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SUSTAINABLE DESIGN PERSPECTIVES FOR HERITAGES' RECONSTRUCTION

Alessandro Raffa[a], Valerio Tolve[b]

[a]Università degli Studi della Basilicata, Matera, Italy
[b]Politecnico di Milano, Italy

ABSTRACT

Natural disasters and conflicts effects, on a large scale, on communities and their heritages, together with the semantic expansion and democratization of the concept of heritage itself, have determined recently a shifting attitude towards the idea of reconstruction. The contribution, moving through theoretical positions and operational experiences, intends to explore the role and perspectives of design for heritages' reconstruction, framing this crucial issue between contemporary urgencies and sustainable development scenarios promoted by the Agenda 2030 and its SDG. The intense ongoing debate, also in the design disciplines, shows the need for a reflection on reconstruction, seen, without prejudice, as a design possibility for communities to imagine different forms of existence for their destroyed heritages. But also, to understand approaches, methods, tools and ways through which the project shapes reconstruction. Through a series of emblematic case studies, which move between re-building and re-constructing and their reciprocal overlaps, this contribution will also highlight the "order of similarities" that each reconstruction project interprets within a sustainable development framework. Both built an un-built projects will be presented as possible references to orient a debate and a critical reflection on contemporary heritage reconstruction, seen as strategical for heritage enhancement and an opportunity for promoting sustainable development for places and communities.The proposal for the International competition on the Buffer zone of the UNESCO site of Villa Adriana will be presented as a design experimentation, showing how sustainability could inform design strategies for reconstruction according to global agendas[1] .

KEYWORDS

Vernacular architecture; conservation; heritage; urban integration; absorption.

1. INTRODUCTION

Large-scale conflicts and present and potential natural disasters not only show the fragility of heritage in general, but also of that special category of places recognized as World Heritage (WH) Sites. The destructions that have affected UNESCO sites in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, etc., have, in recent years, renewed interest and re-energized the debate about perhaps the most controversial practice for those involved in heritage design: reconstruction. And UNESCO sites, precisely because of the experimental dimension, concerning innovative approaches, methods and practices of management, constitute

an interesting field of research for the reconstruction topic. Through specific cases and interdisciplinary debate between UNESCO, its advisory bodies and those involved in heritage studies, emerged a shifting attitude towards the reconstruction projects, from the issuance of the *Carta di Venezia* (1964), which depowered its as a design possibility concerning heritage. The conteporary scale and scope of destructive events, together with the redefinition of the concept of heritage, call for an a new approach towards reconstruction, including through a redefinition of the concepts of authenticity and integrity as well as, in the case of UNESCO sites, of the Outstanding Universal Values for the site reconstructed or to be reconstructed. The ancient city of Sana'a in Yemen, a UNESCO WH Site since 1986 and included since 2015 in the list of WH Sites in Danger, has been subject in recent years to bombings, explosions and firefights and, in 2020, to exceptional rainfalls, an effect of contemporary climate change, which have produced massive destruction of an heritage by its very nature fragile. A heritage made up of mosques, hammams and more than 6,000 houses made of dried brick that a exhausted population is rebuilding by resorting thanks to traditional building techniques, making them alive. Although the reconstruction of the Yemeni city is a borderline case for a number of reasons-primarily the autonomy and cultural autarky of a country that is not as highly globalized-it highlights a number of crucial issues that, at different times, have run through the debate on the reconstruction of UNESCO sites and whose redefinition with respect to the current cultural context represents one of the major challenges for the international body in the near future. Why reconstructing? For whom to reconstruct? What role in the present and future of reconstructed heritage? What the meaning of concepts like authenticity and integrity for a reconstructed site? What balance between tangible and intangible dimensions in the reconstruction process? If and how can the local and global dimensions find a synthesis? How to reconstruct? How to cope with documentary uncertainty, which is often frequent in marginal contexts? How to ensure the preservation of heritage while improving the conditions of those who inhabit the places? Within this problematic framework, the aim of this contribution, intersecting positions elaborated in the UNESCO framework and case study of reconstruction included in the WH List, will be to understand what are the current trends and future perspectives concerning reconstruction; what is the possible role of the contemporary project for reconstruction, with a focus on its sustainable dimensions, inside global agendas framework.

2. RECONSTRUCTION. A SHIFTING ATTITUDE

An important premise concerns the critical redefinition of the concept of heritage over the past three decades, which has seen its processual and participatory dimensions consolidated, partly because of the role accorded to the intangible dimension. Heritage is dynamic; destruction and reconstruction are the extreme events in a process of continuous modification of heritage. Moreover, the latter is the result of cultural significance processes in the hands of communities that recognize in what they had inherited a value system based on their own needs, redefining its role, meanings and purposes (Bandarin and Van Oers 2012, 178) in the present and for their future. Heritage status is not inherited a priori, it is extrinsic; how to transmit the values attributed to it and, in the case of a destroyed site, the possibility of rebuilding it, is a process that can be activated by communities in the present. The scale and acceleration of destructive events require 'change management' and a consequent redefinition of preservation

practices (ICOMOS 2019, 41) with respect to the contemporary socio-cultural condition. Both the negotiation of loss, mediated for example also through virtual reconstruction, and the physical reconstruction of the destroyed or altered asset are possibilities within the process of transmitting the values associated with it, according to an approach that puts local communities, their needs and desires in the present at the very center. Especially today when heritage, and culture more generally, is recognized as playing a crucial role in post-disaster social and economic reconstruction processes, promoting forms of resilience and sustainable development (UNESCO and World Bank 2018) that integrate local and global dimensions.

> All reconstruction work should however be ruled out "a priori". Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. (ICOMOS 1965, art.15)

In the "Operational Guidelines" for the inscription of a site within the UNESCO WH List, reconstruction:

> "[...] of archaeological remains or historic buildings or districts is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances. Reconstruction is acceptable only on the basis of complete and detailed documentation and to no extent on conjecture." (UNESCO and WHC 2015, par.86)

The Venice Charter has profoundly influenced the documents of Unesco and its advisory bodies, outlining the scope and modalities for WH sites' preservation, and with it marginalizing reconstruction among possibilities for heritage transmission. The exceptional nature of the circumstances in which it could be contemplated as an operational possibility, actually, prevented the flourishing of a debate that would

clarify issues or at least define the limits within which it was possible to operate. In subsequent years, attempts will be made to better specify the conditions that make reconstruction possible, opening, however, to further interpretive problems:

> [...] where reconstruction is necessary for the survival of the place; where a "place" is incomplete through damage or alteration; where it recovers the cultural significance of a place; or in response to tragic loss through disasters whether of natural or human origin; and providing always that reconstruction can be carried out without conjecture or compromising existing in situ remains, and that any reconstruction is legible, reversible, and the least necessary for the conservation and presentation of the site. (ICCROM 2000, 258)

It is difficult to say how much, even if endorsed by scientific documentation, a reconstruction operation can be conducted 'without conjecture' since subjective interpretation is the basis of any design process, and therefore also of reconstruction (Semes 2009, 167); as well as it is rather difficult to always guarantee the reversibility of the intervention. Doubts remain as well as the highly restrictive (Petzet 2009, 19) and material-focused position concerning reconstruction which is allowed

> only where a place is incomplete through damage or alteration, and only where there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the fabric. In some cases, reconstruction may also be appropriate as part of a use or practice that retains the cultural significance of the place.(ICOMOS 2013,7)

However, in the light of destruction of different kinds that threatens the survival of the cultural significance as well as the material dimension of many sites of global interest, the need for a

changing approach emerges from the intense debate that has been generated. Redefining the theoretical and operational framework that the destruction/reconstruction dialectic activates is one of the greatest challenges in the near future for UNESCO and its advisory bodies. The propagated exceptionality of the Warsaw's reconstruction (Jokilehto 2013, 2) does not seem so, given the number of sites affected by this practice. The Polish case study (1980) was followed by others: the monastery of Rila (1983), the mosques and mausoleums of Timbuktu (1988), the walled city of Carcassone (1997), the mausoleums of the Buganda kings (2001), Bam and its cultural landscape (2004), and the Bridge of Mostar (2005). In addition to these sites are those that will be subject to reconstruction in the future, as in the case of the cities of Sana', Aleppo, and Palmyra whose destructions have had a strong impact on world public opinion. The case of the Warsaw Old Town has, in fact, set a precedent, for example, for the reconstruction of the Mostar Bridge (ICOMOS 2005, 182). Meticulously destroyed by Nazi reprisal in 1944, its recognition concerns the scale and techniques employed in its reconstruction (about 85 percent of the historic core had been destroyed), a symbol of a patriotic feeling among Polish people; its authenticity

> may not be applied in its strict sence. [...] Its authenticity is associated with this unique realization of the years 1945 to 1966 (ICOMOS 1980, 2)

While the methodology adopted involved a reconstruction of buildings datable between the 14th and 18th centuries through meticulous documentation and interdisciplinary collaboration, the reconstruction proceeded selectively towards certain urban facts, also reducing the urbn density to create quality public spaces, following the principle that would later be summarized in the expression "Build Back Better" (UNISDR 2017). It is

difficult to say whether this is a reconstruction or rather a re-creation aimed at maintaining cultural significance and simultaneously improving the quality of urban spaces in the historic center, integrated into a more general project of reconstructing the contemporary city. It is certainly far-sighted, moreover, the definition of the site's authenticity contained in the justification for inclusion on the WH List, which is not rigidly concerned with its material dimension, but rather with its realization that it has strengthened the relationship of continuity through use between the urban heritage and its community.

3. TOWARDS DYNAMIC AUTHENTICITY

Since its introduction in the Preamble of the Venice Charter (1964), authenticity has been assumed as one of the fundamental criteria for the inclusion and permanence inside the WH List for a site that must "meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship or setting"(UNESCO and WHC 1983, 8). Closely linked to the material dimension in a Eurocentric perspective, it had been later questioned, for example regarding the reconstructive practice of Shinto temples in Japan in which

> authenticity being essentially attached to function, subsidiarily to form, but by no means to material" (Pressouyre in Jokiletho 2013, 3)

In fact, in some cultures, the desire to reconstruct has a different value, depends more on the intangible dimension, as in the case of the cyclical demolition and reconstruction of the Ise temple in Japan, a ritual of renewal that enables the preservation and transmission of heritage. Temple architecture is not a fake, it is authentic contemporary architecture, the result of a system of traditional knowledge and practices that re-create what is intentionally missing.

The debate that had arisen found its synthesis in the "Nara Document of Authenticy" (1994), which broadens its gaze from a Eurocentric, material view, placing greater emphasis on the dynamic dimension of authenticity and cultural diversity:

> It is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.(ICOMOS 1994, art.11)

Moreover, the concept of authenticity is not an a priori; coherently with a vision of heritage as dynamic and processual, it's a mutable human construct, affected by a continuous redefinition in the present (Bortolotto 2007, 42), starting from processes of cultural significance, activated by communities in places. Although the Nara Declaration had a considerable impact in the processes of value assignment, the emphasis on the tangible dimension and the dogmatic tone against the reconstruction for WH sites, or at least its character of exceptionality, continues to be prevalent: reconstruction continues to be considered a mystification of the traces of the past, however, to be contextualized with respect to the cultural substratum of belonging and to be shared through the participation of local communities and groups. More recently authenticity has been defined as

> the ability of a heritage place or site to express its cultural significance through its material attributes and intangible values in a truthful and credible manner. It depends on the type of cultural heritage place and its cultural context.(ICOMOS 2017, art.1)

So what authenticity for UNESCO Heritage sites that have been reconstructed or are to be reconstructed? It is the "continuity that sustains and guarantees authenticity" (UNESCO 2004, 168) of a reconstructed site; it is the permanence of its cultural relevance and in the use made of it by the community, through processes of value assignment that over time guarantee its authenticity, in a transformative vision of heritage but also of the concept of authenticity itself, understood as 'progressive authenticities' (Jerome 2008, 4) recognizing its stratified dimension. One example is the reconstruction of the mausoleums in Timbuktu. The reasons why it was decided to reconstruct about 20 mausoleums between 2013 and 2015 lies in the role that these places have had but especially have in the present with respect to local communities. The destruction perpetrated intentionally disrupted a continuity in the use of these places that local communities felt needed to be overcome through reconstruction, assigning these places a symbolic value of reconciliation as well. The local communities were involved by UNESCO in the reconstruction process based on the collection of extensive documentation regarding the state of the places but also of rediscovery of traditional building techniques; a working methodology was developed with a strong degree of participation in which local knowledge, also reworked with the contribution of contemporary technical knowledge (for example, to safeguard the reconstruction from the future effects of climate change) according to the needs of the present became the crucial point. The extent of destruction in some cases makes it difficult to recognize reconstruction from the 'archaeological' datum, but the primary goal was to reconstitute a traumatically interrupted continuity of use to the community, ensuring its integrity. The Mostar Bridge and the historic center in which it is embedded are interpreted as an expression of cultural continuity, as well as a symbol of dialogue, cooperation and rebirth. The criteria for its inscription include:

is an exceptional example of physical reconstruction and cultural and historical rehabilitation, and this realization process (1999-2004) is now a part of city's identity and authenticity" (ICOMOS 2005,7),

recognizing that principle of dynamic authenticity introduced by the Nara Declaration. The 're-appropriation' of the artifact to its community inspired the process; reconstruction, we read between the lines, is part of the palimpsest of the compendium and as such the traumatic event and re-construction are part of the history that binds the community to the places.

4. INTEGRITY AS COMPATIBILITY AND DIFFERENCE

Introduced in the Operational Guidelines, the concept of integrity is defined as "a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the [...] cultural heritage and its attributes" (UNESCO and WHC 2015,18). As related to the material and especially visual dimension, the integrity of a site, we also speak of visual integrity, is interpreted as the absence of change detectable by the human eye from an original stage or assessed as relevant. Hence the need for any intervention on heritage, and therefore also on reconstruction, to be compatible and visually distinguishable from the archaeological-patrimonial datum in order not to compromise the integrity and Outstanding Universal Values of the site. The issue of integrity, then, which has become relevant to transformation processes both within UNESCO sites and in their immediate vicinity, is also crucial with respect to the reconstruction of a destroyed site, and requires further reflection. Although the visual reading continues to guide the prevailing approach in UNESCO, some specific cases of reconstruction show the emergence of a more current reasoning

on integrity, the result of a more complex vision, sensitive to differences, capable of accommodating social and cultural, material and immaterial dimensions. The experience of reconstructing the citadel of Bam and its cultural landscape in Iran, which, badly damaged by an earthquake in 2003, was placed on the WH list the following year to ensure its transmission into the future, can be read in this framework. Initially covering only the citadel, a very important example of earthen architecture, the perimeter was extended to its cultural landscape, made up of desert areas, rural landscapes, and the water infrastructure that enabled its development, traditional settlements, and contemporary Bam, included in the Buffer Zone. Here the concept of integrity was interpreted from a socio-functional perspective that involved the identification of functions and processes that have shaped the landscape over time such as people flows, social interactions, cultural processes, belief system, resource use, etc. The spatial identification of the elements currently present expression of these uses and processes enabled the definition of the structural integrity of the landscape as a whole, interpreted as a living landscape. The Bam case shows how a holistic view of the concept of integrity can contribute in understanding the Ouv of a place and a management of the trans-scalar reconstruction process from the intangible dimension of heritage and how reconstruction itself can be understood "as a chance to perpetuate the living identity of Bam" (UNESCO and ICOMOS 2004, 4) The destruction produced by the earthquake made it possible to deepen the archaeological knowledge of the place, to rediscover forgotten building techniques that together with those still in use and the contribution of scientific knowledge, made it possible to develop re-constructive techniques that improved the seismic behavior of the reconstructed buildings. Here it emerges how the intangible dimension of

Bam's heritage as uses, practical knowledge, and traditional building techniques become the foundation for a re-building process that moves at different scales and that, based on cultural signification processes that communities activate on the basis of present needs, are able to translate living heritage into the future. From the experience in Bam's cultural landscape, the above definition could be revised as follows for sites under reconstruction processes:

Integrity is a measure of the compatibility and distinction of the re-created cultural heritage and its attributes. (Khalaf 2018,10).

The critical categories of compatibility and difference can be interpreted as criteria for defining the integrity of a re-created site, moving beyond the currently prevailing material dimension in favor of the intangible one.

5. SUSTAINABLE RECONSTRUCTIONS. A RESEARCH BY DESIGN EXPERIENCE

The design experimentation on Villa Adriana Buffer Zone (Basso Peressut and Caliari, 2019) intents do deal with the issue of reconstruction through the aforementioned critical categories of transformative continuity, progressive authenticities, compatibility and difference, between heritages' tangible and intangible dimensions; it intends to pose questions, identify approaches and tools to orient a sustainable reconstruction process inside the UNESCO perimeter and beyond. Inside the Buffer Zone, interpreted as an experiemental laboratory, our proposal tries to re-connect heritages and fragments of traditional landscape, tangibile and intangible dimension, global/local contemporary needs and challanges, with the objective to enhance resilience and support sustainable development strategies inside a very frigile economic, social and

environemental context. Interstecting complex topics such global issues, cultural landscape and sustainable recontruction requires an ecological and interdisciplinary approach to heritages inside global agendas framework (UN Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement, and others). The design process starded from a recognition of cultural significance communities recognize to specific places but also from and inquiry of present and potential fragilities. During interviews and meeting with local community emerged the traumatic sence of degradation/destruction and also sence of loss, concerning traditional rural/archaeological landscape and the need to overcame it and recall its traces in the present; an other issue concerns the desire to enhance the quality of life for community, also implenting public accessibility to open green/rural spaces and archaeological sites. A simoultanously top-down bottom up cultural mapping process derived, which led to indentification of critical places that became part of a dynamc operational topography for sustainable reconstruction. Re-generation of abandoned or degradated places became the occasion to experiment sustainable reconstruction inside this cultural landscape, through strategical actions which intepreted reconstruction through different degrees of transformative continuity compared to what exists/ had existed in places and local communities desideres. These actions represent an abacus of possible design solutions that communities could elaborate in time inside this living landscape in a socio-ecological perspective.These action are supported by a dynamic knowledge of this landscape, which connects past uses and morfologies, with present and potential pressures and risks (i.e. soil erosion, water scarcity, climate changes impacts), present and future needs, interwaving scientific and traditional knowledge.

Figure 4. a) Histogram of height integration; b) Graph of urban fabric integration; c) Picture of the alquerías in Olba street. Source: (Gosselin 2022)

With this approach, the masterplan (Fig.1) is concieved as an open project in which replaces the Grande Villa Adriana territory inside its own field, subtracting it from the spreading no-place, in order to give it back to the meanings place, that lives the relationships between human being and natural environment. A contemporary *locus amoenus*, that looks into the relationship between antiquity and contemporary without romantic sense, configuring a possible future where past and present are recomposing with continuity. The idea of transformative continuity lies in an overall logic – unitarity but not totalizing – capable of linking nature and artifice. This is the biggest lesson that we can draw from Villa Adriana: beyond the formal quality evoked by its powerful ruins, its plan suggests that the settlement principle of architecture (dispositio) determines the transformation of a place, its managing the inhabit. And this lesson is a current issue today. The project identifies differents gradients and ideas of reconstruction, that correspond as many to different actions on

the landscape. Outside, into the Buffer Zone, the project aims to redefine the relationship with the Aniene river, which has been denied by the most modern constructions that have favored the 'via Maremmana' as a settlement principle. Two different, overlap and relating layers rule the design proposal. The first, hypogeum or the 'under-ground one', follows the direction of via Maremmana, that becomes an underground and distributional internal street. At this level are placed the commercial facilities, parkings and service spaces of the hotels. The second layer, of the 'upper-ground', derives from the existing directions of trees and the transverse east-west axis, that links the exedra of the 'Pantanello' with the main entrance of the Villa (retracing the track of the modern one drawn by Piranesi) and finishes in the Travertino quarry beyond the Aniene. This axis is not only an infrastructure: it is a sequence of remarkable places that starts from Villa Adriana, it passes through the *Domus agricola*, the *Porta al Parco*, the commercial Hub and the visitor center, it reaches the travertine quarry, the Aniene and the renovated paths that lead to Villa d'Este. The 'under-ground' and 'upper-ground' layers are strongly related, creating tension in the vertical section ("*from the ground to the sky*", as Marguerite Yourcenar said) thanks to courtyards and holes that allow lighting and air diffusion inside the hypogeum spaces, as the roman architecture way. All the architectures are inspired by the compositive and typological principles of Villa Adriana, applying the 'enclosure' issue in its different morphological shape. Inside the Villa, in the archaeological area, the project thinks about a different form of reconstruction, formal and ideological, which reaches the completed forms of the ruined architecture through the rewriting of the same compositional elements that distinguish the architecture of the Villa. So the new volumes of the new Museum (on the terrace of Antiquarium faced on the Canpo), the Library and the Hall

(in the Plutonium area) and the Archeological Village (on the terrace of Pretorio) , are simple shaped as pure volumes, inspired by the ruins. They are conceived with low prefab technolgy, with wood or steel structure and hardwood pannel coating. The construction is intended in the classical sense: a strongly expressive action toward the 'exact construction' in which architectural shape, built shape and materials are involved. Finding the 'new' Grand Villa Adriana.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As just described in the research by design experience, destruction and reconstruction are the extreme events in a process of continuous modification of heritage, reflected in the changing of both its material dimension and in the values over time assigned to it by community generations. What is reconstructed is a work of contemporary re-creation (Grimmer in Khalaf 2018, 3); it belongs to the contemporary layer of the heritage palimpsest, reinterpreted through a design process that 'exchanges' with the social, cultural, economic, and even physical context, and whose outcome is an expression of the needs and desires that the community projects onto the rebuilding asset, as a result of processes of cultural signification in the present. The concepts of authenticity and integrity turn out to be difficult to apply to reconstructed sites when referred predominantly to its material dimension; rather, by leveraging the importance assumed by the intangible in heritage processes, these concepts can be respectively interpreted through the categories of continuity, compatibility, and difference, for that matter present within the Venice Charter (Kalhaf 2018, 202). It is continuity that ensures the 'sence of place' of a site; compatibility and difference are measures of the change introduced by the contemporary layer. Reconstruction is

a contemporary project of construction, developed on the basis of an 'ancient' palimpsest. In light of the framework albeit briefly outlined, the contribution that the architectural discipline and its design can offer in the reconstruction of damaged/ destroyed heritages appears to be broader than that expressed so far in these contexts, establishing itself as a shared space and a place of confrontation between the different disciplines that work for heritage; a contribution that looks at reconstruction in a complex sense, capable of supporting processes of reappropriation and re-interpretation of the heritage palimpsest in light of the local/gloabl needs of the present so that "when changes occur it is not entirely at the cost of cultural continuity." (Appadurai 1981, 2018)

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NOTES

[1] The paper is the result of a collaboration between the two authors and reports reflections developed in different research experiences. Introduction and conclusion paragraphs are common; paragraphs two and three are attributed to A. Raffa; paragraphs four and five to V. Tolve.

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