance: what role in this situation is played by the unpleasant memories associated with the architecture of the totalitarian regime? Is it really of such poor quality? Are we not still viewing architecture through the filter of the now outmoded criteria of age and decorativeness instead of quality? Is a role in evaluations played by the potential for conflict with a powerful investor? Will this situation actually be improved by the forthcoming amendment to the Heritage Act, which will make the Ministry of Culture the sole body to propose and decide on the listing of a site (at present any private or person with legal standing can propose that a site be listed as a protected monument) and the listing of a site will be subject to the approval of the property's owner? Is this situation not a sign of a lasting inability to come to terms with the recent past?

Is it at all possible to alter the relationship to post-war architecture by means of heritage protection grounded in legislation? Or is it much more important to build awareness and to change attitudes in society, which are then reflected in our approach to this specific field of cultural heritage and ultimately in the policy of the Ministry of Culture? It is above all important to note that inscription on the list of cultural monuments alone does not mean that a building will become an 'untouchable museum piece' thereafter, in need of nothing more than the owner's devoted and expensive care. It is rather about a system of increased oversight in which any changes and renovations are made with the support of more professional consultation to ensure that key features of value are not destroyed and the sensitive borderline between the authenticity of a preserved historical work and the oftentimes excessive demands of the modern consumer lifestyle is not breached. Inclusion on the list, however, also makes it possible to apply for subsidies.

The advantage of a site being listed as protected also comes from the fact that when repairs or long-term maintenance are sensitively executed, the work can be used as an exemplary approach to which other historical buildings that are not listed can refer. Along with increased public awareness, heritage conservation breaks down the stereotypes and clichés that are otherwise hard to avoid in an ever faster-moving and quantitatively oriented world. It is enough today to compare the now established approach taken to the rental tenement buildings of the turn of the 19th century, where the addition of thermal

insulation to the articulated historical façades and the replacement of the original windows with plastic ones is often deemed unacceptable, whereas in the case of post-war architecture it is automatically assumed possible to change any and all materials up to and except for the actual load-bearing structure. How is it possible to expect anything but trendy and temporary aspirations from the newly emerging generation of architects today, when the work is based on the advance assumption that it will probably be completely transformed within the timeline of a single generation? Applying an exemplary approach to cultural heritage also has the effect of cultivating our relationship to the lived environment and to architecture in general.

It is equally essential to mark out a path towards increasing general awareness and understanding in society as a whole, and towards breaking down hardened prejudices. Venturing into the international context reveals that the sad demise of an entire stage of our history is an acute problem not just for the Eastern socialist bloc but for the entire advanced world, and is largely associated with changing strategies of construction and development and with the end of the lifespan of this large part of the building stock<sup>8</sup>.

Recent efforts to debunk the preconceptions about industrial heritage<sup>9</sup> and the enormous surge in the popularity of conversions of industrial buildings that ensued have shown that an open and informed approach to historical and especially modern architecture not only has the effect of strengthening identity but is also financially and culturally rewarding.

### **Demolished and at risk**

The demolition of historic buildings and the construction of something new on the vacant site is part of the natural process of renewal and revitalisation of the city. But it is always necessary to carefully consider the real benefits of new structures and the risk of a loss of identity. However, a frequent argument levelled in favour of demolition in the Czech Republic is the poor physical condition of a structure, usually the result of a lack of maintenance (which in recent years has become the common standard and reflects our loose, consumerist relationship to architecture). Even more popular, however, is the defence of a new building on the grounds of lifestyle, and specifically that the lifestyle associated with the outgoing structure is obsolete. The danger of this position in the long term, however, is well illustrated by making a comparison with similar rhetoric that was behind the shameful demolition of the unique Jewish Quarter in Prague in the late 19th century, and the planned but fortunately never implemented demolition and redevelopment of the charming and now very popular working-class district of Žižkov in Prague.

Among the gems of Czech post-war architecture that have recently been lost, foremost mention should be made of the internationally renowned Ještěd Department Store in Liberec (Miroslav Masák, Karel Hubáček, Václav Voda, 1968–1979) (Fig. 1), which despite considerable media attention and boisterous protests from the professional community and the general public was replaced with a plain new department store building with little relationship to its surroundings. Currently there are plans to demolish, for example, the Transgas dispatch building and the building of the (former) Ministry of Fuel and Energy in Prague-Vinohrady (Jindřich Malátek, Jiří Eisenreich, Ivo Loos, Václav Aulický, 1966–1978) (Fig. 2), the Czech embassy in Berlin (Věra and Vladimír Machonin, 1970–1978) (Fig. 3) and the Automatic Telephone Exchange building in Prague-Dejvice (Jindřich Malátek, Jiří Eisenreich, Václav Aulický, Jaromíra Eismannová, 1975–1982) (Fig. 4). These are all well-known cases that have sparked waves of protests, public awareness campaigns and height-

FIG. 1. Ještěd Department Store in Liberec, designed by Miroslav Masák, Karel Hubáček, Václav Voda, 1968–1979, demolished.

FIG. 2. Transgas dispatch building and the (former) Ministry of Fuel and Energy in Prague-Vinohrady, designed by Jindřich Malátek, Jiří Eisenreich, Ivo Loos, Václav Aulický, 1966–1978, currently at risk.

FIG. 3. Czech embassy in Berlin, designed by Věra and Vladimír Machonin, 1970–1978, currently at risk.

FIG. 4. Automatic Telephone Exchange building in Prague-Dejvice, designed by Jindřich Malátek, Jiří Eisenreich, Václav Aulický, Jaromíra Eismannová, 1975–1982, currently at risk.



ened attention from the media. Nevertheless, many more sites are being lost outside the spotlight and beyond the reach of the public, a situation exacerbated by the established domestic practice of shrouding large-scale building activities and planned projects in secrecy (even though they often involve prominent public spaces or sites with extraordinary heritage protection status, for example demolition of the Czechoslovak Children's House at Prague Castle - Josef Hlavatý, 1960–1963).

### **The violation of integrity**

The most common way in which the value and the valuable features of a site are lost, however, is not by demolition but through gradual disintegration. Neglected maintenance,

incongruous repairs, renovations and modifications to interiors and facings, the rental or short-sighted financial exploitation of space: all these processes gradually eat away at the coherent composition of the original work and blot out the spirit of the age in which it originated. The original atmosphere mixed with poor-quality alterations added on creates such a strange impression that the structure is then thereby deprived of its original intensity or voice, and the ensuing incomprehension met with by a structure that has lost its meaning thereafter serves to accelerate its demise. The end usually comes in the form of a massive renovation in which of the original materials only the very basic frame of the structure remains and the rest is replaced with modern products. The result is a post-war piece of architecture in terms of its volume and urban context, but fitted inside and out with a modern face.

A frequent argument used to justify making extensive changes to post-war architecture is the alleged poor quality of the structural details owing to the rigid nature of the centrally planned economy that favoured quantity over quality, so that it sought to maximise uniformity and reduce costs<sup>10</sup>. The landmark structures that today warrant our attention and care, however, in most cases originated out of singular circumstances as individual contracts outside the workings of the centralised system and were designed and built tailored to the particular job and with the exceptional support of or, more often, despite the regime. These works excel in their attention to compositional detail and the importance of these works for the past and present is as models that others can try to follow and can gradually steer standard industrial production in the same direction. The overtly progressive approach taken by architects in these demonstratory and bold buildings was usually well ahead of the realistic possibilities of its time (cf. the interwar avant-garde) and this architecture is therefore very fragile. Experimenting beyond the limits of what was possible, however, gave rise to a unique and authentic style of technicist aesthetics. And this is being irretrievably lost during renovation in exchange for the dull and certified products of the present day.

Of the many dubious renovation projects that have destroyed the valuable features of the original work without creating any new value, mention can be made, for instance, of the cumbersome new facing applied to the building of Albatros Publishers in Prague (Stanislav Franz, Luděk Hanf, Jan Nováček, 1966–1969) (Figs. 5a-5b), the renovation to Motokov in Prague (currently City Empiria; Zdeněk Kuna, Zdeněk Stupka, Olivier Honke-Houfek, Jaroslav Zdražil a Milan Valenta, 1974–1977), during which the entire horizontal base, among other things, was destroyed, leaving in its wake an empty construction pit that remains there to the present day. A basic conflict arises in the case of the total transformation of the interior of a building that was originally created with a unifying and all-pervasive architectural concept carried through to the last detail – for example, the famous Thermal Hotel complex in Karlovy Vary (Věra and Vladimír Machonin, 1963–1978) and the new check-in hall of the Main Train Station in Prague (Josef Danda, Alena and Jan Šrámek, Jan Bočan, Zdeněk Rothbauer, 1972–1977).

## Models

There has been an acceleration in recent years in the pace at which this architecture is being lost. Experts warn that in the near future there may no longer be anything left to save and one whole period of our history will be gone. While losses still prevail, the current retro trend and the heightened sensitivity to post-war architecture have led to the ap-

FIGS. 5a-5b. Albatros Publishers in Prague, designed by Stanislav Franz, Luděk Hanf, Jan Nováček, 1966–1969: (a) original state and (b) new unsuitable facing.

FIG. 6. Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering in Prague-Dejvice, designed by František Čermák, Gustav Paul, Vladimír Hladík, 1958–1967, within recently thermal cladding applied.

FIG. 7. ČKD building in Prague on Wenceslas Square, designed by Alena and Jan Šrámek, 1976–1983, cultural monument, Alena Šrámek as original architect also contributed on repairs.



pearance of several singular positive rehabilitations. Successful examples identified by the professional community include the thermal cladding added to the Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering in Prague-Dejvice<sup>11</sup> (František Čermák, Gustav Paul, Vladimír Hladík, 1958–1967) (Fig. 6). And also the repairs made to the ČKD building in Prague on Wenceslas Square (Alena and Jan Šrámek, 1976–1983, cultural monument) (Fig. 7) and the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry in Prague-Petřiny (Karel Prager, 1958–1964, cultural monument), work to which the original architects also contributed (which in theory, however, can entail a certain risk that there will be an attempt to correct the mistakes

FIGS. 8a-8b. Ještěd Mountain Hotel and TV Tower in Liberec, designed by Karel Hubáček, Zdeněk Patrman, Otakar Binar, 1963–1973, national cultural monument: (a) original state of bar and (b) recently made replicas, with contribution of original designer.



and deficiencies of building production of the time and thereby detract from the value of the work's strong authentic statement).

Even amidst the prevalence of negative experiences and the loss of charming original post-war interiors, occasionally there is a spark of hope, provided for instance by the increasingly common practice of attempting to bring back the original furnishings through the use of replicas, an approach used, for example, in Parkhotel in Prague-Holešovice (Zdeněk Edel, Jiří Lavička, Alena Šrámková, 1959–1967) and Ještěd Mountain Hotel and TV Tower<sup>12</sup> (Karel Hubáček, Zdeněk Patrman, Otakar Binar, 1963–1973) (Figs. 8a-8b). Enlightened owners and operators of these sites are finally awakening to the fact that a sensitive treatment of historical architecture, including post-war and socialist, has the additional advantage of creating something that is unique and unforgettable, the most prized values in the global market in real estate and the inhabited environment.

### Shared experience

The complexity of modern and mainly post-war architecture requires interdisciplinary and international cooperation. Shared experience, especially when crossing the boundary of building type, allows us to find proper strategies – and also to stir up the debate held by the professional community in response to different social and economic situation of cultural heritage in contemporary Europe.

The main topic of the EAAE Workshop 2015, i.e. 'spirit and authenticity of historic architecture, possibilities and limits of its protections through reuse and new strategies', was focused particularly on the examples of industrial and religious buildings. Nevertheless, post-war architecture is closely related to these typologies. Its concept is also based on generous, open and airy space, on uniquely designed structure, and on repetitive, simple detail. Other similar issues arise in relation to all of these buildings – they are strongly dependent on current social and cultural circumstances. That's why they can be easily endangered or fall into ruins during currently ongoing frantic changes (cf. situation of extensive industrial areas in post-industrial Europe, and the ethos of sustainability and

economy; religious buildings face to face with [Czech] atheist consumerism; post-war socialist architecture in a democratic society distancing itself from the past).

Shared experience and research, simultaneously focused on the potentials and limits of creative reuse of these three heritage types, should introduce new strategies and enhance the entire field. Each type can contribute with specific proven strategy and experience. Religious buildings belong to the most evolved and 'classic' tasks, especially in terms of interlinking traditional and new building technologies, without losing or affecting the spiritual dimension. Industrial heritage recently changed the ways of incorporating the 'ostracised' and uninvitingly dilapidated architecture back into contemporary urban and social structure, through popularisation, interdisciplinary research, or cooperation with local communities and artists. It shows also how to effectively and attractively mix new interventions with authentic structures. And this inspiration crossed the borders of the industrial field and changed the ethos of all the contemporary architecture (cf. popular raw, industrial style).

The fact that post-war heritage is extensive (in the Czech Republic, more than half of the building stock) provides a lever to help rehabilitate and renew the urban environment as a whole, finding new creative reuse strategies for historic yet modern buildings, which are so often unprotected. We can take advantage of authentic remains of post-war buildings, still vivid memories of witnesses, and also of the enthusiasm and passion of young people. In the time of relativism and consumerism this shared experience, research and inspiration can help upgrade and restart the entire field of historic sciences and heritage protection.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Examples of comprehensive overviews include: Švácha, Platovská 2005 and 2007; Ševčík, Beneš 2009. Examples of typological overviews include: Vorlík 2015; Klíma 2011. Examples of a monograph on a design institute: Švácha 2010. An example of a monograph devoted to an architect: Pučerová, Směták 2010. Examples of monographs on particular structures: Vorlík 2006; Hubičková 2014.

<sup>2</sup> This is particularly true of the youngest generation, who are the most actively engaged in promoting awareness and conservation of this unique and hard to grasp cultural heritage: <[www.panel-aci.cz](http://www.panel-aci.cz)>; <<https://www.facebook.com/Architektura-70-let-167729773246177/>>; <<https://www.facebook.com/seminarDA/>>; <<https://www.facebook.com/respektmadam/?fref=ts>>; <[www.zastarouprahu.cz](http://www.zastarouprahu.cz)> [Accessed 15 March 2016].

<sup>3</sup> Urlich et al. 2006.

<sup>4</sup> The exception being the Czechoslovak pavilions at EXPO, the buildings of the embassy and congress of the UIA held in 1967 in Prague.

<sup>5</sup> In the Czech Republic a structure may have the status of a 'cultural monument' and in exceptional cases a 'national cultural monument', or it may be part of a protected area.

<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of works of art in architectural projects was in fact required by law and depending on the social significance of the project amounted to 1–3 per cent of the total budget of the project: Karous 2015; website of the project: *Vetřelci a volavky* [online]. Available at: <[www.vetrelciavolavky.cz](http://www.vetrelciavolavky.cz)> [Accessed 15 March 2016].

<sup>7</sup> The situation is illustrated well by a basic statistical analysis of the entries on the list of cultural monuments of the Czech Republic (website of the State Institute for the Care of Historical Monuments: *Památkový Katalog* [online]. National Heritage Institute. Available at: <<http://pamatkovykatalog.cz/>> or <<http://monumnet.npu.cz/monumnet.php>> [Accessed 15 March 2016]):

– 44 railway stations (none from the 1960s or 1970s; the renowned and now largely damaged new check-in building of the main train station



in Prague and the station in Havířov are missing from the list);  
 – 42 department stores (missing are such icons as Dům bytové kultury/the Home Living Store and Kotva in Prague, Labe in Ústí nad Labem, Prior in Pardubice, and so on);  
 – 389 bridges (missing is Nusle Bridge in Prague and the renowned ribbon bridge in Prague-Troja);  
 – 3,987 churches (missing is the church in Senetářov, one of the few churches built during the compulsorily atheistic socialist era and truly remarkable).

The handful of works from this era that are on the heritage list include the hotel building in Prague-Karlín, the Federal Assembly in Prague-Vinohrady, Máj Department Store in Prague, the Hotel Continental in Brno, the Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry in Prague, and the youngest buildings on the list are the ČKD building in Prague and of course Ještěd Mountain Hotel and TV Tower, a national cultural monument. The Stalinist 1940s and 1950s, paradoxically, fare better, and are represented by the Cultural House in Ostrov, Jalta Hotel in Prague, Hotel International in Prague-Dejvice, the 'High-Rise' buildings in Kladno-Rozdělův and the collective houses in Zlín and Litvínov.

<sup>8</sup> ICOMOS, 2013; Tostões, Ferreira, 2016; *SOS Brutalism*. [online]. DAM Deutsches Architekturmuseum. Available at: <www.sosbrutalism.org> [Accessed 19 June 2017].

<sup>9</sup> VCPD. [online]. Research Centre for Industrial Heritage FA CTU Prague. Available at: <http://vcpd.cvut.cz/cz/> [Accessed 15 March 2016]; *Industriální Stopy*. [online]. Industriální Stopy. Available at: <www.industrialnistry.cz> [Accessed 15 March 2016].

<sup>10</sup> For example, prefabricated panel buildings were experimental and diverse structures in the 1960s but by the 1980s had become utterly indifferentiated products, with the recurrence of the same building type over and over within giant housing estates.

<sup>11</sup> Vorlík 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Vorlík, Fagner, Beran 2010; *Ještěd 73*. [online]. Ještěd. Available at: <www.jested73.cz> [Accessed 15 March 2016].

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# ADAPTIVE REUSE AND CHALLENGES IN VALUE-ASSOCIATED HISTORIC BUILDINGS: ADAPTATION OF OLD CHURCHES TO NEW USES

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## Introduction

In recent years, several sacred buildings – mostly churches, previously thought to be untouchable – have been converted to new uses; this trend, perhaps more obvious in Northern Europe, is constantly on the increase as more and more churches and religious constructions are considered resources by investors and developers for adaptive reuse projects. It seems that in converting churches and sacred architecture to new uses, the Netherlands is one of the pioneering countries and in that country, recycling old churches is a common design trend. More specifically, in the city of Maastricht (120,000 inhabitants), to which I will specifically refer, several churches have been converted to completely different new uses following adaptive reuse strategies. The 13th-century Gothic Selexyz Dominicanen of the former Dominican convent, converted to a bookstore, and the 15th-century church, converted to Kruisherhotel Maastricht, are just two of the churches deconsecrated and converted to new uses (Figs. 1-2). Still in the Netherlands, for example, *De Stichting Oude Groninger Kerken* or the Dutch foundation for old churches in the Groningen province, an organisation dedicated to management and contemporary reuse of more than eighty churches, synagogues, rectories and historic cemeteries, is another confirmation that the church conversion trend in this country is increasing noticeably.

There are many convincing reasons to support the idea of adapting old churches to new uses: the management groups for churches and sacred buildings cannot afford the maintenance costs, adaptive reuse projects provide social benefit to the community, or adaptive reuse saves old churches from further deteriorations, for instance. But there are also many questions and serious considerations that challenge the applicability of the adaptive reuse concept to sacred buildings: is adaptive reuse really suitable for sacred buildings; what are the risks of adapting historic sacred buildings to new uses; to what extent can a sacred building be adapted to a new use; and to what extent can adaptive reuse be considered as a conservation strategy for these buildings?

This article discusses such considerations and the impacts of adaptive reuse practices in sacred buildings, with particular reference to examples witnessed in the historic part of the city of Maastricht, where most of the converted churches are located, and concludes with formulating some practical recommendations for an effective reuse strategy for sacred architecture. With particular reference to the Maastricht churches, Selexyz Dominicanen and Kruisherhotel, the article argues how the adaptive reuse of old historical churches greatly affects their characteristics.

## Sacred architectures and challenges in modern times

Sacred buildings, as places of worship, are the most representative type of value-associated historic buildings. Sacred buildings were and still are constructed to represent God and



Fig. 1. 13th century Gothic church of the former Dominican convent converted to a bookstore in Maastricht.



Fig. 2. 15th century church converted to Kruissherenhotel in Maastricht.

religion as an institution in different cultures and societies and this idea is still recognisable within present-day society (Lueg 2011). The tangible expression of people's devotion to religious beliefs, visible in the enduring prominence of religious buildings and artefacts in urban spaces, attests to the reciprocal connection between people and sacred architecture. The necessity of their continued use is part of an awareness of their role in society, and exists in parallel with the need to preserve these buildings from physical decay, helping them to survive over time (Zargaran 2014).

Churches, cathedrals and religious congregations hold and present many different values, architectural formal values as well as representational or symbolic values. They are also places of memory; they hold and represent the materialisation of the collective memory of their society; during their existence they have hosted and lived through the most important events of society and its urban populations where they have existed for generations.

Churches and sacred buildings generally can be considered, by any means, as intentional monuments based on the Rieglian definition, from the instant of their creation; with the rise of the concept of national monuments in the 19th century, old churches and sacred architecture experienced a shift from the places constructed originally to venerate religion to being valuable assets and existing testimonies to the veneration of history, and were recognised and labelled as monuments. Furthermore, with the development of conservation theory and the stress on the preservation of these old buildings, such architecture was also ascribed with secular attributes, which turned them into important factors in creating local and national identities within various cultural backgrounds.

From the early years of the 20th century, and particularly during recent years, demographic changes (people moving out from city centres to suburbs or young people coming to centres for work) along with other complex factors – social, political, or religious – weakened the connections between these buildings and their surrounding environments. For example, an average of about 150,000 people have left the German Protestant Church each year for the last decade and the same thing happened during the same period for the Catholic Church, which lost about 110,000 members annually. Consequently, sacred buildings became less frequented and in some cases were completely abandoned. The history of the former Dominican church in Maastricht shows different periods of complete abandonment and incompatible occupations during the last two centuries. With sacred places becoming less frequented, and the costs for maintaining these buildings increasing constantly, the future of these buildings within existing and future urban contexts is threatened.

### **Adaptive reuse: definitions and applications**

Adaptive reuse is generally defined as the act of finding a new use for a building (Cantell 2005). Change is the core concept of adaptive reuse; use and especially reuse of buildings for new functions typically requires a certain number of changes to their existing fabric in order to accommodate a particular use. During the adaptive reuse process, different parts of the building, including its interior/exterior aspects, structural system, and current function, may be changed to adapt to new functions.

Adaptive reuse came into mainstream architectural debate and became popular during the post-industrialisation era, specifically during the 1960s and 1970s (Cantell 2005). However, adaptive reuse is not per se a recently discovered phenomenon. The concept of reusing old buildings for different uses technically dates back centuries to before the rise of the historic preservation movement. For many centuries, old buildings were preserved and adapted to take part in their societies and the continual use of these old buildings has contributed to the recognition of their heritage status.

The approaches of heritage preservation professionals regarding the consideration of adaptive reuse as an historic preservation strategy are contradictory. Some historic preservation professionals and scholars consider adaptive reuse to be an historic preservation strategy; they believe that adaptive reuse helps to extend the life of historic buildings (Pimonsathean 2002) by changing their functions to new use(s) in meeting contemporary demands. For them, 'rehabilitation' and 'adaptive reuse' are nearly the same thing, and both help to preserve a historic building. Viollet-le-Duc, for example, considered adaptive reuse a way to preserve historic monuments, stating that 'the best way to preserve a

building is to find a use for it' (Viollet-le-Duc 1990). Other professionals believe these are two very different strategies, producing two very different kinds of results (Bond 2011) and they promote a minimalistic approach in intervention in historic buildings. They believe that every time a historic structure undergoes any kind of intervention (restoration), part of its originality is lost and sacrificed for the purpose of preserving it. The result is expressed thus: 'it is better to preserve than to repair, better to repair than to restore, better to restore than to reconstruct' (Venturi, Rauch 1975). This 'less is more' approach obviously reflects their opposing position and orientation as regards adapting historic buildings to new uses.

### **Challenges of adaptive reuse in value-associated buildings**

Adaptive reuse of sacred buildings – old churches, for example – cannot be considered a mere process of changing a disused or ineffective item into a new item that can be used for a different purpose, as in the case of industrial architecture. Unlike the success of converting old and deteriorated industrial complexes to modern-designed, fascinating new complexes, in sacred buildings adaptive reuse is very challenging and complicated.

As there are multiple values associated with sacred architecture, when it comes to the question of using and reusing such buildings, different opinions arise regarding their proper use, and the adaptive reuse of churches often provokes discussion and arouses controversy in terms of acceptable new uses and changes to the structures. The institutional church generally focuses on the use value of the building and its spiritual and symbolic function. Preservationists, on the other hand, place more importance on architectural value and the materiality of the church building. Finally, developers and investors are most interested in the economic value of churches and the potential revenue they might produce.

It is important to consider that most adaptive reuse activities were (and still are) actually carried out by developers and not by historic preservationists. This arises also from the urban development policies in place. With the maintenance costs of churches increasing, there are emerging questions as to whether to preserve them by spending more money or to consider them for inclusion as new resources in the urban development programmes, especially since churches and other sacred architecture are usually located in the central and historic parts of the city or town – important and significant parts, as well as accessible from all parts of the town, and where the land value is often higher than the value of the church building itself. This fact may confirm why most historic buildings, in our case the old churches, are considered for conversion into commercial or residential projects thorough adaptive reuse, where creating the maximum profitable space is the final goal. For preservationists, the most important challenge of adaptive reuse in sacred architecture is to maintain the attributes and values of these buildings, while at the same time fulfilling the demanding stakeholders who wish to modify them for their money-making activities.

Change is the core concept of adaptive reuse, but due to the particularities of sacred architecture, many heritage preservation professionals maintain that adaptive reuse brings too many irreversible changes to the original formal characteristics of these buildings, which greatly affect their originality and integrity. For them, changing, altering,

modifying and even destroying the original fabric of the building in order to reach this goal is in complete contradiction with historic preservation principles and guidelines that seek to minimise the changes to historic structures, and that recommend conserving and maintaining their values and attributes as much as possible.

Accommodating a new use in an old church, replacing its original use, makes some architectural components of the churches useless, thus reducing their integrity. In any church conversion, the church bell-tower or 'campanile', for example, becomes completely useless; other architectural or decorative elements find new strange uses: the altar zone becomes a bar, in both Selexyz Dominicanen and Kruisherhotel Maastricht or the church's symbolic cross in Selexyz Dominicanen is used as a table. Another problem arising from modification of the original structure of buildings subjected to adaptive reuse is, for example, the effect of the installed heating boilers on the consistency of the original stones of the church.

Religious buildings are typically large, with high hall-like structures, meant to provoke certain feelings and reactions in people entering them. Sometimes radical interventions should be made to address the requirements of the reuse project with the configurations of the historic church, and to integrate the former appearance of the church with its new image (Robert 1989). Through conversion to incompatible uses these formal characteristics are deeply affected, as seen in both of the Maastricht churches. In the Selexyz Dominicanen, the central visual axis connecting the entrance to the altar and choir space is lost by installing a two-storey metal book stack structure. The linear arrangement and direct circulation of the space are lost through the perpendicular book stack installation, which disorients the visitor. A similar result has occurred in the Kruisherhotel, where the interior designer Henk Vos has completely transformed the character of the place. Here, the main entrance to the building now differs from the original church entrance and is designed using a modernistic copper installation in the centre of a side aisle, which completely undermines the visual connection with the altar and central axis of the church, thus reducing the visual effects of the original construction. In both cases, the visitor's perceptions change from being space-related to being object-focused, reducing the comprehension of the original structure and consequently affecting the original intrinsic, formal characteristics of the churches.

Inserting incompatible functions into a church building highly affects its integrity and authenticity. Heritage preservation professionals maintain that misunderstanding and misinterpretations of the concept of adaptive reuse and the prioritisation of functions over values deprives sacred buildings of their authentic and original values and their subsequently acquired and recognised values also.

Misguided reuse strategy radically alters the historicity of these buildings; inserting new uses affects their historical integrity by introducing new scenarios in such articulated and complex value-associated entities. If not compatible with the context to which they are applied, these new uses and scenarios not only do not contribute to enriching the existing embodied values of the building, but may even result in the loss of their historic values.

Finally, adapting religious architectures to new uses reduces their active contribution to the societies in which they have figured for centuries by altering their accessibility and integration with their surrounding context. Churches, places of God that were formerly publicly accessible to all citizens, rich and poor alike, after being converted to new uses

find a specific customised audience and become less generally accessible. For instance, the luxury Kruisherhotel in Maastricht is affordable to those with mid-high incomes, while the former Dominican convent, converted to a bookstore, targets a specific audience/consumer group. The result is that these buildings will not have the same relationship with their present contexts and with future generations, either in terms of the newly inserted values or their very intrinsic and embodied ones.

Both the bookstore and the hotel may be considered as examples of exceptional and innovative design, but we should not forget what gaining this exceptionality has cost the original host structures, to what extent these buildings have lost their heritage values. Once done, how can we return the historicity lost through changes, alterations and modifications during adaptive reuse? The uniqueness and exceptional quality of these sacred buildings are the result of their history as it has unfolded, and the focus of attention should be on maintaining these qualities as much as possible, rather than on finding new uses that can reduce them.

### **Conclusions**

Change and use are parts of the life of buildings, and religious and sacred architecture is no exception; these buildings need to evolve and to be adapted to meet the exigencies of their context and time. It is true that those who manage church and sacred buildings cannot afford the maintenance costs, and it is also true that freezing these buildings in their current state and preserving them in perpetuity does not help them to survive, but rather results in great problems, as have been documented in the history of Selexyz Dominicanen. And finally, it is also correct that in the conservation project there should be a proper balance between the authenticity and the integrity of the heritage and the real life and social evolution. Adapting religious architecture and reusing it for new functions is not impossible.

Sacred and religious architecture includes complex sets of values, and if not adequately elaborated, the impacts and influences of the adaptive reuse strategy can be destructive, resulting in the loss of the values associated with them. To prevent sacred architecture from losing its heritage values, preservationists state that ideally any intervention in such buildings, adaptive reuse included, should have minimal impact on the heritage values of the building and its setting. Otherwise intervention may be self-defeating if it fails to protect the heritage values of the objects involved. Considering these risks, we can assert that not all types of sacred architecture can be considered completely eligible subjects for adaptive reuse.

However, this fact does not necessarily mean that sacred buildings are impossible to convert to host new uses. Generally there is no incompatibility between preserving a historic building and reusing it, since adaptive reuse was firstly recognised as the response to a building's loss of utility. Referring to Riegl's statement, 'the values invested in historic structures influence the appropriate preservation practice'<sup>1</sup>, it is to some extent possible to formulate a possible reuse strategy that respects, enhances and revitalises the values of the sacred architecture while aiming at extracting and generating new values from it. However, this strategy can be formulated when, and only when, an equilibrium is established between preservation purposes and real-estate aspects of development.

To formulate such a reuse plan, like any other project, the designer in the first place should confront a series of challenges and make a series of decisions as to how to proceed and successfully adapt churches to retain their historic integrity and values, while also achieving economic viability and modern functionality. A value-centred reuse approach that ‘identifies and takes into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance (Maguire 1997) without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others’ can be proposed in order to maintain and conserve the values and attributes of sacred architectures during the adaptive reuse practices, in order to gain the best results.

A possible feasibility assessment of such an approach can be made by providing responses for these questions: what value(s) is/are established, recognised and associated in sacred and religious architecture and constructions? How do we want to valorise them? How and based on what criteria can these values be interpreted during the adaptive reuse process? How can we insert new uses into their existing fabric without altering the recognised values? What values do we expect our adaptive reuse intervention to generate from the building? Do new uses and changes to these buildings harmonise or conflict with their existing values?

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more on Riegl’s concept of monuments, see Riegl 1982 [1903].

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## EPILOGUE

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The continuing lives of buildings and places carry with them legacies of the past, sifted and selected through to the perceptions of the present. And so, in our time the question is unavoidable: how should these legacies shape the future of buildings and places? Many are beautiful; works of individual and collective creative genius. Many are not, but bear witness to significant facets of creativity and endeavour. The balance between transmission of inheritance and its adaptation for new uses as a means of ensuring survival is not commonly struck. Within this publication, among authors who share an interest in works inherited from the past and who are committed to their continuing and fitting survival, there are differences in approach and in the values underlying their positions: while some do explore the boundaries of the orthodox, most assert the value of what was inherited in the face of contemporary demands – demands that at times seem incongruous when placed against the values attributed to that inheritance. The context for the workshop was set by contrasting categories of inheritance, and the issues arising from them were presented as foci for reflection and debate: the reuse of buildings that had formerly a significant social, religious or cultural function, and sites of commemoration. They included buildings formerly devoted to religious uses, a converted prison, a revitalised former mining complex and sites that are memorials to the First World War.

Aside from the sites of commemoration, the issues presented by the grouping are familiar concerns, as the stock of redundant historic buildings increases, and as the process of valorising ever-broader aspects of inheritance continues. Redundant buildings pose ecological as well as cultural questions, while the process of valuing reflects the democratisation of culture and the ever more pervasive sense of ownership of its objects. These aspects are often referred to, but the main concern of the essays lies outside these considerations. Taken as a whole, the essays explore the parameters of conservation and paradigms of reuse through reflection on examples of intervention and their philosophical and practical implications. It could be said that they are founded on the belief that special qualities of inheritance endure through time and the vicissitudes of intervening adaptations, and that this forms the basis for asserting that these qualities must be recognised through appropriate uses and sympathetic interventions.

Some buildings and places maintain a place in the minds of people, through time, changes of use and transformations in form. They manifest their continuing presence through art, literature, music, folklore and their role in structuring the landscapes of everyday life. Such buildings and places, even if they have become ruins, continue to evoke an inheritance of identity and feeling among many people that can crystallise into a future-directed predisposition to re-establish a commensurate significance. This capacity for evocation is not necessarily related to architectural, cultural or historical significance as these are often understood, but is rather a reflection of the standing of certain build-

ings and places within the collective psyche. As Anthony Vidler, writing about the hold of ancient buildings on the imagination, puts it: ‘...it is not so much the monuments themselves... that construct this “meaning” so much as what they stand for; they, after all, are agents and instruments that operate, like literary figures, to say one thing by means of another. They act, in this sense, as tropes of the memory discourse they engender’<sup>1</sup>. In this, the inheritance is regarded both as a form of witness and a form of admonition, twin aspects of what has sometimes been termed the didactic role of monuments. The force of that proposition is accentuated rather than diminished where these environments bear witness to inflicted pain, oppression and atrocity. We shall return below to the implications for adaptation and how this matter might be approached in the academy.

This power of evocation is exceptionally conscripted in sites of commemoration. At the time of their creation their purpose was clear, and the language that accompanied their installation referred to specific aspects of the events they commemorate. Ritual commemoration has many roles, but perhaps most overtly the civic function is one of reassurance: the sacrifice was not in vain; the past is finished; the present has benefited from the experience, however bitter, however remote; and the the future will learn from the past. Whether built specifically for the purpose of commemoration or having had this role conferred upon them, such environments carry the presumption of permanence of their presence and their message. Today these memorials are more often threatened by neglect than by deliberate destruction, unless they are reanimated to fulfill a consciously didactic purpose. They portray sharply the uncertain nature of commemorative architecture when removed in time from the events and sensibilities that prompted its creation.

In part, this uncertainty arises because the deeper questions we now ask were rarely addressed in these constructions. Perhaps they could not be – the civic embrace acknowledges loss, but has little room for either critical analysis or for the expression of grief – these dimensions of the events being left to the community, the private realm and the passage of time. Instead they look steadily to the political future. Today we are not limited by that selectivity and the memorials have more complex connotations. Some of these derive from a wider knowledge of the contexts of their origins. Others derive from the imaginative juxtaposition of these objects of memorialisation against the anticipation of threatening futures whose dimensions are sketched through contemporary events. From today’s perspective also, the frequent conjunction of religion and nationalism captured in many artefacts commemorating wars could be seen as a shocking acceptance of sacrifice and slaughter, sanctified in the case of the First World War by a success that helped sow the seeds of further human abasement through famine, civil wars and ethnic cleansing throughout the territories of defeated protagonists<sup>2</sup>.

Making such places resonate with contemporary sensibilities involves interventions that evoke connection, not with the events themselves, but with those affected by them. Leaving aside the broader context, they aim to elicit an empathetic relationship with the experience of people whose individual lives were consumed in the maelstrom (Figs. 1a-1b). One could make an analogous comment in relation to interventions in buildings and sites whose significance derives from their former productive functions that shaped and consumed the working, social and personal lives of their communities. It is notable, in contrast, that in the case of inherited buildings formerly used for religious purposes – buildings of beauty, objects of culture and evocative of beliefs now abandoned – the weight of critique applied to intervention looks to evoke empathy with the buildings themselves,

FIGS. 1a-1b. Contrasting evocations from the Interallied Monument and Fort de Loncin in Liège (photos by G. Franco/L. Kealy).



even as we become distant from the spiritual and material lives of their erstwhile occupants.

Meaning and significance cannot remain constant over time, and meanings are overlaid with others, and sometimes deeply obscured. Fresh sets of associations and significances emerge. And in the process these inheritances may become significant for groups other than, and far removed from, those whom they originally served, in terms of values or ethnicity<sup>3</sup>. One can note that an influential stream in current critical thinking on the subject of ‘heritage’ argues for greater scrutiny of the processes whereby heritage is designated, arguing that such designation is predominantly a reflection of contemporary values rather than deriving from intrinsic attributes of the inherited object<sup>4</sup>.

And so....

In creating the future of inherited buildings and places, there is often a choice between modes of thinking: on the one hand, engaging in the iterative and interrogative exploration of the inheritance as it is given to us, trusting that in itself this opens new possibilities; or on the other hand, going beyond an empathetic connection with the familiar in favor of inducing a new, memorable, and possibly shocking, experience. Choices are not always dilemmas.

When the meaning of a place is sensed rather than learned about, it enters into an imaginative space that can belong to the past or to the future rather than to the present. Writing about Ricoeur, the philosopher Richard Kearney puts it thus: ‘Every historical narrative borrows from this imaginative power of redescription since, as a “reference through traces”, “the past can only be reconstructed by the imagination”<sup>5</sup>. The present meaning of a place is one that can be described, one that is subject to language and open to purposeful thought. When this capacity is accompanied – that is, not displaced but augmented by the infusion of metaphor, where for example a place ‘has a life’ – then we have something very close to the capacity for innovation and creativity.

The emergence of critical perspectives on ‘heritage’ illustrates a paradox. Their effect is to move the focus of attention from fabric to meaning. They cannot be ignored within

the academy or dismissed because they seem to threaten conventional understandings, especially in educational contexts focused specifically on the physical fabric as the primary embodiment of significance. At the same time, Rossi's 'containers' are not empty or passive, nor waiting to have real meaning conferred on them through new uses. Fresh perspectives are needed if heritage is not to become primarily a form of theatre, a setting for translating ideas through emotion, of borrowing cultural cachet for contemporary undertakings. The new critical insights might appear to offer an escape route through the intractable, dense thicket of theory and established practice and into the realm of future-directed action. In this, they resonate with the progressive mainstreaming of 'conservation' in architecture through 'adaptive reuse' where the critical attention moves from the first to the second.

Moving the focus from fabric to meaning brings with it the risk of creating an inverted order of importance in processes of decision-making about appropriate uses and, more widely, about resource allocation. This project of paradox exposition is one to be embraced by the academy. It must be part of the core agenda of every scholar to create opportunities for engagement, to act as a critic of curricula that fail to address that paradox. At its heart is the interface between tangible and intangible dimensions of inheritance: it is the challenge that conservation faces into the future.

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#### Notes and references

<sup>1</sup> Vidler, A. 1992. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. Cambridge, MA. 178.

<sup>2</sup> A recently published book demonstrates how the fallout from the First World War gave rise to rebellions and civil wars through the nations peripheral to the main protagonists, resulting in regime changes, four million deaths and the displacement of populations. While many upheavals were documented in the countries in which they occurred, this study, a collaborative research project extending over five years and involving a team of postdoctoral researchers working in thirteen languages, was the first comprehensive overview of a period that gave rise to conditions that remain the cause of conflict to this day (Gerwath, R., 2016. *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End, 1917–1923*. London).

<sup>3</sup> Jamme Masjid Mosque, Brick Lane, London is a Grade II\* listed building. It was built in 1743 as the 'Neuve Eglise' to serve French Huguenot refugees. It served as the headquarters of the Society for Propagating Christianity (early 19th century, targeting the Jewish immigrants in the area) and served as a

Wesleyan chapel after 1819. The building became a synagogue in 1897. In 1976, the synagogue was converted into a mosque and subsequently altered. DGA Architects added a 'minaret' in 2009. An account of the changes is given in Penrose, S., 2010. "Oranges and Lemons: When is the Heritage of Diversity?", in *Heritage Futures*. [online journal]. Available at: <<https://heritage-futures.org/oranges-lemons-heritage-diversity/>> [Accessed 31 March 2017].

<sup>4</sup> Examination of the role of heritage in contemporary life and culture is spearheaded under the banner of 'Heritage Futures', notably in the UK, New Zealand and Australia. 'Heritage Futures' is also the title of an interdisciplinary research endeavour based in the Institute of Archaeology, UCL (see: *Heritage Futures*. [online]. UCL Institute of Archaeology. Available at: <<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/research/directory/heritage-futures>> [Accessed 23 May 2017]) and the title of a book (Harrison, R. et al., 2016. "Heritage Futures", in *Archaeology International*, 19. 68–72).

<sup>5</sup> Kearney, R. 1991. *Poetics of Imagining: from Husserl to Lyotard*. London. 153.

## Annexe



## REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

At the commencement of discussions three questions were posed as common ground between Groups and between categories of inheritance under consideration:

What is the significance of the objects we have inherited; to what extent is the significance embodied in the fabric; what is the effect of the intervention on this significance?

The Groups were not bound to these questions however, and they were used differently in the various Groups.

### GROUP 1

#### *Buildings and places with religious significance*

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THE PLACE: Religious and sacred buildings and places are special cases in conservation terms. They provoke emotional responses in their users. They frequently house collections of mobile heritage such as furnishings and art which are often indissociable from their fabric and intangible qualities. They frequently have a museum function, further complicating their effective conservation. They are often regarded as the cultural patrimony of the wider society and of humanity, and not just the property of the local user group.

These monuments are an embodiment of the passage of time. They have usually undergone frequent, sometimes radical change, and discontinuity of use, due to war, revolution or changing religious ideas. They also raise particular conservation problems in terms of perceived ownership and identification.

Thus these monuments usually have multiple levels of meaning and these meanings can be quite specific to the different groups who lay claim to them. These meanings are embodied in the stratification of their historic fabric, and the specificity of their form to their ritual use. They are particularly rich repositories of tangible and intangible heritage, and frequently the two are inextricably present in the reading of their fabric.

The meaning of these monuments is often under threat from a discontinuity of transmitted values, such as faith, community and shared cultures. This poses a particular problem for the conservation of their intangible qualities in particular. However, because of



changing socio-cultural circumstances, these places often have a diminishing functional imperative which makes them vulnerable to deterioration. This is more likely to occur due to neglect rather than demolition.

**THE COMMUNITY:** connections to these monuments often extends well beyond the locality in which they are situated. The very diversity of the user groups and stakeholders often poses particular threats to the conservation of these monuments. Ownership too can pose a threat, particularly where the monument is shared by multiple users.

These stakeholders might include; the local community, the wider urban community, those who share the same cultural values and humanity at large. It also includes those who are charged with the upkeep of the monument, including conservation professionals, designers, authorities and new or temporary owners etc.

It is the duty of conservation professionals, once the extent of the threat to the monument has been identified, to ensure that this is communicated to the user groups through the sharing and dissemination of knowledge. Any solution must be as inclusive as possible, and the responsibilities of each participant clearly identified. We are the temporary custodians of this heritage and our present term of custodianship of these monuments is short.

This identification with the monument is part of its intangible qualities and must be respected when changes to use and/or fabric are being considered.

While accepting that these monuments have multiple levels of meaning we can never fully understand them. It is important when reading or interpreting them that we leave a place for the imagination, as this too is part of their intangible function.

These monuments also have a cyclical function of reminding each generation of its responsibilities towards them, and challenging us to find appropriate solutions.

**INTERVENTIONS:** the term 'adaptive re-use' can be ambiguous and is too broad a definition. This is true too of the term 'compatible use'. No shared definition of what constitutes conservation was found during discussion. However, there was general agreement on the importance of retaining significance as the primary intention of all conservation action. There was also a recognition of the importance of conserving the fabric as the first step in the rehabilitation of the place.

The typology of religious and sacred buildings is very specific to their ritual function. They often have large open areas, high volumes and rich architectural detail. The architectural qualities that give them significance are often an impediment to their reuse, particularly where diversification of functions is required.

When considering an adaptive (re)use, sufficient economic resources must be made available to the project in order to ensure an appropriate response at site appraisal, design and construction stages. The 'bottom line' in economic terms is not admissible in these cases.

The designer cannot act alone in deciding on the nature of the intervention in these situations. Prior to design intervention, and even before concept stage, there must be a dialogue with the place, through a fully professional conservation appraisal, and with its users and stakeholders in determining the programme. The designer must have an understanding of the place and empathy for it and the needs of its users. The designer must be aware of the importance of its intangible qualities.

The intervention should ideally be one that adds to the place's cultural significance. Current conservation intervention allows for reversibility as a last resort. However the

principle of reversibility is far from representing an ideal approach to intervention. While the solution may be reversible, it will inevitably leave a mark. The intervention must endeavour to marry the tangible and intangible elements of the programme in the same way that the existing fabric does.

## **GROUP 2**

### *Heritage with social meaning: industrial sites and other examples*

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Foreword: Discussions within the Working Group treated the word 'social' in two ways - in a societal sense, relating to society in general, and as referring to the relationship between people and groups (community or communal). Thus the propositions that emerged had different frames of reference depending on whether they related to matters of general application or whether they referred to the experiences at the study sites encountered during the Workshop.

The Group considered the three questions put to the Workshop and also added some others. The Group sought to establish what was common ground between members and what is a open issue/challenge. Discussions focused on 'heritage at risk'.

The Group noted that the relics of the recent past are not always valued by local communities and broader society in which they exist (and sometimes have negative connotations). As an example of recently recognised heritage, the category of 'industrial archaeology' emerged in the 1980's (reference was made to documents of ICOMOS, TICCIH, the emergence of Docomomo, etc). Such heritage has a strong social meaning, bears intangible values (community life, lives of man and women, workers ...). Such heritage also raises the issue of the selection of values (eg Ford) – is everything heritage? (the 'Complex of Noah')

Regarding the question, 'what is the significance of the building/place?', the following points were raised: gathering people (opportunities); significance was not evident and had to be discovered; places infused with imagination and artistic concept, recall individual memory; memory of the community, of cultural background; expression of relation between human and environment; the educational/didactic contribution; connection; history in general (not only construction, partial visions...); any building is an interpretation of the place, helps understanding the opportunities of the place; referring to the industrial complex visited, it allows people to be proud of the factory, where they live; significance is what is needed in a precise moment.

With regard to embeddedness, landscape/urban/architectural scale evoke different memories: societal, typological, technical/material, etc; subjective interpretation of the layers of history revealed/displayed to society; objective understanding of the layers of history; reveal the value; built memory of people's work and of modern culture of produc-

tion; understanding and revelation of the essence of place is the key to sustainable future; testimony of fabric skills of the society that create this buildings.

Interpretation needed to address all senses, multisensorial and phenomenological experience; to represent us the roots of community and its identity; to be able to recreate the sense of community; testimony of heritage of new experimental techniques; it has the possibility to generate a process of integration and a sense of belonging; heritage is an open text - we try to interpret in order to give sense to our collective life; the capability of the building and of its layers to communicate the essence of the places; material, visual, sign of the culture, but also political and economical context; it has to unveil stories to address new forms of occupancy; to know and recognise the social value of the subject (history of its architecture and relation with urban territory/space); cultural recognition of value/value of social acceptance of qualities.

### **GROUP 3**

*Heritage with political/ commemorative value*

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Considering first the cases of the Interallied Monument and the Fort of Loncin in Liège, the Group addressed the issues related to the specifics of political and commemorative values. It discussed the use of memory in military architecture with a heritage function and the connection between the social aims of commemoration and the political values attached.

It was recognised that presenting such sites to the public today involved finding ways of involving visitors in an experience, with the risk of over-simplifying or exaggerating certain aspects of the events being commemorated, and the question was debated as to how to avoid 'Disneyfication'. The choices made were discussed, what was commemorated, what was included and what was left out.

It was felt that in the Fort of Loncin, a different kind of experience was presented, in which the visitor could feel close to the soldiers entombed in the ruins, an empathy with their fate. At the same time it was recognised that the architecture of such places can evoke contradictory values, positive and negative, and that the memory value and its perception depended on the cultural context.

The question was raised as to how we evaluate complex values. The spirit of a place can be lost through adaptive reuse. To project intangible values it was necessary to use appropriate communication strategies. How could a policy directed towards transmitting the intangible values of what has been inherited be formulated? Where adaptive reuse was concerned taking refuge in simplified narratives had to be avoided, and it was important to remember that decisions are time specific and that interventions can be temporary. There is always a range of value systems involved: all should be considered before deci-

sions are taken and it was important that those who benefit from the process should be involved. Diversity was to be preserved.

In considering the question, what is the significance of the place, the group listed a range of factors involved in its determination: authenticity; the significance of use; context-based evaluation (diversity); the significance of the events stressed - negative or positive; changes of significance; the documentation dimension; collective/individual memory; characterizing the significance of memory; intangible values; competing memories-one prevails; subjectivity of memory; documentary sources; time specific evaluation/meanings.

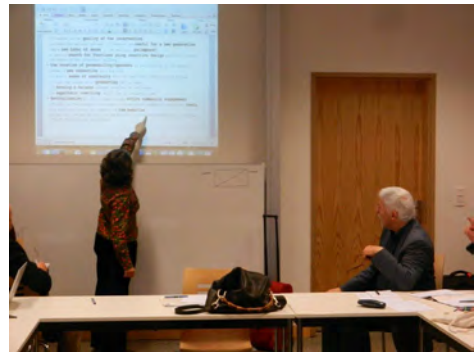
The question as to how significance might be embedded in the fabric led to the discussion of the following considerations: material authenticity/palimpsest; the spirit of the place (material/immaterial); multidimensional communication; typology; anchorage point/presence in the landscape; tradition/craftsmanship/heritage; significance cannot be narrowed to the place/fabric; preservation of damage to the fabric caused by a political act.

In considering the effects of intervention on significance, the group discussion covered the following considerations: heritage is better understood and maintained - didactic value; intervention reveals or conceals significance; is the process more important than the outcome?; retain the collective memory; acquisition of the new values/reflect identity; relevance for the future; the need to interrogate and record the process critically; the negative effects/demolitions; the risk of losing the sense of the heritage/the spirit of the place.



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