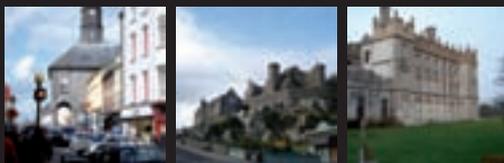


**Loughlin Kealy**  
**Stefano F. Musso**  
Editors



**EAAE Transactions on Architectural Education**

# CONSERVATION/ TRANSFORMATION





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# CONSERVATION/ TRANSFORMATION

**Loughlin Kealy**  
**Stefano F. Musso**  
Editors

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The workshop was attended by almost 65 participants representing: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, United States of America, United Kingdom.

### Scientific Committee:

Professor Francesco Doglioni  
Professor Loughlin Kealy  
Professor Stefano F. Musso  
Professor Chris Younès.



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# Conservation/Transformation

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# Conservation/Transformation

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## Introduction

It is a tendency of our times that historic buildings and sites have become invitations to intervene. They are no longer simply monuments - features of the urban and rural landscape that carry messages from the past for those that can read them – they are now common cultural and intellectual property as well as economic instruments, and are expected to be part of the mainstream of everyday life and leisure of the global community. For those charged with the care of historic buildings, and for those responsible for education and training, the issues to be addressed have become more diverse, incorporating perspectives that have little to do with the transmission of values and the conservation of material culture. For this reason it is important to stand back from the doctrinal and practical challenges and to reflect on the fundamentals of intervention in our time.

The chosen theme for the 2009 workshop was that of “transformation”. The conserved object is not what it was before intervention. The question lies in the kind of change that has been generated by the fact and process of intervention. One can reflect on change in the object and in our perception of it, and on the responsibility we assume for inducing that change as we propose to extend the “life” of what we value.

The intention of the Conservation/Transformation workshop was to provide a new kind of opportunity for participants – an opportunity to reflect and discuss issues within conservation that can evade attention. The hope was that the participants in the Conservation network could build on the experience of the workshop held in Genoa in 2007. For this reason, the 2009 workshop was to be experimental. Instead of bringing prepared papers to the conference, participants were asked, through the medium of real sites, to reflect on some key issues that impact on conservation/restoration practice and theory and on how these may be explored in teaching. The ambition was to create a discursive atmosphere as a contribution to the reflective papers of the participants that would be prepared at the conclusion of the meeting.

Thus the Workshop had three distinct elements: study visits to a number of important sites that posed complex questions of conservation and development; four themes to be addressed in the context of these sites, and

the presentation of papers by the participants for publication. The book as a whole presents the full outcome of the Workshop, including the briefing statements of the organizers, the papers of the participants and notes on the discussions. The first two elements, the sites and the themes are outlined below.

## **THE STUDY SITES**

Three study sites were chosen: Borris House and demesne, Kells Augustinian Priory and Kilkenny city centre. They present very different challenges: Borris House is a country house in an historic demesne landscape, continuously occupied by the same family since early medieval times, both house and demesne are in need of conservation and future-directed management; Kells Priory is a ruin, a National Monument located in a rural area, adjacent to a small settlement, a complex of national and local significance without visitor services, while Kilkenny city is an important historic city founded on an ancient habitation site, now in the process of becoming a modern city.

The following paragraphs give a brief outline of each site.

### **BORRIS HOUSE AND DEMESNE**

Borris House and demesne constitute an historic endowment of national significance. The demesne has shaped the village of Borris: historically, the village was established in its present form on the initiative of the Kavanaghs of Borris; physically, the demesne wall forms the western edge of the settlement, the castellated entrance gate is a striking feature of the townscape and the viaduct built by the Kavanaghs reinforces its eastern perimeter.

As it appears today Borris House is a three-storey country mansion, set in a demesne landscape of great beauty. Its appearance it owes to Richard and William Vitruvius Morrison who remodeled in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, an earlier house which incorporated the remains of a medieval castle. That house is said to have been severely damaged in the rebellion of 1798.

In its present form, the house presents itself as an essay in the application of a Tudor Revival aesthetic to an earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century structure. The earlier house was built, probably in 1731, for Morgan Kavanagh and incorporated the remains of a medieval castle. It is said to have been three storeys in height and to have formed three sides of a small courtyard. It was substantially re-modeled by the Morrisons in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which resulted also in the addition of a service wing and a chapel. Various dates have been proposed for the work, which is believed to have been completed c1813. The intervention resulted in a series of fine interior spaces, orchestrated around the entrance hall: a circle within a square, achieved by insertion of scagliola columns supporting shallow



arches which in turn support the ceiling comprising three concentric plaster bands of increasing elaboration and completed by an elaborate rose. The courtyard became the three-storey stair hall. The surrounding ground floor rooms are fine spaces, neo-classical rather than Tudor Revival in character. The principal staircase rises just one storey to a narrow landing. From this opens the library, a fine double height space with alternative barrel and rib vaults, looking east over the entrance portico. The stair hall has a gallery at second floor level. It has a fine fan-vaulted ceiling and is lit by a tall, traceried west-facing window. The rest of the accommodation on this floor and the one above consists of bedrooms and bathrooms.

Two related structures are attached to the rear of the house, a single volume space known as the ballroom but possibly originally a billiard room, and a two storey service block that comprised kitchen facilities and butler's pantry on the ground floor and nursery accommodation on the first floor. Lobbies and passageways separate them from the main block.

A substantial service block formerly located between the house and the Chapel was demolished in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Tudor Revival overcoat finds expression in the elaborate profile and detailing of the east, south and west elevations of the building: hood mouldings



over windows, a decorative battlemented parapet and turrets with slender finials. The turrets once had tall lanterns, but these were removed in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Chapel building is a two-storey structure, with the chapel space at first floor above an undercroft. The building was substantially altered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as part of the Morrison remodeling, and was further affected by the removal in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, of the service block linking it with the house. The Chapel has a fine rib-vaulted ceiling. It has a gallery at the south end, once connected to the house at first floor via a passageway through the now-demolished service block. The north end has an altar apse. The alterations by the Morrisons included changes to the fenestration and the provision of buttresses and of a battlemented parapet, with detailing consistent with that applied to the exterior of the house.

The evolution of the present-day demesne landscape can be documented with precision from 1742. At that time, the demesne comprised some 738 acres and 3 perches. The town of Borris had yet to develop to its present form although the line of the main street appears on a map of that year. The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the progressive transformation of the Baroque estate layout, a landscape of axial approach avenues, substantial formal walled garden and



a turreted house within walled courts, to a demesne parkland landscape, with serpentine avenues designed to capture views and prospects, lawns, tree plantations and a circular road around the perimeter. The 1780 map suggests that the house was orientated towards the south. The back of the house with its service areas, fishpond, etc., was thus between house and town. To this date, preferred views of the house are from the south and south-east. The map also demonstrates clearly the ambition to landscape the river valley. By 1791 we have clear documentation of the town layout.

Evidence of the plantation history can be traced from Patrick Grene's 1742 map in which the wooded angle between the Barrow and the Dinin ('Black' or Mountain River) at the south-eastern corner of the demesne appears wooded. The oakwoods above the slopes of the Barrow further east were planted shortly thereafter. On the 1841 Ordnance Survey map the woods on the sloping ground above the rivers are fully intact, and they are substantially intact today, though much overgrown in places. The wooded area that appears on the 1742 map is of particular interest because parts of it are likely to be in ecological continuity with the original natural woodland of the Barrow valley.

While there have been some demolitions and additions, a substantive stock of ancillary buildings and other structures of the demesne remains, in varying conditions of use and repair. In outline the ancillary and structures comprise substantial buildings of two yards, demesne walls, lodges and gateways, the walled gardens, a garden house, apple house, boathouse and bridges.

The town of Borris developed to the north of the house and its demesne, associated with the service areas of the house. The alignment of the main street is visible on an early estate map. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction of the house, at a time when elsewhere in the country, adjacent settlements were "improved" as expressions of new aspirations for the ordering of the built environment, the town of Borris retained its existing morphology. The 19<sup>th</sup> century re-modeling produced important new built elements, among them a school, the Catholic church and the railway viaduct, that re-stated the relationship between house, demesne and town.

## **KELLS AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY**

The Augustinian Priory at Kells, County Kilkenny was established in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. Its origins can be said to lie in the settlement policies of the Anglo-Normans as they established control over the territory of Leinster. William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, appointed Geoffrey fitz Robert as lord of the cantred of Kells, one of the twelve subdivisions of Kilkenny. He established a new borough (a chartered town) at Kells, on the south bank of the King's River. This town was probably not walled, but was protected by a castle built

by Geoffrey on an island in the river.

The accepted procedure was for the lord to relinquish control of the parishes that constituted the manors of the lordship. This was usually done by establishing a monastery, under an order that could accept churches and tithes. The Augustinian Order (Black Canons) was permitted to act as parish clergy. While the exact date is uncertain, it seems that Kells Priory was founded by Geoffrey in 1193. It succeeded an earlier collegiate church, St. Kieran's, founded in 1183.

The first construction of the Priory was a church dedicated to St. Mary, the Blessed Virgin, possibly about 1218, followed soon after by the construction of a water mill. Archaeological investigation suggests that it was commenced in the first quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There is also evidence that the east range of the cloister was commenced in the second quarter, with an early 14<sup>th</sup> century date for the remainder of the claustral ranges. The north transept of the church was also extended at this time, with an enlargement of the church and the building of the belfry tower following closely.

Development was not without interruption: the town of Kells and probably also





the priory was attacked and burned on three occasions before the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The upheavals of the 14<sup>th</sup> century had a major influence on the physical form of the Priory. On the political front the lordship of the territory essentially collapsed – the power vacuum being progressively filled by the earls of Ormond. Unfortunately, over a considerable period, this control was exercised in an absentee manner, with considerable instability in the region. In this context the priors of Kells assumed responsibility for the defense of the settlement. The result was the construction between 1460 and 1475, of the Burgess Court, south of the priory complex. In addition to the wall with its towers, this period also saw the construction of the new, fortified Prior's Tower and a new belfry, and other modifications to the church and monastic buildings as well.

The Priory at Kells was dissolved in 1540 and the church and property were surrendered to James Butler, 9<sup>th</sup> earl of Ormond. One of the canons, Nicholas Tobin, retained a rectory and continued to act as curate for a time afterwards. Some of the priory buildings were adapted for other purposes, while others became quarries for the construction of other buildings. Prior's Tower was used as a farmhouse, while the east range of the claustral buildings and the cloister itself was used as a stable yard in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The upper level of the South Tower was converted into a columbarium during this period.

Kells Priory is a National Monument under the guardianship of the Commissioners of Public Works.



## **KILKENNY CITY**

The city of Kilkenny is built on a bend of the River Nore on five low hills that are now occupied by significant structures. The city owes its origins and its name to a 7th century ecclesiastical foundation (c685), although there is evidence of a 5th century church in the locality. The early settlement was concentrated in the area adjacent to the present-day St. Canice's cathedral, although this structure is considerably later in date. Evidence for the earlier ecclesiastical enclosure can be seen in the curving alignment of surrounding streets. The city gained prominence as the seat of the Leinster king Cearball in the 9th century and consolidated this position through the tenth and eleventh centuries. Its strategic position at a river crossing and its location at the heart of a fertile region underpinned its economic and political prominence. The 12th century saw the erection of a castle by the Anglo-Normans. The city, at that time the largest inland settlement in the south-east of Ireland, formed part of the lordship of Leinster, ruled by Richard fitz Gilbert (otherwise known as Strongbow). He had been invited to Ireland by Art McMurrugh Kavanagh, king of Leinster, to assist in local wars. After the invasion, St. Canice's became the centre of a separate burrough, called Irishtown. The first documented privileges of the town date to this period and the first charter of 1207 formalised the town's existing rights and status.

The Anglo-Norman castle and town was built downriver from the earlier settlement, which was under the control of the bishop of Ossory. The castle



was built at the southern edge of the Anglo-Norman town. It was located on high ground and also overlooked a river crossing point. The effect was to create a bi-polar entity, named Irishtown and Hightown, both with their own defensive systems. The present castle was begun in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and had defensive outworks extending over twice the area of the present building. The focal point of Irishtown was St. Canice's cathedral. Built in its original form between c.1205 and 1285 and replacing a Romanesque predecessor, this is the second largest, but most intact, gothic cathedral in Ireland. The Round



Tower, a particular Irish building type, predates the gothic building. The city hosted meetings of the parliament of Ireland and the king's council on many occasions through the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century plagues both reduced the population and stifled the economy leading to abandonment of both urban and suburban plots and the demolition of extra-mural churches. A significant point of transition was reached when in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, the town was purchased by the Earl of Ormond. It marked a shift in attitude towards Gaelic elements, brought about by the ability of the earl to accommodate diverse traditions in the management of his estates. The fifteenth century witnessed the emergence of an urban oligarchy and considerable building activity within the city walls, but no expansion of the town itself until after the reformation in England, when the lands of suppressed monastic foundations located outside the walls were secured by a number of prominent families, resulting in the first extra-mural expansion of the city for about two hundred years.

Kilkenny was given city status in 1609 - the city retaining two corporations in the change in status. In 1649 the city became the venue for the Catholic Confederation. However, the overthrow of the English and the advent of Parliamentary rule proved a temporary setback. With the Restoration of the monarchy, James Butler now Duke of Ormond initiated major urban changes, establishing the Parade and in the process demolishing the east side of Castle Street. He transformed the castle, filling in the moat and establishing formal gardens. Migration from the countryside through the 17<sup>th</sup> century boosted the Catholic element while the Protestant population declined, there being no influx from England to counterbalance this development. This pattern continued in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, leading to many vacant properties within the city.

The city had achieved its characteristic form by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and, to a great extent, retained that form into the 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **THE THEMES**

Four inter-connected themes were put forward for consideration:

Communication and conservation/restoration; Design: creative intervention in historic buildings and sites; Confronting issues of sustainability and Universal access/ conservation ethics

### **Communication and conservation/restoration**

Recent years have seen an increasing emphasis on adapting older historic buildings for new purposes as against the construction of new buildings. The emerging economic climate seems likely to support this trend. The economic role of historic areas has long been recognized, even if it remains difficult

to ensure that cultural values are respected in development. Conservators working with historic buildings, sites and urban areas need to be able to communicate how conservation principles inform their choices. The difficulties of doing this effectively arise partly from the philosophical language in which conservation ethics is expressed. Yet the outcomes of decisions (including design decisions) inspired by ethical principles are both aesthetic and practical. Teaching the discipline of architectural conservation needs to take these matters into account.

In the area of scholarly study conservation/restoration theory finds itself touching on issues that are to the forefront of examination in other disciplines: questions of the meaning of authenticity in increasingly diverse societies; the issue of the values supported through conservation action; the question of how values that have emerged through the globalization process are to find expression in specific cultural contexts, and many more. It is essential that conservators actively engage with these disciplines and that teaching conservation is not an inward-looking activity. Most especially it needs to find its place within debates on architectural history and theory and on urbanism.

### **Design: creative intervention in historic buildings and sites**

The intimate and productive relationship between design and conservation action has been observed throughout the centuries. Yet they are often seen as polar opposites – almost as antagonistic imperatives within architecture, urban design and planning. In everyday experience, those who support conservation/restoration often see themselves as defending material culture against inappropriate design solutions, while designers see conservators as supporting pastiche against true cultural exploration. Yet the continuing life of monuments makes design intervention almost inevitable, and theory and good practice argue that such work need not be invisible, but should contribute to contemporary understanding and use.

In the academic environment programmatic and institutional structures often ensure that design and conservation/restoration are taught with little or no mutual reference. The history of architecture pays little heed to the adaptation of inherited buildings throughout history and the role of historical sensibility in the transformations of buildings and sites brought about by architects from the Renaissance onwards. Does this antipathy display a weakness that needs to be addressed? What roles can the teaching of architectural conservation/restoration play?

### **Confronting issues of sustainability**

The ethical basis for conservation looks to a form of environmental justice

for its primary justification. Unreflective consumption of inherited resources impoverishes future generations, whether this occurs with regard to cultural or environmental capital. The concept of inter-generational justice has been articulated in an attempt to make such deprivation explicit and comprehensible in the context of concepts of development. Conservation/restoration cannot ignore the challenges evoked by this emerging consciousness however tempting it may be to think that they do not apply to the field – conservation/restoration principles adapt to shifts in cultural consciousness and the ethical basis of technical actions needs to be considered, especially as they impact on scarce material resources or the use of modern materials. At another level, interventions to introduce new technologies that will permit historic buildings to be used for compatible purposes has long been a concern for conservators of historic buildings. At this time, researchers across Europe are engaged in explorations of the potential role of renewable technologies in historic buildings and urban areas. How are such issues to be approached in teaching? Can the necessary inter-disciplinary connections be established to ensure that the issues and potentials are understood within the field of conservation/restoration?

### **Universal access/ conservation ethics**

Access to the historic built environment for people with disabilities is seen as a matter of justice – that disability should not preclude people from experiencing and enjoying cultural heritage to the greatest extent possible. In practical terms this involves the ongoing effort to remove barriers to inclusion. The theoretical issues arise at several levels. The most immediate are those that reflect the fact that many sites do not cater well for those with disabilities, while the nature of others presents substantive difficulties. To some extent, restricted mobility has received attention. The appreciation of cultural heritage leans heavily on the faculty of sight. In some cases other faculties (touch and sound, for example) have been exploited in the communication strategies adopted for particular sites. It is true that many issues can be resolved through ingenuity in design intervention. It is important to explore how this issue is approached in the teaching of conservation/restoration.

### **The Contribution of the Workshop**

This purpose of the workshop is to develop both thought and dialogue rather than to resolve finally the theoretical and practical issues arising from these considerations. The workshop is an attempt to explore the issues in the light of theory and practice and to encourage teachers of conservation/restoration to reflect on how they might introduce these issues/conflicts into their treatment

of conservation/restoration. Resolutions will come about through reflection and practice. It remains to be seen whether we can extend the agenda of our conversations in a way that will engage architectural education more profoundly than we have done so far. The publication of papers arising from the workshop will extend that conversation to a wider audience.

# Expectations. Between conservation and transformation of inhabited milieu: inheriting and transmitting

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## **Are we able to inherit? Paradoxes of patrimonialisation and disinheritance**

If inheritance involves transmission and memory, it is also open to questioning. For the first time in humanity, individualism and a type of generalised disinheritance are associated, thus observes Peter Sloterdijk: *“The fact is that people who grow up in an individualistic regime suffer from a type of integral disinheritance. It is a term I have been using for a while; because we need it to describe this strange way in which the young generations detach themselves in one leap from their parents. This type of behaviour has never existed in any previous form of civilisation.”*<sup>1</sup>The paradox is a powerful one. We have moved from a world of inheritance of goods and stabilized values to a splintered society, out of focus and contingent, in which people’s points of reference are being questioned. And yet, the ascendancy of a normalized inheritance is also denounced. Indeed, with the crisis of the condition of modern man, characterized by a questioning of all its foundations, the consensus seems to be that we are experiencing a withdrawal regarding identities and an overinvestment of heritage which incarnates the opposite of a rupture. This inflation has become problematic. Pierre Nora<sup>2</sup> asks: *“Can we, without dread, in such as congestion saturation, imagine the material increase of the weight of the past in the present?”* This recent heritage piety has now spread to all fields. To what once gave value in terms of sacred relics or works, has been added firstly the historic monument, and then urban, industrial, vernacular, landscape and natural heritages, before ending with the ‘heritage of humanity’, a particularly revealing expression of the modification of the concept of heritage, whether it is by the broadening of its meaning or its reinterpretation. Thus, planet Earth is now considered as a common good for the human species, in terms of the condition of life in its diversity, which raises multiple political, ethical and philosophical questions. What are the heritages at stake? How far can we go and still conserve it? How do we prepare the future? What are we in charge of when we inherit and when we transmit?

## Regeneration of inhabited milieu and sustainable development

The main thought processes which have asserted themselves in Europe during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century are being put into perspective today with the resonance of an ecological posture, which valorises not only cultural heritage but also natural heritage and its tectonic, climatic, biological strengths. An ethical-environmental attitude requestions the long duration of the human species' journey and its future. These accelerated preoccupations with the new planetary contract of 'sustainable development' takes us back to an "*ethic of the future*"<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, humans are confronted with the invention of the spaces of a city which can be the planetary home of humans, a home which extends to future generations. Faced with the increasing possibilities of technical manipulations of the environment, and with the awareness of the fragility of the living, it is other priorities<sup>4</sup> which are being advocated: the duty of precaution<sup>5</sup> and the worry of the long term, of the 'sustainable'; it is to operate a civilizational repositioning of the relationship between nature and culture.

Thus new forms of responsibilities have suddenly appeared<sup>6</sup> in all transformations in order that the space of Earth remains liveable<sup>7</sup>, and has led us to rethink the sense of what can be inhabited and what is the common good. Memory, culture which are shared and debated like projects which commit themselves to re-creations are vital, Kierkegaard speaks about "Gjentagelsen" (reprise). If we want these life conditions to be fair and to have a sense of solidarity, we will need to modify the conditions of thought and action; invent new words, new concepts, to advance representations, practices. How can we, in all our different worlds agree? What place should we leave to diverse points of view and values? How can we regenerate and re-enchant our world? In what the sustainability requires new strategies, new ways of thinking and acting?

This workshop which highlights and puts to the test thought processes and collaborative work in a situated inhabited milieu should allow us to take stock of references, postures, but also to question ourselves and to take risks together. This constitutes for me a promise for education in architecture and conservation.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Essai d'intoxication volontaire*, translated by O. Mannoni, Paris, Hachette, 2001, p. 38

<sup>2</sup> cf. Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire (The Places of memory)*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993, (re-published. 3 volumes, coll. »quarto«, Gallimard, 1997) and Pierre Nora (dir.), *Science et conscience du patrimoine (Science and conscience of heritage)*, Fayard, 1997. Pierre Nora emphasized that "as long as we know very directly from whom we are descended, from whom we are, heritage has conserved its appearance as a family affair».

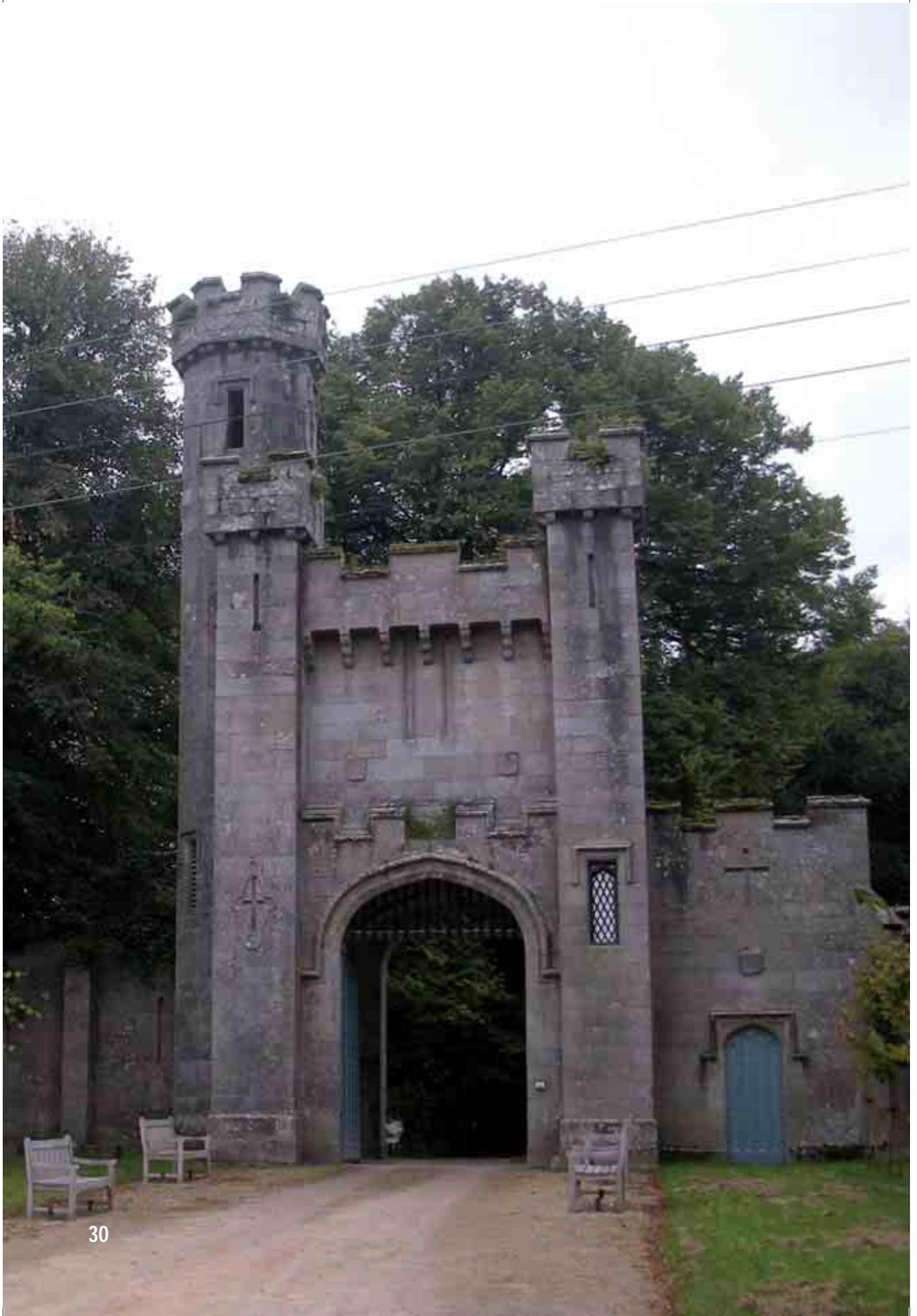
<sup>3</sup>Hans Jonas, *Pour une éthique du futur (For an ethic of the future)*, Paris, Payot et Rivages, 1998

<sup>4</sup> «It is the conscience of our belonging to the living world which founds and impulses the project of an industrial ecology in service of sustainable development «. D. Bourg, 'Planète sous contrôle (Planet under control)', in *Pour une politique de la nature (For a nature policy)*, Paris, éd. Textuel, 1998, p. 70

<sup>5</sup>The Principle of precaution and the principle of responsibility are associated in the work of C. Lepage and F. Guéry, *La politique de précaution (The policy of precaution)*, Paris, PUF, 2001, which emphasizes the rupture between the political philosophy of democracy and free-for-all economic liberalism.

<sup>6</sup>H. Jonas, *Le principe de responsabilité (The principle of responsibility)*, Paris, éd. du Cerf, 1990, p. 24 [original edition: *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, Frankfurt a.m., Insel Verlag, 1979].

<sup>7</sup>“The awareness of the community of terrestrial destiny must be the key event of the end of the millennium; we act in solidarity in this planet, our life is linked to its life. We must develop it or die.” E. Morin, *Terre – patrie (Earth – native planet)*, Paris, Seuil, 1993, p. 213



# “Cum-servāre”/”Trāns-formāre”.

## Ideas, concepts, actions and contradictions.

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As Loughlin Kealy says in his Epilogue to this book, transformation is certainly not a goal for conservation. Nor does it seem to be a goal of restoration. Nevertheless, transformation belongs or is inevitably presumed and involved in/by both conservation and restoration. It is clearly a matter of fact characterized by confusion and by never ending conflicts, at least from the age in which the modern theories about restoration/conservation explicitly rose from the European culture. The long and complex history of ideas, conceptual elaborations, theoretical expressions and also of practical interventions that characterise these eternal contrapositions makes any attempt to clarify the problem very difficult and perhaps without any prospect of success. This does not mean that we have to renounce the task. We have only to continue reflecting on these contradictory aspects of our job, especially as scholars and teachers, trying to make our statements on the topic explicit and clear, as far as we can, and not pretending to close the question. Everyone, in the present and in the future, will inevitably come back to it and will propose his personal position.

Let us then begin from the words, with their etymological origins and their historically acquired meanings.

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

Transformation derives as well from the Latin verb “*transformāre*”, composed by “*trāns*” (further, farther, more, over...) and “*formāre*” (to form, to give form...) with the meaning of changing, modifying, converting, turning and so on.

Everything is thus clear? No, not at all: because, as always, while words are important and even crucial to understanding the world and its expressions, they are never sufficient. They are living organisms that sometimes create ideas and thoughts, rather than simply express them. Going further, this propensity or capability is embedded in our history and this makes the problem more complicated than it may appear.

Conservation is a goal, perhaps a hope or even a need or a desire, relating to different levels of human life, and many of its expressions or products and its possibilities of success depend on many and almost unpredictable variables. On a political level, conservation seems to express the willingness to maintain an existing social, economic or ideological order or asset of the world, in order to preserve and pass to the future generation its systems of values, its rules of coexistence, its organization and governance. In this sense, it seems to be eternally struggling with the apparently opposite tension towards the change interpreted by any progressive (or “liberal”) political party. Nevertheless, ancient and recent history teaches us that its development has never been determined by a clear and definite opposition of these two extremes, as though they were completely different and separate. Rather, human history knows the continuous interaction between those two positions and their aims with frequent and sudden reversals or changes in the contents, slogans and goals of the two fronts.

From a different perspective and point of view, conservation seems to have a clear and unambiguous meaning at least within Physics and the “Natural Sciences” (maintaining for a moment this ancient but almost contested definition deriving from the nineteenth century organization of knowledge that so deeply influenced reflection about our topic). In fact one of the most important principles in this field is the so named “energy conservation principle”: mass can change but never it disappears because everything can only be transformed into energy, and energy will remain always the same (at least from the perspective of the scientific paradigm and theory in which it is embedded).

More than a century ago, when traditional alchemy was transformed into modern science, Chemistry added the interesting suggestion that “nothing can be created, nothing can be destroyed, everything is transformed”.

Another expression of human culture, and for some the first and most important one - the “art of cooking” - shows how the most ancient but also the most refined and recent ways to conserve (preserve) food were ensured by some sort of transformation practices through which the “form”, or the shapes, of some fruits, of the tomatoes or of the milk, for example, were sacrificed in order to maintain their flavour, their taste and nutritional properties (jams, wines, sauces, cheeses...). Not to speak about the infinite cases of change of meanings that occurred to ancient monuments or artefacts without any intentional transformation of their bodies and matters. During the Renaissance period, for the Pope’s architects, it was sufficient to put a cross on the top of the ancient Egyptian obelisks to “transform” them into a Christian, or better still, a Catholic landmark for the new secular Jerusalem, forgetting or going

beyond their pagan origins and meanings.

We could easily add other examples of how the verb “to conserve” or the word “conservation” are used in different scientific, cultural, professional, technical or social fields and even in everyday language or in that of the communications media. By so doing we would only find other similar meanings that should never be reduced to unity or to a single universal horizon of sense and significance because they inevitably reflect the specific needs and intentions that determine their use. In such reduction confusion could only be enhanced. We could at this point argue, adopting in a larger sense the recalled sentences and translating into the world of conservation/transformation of human artefacts the principles we quoted, that we perhaps could only conserve energy but not bodies, or better, the “immaterial” rather than the “material”, even if this last distinction is also not so clear and sure. With other words, we could perhaps conserve (or recover and re-discover) ideas, meanings, knowledge, ways of living that are buried, embedded, imprisoned or reflected in the “physical state” of those artefacts and buildings more than their stones, plasters, frescoes or timber elements, with their present material consistence and status. At least, we cannot do it forever or without changing it, in some way and for some amount. But this could exactly mean trans-forming the material bodies we have to take care of.

In this sense, conservation as an absolute goal is impossible and contradictory, considering both nature and history. It foresees and presumes transformation or it needs it. Consolidating a stucco work or a plaster made of mortars that has lost its compactness and solidity by adding (injecting, imbibing...) a chemical product in order to conserve it, is in any case a transformation of its present condition and physical status. We have to change it to ensure its resistance and capability to last for many years. We act in order to bring again together those little sand grains that were originally transformed into a sort of artificial stone with the help of lime and thanks to some physical processes that, in some cases, are not so clear even for our developed scientific and technological culture (a circumstance that makes them precious for the future). The sand grains lost this link and the plaster lost its continuity, its compactness and inner adherence, thus arriving at its present decayed status. If we decide to intervene we can never go back, in any case we will move its status toward a new condition – one that never existed before. This means that, in some way, we “trans-form” it if (or because) we want to “conserve” it, and even though no evident change in its external form may appear. What an astonishing contradiction, someone could say! But, if we examine the question in a more careful way, we will discover that it is not a contradiction, at least if we remember that things cannot be always simply divided into

opposite and well separated categories. The world of history cannot be easily investigated using a simplified scheme based on the disjunctive logic expressed by the use in our speech of the prepositions “or-or”. More often, if we consider ourselves within the surrounding world, we can discover that things, events and processes persist and can be explained and interpreted using a different inclusive logic that allows and presumes their coexistence using the prepositions “and-and”.

On the other hand, what we call Architecture, or even any artefacts we receive from the past and that we want to preserve (conserve) for the future, was the product of a complex process in its conception, construction or manufacture. It involved different kinds of knowledge, various capabilities and crafts, many ideas, needs, purposes and even desires. It was brought to that end, which we do not exactly know, by many men. Now, it is in front of us, it belongs to our present world and we think it is necessary to pass it to the future. But it is not anymore what it was in its origin. It knew many other origins and changes: partly due to human acts and intentions and partly determined by the flowing of natural time. It is now a provisional intermediate product of a long “*process of transitions*” between different statuses<sup>1</sup>. No one of them is indeed the most important one - no one can come to the front-stage - and we could never go back to it in any case. We can only try to insert ourselves in this long process, keeping in mind that it is the result of several previous transitions which we are not exactly or completely aware of, because they took place while nobody recorded them, also because some of them took place “second after second”, as it happens, by the way, for several decay phenomena that affect the built bodies of our monuments.

This means that we cannot continue opposing transformation to conservation (or the reverse) as if they were the good and the evil, the cultural and the high or the pragmatic and the trivial, the right and the wrong. They are part of the same process: a continuous “*process of transitions*” between different statuses. If natural, the “laws of nature” rule it and their actions give life to some sort of “*silent transformations*”. If it derives from man's decisions and actions, we have to remind ourselves that, as a protagonist of his “world of culture”, humankind always interferes with the processes of the “world of nature” (taking into account that it is more and more difficult to accept a similar distinction). If so, any decisions and actions generate a “transformation” of the existing status of things, even if the intention is to conserve them or a part of them. Also for this reason, the issue is not to place transformation in opposition to conservation but to control the amount or the ratio of the first in order to avoid the risk that, at the end of our intervention, nothing (or the most part) of what we declared we wanted to preserve and conserve for the

future will survive because everything has been deeply changed, modified or turned in something completely different. It is not a case if someone says that conservation is exactly the government of the necessary and bearable transformation that must (or can) be realized in order to ensure the permanence of the artefact we think must be transferred to the future generations: in stable and safe conditions, ready to be still used but possessed of all the signs and traces that history has stratified upon it.

If this is even only partly true or acceptable, we should recognize that a great part of the contradiction that always seems to rise between conservation (and restoration, with even more complicated and hidden aspects) and transformation is exactly linked to the term “form” that is part of this challenging word. Form reminds us, in a pre-conceptual scheme of thinking (as Cesare Brandi said about restoration) of what is simply seen, perceived, aesthetically appreciated and often evaluated. But we cannot rest there. Going back to the Greek roots of our western philosophical thought and culture, we cannot ignore the powerful role that the idea (“*Eidos*”) played, at least in Plato. Ideas gave life to a world of perfection, of the un-corruptible, of eternal as opposed to the sub-lunar and un-perfect, changing, fragmented, contradictory and subjected to death world of men, considered as put in chains and condemned to see the truth only as a shadow in the back of a cave, as in a jail. Aristotle reacted to this vision and with the prominence given to the “*Logos*” proposed a quite different way to see, to inquire and to think about the world, distinguishing first of all, the “*Physis*” and what is behind, or out of, it (the “*Metaphysics*”) thus giving us the capability and the instruments to distinguish things in order to orientate ourselves in the world. He also introduced “substance” as opposed to the “idea” and took into account the world’s changing phenomena. But he did not definitely solved the problem of how change (or modification and transformation) really can take place from one status of things to the following one. These seem to be, among others, the reasons why “transformation” still escapes from our comprehension. Those ancient roots offered us some instruments to determine, to name, to distinguish identified forms but the same instruments seem inadequate to allow us to recognize, to understand and to catch what is unpredictable or undetermined, exactly what characterizes every transitional phenomenon. Centuries of European culture have been influenced by these two original pillars, always able to give life to new interpretations of the world we are living in and of its products and expressions. It is perhaps too superficial but it is also in some way true to affirm now that the first approach has mainly and deeply influenced the history of art between nineteenth and twentieth centuries, together with the emerging theories about restoration. Thus we can see how any attempt to free our activity from this influence is still

difficult, even after more than two centuries have passed.

What makes us hesitant, while speaking of “*trans-formation*”, is perhaps the fear that at the end of the conservation intervention (or of restoration) our building or artefact can assume a completely different visible “form” so that it would be easy to say what is the “form” of a building, or bring about the situation where it would be the only attribute we have to take count of. In reality, as we said, we always “transform” what we are working on and, even if we do not do anything, nature will transform it in a continuous transition process. It is even banal to highlight this circumstance: if not, why should we intervene? What someone is always worrying about is that we could change the general appearance of the building, forgetting that it will change in any case and that the appearance is not perhaps the only or the main important aspect of a building or that it is always difficult (for someone even impossible) to separate any form from its material (and historical) determination. It is a fact that exactly on this “amount” and on this matter of “change” (or at least also on this) that all theories about restoration have been built during at least two centuries of history.

This is another reason why we finally have to recognize that there is no conservation without transformation in the same way that any transformation usually conserves some part of the existing. The problem is that neither of the two terms has clear, certain, given or necessary boundaries. It is up to any one of us to clarify what should be conserved, the limits of the meaning we assign to this goal or intention, and the instruments (conceptual and technical) we intend to use to reach it. Moreover, as an inevitable consequence, we should also clarify which kind of “transformation” we propose or accept in order to reach the conservation objective, in terms of what and of which aspect of our artefact (or of our universe of intervention) will be transformed and how deep that transformation will be, with which future visible, invisible or simply hidden consequences.

It is not easy but it is necessary if we want to be sincere, active and positive protagonists of our present times and not tired repliers of what has been already said, seen or made. Our present condition proposes every day new challenges, in a globalized world characterized by insufficient material and un-material resources and perspectives. It would be really important if we were able to stop ancient polemics, thus conquering a higher level of comprehension of how some aspects of our life and even of the problems we are speaking about, are deeply and strongly interrelated, interdependent and reciprocally influencing each other. We need a really “ecological”<sup>2</sup> way of thinking, able to understand and taking into account the context we are acting in, open to managing the contradictions and the conflicts we confront, instead

of struggling to give the prevalence to one term or another. We need to think and act using the “and-and” and not only the “or-or” logic and behaviour, taking advantage of the inclusive and not only the exclusive or distinguishing thinking, never abandoning, of course, what the second one had offered us during more than two millenniums, making us able to recognize, to identify and to inquiry what we usually call the “reality” we belong to (as it would or could be seen and considered independent from us).

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Jullien Françoise, *Le trasformazioni silenziose*, Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milano 2010 (tit. or. *Les transformations silencieuses*, Editions Grasset&Fasquelle, Paris 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Edgar Morin, *I sette saperi necessari all'educazione del futuro*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 2001 (tit. or. *Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l'éducation du futur*, Le Seuil, Paris 1999); Edgar Morin, *La testa ben fatta: riforma dell'insegnamento e riforma del pensiero*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 2000 (tit. or. *La tête bien faite*, Le Seuil, Paris 1999).



# Report of the discussion regarding the visit to Kells Priory, County Kilkenny

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The group visited three sites in all starting with Kells Augustinian Priory then travelling on to Jerpoint Cistercian Abbey and, together with the full group, spending the afternoon at the Rock of Cashel. Kells Priory was to form the main focus of the group's discussions.

## **Sustainability**

The predominance of ruins in the Irish countryside was noted by the foreign members of the group and was the subject of much discussion both during the plenary session and informally between individuals over the course of the workshop. The experience on the continent generally appears to be that, apart from the most ancient ruins, most ruined structures were either incorporated within later buildings or, if redundant, had been 'quarried' to provide materials for other buildings. It proved a challenge to the Irish participants to explain the reasons, not only for the existence of so many ruins but, more precisely, why so many upstanding ruins have survived.

The meaning of ruins and the stories attached to them, whether true or not, appears to have led to a particular affinity for these sites in Ireland. Connections with religious sites continued long after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the mid-sixteenth century when sites such as Kells and Jerpoint had supposedly been abandoned. Tower houses and other castles connected with absent Catholic nobility may also have had such significance to the local population that they were not dismantled even after centuries of abandonment.

The sustainability of retaining so many ruins was queried by some of the group and the idea was raised that they might be better brought back into use. This idea was later dismissed by the group as inappropriate both because of the difficulty of finding a viable use for the restored buildings and also because of the unacceptable level of intervention that would be required.

## **Communication**

The two abbey sites are both National Monuments in state ownership but the



*Kells  
Priory*

presentation differs in each case. Jerpoint Abbey is a fully serviced visitor site with guides, visitor facilities, car parking and the like. Kells Priory, in contrast, provides no facilities for the visitor. While the public is not kept away from the site, no encouragement is given to visit the site; it is not highly advertised, no interpretation is provided of the site and no works have been carried out to improve accessibility for the disabled visitor.

This contrast between the two sites gave rise to a lot of discussion. On one hand, the approach to the presentation of Kells Priory was approved of by the group. The lack of signage and interpretation meant that the experience of the ruins was more personal. It was experienced almost as an icon or a 'found' object. It was appreciated as a place of silence and of the imagination. On the other hand, the total lack of information was felt by some to be a disadvantage. It was thought there should be some access to information to enhance the understanding of the ruins and the conservation works that had been carried out there or were ongoing. It was suggested that this could be low-key and unobtrusive; available to those who sought it but not impinging on the experience of the monument to those who didn't want it. Suggestions included providing access to information using mobile phone or GPS technology, by discreet signboards located within the Prior's Tower or remote from the site, within the village of Kells.



## Intervention

It was generally believed within the group that little intervention is needed at Kells Priory. However, the effects of climate change and human activity may make intervention unavoidable. Flooding is an increasingly regular event with water inundating the site from the river, from the hill behind the monument and even rising up from the water table. It was seen as ironic that the river, the King's River, which was probably the main determining factor in the choice of location of the Priory, has now become its greatest threat.

Two recent interventions within the site were discussed. The timber bridge was felt to be a great advantage, giving the site a connection (albeit one with no historical precedent) back to the village and allowing visitors to complete a circular walk from the village to the monument and back again. However, it was generally agreed that the design of the bridge in its current form was a missed opportunity and that a higher quality design intervention might have enhanced the setting of the monument. The bridge is poorly finished, slippery and unsafe and does not meet the required standards for wheelchair access. The decision of the OPW to re-roof the Prior's Tower using traditional materials was also discussed and generally approved of by the group. It was noted that the new roof was hardly visible from the ground. Its proposed use was seen as an advantage in providing a home on site for loose stonework associated with the monument currently placed in the cloister garth.

## Presentation

Kells and its relationship to the landscape were discussed. It was suggested that reopening ancient pathways and routes would be valuable in reconnecting it to its surroundings. The discussion widened to encompass not only reconnecting the Priory to its immediate physical surroundings but to set it in its national and international contexts; exploring the Anglo-Norman connections which possibly link the Priory to the Crusades, to Italy (through the founder, Geoffrey FitzRobert de Marisco) and to its mother house in Cornwall. The Augustinian connections would link the Priory to other similar priories throughout Europe. The presentation of Kells Priory was another subject of discussion. It was generally accepted that state ownership of a ruinous monument brings about a responsibility of care that sometimes results in such sites being 'over-cleaned' and orderly. The conservation of ruins presents a difficult situation where a lot of work is required to keep the site looking as if untouched. It was noted by the group that there was, on closer inspection, much evidence of previous interventions into the built fabric of the monument to consolidate, and in places, partially restore the buildings. The presentation of the monument itself was seen as a contrast to the adjacent graveyard, outside the National



Monument site, which was overgrown and wild.

Discussion took place both on site and subsequently on whether it would be appropriate to landscape the site. The OPW said that it is intended to plant the cloister garth following the removal of loose stone to the Prior's Tower. The idea of adding planting such as orchards, herb gardens and the like was also discussed and the group was divided on whether or not this would be suitable. On the one hand, such planting could be evocative of the mediaeval character of the site while, on the other hand, it could have an unacceptable effect on the present character of the site as an isolated ruin in the landscape. The inclusion of more hard landscaping such as paving was also discussed but it was generally felt that this would be out of character with the ruined monument although it would have the advantage of improving the accessibility of the site which is presently difficult.

### **Connections with the local community**

The establishment of the borough of Kells was contemporary with the Priory, the castle of the founder being located close to the river crossing upstream. The group saw great significance in the historical and geographical connections between the Priory and the village of Kells.

The site continues to have considerable local significance and is used both as a place to walk through or to simply sit in. It has been used as a music venue and as the location of an annual sculpture exhibition. It was generally agreed in the group that the conservation of this site was a delicate balance between popularising it and making its existence more widely known and retaining its very special qualities of remoteness and isolation.



# Report of the discussion regarding the visit to Borris House and Demesne, County Carlow

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The discussion began with an exploration of the role aristocracies played during the communist era in safeguarding eastern Europe’s national heritage for future generations. Aristocratic houses in Poland were returned to the original families in the decades following the fall of Communism but not the lands attached originally to those houses. Unlike Borris, the separation of the manor house from the landscape that sustained it has made it difficult for their full significance to be communicated to younger generations.

A primary concern which arose during discussion was the significance of the Kavanagh family to the place they have inhabited for generations. Both the house and the landscape accrue additional significance from the fact that one family (and a particularly unusual family because of their native Irish lineage and their Catholic identity up until the mid-nineteenth century) has continuously designed, modified and altered this house and landscape for some five hundred years. This process is highly significant and its continuance of great concern to the discussion group. The Kavanagh family need to be reassured that Borris House and Demesne, by continuing this process, is a success story already.

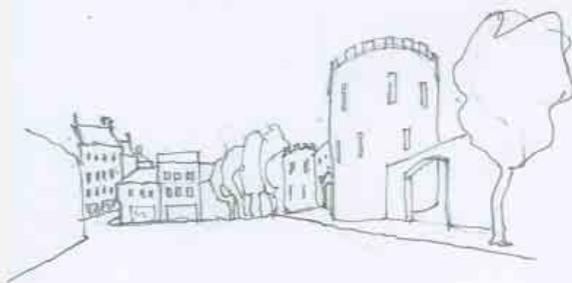
However it was clear this process needs support- both financial and otherwise into the future. The discussion group agreed that a masterplan would be of benefit to the family- yet it would have to recognise that family decisions are fundamentally different from those made by public institutions with committees, management boards and clearly defined stakeholders. Any masterplan would need to incorporate the flexibility a family needs to sustain its inherited heritage. Discussion also arose about the differing significances awarded by the nationalities present to aspects of Borris’s architectural heritage, in particular the use of Roman cement. The conservation of the window surrounds and their decorative heads was felt by some to be too casual; others thought that they had little if any artistic merit and could safely be left where they fell. William and Vitruvius Morrison’s contributions to the eighteenth-century Georgian block of Borris house, which can still be discerned behind their

artfully applied make-up, were considered by those of an architectonic sensibility to detract from the simplicity of the architectural form, reducing architecture to the application of decorative elements in keeping with the period. Others attached greater weighting to the Morrisons' interventions, seeing any attempt to diminish their impact as detrimental to the building's overall architectural significance. The Morrisons' contribution to the nineteenth-century approach landscape sequence, where the building's new castellated silhouette and garden viewing terrace overlooked the approaching curving carriage route to contribute a designed sense of imminent drama, were said by some to be revelatory for their understanding of the overlapping significances of architecture and landscape. Some also noted that despite the building's failure in spots (dry rot, rising damp, water ingress, plaster cracking) no building of such an age can be described as a 'bad building', again an instance of absolution for the Morrisons' questioned ability to design in detail for the Irish climate. The discussion concluded with the conviction that the many issues, whether material, landscape, urban, or architectural, all contribute to Borris's significance, and none should be overlooked in any future decisions.

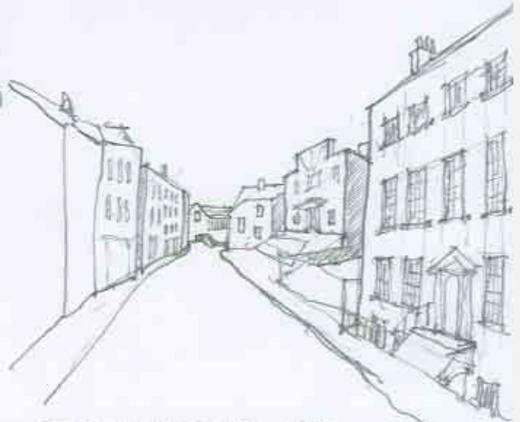
The Kavanagh family's ability to incorporate community use and value into their heritage was highly recommended. It was remarked that in Italy there is very little middle ground; a house is either a private dwelling or it is a museum, resulting in 'no life in conservation or conservation in life'. The varied and varying plans the family have for their house and landscape were again instanced as a great strength. Many projects in Ireland do not convince the community that they represent anything but private material gain (hotels, golf courses, ill-considered housing developments), and they therefore receive little support from that wider community. It also makes it difficult for them to attract innovative sources of funding. Borris may find it more sustainable for town and great house, if the community's links with the family and the ancestral landscape are strengthened by projects which clearly also benefit the local community. Potential projects discussed included music centre, art studios/exhibitions, culture village, creche, school, housing projects, craft centre, education centre. Such projects would ideally communicate the value of inherited heritage to others and make that difficult transition (particularly in country with a tragic history of landownership) from being someone else's inheritance to one which is also one's own. Returning to the masterplan, discussion ranged from the need for some degree of prioritisation to arise from a measured assessment of Borris's

layered and complex significance, a simpler strategy plan, or a set of helping guidelines.

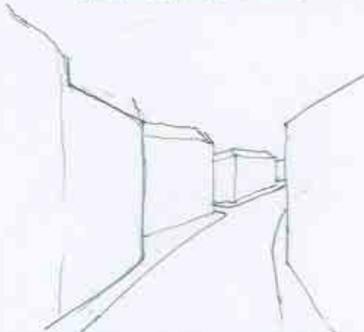
The group's central concern was the role of villa landscape in the modern context of the Irish republic. If defined as a private capitalist economic entity, which drove the regional economy in the past by communicating the ability of private endeavour and entrepreneurship to create a beautiful and holistic environment, how can that tradition be continued in the modern context? Some middle ground must be found between the public and the private interest, while acknowledging that the ideology of England's National Trust is difficult for Ireland to adopt. Financial life is not synonymous with cultural life and material wealth is not the only form of capital. The significance of this family to the community and that of the community to the family needs to be both nurtured and needed for Borris house, demesne and estate town to attain its



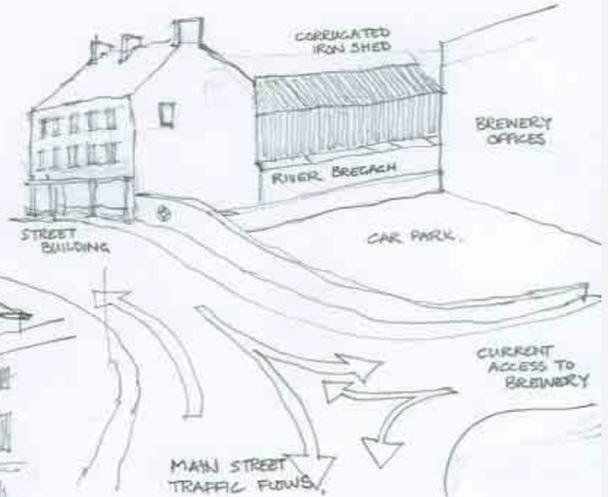
1 THE PARADE - CASTLE & ENTRANCE TO HIGH STREET (BEST URBAN SPACE IN THE CITY)



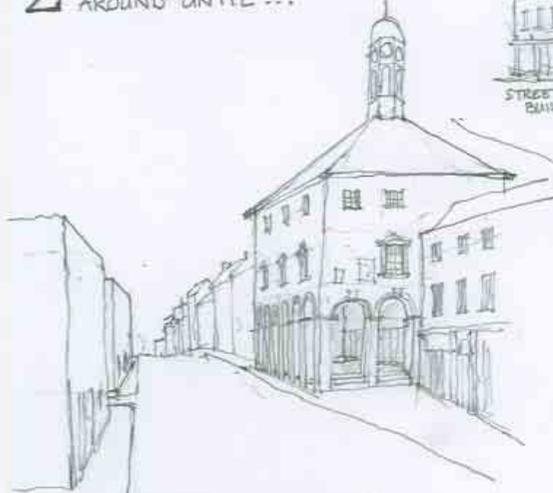
4 RIGHT AT THE END, THE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER BREGACH, WHICH DIVIDED THE MEDIEVAL TOWN, AND THE GABLE-END & SIDE OF AN IRISHTOWN STREET BUILDING FACE BACK UP THE STREET.



2 UP HIGH STREET, CURVING AROUND UNTIL ...



5 APPROACH TO PROPOSED NEW PEDESTRIAN STREET



3 THE THOLSEL (CITY HALL) BECOMES VISIBLE. BEYOND, THE LONG VISTA DOWN THE HIGH STREET OPENS UP.

# KILKENNY, IRELAND

FROM CASTLE TO CATHEDRAL SEQUENCE OF SPACES



6 THE CATHEDRAL & ROUND TOWER APPROACHED FROM IRISHTOWN

# Report on the group reflection and discussion regarding the visit to Kilkenny City

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The group took a route through the city centre, beginning at St. Canice's Cathedral, visiting Rothe House, the Courthouse, the 'Hole in the Wall', the Parade (public realm works), and Kilkenny Castle. 18 September 2009.

The group raised the question of what "sustainability" meant when talking about the city - what is to be sustained, the buildings that make up the physical fabric or the uses that are accommodated in them? When we speak about sustainability, is it a challenge to the architect / built heritage conservator to include in his or her thinking the conservation of nature? The city is the milieu of humans – should we include in our thinking about 'nature' the nature of what people do (unselfconscious human nature). There was a need to understand the nature of "soft mobilities" – the way that people move around the city. For some "sustainability meant a kind of continuity – of habitation and of use.

The perception of Kilkenny city seemed to focus only on the historic city on the west bank of the river - the other side of the river rarely came to attention. If the city expands there, as is very likely, will this reinforce or undermine the historic city. The river also provided a metaphor for the issues confronting the city, what was included, what was marginalised. Balance was needed between nature and the artefact (working with, not against, nature in prolonging the life of an artefact upon which we have placed a value). Making use of the river as a recreational resource, could connect the two sides of the river and also link the landscape, countryside, 'nature' with the city. (Why did we ignore the river when introducing the city to workshop participants?)

The city as "museum" was contrasted with the city as the domain of 'the people. What is the reason tourists would be attracted to Kilkenny? Because (a) it is Ireland's only inland medieval city? (the academic answer) (b) it is a cultural destination, and (c) it's a place for pre-wedding parties ('Hen' nights and 'Stag' nights). There was a perception that 'Heritage' was separate from everyday life. But "heritage" could not just exist for visitors, it was also part of the identity of its inhabitants. Identity and communication means public awareness; those who support conservation need to take care to communicate heritage values to the public.

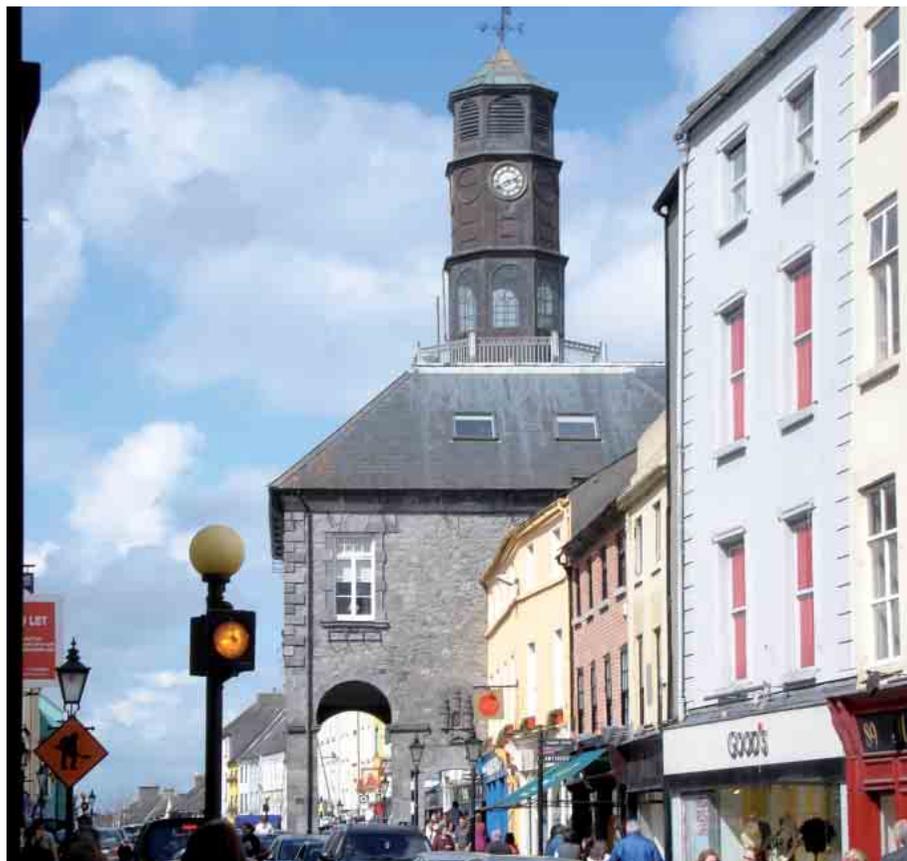
The conservation of the city could not just rest with its historic and monumental buildings. There needed to be an understanding of the role of the 'in-between', the more ordinary buildings. (This point raised the question of how to regulate changes of character here). Not making use of existing resources of the buildings of the city is a waste of this resource. It was observed that the most inhabitants were unfamiliar with the interiors of buildings – the question was raised as to how to extend the public space of the city into its buildings. If the ground floors of Kilkenny's High Street were emptied, it would be a disaster for the city. The importance of the Kilkenny Arts Festival was mentioned as contributing greatly to the sense of vitality of this city. It was an occasion when more buildings were open to the public. The potential of the brewery site was also noted – a substantial sector of city remained locked in this site. What economic activities would sustain the city into the future?

The group also considered the city through the lens of its accessibility. Barriers were noted and the point was made that new works to improve accessibility can be a contribution to the architecture of the city. One must begin with people, then look to see if the city is accessible. Accessibility is an issue of guaranteeing parity for the community. In many ways such works would be a mark of our civilisation.

There was comment concerning "confusion" in the presentation of the cathedral and of Rothe House, and a question concerning what was the story to be told with regard to these buildings. Such matters required a great deal of thought. The question was raised of the palette of materials for architectural intervention in historic buildings – why do the introduced materials always have to be in contrast to their surroundings? Were glass and steel the only legitimate materials for intervention? There was a presumption that any intervention must speak about its own time, but consider the continuity of use of a material like Kilkenny limestone. Is there a route out of this dilemma by considering 'Transformation' in the use of traditional materials? Can the dilemma be resolved by considering design as a transformation rather than a contrast? The group agreed on the importance of good design, seeking a balance of energies that are brought to bear in the city. "Money + Imagination + Balance" was one formulation.

The group noted that issues of conservation and planning and politics are intertwined in the fragile historic city. Planning and politics should be a new heading in addition to the four envisaged in the programme. The strength of political liberalism and its celebration of individualism and the rights of land owners, created tension with the Public Good. While conservation was not equated with transformation, nonetheless could conservation involve "energising" communities, coming together to celebrate the city? How is this to be understood: the question of energy points in a city – how many should there

be - or was the city as a whole one large field of energy? Transformation might be an appropriate concept in energising, fostering identity with the physical city. Conservation should be a force guiding transformation. The point was made that most people live between the city and the countryside in the suburbs (does this have a public realm?). Do these citizens have an opinion about the historic city? In Ireland generally, there was a major issue concerning the building of dwellings in the countryside ('one-off houses'), perhaps an issue of cultural conflict as well as raising questions of sustainability. The strong popular desire to live in the country must be countered by making cities desirable places to live. Here one needed to take account of "intangible" values - the vitality of intangible aspects of heritage in Ireland – language, music, sport was recognised. How conscious were the inhabitants of the conservation issues of the city? The conservation of the city required informed choices, reflecting agreed priorities. Key words of the discussion: nature and culture; identity; traces and memory; people; continuity; co-ordination; dialogue; ownership; "mixture". Finally, legal codes and the Constitution create differences. *(paraphrased by editors)*



*Kilkenny City*



# Essays



# Conservation, Accessibility, Design. Discussion and Practice in Italy

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Gropius said that the purpose of law, in a society where individuals are different, is to protect the weak against the strong. Were individuals equal, law would have no purpose. In 2008 the Italian Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali issued guidelines for overcoming architectural barriers in cultural properties - guidelines that were quite advanced. We think it would be useful to inform the reader of the steps leading to this achievement.

It is worth mentioning that the Italian Constitution guarantees human rights and equal opportunities, and supports the preservation of Cultural Heritage. Nevertheless, it was only at the end of the 1960s that the first official documents were issued, providing guidelines and standards to ensure compliance with the goal of avoiding architectural barriers in public buildings, new or refurbished - without, however, paying special attention to listed monuments. Italian Law<sup>1</sup> first addressed this matter in 1971. Thus the principle was established that there should be no such barrier either in new public buildings or in new private buildings that are open to the public, and that the same should hold in existing buildings when going through refurbishment. That first act gave sharply defined requirements, such as minimum dimensions of elements, strict design criteria for paths, ramps and so on.

The attempt to apply a strictly prescriptive regulation turned out to be ineffectual. As time passed, and taking into account practice in other countries, the focus of Italian laws had to change substantially. The law as it is nowadays enforced was passed in 1989<sup>2</sup>. It no longer claims to solve the problems by strict regulations alone, but rather by the comparative evaluation of possible solutions designed to result in a real elimination of architectural barriers. So specific guidelines are given, as well as examples designed in detail - even to the extent of providing dimensions. However, the collection of cases has to be understood as support to a research of different ways of making accessibility real.

The law sets out to be a 'structural regulation', which 'poses as an essential requirement that the quality of a building can be measured by referring to a set

of basic needs to be fulfilled, by seeing them in a historic perspective. In this vision, the quality of a building does not depend on preconceived technical devices, but it is determined just because an object meets the requirements of its performance in everyday use'.

It has to be said that the law has an easier task when it prescribes that it is mandatory to avoid new barriers: that is, when the purpose of the regulation is 'to impose' and prescribe requirements to be met by new construction. It is a less simple matter when the intention of the standard is 'to encourage', and this is especially so with regard to the elimination of barriers. The way chosen by the Italian legislator has been to exploit the opportunity presented by refurbishment works in order to free existing buildings of barriers. The alternative approach, that of imposing the elimination as a mandatory requirement has been rejected, although a fine-tuning of the proposed guidance actions could bring about this result. In juridical terms, interventions are welcomed, but not mandatory.

Given these circumstances, the individual project bears the responsibility of balancing the two values (accessibility as a civil right and the preservation of Cultural Heritage) - values that can come into conflict. In practice, Italian law holds the right of the disabled citizen as the priority, unless the works required to make a listed monument accessible inflict damage or jeopardise cultural values.

For this reason special controls are exercised on works to buildings protected by preservation law, in that these works have to be approved by Local Heritage Offices. Permissions may contain detailed prescriptions, and these can be contravened only if the modifications required to ensure accessibility entail serious hazards to the value of the listed building. The procedures have been well clarified by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, so that it is definitely clear that a contravention has to be justified, and that alternative solutions put forward have to be examined and evaluated by the Local Heritage Office. A 1996 Decree reaffirms what was previously stated, to the effect that the contravention is possible where 'works are hazardous for the historical and aesthetic values of the listed building; then the accessibility requirement is met by means of provisional works or, as a second preference, by methods of assistance and mobile devices that are not permanently tied to structures'.

The possibility of not completely meeting the legal requirement is therefore left open only in the case of proven technical impracticability and, in general, only for monuments and sites of outstanding artistic value. But such a dispensation has often been interpreted as though provisional and reversible devices, seen as not affecting cultural values, could be enough to solve the problem.

The law, however, maintains the possibility of dispensation simply because it would be impossible to foresee every different reality. The architectural project has to find the best solution for each case, taking advantage of the flexibility left by regulation.

Nevertheless, the real outcome has not been a positive flexibility in using regulations, but mostly the abandonment of any commitment in design, as if 'dispensation' meant that the target is no longer necessary. In this context, one notes the publication in 1998 of the monograph issue of *TeMA* (Tempo, Materia, Architettura), which, without discursive elaboration of ideas, was devoted to the elimination of architectural barriers in 'monumental' buildings. It draws on available devices and technologies from the few cases which, in our country, at that time, could become models to be studied. Most of all it devoted itself to ideas that could justify the vision of a stronger commitment in design (AA.VV. 1998).

With time the corpus of scholarly literature was expanded through relevant contributions, leading up the publication of *Linee Guida per il superamento della barriere architettoniche nei luoghi di interesse culturale*, issued by the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali in 2008<sup>3</sup>. These guidelines are 'soft regulations': they are a reference both from the cultural and the design viewpoint, as they take into account very well the whole rich debate of the last ten years. It is worthy of note that in the introduction there are references both to the framework of preservation law, which asserts the aim of all activities of preservation and valorisation of Italian cultural heritage just in public use, as well as to the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health), which enabled the evolution of the concept of disability from being based on a medical model to a bio-psycho-social one. This concept looks to the goal of inclusion, one that is denied or favored by environmental conditions, thus leading public and private operators to identify and achieve positive actions to ensure a real and complete integration of all citizens, and their participation in every aspect of social life, including cultural activities.

Reading the Guidelines, what emerges is the change of attitude toward disability, and therefore toward the design method for accessibility to historic properties (but the same holds for all existing buildings): from the plain and bureaucratic compliance with regulations, to the commitment to design that has clear reference to the criteria of 'Design for All'.

The theme of accessibility has proved to be really fruitful in the architectural restoration sector, just because it has opened the way to a deep rethinking of the design methods. It has epitomised the need for new methods that can manage complexity of aims and that can think of these targets in positive terms, not as burdens jeopardising good and pure restoration, but the activators of

potentialities. Designing for what already exists, it is possible to make new solutions emerge from the comparison between what is, what has been and the targets required for the future; we use the word 'emergence', because these solutions could be somehow unexpected, or even enhancements, and not necessarily generated by the elements taken one by one. This entails: opening to the idea of transformation, accepting it a *priori* as a condition of existence, one which establishes the essence of architecture and generally of the built environment;

the vision of the restoration project as a way of giving the monument an adjunctive richness, made up of alternative ways of understanding and use; a method which does not relegate the barriers issue to being a late control of problems, to be solved by means of devices and tricks, but instead a method which considers it in relation to other issues - simultaneously and free of hierarchies of aims and resources;

an integration of restoration in management processes, including regulation of use and long-term maintenance.

To think of transformation as a virtuous condition, and not as a tragic lack of stability, enables one to re-evaluate additions and changes required by use. Accustomed as we are to take restoration categories from the world of art works, we generally tend to think that a building, or an urban environment, or even an archeological or naturalistic site, is a complete work, that is to be re-established or to be confirmed in its own form. For decades utilitarian additions have been removed by restoration as ugly and unseemly. Yet architecture is made to be used, to be inhabited. The useful addition bears a message, besides its own usefulness. That is why the design of additions is a sensitive and important matter. This is the cultural premise, which entails criteria for the quality of intervention.

But the discourse could be even broader, thinking of restoration as an event in the frame of a long chain of relationships between the building and its users. For the restoration of a building, there must be the hypothesis that it can be inhabited again in the future, giving on the whole a better solution than a new building, mainly because the existing one bears a memory which cannot be substituted.

The challenge of being time-bound entails some degree of transformation as a function of changing goals, some of which will be ephemeral, deserving ephemeral answers, while others correspond instead to definitive changes of mentality, therefore calling for appropriate solutions, and requiring definitive works for 'adjustment'.

The term 'adjustment' requires some attention: it can mean a quite lazy mechanism of necessary and sufficient meeting of requirements. Deeper

thinking leads one to understand that, if one analyses the user with due diligence, different requirements emerge, and no solution can be found in a simple and unique provision, but rather solutions have to work in terms of equipment and with alternative options.

There is a close relationship between the vision of a monument/document that is oriented toward the possibility of infinite interpretations, and which therefore requires transmission to the future of its authenticity, and the vision of space as open to use by a number of subjects, each of them different because of culture and of physical, sensorial and mental abilities, and which therefore must be capable of meeting a number of different requirements. Thus, to conserve a building, to inhabit it again in the present and in the future, means to develop its potentialities, obviously without losing its documental richness. The step from the bureaucratic idea of adjustment to a vision of enrichment also entails a renewal of the method of designing.

The requirement for accessibility can no longer be the object of a separate checklist, but, alongside other requirements like availability, safety, comfort and so on, it will be an aim among other ones, having the same relevance. To meet formal requirements reduced in prescriptive regulations is no longer enough. As it is well known, hard regulations carry the risk of inducing technicians 'not to do better': the issue of Design for All demonstrates that no preconceived solution can ever satisfy all individual exigencies. The requirement instead is to posit targets, and to compare them with other requirements (often in conflict) at the beginning of the design process, so that all the tools will be available for arriving at the optimum solution. Architectural restoration has always had many different targets and different stakeholders.

Not only does the discipline of conservation have many different souls and different sources of inspiration, but in reality decisions about restoration of important monuments are never the responsibility of a single designer (luckily). Many operators with different skills are engaged in the work of restoration, and every decision is the product of a series of steps, often organised in an irrational sequence of priorities, which stiffens some early decision, so that afterwards only difficult and costly compromises are possible.

The method we propose means on the one hand the refusal of any prescriptive imposition, on the other hand the use of multi-criteria analysis to compare objectives that are almost equal in importance. Thus, it is very useful to clarify the criteria adopted in order to fix the weighting given to different objectives. With its origins in the 1960s, multi-criteria analysis is a decision-making tool for complex problems, in which different stakes are to be compared, alternative solutions are possible, and several criteria have to be taken into account simultaneously. To use such a methodology for restoration implies

a theoretical option about the project itself, which is thought of not as the intellectual creation that implies specific decisions and foreshadows material actions, but as a negotiated process, taking care of many different stakes and viewpoints (Della Torre, Pracchi, Treccani 2007).

These being the purposes, it makes no sense for us to steer the use of this tool in such a way as to reduce the comparative process to a mere numerical game, having transformed into quantitative data even values whose nature is necessarily qualitative.

Using even the simplest versions of the tool, what counts is to understand some basic positions: the relevance of getting stakeholders involved in the evaluation process, and the fact that no one individual, a non-criterion perhaps, can have undue weight (or the power of veto) in the evaluation. This can seem a little thing, but it is full of meaning.

The adoption of this method, both in our professional activity and in restoration education, had, in our experience, three main outcomes: first of all, it taught ourselves and our students to always take into account a number of problems while designing for accessibility in existing buildings; secondly, it taught us to regard the issue of barriers as one of the objectives, that is to maintain awareness of complexity and of the need for a systemic approach; thirdly, it proved to be important in demystifying among young people the myth of the demiurge designer, making them keen to listen to the building to be restored as well as to the exigencies of people who, through their use of the building, will ensure its future.

### **An accessible walk in Kilkenny**

The walk in Kilkenny within the Conservation/Transformation workshop provided an opportunity to make some observations about accessibility in an historic town and some of its historic buildings.

First of all, it should be underlined that in Ireland the practice of accessibility is widely established in comparison to Italy. From one perspective, it is difficult to put forward solutions that would improve it. This is a reflection of the fact that accessibility, as expression of a phenomenon occurring in society, must be considered a dynamic concept which is defined by unsteady processes. To understand these processes means, in our field, to re-interpret the practice of design according to the actual and variable demands on the society. From this perspective the same approach can be adopted while access in general, and not only to historic properties, is analysed: *conservation* and *transformation* are interdependent consequences. Transformation of society (and of an existing building) cannot be stopped or avoided, and conservation can become a good strategy to manage it.

The walk in Kilkenny started from St. Canice's Cathedral, where access through the side of the building is afforded by means of an internal ramp which connects the higher outside level to the internal one. This lateral access is not a secondary one, but is the common entrance (Fig. 1). The ramp is made of modern materials, glass and steel, to clearly stand out from the context and to ensure that its presence is to be read as a new addition, intended to satisfy modern requirements (Fig. 2, 3). This choice was a topic of discussion at the workshop: it was argued that this kind of addition should be camouflaged, that it should be consistent in style with the building - in some way hidden. We, on the other hand, think that even a ramp - even a new ramp - is to be well designed. It should denote its contemporary nature both in terms of aesthetics and of functionality. This position can be elaborated with reference to the approach to the heating system of the cathedral: most of us considered it as significative evidence from the beginning of the last century (Fig. 4). In other words it is a part, a document, a layer of the cathedral. Did the people of the early '900's think the same?

As far as accessibility is concerned, a second place of interest was Rothe House (Fig. 5) and in particular the cobbled paving in the courtyard (Fig. 6, 7). This kind of pavement is extremely difficult to navigate with a wheelchair, even with some help. In this case a large part of it was new, probably because new



*Fig. 1*  
St. Canice's  
Cathedral: the  
main entrance



*Fig. 2, 3*  
St. Canice's  
Cathedral: the  
internal ramp

underground services had been installed and the original paving was lost. Now the question is whether it makes any sense to replace an old paving with a new one, with the intention only to 'recreate a false ancient image' (Della Torre 1997). In this case the difference between the original part and the new one is really visible, and thus the new paving should be also functional, for example by means of a path of stone slabs, or, as at the Kilkenny Design Centre (*Fig. 8*), by raising the level of the mortar between the cobble sets (Arengi, Pezzagno 2006; Foster 1997).

The last leg of the walk was Kilkenny Castle. The main entrance was not in use because some works were in progress, but we could note that the new paving of stone slabs was set down to create a slope up to the main entrance



*Fig. 4*  
St. Canice's  
Cathedral: the  
heating system



*Fig. 5*  
Rothe House: the  
façade on High  
Street

without a landing platform before it, and that one step was left. We noted the same situation at the Custom House in Dublin, where the metal ramp to overcome the step in front to the entrance door is provided without a landing platform (*Fig. 9, 10*).

The conference hall in the Parade Tower of the castle is reachable by a new internal lift constructed in white painted steel and glass, while its superstructure emerging above the roof level is camouflaged by using material that blends with that of the building (*Fig. 11, 12*). Once again the theme of a new addition with modern material, its position within the building and the aesthetic interference



*Fig. 6*  
Rothe House:  
the new cobbled  
paving



*Fig. 7*  
Rothe House: the  
new and original  
cobbled paving



*Fig. 8*  
Kilkenny Design  
Centre: the  
cobbled paving  
with mortar  
between the sets

*Fig. 9*  
Custom House,  
Dublin: the ramp at  
the entrance

with it. As far as the internal aspects are concerned, one accepts the choice of material and position: it is recognisable as a modern feature and is located in an 'empty corner'. Our comment relates to the external profile where the lift housing emerges from the roof and to the decision to treat it so that at first impression it can be read as a 'secondary old tower'. This is open to criticism, not least because the roof of the opposite wing of the castle is completely glazed, and this architectural device could perhaps have been repeated. On the other hand we did not have enough elements for us to give a complete answer to such a difficult intervention. This demonstrates that every situation is to be deeply analysed from several points of view: the multicriteria method could help in this endeavor.



*Fig. 10*  
Kilkenny Castle:  
the pavement at  
the main entrance

*Fig. 11*  
Kilkenny Castle:  
the internal lift



*Fig. 12*  
Kilkenny Castle:  
the headroom of  
the lift on the roof

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Legge 30 marzo 1971 n.118, whose regulation will be issued in 1978 (D.P.R. 27 aprile 1978 n.384). The last one has been replaced by D.P.R. 24 luglio 1996 n.503.

<sup>2</sup> Legge 9 gennaio 1989 n.13, with regulation in D.M. 14 giugno 1989 n.236 and D.P.R. 24 luglio 1996 n.503.

<sup>3</sup> Decreto 28 marzo 2008

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# Kells: Conserving an enigma

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We learn history through the receipt of information, conveyed primarily by words and images; heritage, the physical manifestation of history, demands authentic, intact objects conserved in situ. Monuments such as the Augustinian Priory at Kells (*Fig. 1*) are by definition the embodiment of cultural memories, memories for all humanity, having no other primary function than as the 'grey matter' which contains such memories. The quality of the memory is intrinsically bound up with the authenticity of the fabric of the monument, which, when altered, distorts the memory and therefore diminishes the value of the artefact. Such distortion is inevitable. At best, if distortion is carried out consciously the loss can be mitigated.

This essay proposes that the site of the Augustinian Priory at Kells be consciously conserved in the service of conservation education while at the same time fulfilling a more general tourism function. The site at Kells, centred on the ruins of the Augustinian Priory, conforms to the conventional



*Fig. 1*  
The Cistercian  
abbey at Jerpoint,  
twelfth century,  
presented in a  
partially restored  
manner akin to  
anastylosis.

image of a cultural property, worthy of conservation. While William Morris may have directed his comments towards buildings in active use, his words are applicable to Kells, which:

‘still stands trim and sound, with no willfulness of which to accuse the hand of man, with nothing to regret except the inevitable lapse of time, and the slow and gentle decay it has brought with it.’<sup>1</sup>

Viewed as such, it may be subjected to conservation best practice, which allows a multidisciplinary analysis of the entity for the purposes of identifying its cultural significance, leading to the articulation of policies for the protection of that significance. Conservation projects of an order which may demand a conservation plan address topics of interest to a wider audience. The engagement of specialist consultants, whose contribution to the conservation process may be unique, peripheral or fundamental, allows a connection from within the architecture-centred building conservation field to a world of broader interests – typically wildlife, botany, painting and art, history, art history, gardens and landscape, industrial history, sustainability and, less often, the world of literature, hydrology, and so on. In addition, stakeholders, often neophytes in conservation, or agencies whose primary interests lie elsewhere, may include governmental and non-governmental organisations at different levels in society.

How does a conservation plan process differ from a typical design team activity? The hierarchical structure of a design process, well established by custom and usage, allows the architect to determine design decisions. A conservation plan, by contrast, is mediated, and ultimately demands consensus, not only on the part of the professional advisors, but also of the private and institutional stakeholders.

It is from within these ranks that many students of conservation emerge. This connection offers possibilities for the examination of the role of conservation-trained personnel in society: what are their roles, how in particular do they relate to the decision making-structures within which they operate? If conservation were a single discipline, one might expect to find practitioners distributed throughout the corporate hierarchy, with clearly defined relationships between colleagues. The reality is that conservation practitioners are unequally distributed through decision-making structures. It thus becomes difficult for each practitioner to repeatedly find a way of making their view known as the availability of homologues is erratic: for concepts to be received, the shared language leading to understanding must be more pervasive.

For most conservation projects the necessary studies are normally multi-disciplinary, rather than interdisciplinary, relying on the synthetic skill and formation of the lead consultant. Recognition that conservation plan

preparation could be a transdisciplinary activity may allow a more holistic approach to the project. The concept of transdisciplinarity addresses the question: are there systems of thought in one discipline that may be applied to another? Communality of activity such as in the conservation plan process provides a ready context in which to explore this concept. A conservation project is an exercise in collective intelligence, demanding that large, often otherwise disparate, groups and individuals collaborate and compete with one another for a common purpose. Use of collective intelligence must be emphatically site-specific if we are to avoid 'patri-mondialisation', a type of homogenous treatment arising from standard solutions to the conservation of the world 'patrimoine'.<sup>2</sup>

If 'what we believe will determine what and how we teach' (Pickering, 1969), it is clear that the ethos of conservation activity outlined above is of paramount importance. We must be clear what we educate for. The expectation is that education related primarily to conservation practitioners is vocational in intent; the formal training of built-environment conservators emerged following European Architectural Heritage Year 1975. As the field extends into a second generation, there should be an acknowledgement that the interdisciplinary role of conservators has changed, and equally that at the level of individual disciplines, it may not have changed very much.

'For training to be vital it must evolve, with continuing reference to the relevance of the discipline.' (Pickering, 1969)

'In the history of education the most striking phenomenon is that schools of learning, which at one epoch are alive with a ferment of genius, in a succeeding generation exhibit merely pedantry and routine. The reason is that they are overladen with inert ideas. Education with inert ideas is not only useless: it is, above all things, harmful - *Corruptio optimi, pessima*.' (Whitehead, cited in Pickering 1969:68)<sup>3</sup>

We are now such a 'succeeding generation'. Is there another field wherein activity is so constrained by charters, which continue to have moral and persuasive authority? Are the charters Pickering's 'inert ideas'? Indeed, are charters liberating or constraining? Or are they first and foremost a lexicon of common language and terms which might allow transdisciplinarity of action? It is proposed that the conservation of Kells in the conventional sense may never be achieved; one may choose continually to mediate between a 'preserved' site, nominally in a state of stasis, and the continuing evolution of conservation thinking and policy. The maximum value or enhancement of this cultural asset can be perpetually attained without 'completion' if it is primarily considered as a vehicle for education. In this context, it may be helpful to allow that all interaction with cultural assets is a form of education: at its most basic,

of an architectural or spatial kind, then 'poetic' or aesthetic, then varying levels of intellectual engagement, with the object itself or with the presentation of the object.

People do not experience a cultural artefact directly, immediately, devoid of meanings or a structure within which to place them. The design of the site, to allow its architectural and spatial qualities to be optimised, involves decisions regarding the consolidation and presentation of the above-ground remains as ruin, ideally in an apparently as-found condition. Such deliberate contrivance, such artificial preservation of the remains and their context, will require control of vegetation and the introduction of new planting, encouragement of wildlife, tolerance or control of the seasonal behaviour of the river, and so on.

It will be asserted that such a conservative scenographic approach is fraught with ambiguity: preservation of the authentic (undisturbed and primary, but denuded of render and plaster) masonry fabric is to be paralleled by a new designed environment, albeit one that is intended to complement in its character the nature of the authentic, apparently functionless, ruin – McCannell's 'final victory of modernity'.<sup>4</sup> The education values lie, in part, in the discussion itself, which can be extended by reference to other riverine ruinous sites such as Athassel (*Fig. 2*) of comparable archaeological, architectural and aesthetic interest. Should the same policy be applied there or, if only for didactic purposes, should a distinct approach be encouraged?

As used above, the term 'perpetual' can be interpreted to mean 'for the foreseeable future' if we accept that the needs of society with respect to



*Fig. 2*  
The Cistercian abbey at Jerpoint, twelfth century, presented in a partially restored manner akin to anastylosis

conservation education will evolve and change, and that conservation education itself must change to remain vital. Reflection on the nature of conservation education is a beginning of such change; other change will relate to the nature of demand for the services that conservation practitioners provide. It is possible to observe from an overview of current architectural conservation activity in Ireland as represented, *inter alia*, by projects grant-aided under the Civic Structures scheme (a government scheme to provide modest grant aid for the repair of buildings), that while there is a hierarchy of activity, the range of skills required for the conservation of the fabric of the such civic structures (primarily churches, but with a range of other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings), is well within the compass of the conservation architect as currently formed through education, training and experience, and as assessed under the accreditation process of the institute of architects. Where then does the conserved, scenographic Kells fit into the conservation education needs of society?

The scale of the experience of the site is at the same time local, national and international in a geographic and a discipline-related sense, and as part of a cultural 'tour' will not be seen in isolation. Thus, the experience will allow comparison of the nature of the presentation of the site with others such as Athassel and Jerpoint (*Fig. 3*), comparison with other Norman boroughs in Ireland and continental Europe, coupled with reflection on a further heterogenous group of subjects which will include the role of the Canons Regular of St Augustine, the Crusades and contact with the Islamic world of the Middle



*Fig. 3*  
Athassel  
Augustinian Priory,  
thirteenth century:  
*objet trouvée:*  
the ruin in the  
landscape

Ages, sporadic flooding and global climate change, biodiversity assessment, and so on.

It is accepted that the primary goal of the proposed conservation activity is a promulgation of enlightenment based on new insights and discoveries. Who is to be educated? The answer lies in part in the conservation process; decision makers for cultural heritage sites are ultimately the public representatives, assisted by their technical advisors. These special-interest groups will be taken 'backstage' where the contrivance of the site will be clearer. The general tourist may be allowed to 'discover' the site, to experience its ambience and invited to understand its local, national and global significance: the conservation 'community' and the tourism 'market' can each be served. Thus resolving the dilemma of developing the understanding of Kells, preserving the fabric and conserving the enigma.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The context of the quotation is as follows: 'We should like to protest once more against this misunderstanding, and to declare what a grief it is to us to come across the results, the unfortunately irreparable results, of neglect and brutality, and what a pleasure to look on a building which, owing to reverent and constant care, still stands trim and sound, with no willfulness of which to accuse the hand of man, with nothing to regret except the inevitable lapse of time, and the slow and gentle decay it has brought with it; and how slow that may be, the most ancient buildings in the world yet bear witness, and will do so for many a hundred years. (Miele 1996: 62)

<sup>2</sup> THE ICOMOS CHARTER FOR THE INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES Quebec 2008 asserts that the 'interpretation of a site not be considered complete upon completion of a specific interpretative infrastructure, but should be regularly reviewed. The Charter also acknowledges a 'diversity of interpretive approaches'.

<sup>3</sup> Whitehead, A. N. (1962) 'The Aims of Education' Ernest Benn Ltd: London. As cited in Pickering, op cit.

<sup>4</sup> 'The final victory of modernity over other sociocultural arrangements is not the disappearance of the non-modern world, but its artificial preservation and reconstruction in modern society.' (MacCannell 1999:8)

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# Between Material and Spiritual Heritage: The Case of the Polish Manor House

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The international Conservation/Transformation Workshop, which took place in September 2009 in Ireland, became a good opportunity to reconsider the idea of cultural heritage, its present situation, different approaches to conservation processes and methods in varying, changing circumstances. The case of Borris House and of the MacMurrough Kavanagh family, owners and custodians of this magnificent residence for hundreds of years, seems to be an appropriate point of reference for discussion on the fate of numerous rural residences and landscapes in other European countries. In spite of many geographical, historical, cultural and sociopolitical differences, there are also some similarities in the role that residences and landed estates in Ireland and Poland played in organising economic, social and cultural life, shaping landscapes and developing local, regional or national identity.

Until the nineteenth century Poland was predominantly an agricultural country, exporting cereals to European markets. Unlike the majority of European countries, the bourgeois class never dominated cultural life; Poland's culture was rooted in the countryside. The system of aristocratic residences, associated estates and noblemen's manor houses constituted for centuries the main economic structure of feudal and post-feudal society. This consisted of a three-level network of royal castles, aristocratic palaces and manor houses of country noblemen. The last gradually became a primary cultural phenomenon, shaping national ethos and maintaining the continuity of traditional values. It demonstrated an often surprisingly symbiotic coexistence of high cultural expression of European values and standards (aristocratic residences) and local vernacular culture (manor houses).

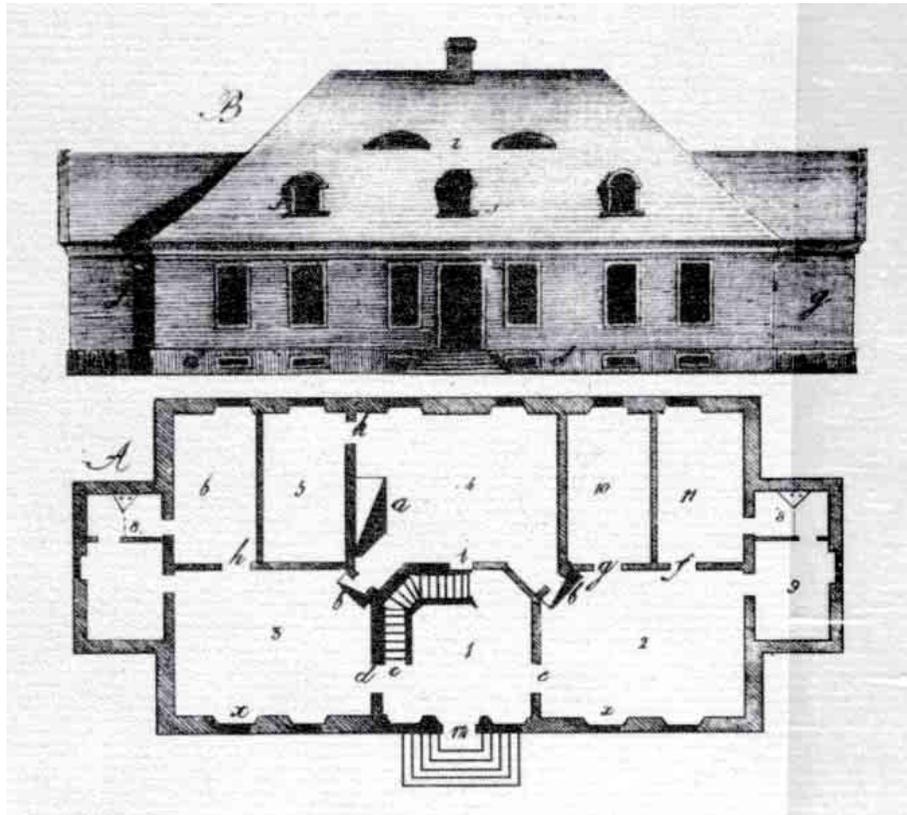
While aristocratic residences reached their peak of magnificence and cultural influence in the second half of the sixteenth century, in the next century the dense network of manor houses became one of the major factors organising and hierarchically ordering Poland's countryside landscape (*Fig. 1*). The small and medium-sized one-storied manor house of the nobility assumed its shape during the seventeenth century owing to foreign, predominantly Italian, architects working in Poland. 'From the point of view of forms this was a



*Fig. 1*  
Landscape setting  
- manor house in  
Nagłowice (photo:  
Markowski S.,  
Markowski 1996)

peripheral type of a modern residence which reduced new West European (Italian and French) palace and villa solutions, and adapted them to standards of local construction culture' (Lesniakowska 1996). The historical form of the manor house became an archetype of habitation, influenced the architecture of other buildings and is still recognisable as the 'Polish manor house' (*Fig. 2, 3*). Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Polish manor house remained a social and cultural phenomenon that epitomised the country's historical heritage and national identity. Its cultural importance became particularly significant during the hundred and twenty-three years during which Poland was absent from the political maps of Europe. The manor house was a place in which native tradition, national identity and the struggle to regain independence could be continued (in the national uprisings of 1830 and 1863, the network of manor houses served as insurgents' refuges and military headquarters). All this resulted in mythologisation of the Polish manor house as both material and cultural form of consciousness that sustained vanishing values.

The myth of a manor house gave rise to a great deal of discussion focused on the origin, role and place of the manor house in Polish culture, which resulted in intense exchanges of views and theories concerning mainly the vital question of preserving national identity. It reflects nativistic movements challenging Hegelian belief that it is impossible for a nation to exist without the state and the nineteenth-century idea of house and family constituting 'private homeland' – Rousseau's Arcadian motif (*Fig. 4, 5, 6*). In cultural anthropology,



*Fig. 2*  
Project of a  
wooden manor  
house, 1798  
(Lesniakowska  
1996)



*Fig. 3*  
Classicist manor  
house in Czeremo  
(photo: Rydel M.,  
Rydel 1993)

according to Linton, nativism is recognised as a conscious, organised attempt to revitalise or perpetuate chosen aspects or valued elements of local, regional or national culture. It is seen as constituting a native reaction to the threat from a foreign culture in a situation of their clash and conflict (domination or subordination). The concept of 'nativeness' is understood with reference to the sphere in which it is received, which creates subjective and historically relative visions of those features of architecture that could be regarded as idiomatic elements of national culture. Vernacularism is connected, in turn, to the whole sphere of objective, utilitarian and typical features of architecture (Linton 1943, Lesniakowska 1996).

The issue of the 'nativeness' of the manor house was part of tendencies cultivated by the nationalistic historiography of the period. Based on mythical discourses, the motivation for cultivating the idea of 'nativeness' was to retain concurrence with the Romantic preference for all that was ancient and prehistoric. 'The Polish manor house functioned as a basic cultural model, repeating a set of ideal, positive semantic features, which – woven in an architectural and functional programme – were formed jointly by established systems of values in Polish culture' (Lesniakowska 1996: 65). At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, as with national romanticism movements in the architecture of many countries, the manor house became a pattern for the design of many public buildings, community centers, schools and railway stations, soon known as the 'Polish manor house style', combining the native character of the traditional manor house with new European concepts of a



*Fig. 4*  
Wooden manor house with 4 corner annexes in Swidnik after renovation (photo: Rydel M., Rydel 1993)



*Fig. 5*  
Brick manor house  
in Koszuty after  
renovation (photo:  
Rydel M., Rydel  
1993)

small town or suburban house for the middle class. To some extent, the Polish manor house style can be seen as the counterpart of Western national styles (country houses) and new villas in garden-cities (Lesniakowska 1996: 109). Three wars in the first half of the twentieth century – World War I (1914-1918), the ‘Bolshevik’ War of 1920, and World War II (1939-1945) – took a heavy toll both on the material substance and human assets/resources of the cultural



*Fig. 6*  
Interior of a  
wooden manor  
house in Zubrzyca  
Gorna (photo:  
Markowski S.,  
Markowski 1996)

heritage, but it was the communist regime imposed on Poland in 1944 that finally destroyed most of this 'benighted and reactionary' heritage. As the result of the war, fifteen million people were forced to leave their homelands and to resettle to the new abandoned areas, to places with an unknown history, alien landscapes and meaningless houses, villages and towns. It was a long-lasting, painful process of assimilation that is still far from being ended. The communists attempted to radically erase from social memory everything that might be associated with a traditional hierarchy of values. Lenin's revolutionary slogan declared 'peace to peasant cottages, war to manor houses' and they did really mean this, in the period 1944-46 depriving landlords of their houses, land and sometimes of all their possessions and forcibly relocating them to remote regions of the country with no right to return. The land was taken over by the state-owned farms or handed out to local peasants, and only thirty manor houses remained in hands of their pre-war owners. Paradoxically, it did not prevent the adoption of the form and details of a manor house for the obligatory 'socialist realism' patterns for art and architecture in the 1950s.

According to the results of a survey carried out by the National Heritage Board of Poland, of the ten to fifteen thousand residences and manor houses that existed prior to 1939, only three thousand survived to 1998. Of these, two thousand were in a ruinous condition or were deformed as a result of conversion to other purposes, usually with their parks cut down and farm buildings demolished. Not a single complex of a manor house with park, adjacent farm buildings and fields withstood this annihilation plan (Rydel 2000). Today, the residences and manor houses accommodate local schools, medical centres, municipalities' offices, hotels and country taverns. Some are inhabited (and often devastated) by several tenant families; only few of them were lucky enough to be transformed into museums.

The fall of the communist system in 1989 initiated a transition process of reinstating democracy, private ownership and a market economy. It seemed that basic legal and socio-economic preconditions had been created that would ease the rescue and protection of the heritage of manor houses, through giving them back to their previous owners. However, it appears that only a dozen or so manor houses were returned to their former owners and that ownership of ten others was transferred to the open-air museums. Simultaneously, the vernacular architecture of the manor house demonstrated again its symbolic strength, becoming the obvious inspiration for postmodern experiments in Polish architecture.

Today, while the majority of people declare their support for the protection of historical monuments in general, when particular cases emerge and people are asked for their opinion on returning a specific building and land-holding

to its former owner, the situation is different. The post-war totalitarian system eroded the system of values and the sense of justice, and the concept of egalitarian communist society is often more appealing to people than the sense of justice and the intangible value of a monument. Public awareness of the importance of cultural heritage for collective identity is relatively low. The loss of material and non-material values represented by residences and manor houses is widely recognised as irreparable. The fate of many historic buildings left in the hands of 'accidental' tenants without clearly defined ownership, unclear responsibilities, lack of resources and absence of management arouses justified fears accompanied a sense of helplessness in view of the indifference of public administration.

Two approaches to the cultural heritage can be observed. The first can be described as a nostalgic longing for traditional values, implying an obligation to make every effort to save the historic substance at all costs, to prevent any changes and to reconstruct monuments that have been non-existent for a long time – a risk of producing a kind of 'ersatz' heritage. This strong sense of duty reflects recognisably the vanishing ethos of nobility. However, it is perceived more as a set of outdated virtues and a kind of a quixotic, unrealistic and impractical attitude than as a standard of behavior to be followed.

The second approach can be characterised as clearly instrumental. No matter how important the historic heritage may be, what really counts is the value of the commodity; any modification and 'upgrading' of its substance is justified by getting a better price for it. And indeed, there is a growing market for the 'Polish manor house'. The hazy idea of a manor house as a symbol of tradition (no matter how selectively treated), successful family life and prosperity, is still alive. The dream of an average representative of the new class of 'nouveau riche', which emerged in the last twenty years, is to build a brand new manor house, combining selected external features of the original with the owner's personal aesthetic ambitions. The effect, clumsy, badly proportioned shapes spoiling rural and suburban landscapes, is becoming a dubious new brand – a sign of the times. In the past, a manor house with adjacent farm buildings and park was carefully located and constituted the core structure organising the larger scale of rural landscape structures. Today, it can be positioned anywhere, even in the form of a crowded settlement of dozen or so 'manor houses' tight packed on narrow parcels of land. What do we inherit?

We live in a civilisation of more and more alienated individuals, weakening or breaking their social ties as a result of a nomadic lifestyle. The nostalgic longing for traditional values is ever more fulfilled with structures, objects and details that are supposed to evoke their original spiritual meaning. Authenticity is reduced to the material part of the heritage, leaving visitors unaware of the

immaterial. It is technically feasible to reconstruct and preserve the abandoned structure correctly in every detail, or even to produce a careful imitation. However it is well-nigh impossible to restore spirit, atmosphere and to breathe new life into it. The material and spiritual components of the heritage once constituted a harmonious, inseparable whole. The real danger is hidden in the simplification of heritage and in its trivial interpretation. Reconstruction tends to be more perfect and accurate than the original, which substantiates its authenticity with some imperfection. The collective memory of history, tradition and cultural heritage has been reduced to a set of at random selected images – a kind of puzzle with some elements missing.

To be able to inherit, one must possess the basic knowledge and understanding that is indispensable for continuity. What happens if the material component has survived, while the spiritual part has sunk into oblivion? The structure emptied, deprived of its vital functions, is vulnerable to misuse and unintentional destruction. It is easily exposed to ill-advised, clumsy alterations or transformation. This is also the case of the Polish manor house. The structure that accommodates the processes for which it was formed and came into existence is more sustainable and adaptable – more likely to survive in changing, often unpredictable socio-cultural and economic circumstances.

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# Accessible Use and Sustainable Heritage

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When approaching the conflict between conserving as opposed to transforming the heritage, many questions appear. The first ones might be: ‘conserving for what – what function or value is worth preserving?’ and ‘transforming into what – what changes are required and why?’ To answer these questions, it is necessary to make some distinctions as regards the different natures of heritage – we could, for instance, differentiate between urban heritage and rural ruins.

In the urban context, the goal of living together confers the overriding legitimacy: the goal of ensuring equal conditions of use – including access to all buildings and sites for all people, regardless of their different capacities – must be accomplished. This includes accessing heritage as well. If we do not, we are actually destroying its original purpose, its architectural essence, as elaborated in the definition of architecture given by William Morris (1999a) in the London Institution conference *The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization*:

*‘Architecture (...) is specially the art of civilization, it neither ever existed nor never can exist alive and progressive by itself (...) it embraces the consideration of the whole external surroundings of the life of man (...) it means the moulding and altering to human needs...’*

Morris deliberated on artistic and social issues in diverse lectures delivered between 1877 and 1894, in which he posed some interesting questions, such as ‘what business have we with art at all unless all can share it?’ The fundamental meaning of his doctrine was absolutely expressed in his dictum: ‘I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few’. (Morris, 1999b)

We may ask, indeed, when did we stop transforming the environment to our own interest and for our own comfort? When did the heritage value take the life away from the architecture, to freeze it as an artwork only to be admired – stealing its vivacity and its service to its users? And if we do that, then are we looking at architecture or sculpture? Is architecture therefore an art? We may find an answer thinking over the reflections made by Alvaro Siza (Machabert &

Beaudouin 2008), in *Une question de mesure*, where the Portuguese architect – it is worth mentioning he is a sculptor as well – reflects on the condition of form in the architectonic context. He establishes the concept of form as an endless process, something always open to be transformed, and asserting as well that it should not be a sculpture to be exhibited as a demonstration of the architect's talent. Hence architecture – including patrimonial architecture – cannot be treated as a closed art such as painting or sculpture, where the masterpieces have a clear starting and final point in their process of creation. Architecture must keep its natural process of transformation in time, to respond to its original purpose of serving the society and its current needs. And that way of thinking should guide how we pursue the durability of heritage. Indeed, what transformations are possible without destroying the history of a building and losing its significance? A plausible answer is: those necessary to bring the building into contemporary use while respecting its recognisable, fundamental nature, and above all, those needed to make it usable by all citizens, regardless of their diverse mobility and communication capabilities. In order to do that, we must be aware that some inevitable changes will be made – alterations that we must accept as natural, understanding that they are required to prosper and survive. To alter, to change, to transform, entails some kind of loss, a process of releasing, of forgetting. The French ethnologist Marc Augé explains how forgetting propels us into the present, how 'to live again and not just survive (...) in order to find faith in the everyday again and mastery over their time' (Augé 2004a), in an illuminating comparison with gardening:

*Remembering or forgetting is doing gardener's work, selecting, pruning. Memories are like plants: there are those that need to be quickly eliminated in order to help the others burgeon, transform, flower. (Augé, 2004b)*

Heritage needs to thrive on forming part of the city life, of civilisation. Ensuring equal access for everybody can be our working tool, and the goal and purpose of transformation. We must comprehend accessibility as the new contemporary layer that rests in harmony with earlier ones, in the same way that we have allowed the transformation of our buildings with new elements that did not exist in the past, but that became indispensable to carrying out our daily activities – such as electric installations, safety devices and sanitary facilities. In just the same way, we have transformed our cities with the introduction of new elements that did not exist in the past, such as streetlights, traffic signs, electric cables or garbage containers. These transformations have been accepted as normal, without controversy. Why then do we not accept ramps,

elevators or stair-lifts as well?

We must reflect on the architectural and cultural barriers that are present in our society, and comprehend that an inhospitable environment generates the condition of being, or feeling, handicapped. Architecture is the result of the habits and needs of a society, and architects must be aware that imprecision in design entails an erroneous social awareness of the capacities of certain persons, and that this fact regrettably ends up in prejudices and discrimination. The requirement concerning accessibility must be a parameter to be taken into account, because improving accessibility in our cities and buildings will allow society to be familiar and sensitive to 'different people'.

Thanks to advances in medicine, hygiene and diet, we find a society with a longer life span, a society that gets older, and that involves certain mobility requirements, but also a society in which people still want to move and travel in an enjoyable manner. On the other hand, thanks to scientific and technical advances, we find a society capable of surviving disabilities, nonetheless having to live with them, but needing to live with dignity in decent conditions. We should forget the preconceived idea of 'healthy' or 'normal' as opposed to 'sick' or 'disabled'. Society is composed of 'people with differing capabilities', all of them having the same right to participate actively in our society.

Encouraging the full participation of society guarantees improvements in accessibility and inclusion. Participation is needed to break taboos, to integrate people with different appearances and capabilities into normality: 'one knows what one sees' – kids should ask and adults should feel comfortable to explain. Accessibility means an increase in the unity of the community. Participative architecture implies taking architecture away from architects and giving it back to the users. As Peter Blundell-Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (2005) state in *Architecture and participation*, 'the architect should accept losing control'. They describe a new concept of intervention, a creation process where society plays an active role:

*In a design-action there is no border between design and use... Creativity is present in use, where one continually has to find ways of adapting and reinventing everyday life contexts... Design-action is inclusive and accessible: it prepares for new aesthetics resulting from a mix of the designer's and the user's aesthetics (...) Design-action is interventionist design. It takes political positions and catalyses social processes.*

It has to do with innovating an intelligent architecture that is able to accommodate the individual needs of each user, and that can conceive of an accessible environment, capable of stimulating all senses and able to provide

the perception of beauty and harmony by everybody. Architects and urban planners must design under the principles of 'universal design', creating an environment suitable for all individuals equally. This will improve the relationship between architecture and society, so those with different capabilities won't be treated as 'special cases', thus limiting them to special accesses, restricted spaces, and alternative itineraries to reach their destinations.

The benefits of an accessible architecture are widespread; if we achieve designs that are equally usable by all, we will also be achieving more sustainable and efficient construction, with an outstanding increase in quality. It is important to be conscious that those requirements that appear indispensable for people with mobility and/or communication impairments become useful and infinitely more comfortable for the rest of the citizens. It is worth noticing that most of the time, people end up choosing what is easier and requires less effort, what is more secure and relaxed. That is to say, people always prefer those environments that serve them better and offer a good life. The best arrangement of objects, rooms, buildings or open spaces will be marked by the quantity and quality of their utilisation, in the same way as Christopher Alexander (1977) observes in his dissertation on a pattern language:

*When they have a choice, people will always gravitate to those rooms which have light on two sides, and leave the rooms which are lit from only one side unused and empty. This pattern, perhaps more than any other single pattern, determines the success or failure of a room. The arrangement of daylight in a room, and the presence of windows on two sides, is fundamental.*

Architecture has a direct influence on how people feel and, consequently, architects must be aware that they can shape buildings in ways that could increase the chances of satisfaction and the sense of good life of citizens. This philosophy is described in *The Architecture of Happiness* by Alain de Botton, where the author establishes 'the balance we approve of in architecture, and which we anoint with the word 'beautiful', alludes to a state that, on a psychological level, we can describe as mental health or happiness' (De Botton, 2006a), or in other words, 'our sense of beauty and our understanding of the nature of a good life are intertwined' (De Botton, 2006b).

Taking into account all the previous ideas and concepts mentioned above, the city of Venice is considered as a study case worthy of discussion. It is well known for its great cultural heritage, and the difficulty of its routes, full of bridges and stairs. Wheelchair users can visit part of the municipality thanks to the 'vaporetto' – a waterbus offered by the Venetian public transportation system – and by means of specific bridges where stair-lifts are available.

But the fact that large parts of the city have to remain inaccessible seems unavoidable.

Nevertheless, the city undergoes a significant transformation on the occasion of the Venice Marathon, an international running competition held in Venice every year since 1986. For this event, thirteen wooden ramps, always with a slope below 8 per cent, are provided on certain bridges, so the city can offer more than 3km that is completely accessible to all people, a providing a unique opportunity to visit those areas normally inaccessible during the remainder of the year.

The organising committee for the competition, with the support of the city council of Venice, proposed to lengthen the time during which these ramps remain in place, under the initiative Venezia Accessibile – A Venezia le barriere si superano di corsa (Accessible Venice – In Venice barriers are overcome by the race), almost certainly once they noticed that visiting and moving around Venice was more comfortable for everyone. This is the fifth consecutive year that this initiative has been in place due to its positive results, and the time that the ramps remain in the city is extending every time: last year they stayed for two and a half months, while this current year they will stay for four months, from the 19th October 2009 to the 11th February 2010.

We could understand this intervention as a temporary exhibition in the architectonic museum that represents the city of Venice. In spite of that, we may also query the provisional character of this option by studying the real effects of this event and registering its many benefits for the inhabitants. In relation to the tourism industry it would be worth noting, for instance, a probable increase in tour trips offered to elderly people, a tourist sector that is growing remarkably. Because 'architecture is made by use and by design' (Jonathan Hill 2003), we should evaluate the possibility of indefinitely prolonging this intervention and, depending on its environmental and economic effects, transforming it into a permanent state, being only temporary when the ramps are removed in order to present the 'historic exhibition' of the city.

In the case of rural environments, on the other hand, the opposition between conserving and transforming the heritage might be approached in a distinct way. Much of the time, we are dealing with ancient ruins that lie in the countryside, practically forgotten or hidden in the landscape, as lieux de mémoire ('sites of memory') quoting an expression from Pierre Nora (1984). These sites often have poor or no maintenance, seeming to be secret, almost forbidden places. The difficulty of accessing them bestows a picturesque identity on them, a special and unique karma. They have become part of the countryside and we can identify them as 'sites of silence', just resting in the landscape, far away from any tourist route. Thus, arriving at them involves

a certain contemplation and reflection process. They aren't exposed to the mass of the public, only receiving select tourists who appreciate their special charm. In such situations, the requirement of accessibility, and consequently the need for transformation, doesn't emerge as clearly as in the context of city life. The adaptation of a rural area always represents a larger interference with the natural scenario, and its actual purpose must be carefully examined in relation to the correct balance between gains for the inhabitants and damage to the environment.

The imperative, according to most Accessibility Codes, is to 'as far as practicable, ensure that the whole or a part of a heritage site is accessible to persons with disabilities and can be visited with ease and dignity' (Disability Act 2005, Government of Ireland). That is to say, one must apply the principle of least restrictive access; being aware that, on one hand, it is not always possible to provide access for every disabled person everywhere and, on the other, a barrier to one group of impaired people may not be a barrier to others. The levels of interventions may be determined in every case under the evaluation of diverse parameters such as topography, conservation, use and public concurrence of the historic and natural heritage. When viable, we must improve accessibility by applying some access standards such as: quality and width of the paths; barrier-free and practicable slopes of the itineraries; and existence of seating, resting and passing places. In addition, accessible information in alternative formats must be provided, such as: audio signals; relief plans and maps; tactile models; special signs; and systems of orientation. In any event, it is important to keep in mind that an archaeological site does not have to be immutable. If we predict new possible uses of the rural heritage that can be attractive for both local and visitor users – such as becoming an open space where one can hold public events such as concerts, special markets or other celebrations – then we must consider some degree of transformation to ensure equal access. It is not possible to change people's impairments, but by adapting architecture and environments, we may change the physical, social and cultural barriers that constitute handicaps. Architecture will be sustainable only when it permits its utilisation and, on that basis, heritage is sustainable when is actually used by living human beings and not only by memories of the past.

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# Working the edge of Appalachia Post-industrial abandoned mine landscapes, environmental mitigation and cultural resource reclamation through design.

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## Historical Overview and Potential Significance of Federal Mine No. 3

During the Pennsylvanian period of the Paleozoic Era, North America was a humid coastal rainforest along the equator. Approximately 300 million years later, West Virginia is a vast eroded plateau of carbon accumulations from dead flora and fauna left from this prehistoric environment. The Pittsburgh coal seam, long recognised as the most valuable mineral deposit in the world, exists underneath much of western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and northern and central West Virginia. The rivers that crisscross the region cut through the layers of sediment to reveal the existence of these vast coal deposits.

Coal mining was an integral part of West Virginia's capitalist transformation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Between 1880 and 1930, the coal industry transformed the state from a predominately individualistic agrarian mountaineer society to an industrial society and reshaped its social, cultural, and economic landscapes. The Federal Mine No. 3 at Everettville serves as a poignant example of the dynamic history of industrial development in the United States and Central Appalachia. Under the United States Department of the Interior's National Register Criterion A '*Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the United States*' (US Department of the Interior 2002), this particular mine represents the spirit of progress and development that was felt in the Upper Monongahela Region during the early twentieth century and the tragic circumstances of life that that progress created. It symbolises the diversification of West Virginia's population, the struggle between labor

unions and industry during this era, and the search for a balance between the industry's need for efficiency during the coal boom and the miners' need for safety (Fig. 1).

Along Indian Creek, a tributary of the Monongahela River in north central West Virginia, a narrow river valley through the Allegheny plateau left the Pittsburgh seam accessible at its base. In 1920, the New England Fuel and Transportation Company opened the Federal Mine No. 3 on the side of the mountain about five hundred feet from the creek's base. The company built a new four-mile section of railroad along Indian Creek from Lowsville station on

### Historic Everettville : 1927-1933



New England Fuel  
and Transportation

1927



Koppers Coal Company

1933

#### Legend

- Historic Buildings
- Federal Mine No 3

0 450 900 1,800 Feet

All original maps provided by  
United States Geological Survey

Created by Kati Singel, West Virginia University  
for Everettville Historical Association  
2009

*Fig. 1*  
Map depicting the  
spatial organisation  
of the community  
in 1933 (Singel)

the Monongahela Railroad to reach the opening of the mine, where the coal could be brought out and dumped from the tipples directly into railroad cars without additional transportation costs (New England Fuel and Transportation Company 1927). Coal could be easily brought to the tippie and then sorted, sized, weighed, and placed into trains for transport. The construction of the railroad was essential to the construction of the mining complex. The company named the new coal town after the industrial suburb that was their home base: Everettville, VA. Originally, there were three portals and an air shaft when the mine went into operation in 1921 (Armstead 2001). The mine portal was at the center of town physically and socially. There was a head-house, a blacksmith shop, a carpentry shop, slate dump, a tippie, and at least one storage building located on site. The town's basic layout included churches, schools and a company store. There were separate churches and schools for the purposes of racial segregation, but only one company store. Pick Handle Hill, where the Old Friendship Baptist Church is today, was the 'old black section' with their church multi-purposed as the school (Armstead 2001). The housing for the miners was located across the bowl-shaped valley from the tippie. When the mine first went into operation, the housing was limited to one-storey barracks until the company grew assured of their investment. The housing for the white mine workers was primarily located at the base of the slope. Between 1920 and 1927, more than 200 housing units were built as the community of workers increased in number (New England Fuel and Transportation Company 1927). Some of these homes, typical one- or two-storey detached structures in a simplified Georgian style with balloon-frame construction techniques, still exist

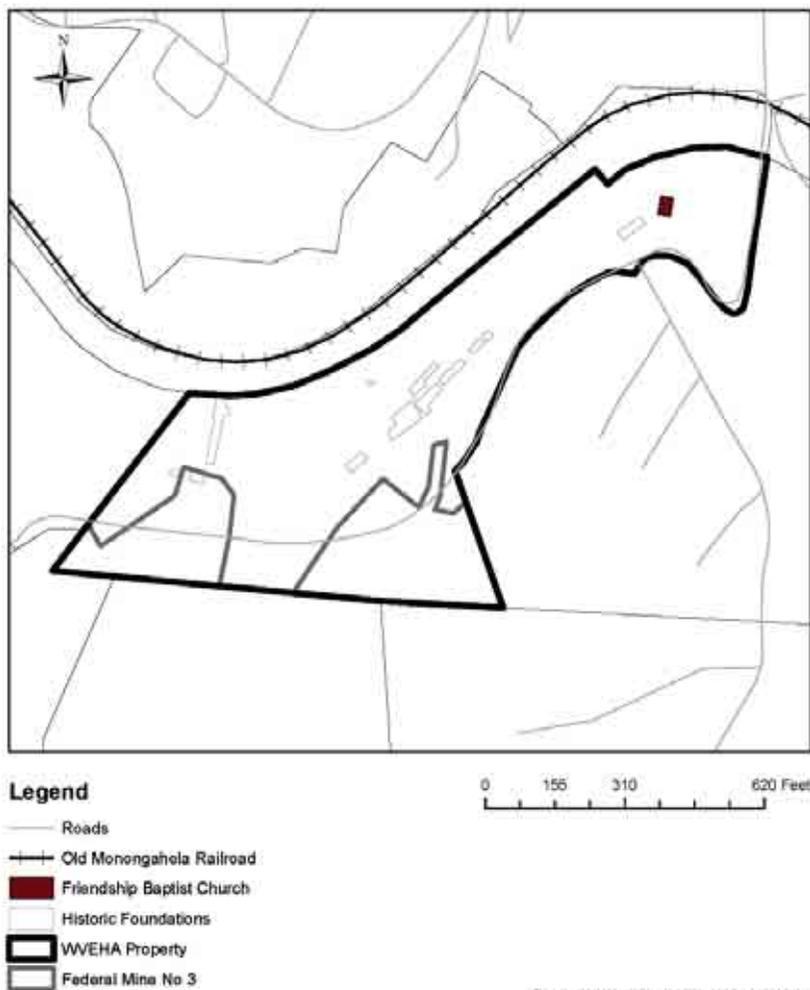


*Fig. 2*  
A photograph  
of the mine site  
showing rail lines,  
tippie and other  
site features  
(Everettville  
Historical  
Association)

today. The expedient and inexpensive balloon-frame construction was typical of coal towns due to the temporality of the settlement and the boom and bust realities of the industry (Fig. 2).

The underground elements of the mine, as depicted in a 1927 New England Fuel and Transportation map, shows that the internal spatial organisation is a checkerboard pattern of rooms and pillars. The interior of the mine has been closed since 1951 (Wall Street Journal 1951: 4). It is presumed to be in a collapsed state after 31 years of extractive activity and abandonment. In 1997, the Division of Environmental Protection's Abandoned Mine Lands and

### Historic Everetville : Site of Miners Memorial Park



*Fig. 3*  
The spatial organisation of the site in 2009. The only structures that remain are the foundations of buildings (Singel)

Reclamation, as is typical practice, hired a contractor to re-grade and seed the thirty acres of slate dumps surrounding the town, erasing much of the character-defining features of the site. They also required 'wet seals', poured Portland cement concrete walls, to close the mine portals. This type of seal includes a ground-level drainage pipe to allow impounded acid mine water, a known contaminant, to escape into Indian Creek.

The significance of the Federal Mine No. 3 is grounded in a particular day: April 30, 1927. This is when an explosion occurred deep within the labyrinthine mine that took the lives of 151 individual miners toiling underground and of those near enough to the openings to be impacted by the blast. While operations continued until 1951, the property's significance is associated with the social, cultural, and economic circumstances that affected the mine in 1927. The day of the disaster was a Saturday, and payday at the mine. There was a smaller than usual crew of 260 men working inside the mine. It was half an hour before the men working in the mine were scheduled to finish their shift. At 3:25 PM, fire shot out of the mouth of the pit when an explosion occurred inside the mine in an area where approximately 115 men were working. Of the eleven working on the tibble, where the mine cars were tipped and emptied of their coal, two men were killed instantly. Within an hour, a request for aid was issued to search for the men inside the mine. R.M. Lambie, Chief of the Department of Mines in West Virginia, delayed rescue workers for twenty-four hours until he sent a team to locate the fire and temporarily seal the affected sections of the mine. The nearby communities of Morgantown and Fairmont both rallied to the cause. The families of the miners gathered near the opening of the mine, waiting for any news of their loved ones. Almost a month later, the recovery team finished evacuating bodies from the depths of the mine. Ninety-one died inside the mine, not including those who died from their wounds later in the local hospitals. The local newspapers, including the Fairmont Times and The New Dominion, claimed that 98 bodies had been removed in the recovery period. Due to the scale of the operation, and the reluctance of the mining company to overestimate the number of bodies, the number is likely to be higher than ninety-one. The New Dominion reported that the northwest section of the mine contained missing bodies, never to be recovered.

The disaster forced the company to shut down an open section of the mine because the fire caused by the explosion continued to burn for an unknown number of years. The mine was idle for two months after the explosion as repairs were made to the interior structure and to the damaged tibble. Today, there are no remains of the tibble (though the foundation may be extant), and the mine is now sealed. According the West Virginia Department of Mines, production ceased in 1954 under the ownership of the Consolidation Coal



*Fig. 4*  
2009 site  
characteristics:  
panoramic view  
(Butler)

Company. In 2008, the Everettville Historical Association (EHA), a 501(c)3 charitable organisation, acquired surface rights to twenty-five acres near the pit mouth to preserve and interpret the site of this disaster and the legacy of the miners of West Virginia (*Fig. 3*).

Programmatically the community of Everettville, with a lack of a core public space for recreation as a result of the 'company town' development, sought to plan and construct a community-focused memorial park on the historic site. During the functioning of the mining operations the entire twenty-five acres were transformed purely for industrial uses. It is known from historic photographs that the spatial organisation of the district consisted of typical mining constructions: rail line and tipple as transportation infrastructure, a hydrologic installation accessing a nearby stream, company offices and housing. While many of these elements of the district have been substantially erased over time, some are still legible and may guide future site interventions. Other evidence suggests that the foundation of the tipple structure is extant below ground and could provide an important interpretive opportunity. The rehabilitation, supporting of new uses, and interpretation of the significant elements of the site create challenges in envisioning its future development (*Fig. 4*).

### **Pedagogic Approaches**

The Community Design Team (CDT) and instructors (Professors Butler and Kyber) of two second-year level landscape architecture studio design courses (site design and planting design) at West Virginia University were queried by the EHA to provide design assistance in envisioning the site's future. Faculty accepted the opportunity and developed a project statement that satisfied learning outcomes and objectives for the courses, and integrated themes that would guide the students' design process: memorial design; narrative design, environmental psychology, and archetypes; industrial landscapes, ruins, and reclamation; and contemporary public parks: education, conservation and recreation. The community members engaged in the process as well, identifying the particular mission of future site development centering on conservation, education and memory. Members of the EHA worked with faculty to develop



*Fig. 5*  
Existing site  
characteristics:  
plan view (Butler)

a program of uses for the site, including: educational elements; conservation practices in land management; stream access; regional trail connections; passive water treatment of abandoned mine drainage; parking facilities; and a communal gathering space with shelter to provide for a memorial service held annually on the last Sunday in April. Throughout the design process, community members hosted students and faculty for site visits, attended critiques, and contributed greatly to the students' educational experience (*Fig. 5*).

### *Memorial Design*

As landscape architectural practice is involved in the design of memorials, students pursued individual analytic research to determine contemporary designers' approaches to memory. Their research consisted of choosing five submissions to the September the 11th Memorial Design Competition for the Ground Zero site in New York City (World Trade Center 2009) and identifying the elements, materials, and experiences that designers proposed and choreographed in their work to reveal particular motifs and themes applied to the projects. When designing memorial landscapes, landscape architects draw from particular histories, materials and sensual and psychological experiences in designing space and meaningful physical engagement. The

'object' memorial for Federal No.3 Mine had been designed: an eight-foot tall, eighteen-foot wide and three-foot thick black granite monolith. The role of the students was to design the memorial park and experience of the site.

#### *Narrative Design, Environmental Psychology, and Archetypes*

The stories collected from community members in the design process, and other primarily historic sources, including a published explosion report (McCaa and Howarth 1929) and other technical documents, guided the students' investigation of potential narratives to interpret, and provided a set of architectural forms from which to draw. Narratives explored and expressed through design ranged from the deep time land-forming processes of the region, to the quotidian work of the site, to the phenomenology of the instant of the explosion. Students organised their designs through the application of archetypal designed landscape forms (Condon 1988), imbued with traditional meanings and associations. Seeking and collecting stories from the community through written history and participation with local residents allowed an intimacy with the community and an expression of endemic narratives (Potteiger and Purinton 1998) through design.

#### *Industrial Landscapes, Ruins, and Reclamation*

As a derelict industrial site where the general community perception of the site was negative, the project was informed by contemporary practice in reclaiming and interpreting brownfields and obsolete technological landscapes (Thayer 1994). Ruins, as physical containers of memory (Butler 2001), grew to become an important theme in the students' work, especially after the site visit and exploration during which multiple artefacts and forms were discovered. Many students designed and constructed mock ruins, or follies, specifically to evoke a sense of time and memory in the space. The issues of abandoned mine drainage and the identity of the site as a 'brownfield' required strategies to mitigate specific problems created by former industrial uses. Water and soil contamination, pollution, subversive social/cultural activities and unsafe conditions were prevalent.

#### *Contemporary Public Parks: Education, Conservation and Recreation*

As a project for a public park, it was posited that this space could play a greater role in the lives of Everettville residents, beyond passive recreation. The park must educate visitors as to the social function of the mine in creating a community focused on its workings, and to reveal some of the industrial processes involved in the extractive industry. The site connects regionally, as one of thousands of such locales which synthesise social history with the physical landscape, and joins with the Rivers of Steel (NPS 2009) to

Pittsburgh in the north and beyond. Culturally, industrial Appalachia brought together (though in segregation) African-Americans, Italians, Polish, Scotch-Irish and other ethnic groups. And in geomorphologic terms, the site reveals a deep time story of an inland sea and organic sedimentary deposits over millions of years. The opportunities for education and interpretation cross many temporal social, cultural and spatial layers. Landscape conservation – in this case, management of successional vegetation and removal of invasive exotic species that have infiltrated the site since the reclamation efforts of the 1980s – would be a component of an overall plan for the park, along with soil testing and remediation. Also, a single ‘spirit’ or ‘wolf’ tree, a massive and aged (approximately 150 years old) Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) stands opposite the mine portal as a witness to the years of industrial development and the explosion of April 30, 1927. Its gnarled branches and odd gestural quality became a major source of design inspiration for students. It provides a tangible form in interpreting the day of the explosion, as it leans away from the mine portal as if cowering back from the blast. Thus, a framing of specific themes for interpretation is necessary and far-reaching, offering notions about shifting culture-nature relationships and about the potentiality of public space (Fig. 6, 7, 8, 9).

## The Future

With the ongoing recording, documenting and mapping of site resources, and the potential of the site’s national, state or local significance, planning of the park continues. Community members were able to deconstruct student design proposals to find pieces that they thought appropriate for implementation. One of the design proposals (McHenry) was selected for its overall spatial treatment of the site, and he will continue his design process through independent study with a faculty advisor and with the community of Everettville. Experts in the mitigation of acid mine drainage recruited to the design team will perform water quality monitoring as a necessary component of site planning. Landscape architecture faculty will synthesise all aspects of the project and provide a guidance document, a singular vision, for the future development of the park. The result will ideally solve the issues of environmental degradation, interpret the multiple narratives inherent in the site’s physical, industrial, cultural and social history, and retain the site’s integrity and character-defining elements for future generations to wonder over and engage with.

Historical research unveils and produces documentation of a site’s significance to a particular community. The work of restoration research is, however, typically site-focused and often lacks active engagement with the community. The historical significance of site resources is commonly documented and



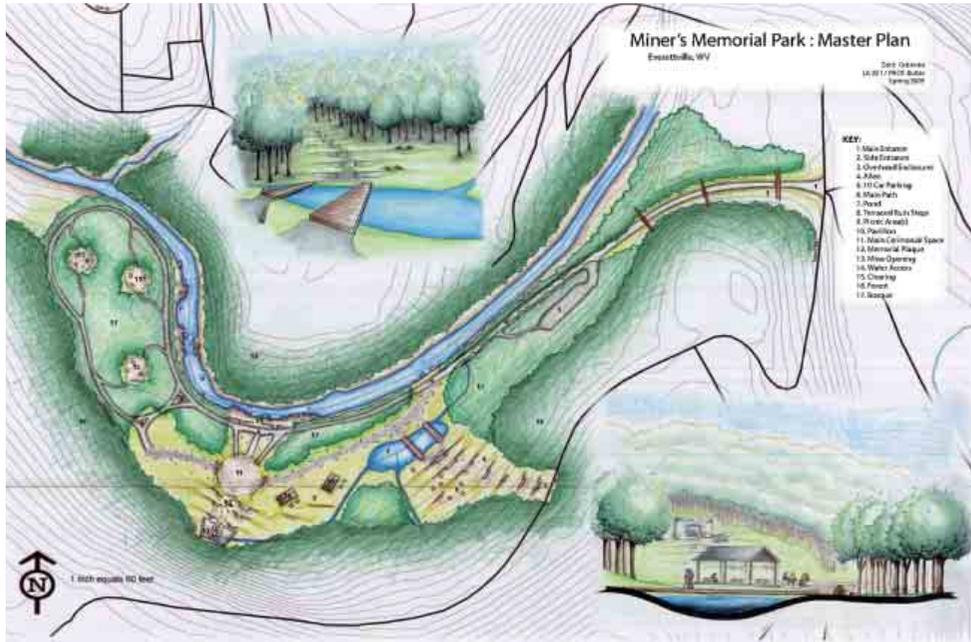


Fig. 8 Student design for the development of a memorial park. Masterplan by Zack Cebenka. (Butler)



Fig. 9 Student design for the development of a memorial park. Perspectives by Nathan Smiell. (Butler)

reproduced through print and photography in the form of interpretive signage, brochures, books, etc., and is left for community visitors to discover passively, separate from their recreation activities. Typically, community engagement in itself is separate from a restoration methodology. The alternative strategy of grassroots engagement has fostered and even become a paramount method for restoration of Federal Mine No. 3. The restoration of Federal Mine No. 3 was initiated with the commitment of local community members in the Everettville Historical Association. That community-based group recruited the local public university's faculty and student involvement in the development of a restoration site design. Finally, the site's design program is designated not only as a historical memorial but as a contemporary public park, engaging the public in simultaneous 'education, conservation and recreation'. Thus, community-based engagement in tandem with all site development is a progressive means for invoking the creation of an innovative landscape that not only is a product of Everettville's past, but also a cornerstone in the living history of the place made anew. First steps in site engagement afford opportunities to reintroduce the site and its history to the current Everettville community and to the greater public in innovative ways.

Performance and installation art, paired with ad-hoc architecture and environmental restoration work, create a stage for initial community involvement while progressing toward site development goals. Pairing ecological restoration sitework with event-based programming showcases Federal Mine No. 3's significant oral and social history. An example of an event that pairs integrated community engagement and restoration site programming is The Prairie Awakening Celebration held in early September of each year in Earlham, Iowa at the Kuehn Conservation Area. At the event, local Native American tribal members host a festival with storytelling and dancing events. The public is invited to participate. Such an 'awakening ceremony' in Everettville could engage the spiritual community of the historical Old Friendship Baptist Church with local schoolchildren during summer school and bible camps. In addition, continued university involvement in small-scale construction with community volunteers offers the opportunity to engage local craftsmanship, paired with local material usage, in applying vernacular methods. As site design becomes further developed, an integration of site installations paired with community events is envisioned as a way to reveal cultural and ecological site stories to the public.

Communities containing former extractive industry-based enterprises in Appalachia require assistance in successfully addressing challenges in their transformation from social and economical depression to social and economic sustainability through economic development based on cultural and natural

resources and quality of life (Thering & Comp 2000) . Partnership, planning, mitigation, design and development of toxic sites in underserved 'survivor' communities can be expected to empower local citizens towards a future of investment in healthy living and enhanced quality of life. In one of the only places in America where life expectancy is declining (Ezzati et al, 2008), the repurposing of abandoned mine lands and associated brownfields within Appalachia provides opportunities to transform and re-envision environmental liabilities afresh as public assets, building on the local economic base and retaining the significant memory of distressed communities.

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# Ribadavia Castle Remains

## Intervention: Conserve And Transform

### Observation, Research, Traces, Intuition

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#### Introduction

Since 1999 we have been working on a lengthy process of study, research, consolidation and retrieval of the remains of Ribadavia Castle. The remains are extremely fragile due to their abandonment and the neglect of local government. The interest lies in the decision-making at the time involved – ‘intervening involves changing’ (De Gracia 1992). We feel that maintaining, transforming or reusing this historic building requires at least that we introduce ourselves to its physical and emotional realities, in its present state and throughout its history. Through very careful observation and systematic documentation, intensive research of historical sources, technical analysis, study of pathologies, identification of traces and memories, and finally a reflexive intuition, we have established a methodology in the ‘master plan’ for this castle that will substantiate the basis for future interventions in the monument, thus creating the possibility of transformation and reuse.

Ribadavia Castle is sited within the historic area of the village and was built incorporating the old wall and supported by a series of circular and square towers on a large rock outcrop. There is no documentation of the earliest human settlement, apart from the fact that a necropolis and a temple existed in the upper part of the town, where the castle now stands. The necropolis was discovered in 1951 within the grounds of the castle (*Figg. 1, 2*).

#### Architectural description

It is not possible to disentangle the evolution of the village from the history of the Sarmiento family in the same way that we can decouple the construction of the castle from the fortress walls to which it is intimately linked. There is no contemporary written documentation available as to its configuration and structure. The first visual documentation is a drawing by Rosendo Amado,

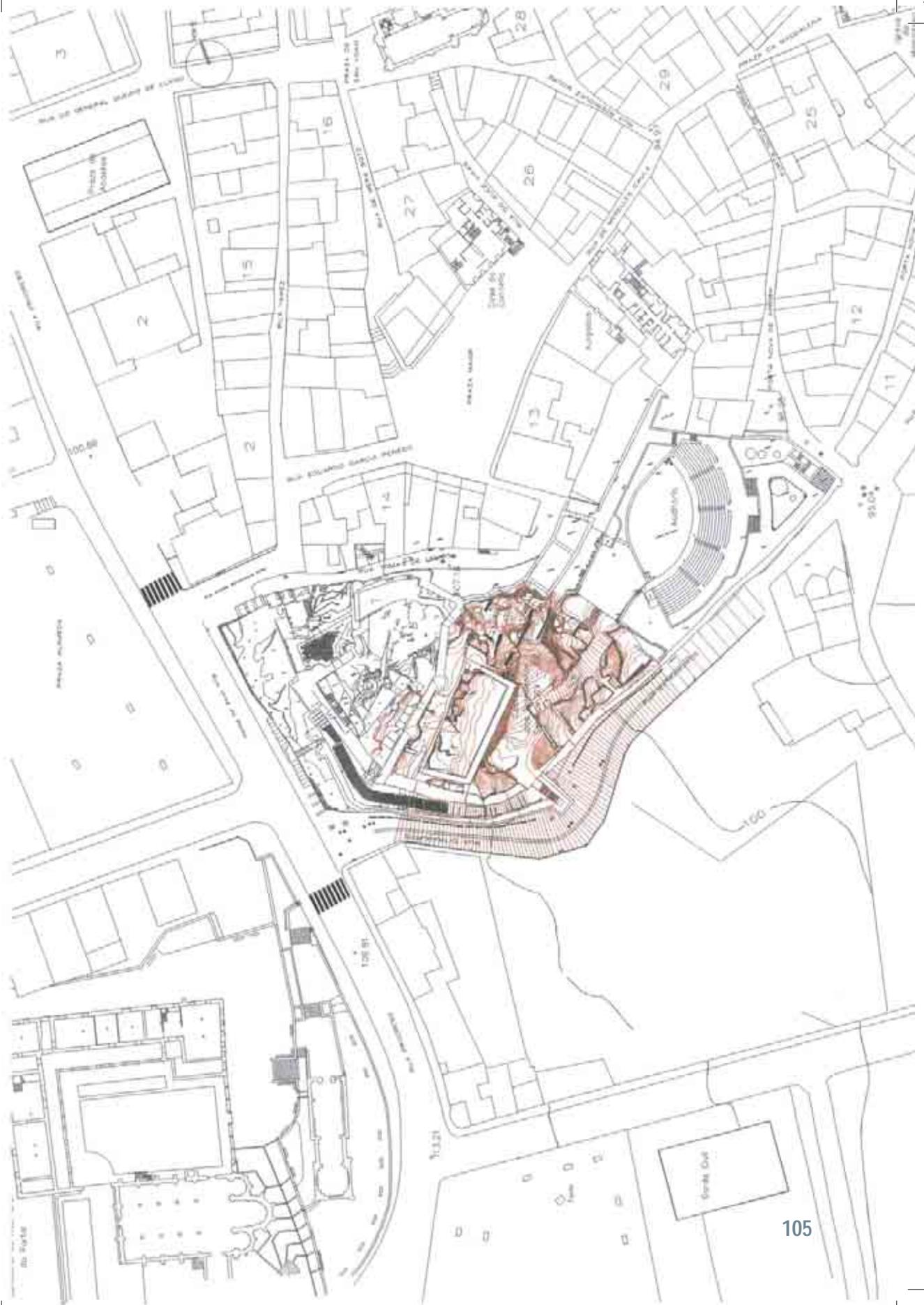


*Fig. 1*  
Aerial Photograph,  
1950

dated 1799 and prepared at the request of Thomas López for the Geographical Dictionary<sup>1</sup>. Despite his mistakes and inaccuracies, this is helpful information on the status of the village prior to the nineteenth century, when the great destruction of the wall began. New theories of urban development in the nineteenth century advocated its elimination, based on ideas of better hygiene and in order not to limit the development of the city. By 1849 much of the town walls had disappeared.

The castle is built on the stretch of town wall fronting the Vigo to Villacastín road. A surviving cubic defensive tower might well be identified with the Tower of San Ginés, given the relationship with the enclosure in which the church of San Ginés stood. Today only the necropolis associated with the church remains. It occupies the space inside the castle. This site is polygonal in shape, while three of the walls that define it demonstrate a certain architectural regularity that speaks of the occupied space itself. The area of the necropolis would have occupied much the same area, of which there exists a delicious description by Doña Emilia Pardo Bazán, published in the journal 'Los lunes del Imparcial', dated 12th November 1893.

*Fig. 2*  
Map of Ribadavia  
1999



*'...It was the best time to see old castles, near dusk, scanning the sky half the dense clouds that awnings, somewhat rosy west, and all imbued with calm and thoughtful meditation. We entered the enclosure today a vineyard and garden, strewn with fallen blocks and cutting of wall paintings that slowly crumbling. In the device of magnificent proportions as the residence of princes a mix of fortress and palace, not far from the guard tower and the tower where the lookout kept watch, the current sumptuous living room fireplace is intact, we can see the windows of the rich rooms, the large retaining pond where conserve the fishing fresh and the decorative fountain which adorn the gardens. Everything is so empty like dry eyes without pupils, water is lost, the roofs and floors have come down, there are sites that would be dangerous to be made, as sagging walls, they want to surrender to their own grief.'*

### **Documentary Development: graphic and planimetric**

Of great importance for documentation purposes were collections of old photographs of the castle in the historical archives and in the possession of the inhabitants of Ribadavia. These bear witness to the extreme fragility of the castle around 1950 (Fig. 3, 4).

In 1999 we were charged with the task of carrying out the first studies of the monument by the Institute for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage of the Galician government. The absence of complete documentation, not only graphic and architectural, but also historical and archaeological, made it necessary to undertake early works in accordance with the recommendations of the Spanish Historical Heritage Institute (IPHE, 2003).

1. Graphic documentation, planimetric and analytical:
  - Topographic maps of the castle and the surrounding area at 1: 200.
  - General plans, sections and elevations scale 1: 200.
  - Drawings of the different levels of use in the castle at 1: 100.
  - Elevational drawings of walls with their stratigraphic sequence.
  - Technical drawings and location of different conditions.
  - Detail drawings to scale 1: 10 and 1: 25.
2. Scale models of the enclosure and walls.
3. Compilation of historical documentation of the castle<sup>2</sup>.
4. Plan of test pits for archaeological excavations<sup>3</sup>.
5. Geotechnical and structural studies of foundations and walls.
6. Construction technology and structural characterisation of the walls of the castle.
7. Study of the alteration of stone and biological colonisation in floors and walls<sup>4</sup>.

*Fig. 3*  
The castle in 1950





*Fig. 4*  
The castle in 1950

8. Relationship between uses of the castle and the pathologies, and between pathologies and materials.
9. Systematisation and continuous updating of documents, new plans following the archaeological excavations, new models with the traces and walls discovered.
10. Progressive updating of stratigraphic sequences (*Figg. 5a, 5b*).

### **Stratigraphic studies of the fabric**

The research and historical studies testify to the history of the village of Ribadavia and the Sarmiento family, but documentation on the construction process of the castle is very limited. This has prompted us to adopt an approach in which ongoing observation, continuous and focused research and the documentation of the emotional truth of the monument are necessary steps before attempting any intervention.

The activity of surveying and recording signs and traces and active investigation has allowed us to understand the evolution of the monument, based on thorough graphic plans, which involved recording the walls through a general stratigraphic study (4.805sqm surface of walls) that was carefully drawn and dimensioned. In terms of form, exact measurements of ashlar masonry and coursing have enabled us to identify periods and sequences of construction, thus throwing light on historic and architectural processes that the documentary sources did not reflect (*Figg. 6, 7*).

The sequence derived from the fabric analysis can be summarised thus:



*Fig. 5a*  
Model of the Castle enclosure

EI: Middle Ages, eighth century – pre-existing. The oldest remains found at the site of the current fortress are those of the medieval necropolis. Dated to the eighth century, these display the traditional ‘Suevic-Germanic’ typology and respect the usual orientation (feet towards the east; head towards the west). Later transformations of the enclosure would cause the destruction of a large number of graves.



*Fig. 5b*  
Model of the Castle enclosure



Fig. 6  
Stratigraphic plan

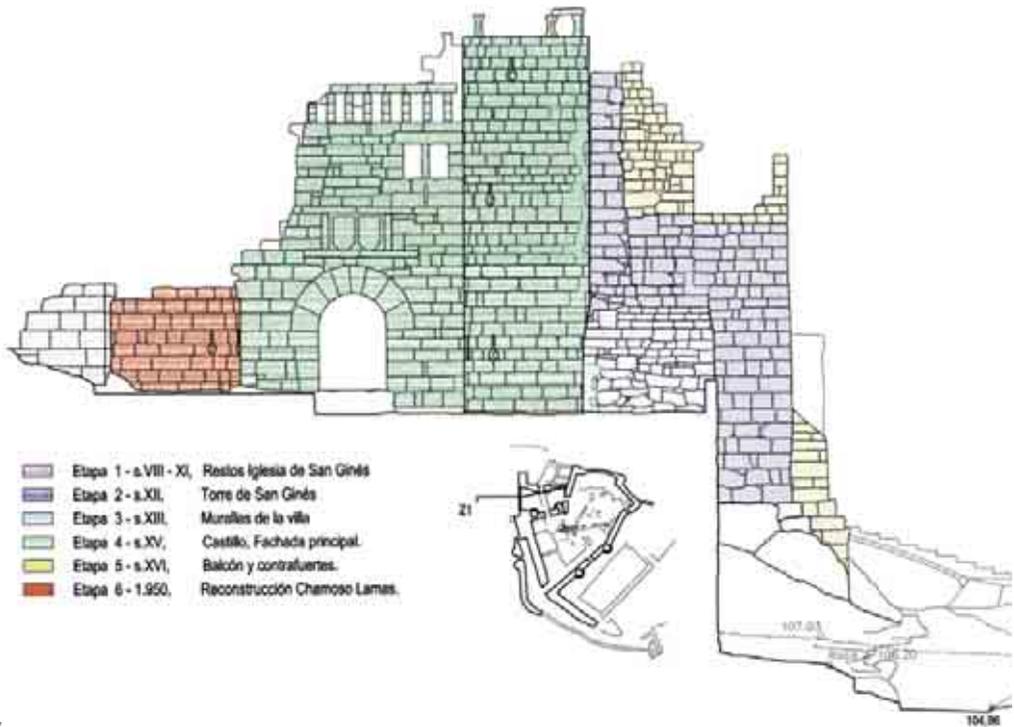


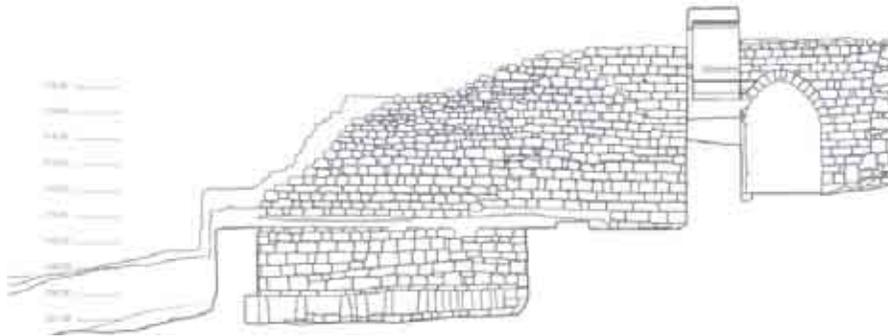
Fig. 7  
Main facade



*Fig. 8*  
The interior of  
San Ginés Tower,  
discovered in 2003

E2: Middle Ages, twelfth century – San Ginés Tower. The tower derives its name from its proximity to the church of St. Ginés. The tower was built in this period as a defensive feature and was dismantled in the late fifteenth century by Bernardino Perez Sarmiento to build the castle. Together with the Mota Tower on the other side of the town, it comprised the defenses of the twelfth-century city. A Royal Order issued by Alfonso IX in 1336 testifies to its existence but not to its exact location. Currently there is no tower in the village, as when the walls were built, this tower was incorporated into their fabric. Our observation of ground levels and masonry led us to conclude that the tower was transformed into a large balcony, located behind a chimney; a quadrangular area is visible at the right side of the entrance to the main façade, on the top level of the rock. The location, size of the stones, and the age of the fabric as witnessed by the heavy erosion of the ashlar, prompted us to investigate that element, looking for the tower inside. Deconstructing the walls, numbering each stone in the process, and hollowing out the interior of the fabric, we found dressed stones facing inwards, creating an interior space with a narrow window as a loophole. It proved the contention that this element, embedded in the enclosing walls of the village and transformed into a balcony above the castle, was the Tower of San Ginés (*Fig. 8*).

E3. Middle Ages, thirteenth century – traces of the town wall of Ribadavia at the castle. The walls enclosing the town of Ribadavia were built from the



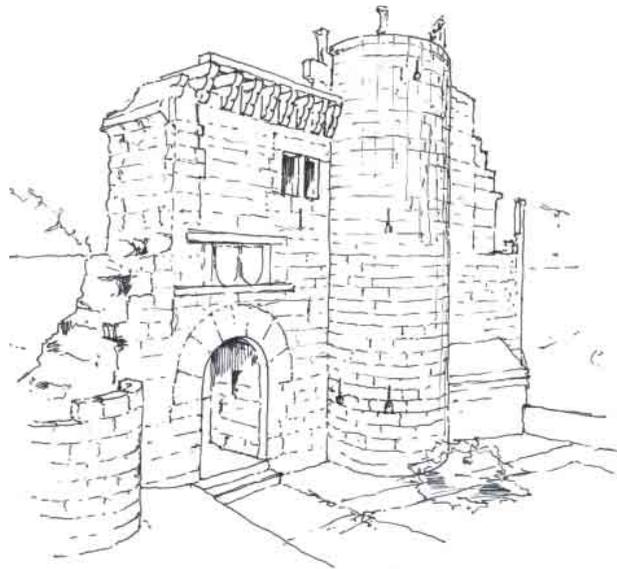
*Fig. 9*  
Stairs in the town  
wall discovered in  
2008; the fabric



*Fig. 10*  
Stairs in the town  
wall discovered in  
2008, photograph

middle of the thirteenth century, prior to the construction of the castle. The structure of the walls is of large stones without mortar, with a total thickness ranging between 3.3 and 2.2 metres, and a height that varies between 7.2 and 5.1 metres. In the late fifteenth century when construction of the castle began, it was decided to use the city wall and integrate it into the defensive enclosure. We still see evidence of this wall in some interior areas of the fortress; however the latest changes within the castle destroyed much of it. Of this period is an ogival gate located in the ancient wall of the village. Its dimensions led us to think that this is one of the city gates, namely the portal of Santo Domingo, as it faces towards the convent of that name. In 2008 a flight of stairs was discovered to the side of this gate in the wall, leading up to the wall walk, the 'chemin de ronde' (Figg. 9, 10).

E4: Early Modern Period, fifteenth century: a castle for Bernardino Pérez Sarmiento. The construction of the castle began in 1471. Its construction made it necessary to demolish the church of San Ginés, located on the highest level of the rock. Also at this time parts of the old city-wall were incorporated into the fabric of the façade of the castle – as mentioned earlier, the wall as incorporated into the defensive fortress became the tower of San Ginés. In 1499 D. Bernardino reached an agreement with the neighbouring convent of Santo Domingo, to channel the water to the fortress. The irrigation canal was built in stone and called 'Levada of the Count'. It is an indication that in this year the castle was still under construction and that it was intended for residential use. The stone for the castle was extracted from the rock in the castle grounds - recent archaeological excavations have uncovered three different quarries with the marks of quarrying still visible.



*Fig. 11*  
Main façade of the  
castle



*Fig. 12*  
Southeast façade  
of the castle

The parts of the castle built in this period are the main façade and the southeast façade. The main façade is oriented north. The entrance was located between two semi-circular towers with loopholes. Of these, only the structure of the left tower survives although the top battlements have gone. Over the outer gate two coats of arms of the Sarmiento and Fajardo families are visible, and a Gothic inscription which reads *ANO MCCCCLXXII ESTA OBRA MANDO AZER MADERA AYO DEL CONDE BERNALDIN*. It establishes the date of 1472 for the completion of this façade. The southeast façade, the great façade in the inner enclosure featuring upper-level openings with ‘*parladiros*’<sup>5</sup>, confirms that it was built for residential purposes. But it has not lost its defensive character, as seen in the semi-circular towers with loopholes flanking the small entrance with an ogee arch (*Fig. 11, 12*).

E5: Early Modern Period, sixteenth century - external wall and chimney. The ogival gate in the old town wall had become one of the entrances giving access to the interior of the castle. A second external defensive wall was built to protect this door. This second wall is smaller in dimension than the town wall – its smaller ashlar blocks are also laid without mortar, with a total thickness of 2.1 and a height of 4.1 metres. This outer wall is topped with a square defensive tower, which connects with the old town wall. A chimney



*Fig. 13*  
The chimney

risers at the top level of the castle, another proof that the Sarmiento family intended to take up residence in the castle. The chimney is French Baroque in style, and is topped by a triangular pediment flanked by two gargoyles. It is of a type very common in the civil architecture of the area.

From this period also dates the 'Garden Door of the Count'. This was made to connect with the town hall, which was built in 1553 while the castle was under construction. During this period town meetings were held there and it was also used as a prison. The gate consists of a semi-circular arch of shaped voussoirs and bears the coat of arms of the Sarmiento family on the keystone. The buttresses are clearly part of a post-medieval wall, as indicated by the typology, the dimension of ashlar masonry and the arrangement of the stone courses. They were intended as support for the old fortress (*Figg. 13, 14*).

### **Stratigraphic studies in floors and levels of use**

The area of the fortress enclosure is 6789.1 sqm. Over time it has accommodated different uses. The first archaeological investigations revealed that new uses were overlaid each time on top of the former. This resulted in a great deal of infilling which, over time, transformed the defensive wall into a retaining wall. This was one of the main causes of the great number of collapses of



*Fig. 14*  
The buttresses

the exterior walls. The significance of the stratigraphic studies of levels and the identification of successive uses lay in the establishment of the original levels, and in being able to complete the sequence in which the enclosure was generated, as distinct from that of the walls.

The sequence obtained from study of the levels can be summarised:

S1: This can be described at the geomorphological level. The ancient village of Ribadavia stood on an east-facing slope that ran down to the river Avia. The castle is located on a large rock formation on top of the highest level of the terrace on which the village was built, at a height of 114.1 metres above sea level. The slope is mainly granitic in composition and the rock outcrop appears just within the castle. Characterisation studies and analyses of stone structure revealed that the stone is a coarse-grained granite, with a high degree of porosity and a natural tendency to crack in certain preferential directions. This has been an important condition for weathering and decay. The analysis of the ashlar masonry also shows that the rock on which the castle is set is the quarry from which the stones were extracted. We have already referred to the many traces of the work of quarrymen and stonemasons, uncovered by the current excavations in the rock quarry, that support this finding.

S2: The Middle Ages – eighth to thirteenth centuries. The church of St. Ginés

and a defensive tower were built on the rock in the eighth century. These uses did not affect the original stratum, but the line of the wall cut off an area of the necropolis, restricting the work of carving tombs on the rock<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 15).

S3: The Early Modern Period – fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. This is the period in which most of the castle walls were built. Findings of the various studies demonstrate that there was an important alteration of the original layer through the formation of the quarries. Archaeological excavations have revealed that in the southeastern façade, under the ogee arch, the rock is at a continuous horizontal level of 111.8 metres above sea level. There is, however, an abrupt change of level in the necropolis to 114.1 metres. This configuration shows that the intention of the quarrying was not only the extraction of stone, but was also to establish the ground level floor to the castle, and that this work was disrupted for some reason. The land located between the palace where the Counts resided during construction was transformed into a garden that was leased to the inhabitants for cultivation, irrigated by the 'Levada of the Count'. These gardens were organised in farming terraces, called 'socialcos', a very common device in Galicia where there is significant difference of level in fields. The walls forming these terraces were found in 2009 under the remains of a modern swimming pool, built in 1960.

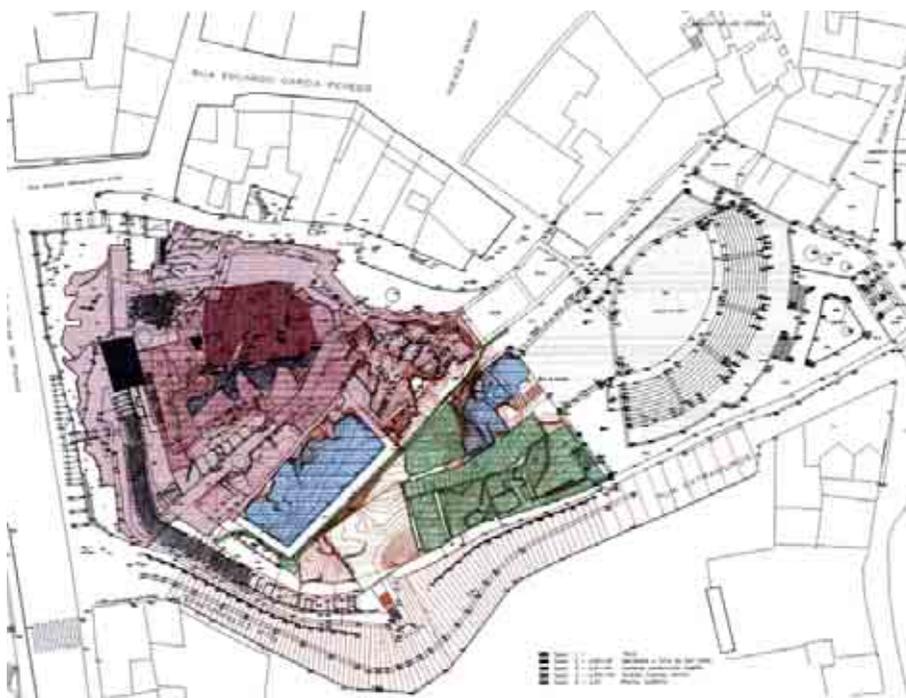
S4: The Modern Period – seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. There are two theories under consideration regarding the state of the castle during this period. The first suggests that the quarrymen, in their work of extracting stone,



*Fig. 15*  
Necropolis dating  
from the Middle  
Ages

came upon the tombs of the cemetery and stopped work. The second theory is supported by documents on the decline of the Sarmiento family, to the effect that in 1803 the family still maintained residence in the village in the Count Palace in the main square, connected to the castle by the garden. This theory is also supported by the absence of traces of foundations or the remains of columns from the inner walls, apart from those of the façade, that would have made it possible to build upper levels. The theory is that the interruption in the construction of the castle was exclusively for economic reasons and that the castle was completed. The 1799 drawing by Rosendo Amado shows the walls of the castle in the same state as now: the main façade and southeastern façade were not finished.

S5: The Contemporary Period – twentieth century. The most important changes in floor levels have taken place during this period. In 1939 the Council of Ribadavia bought the castle with the intention of demolishing it and building low-priced houses in its place. Fortunately, that project never took place. In late 1945, Mr. Manuel Chamoso Lamas, Commissioner of the area of León, Asturias and Galicia, began the declaration file of the Monumental and Artistic Heritage of the town. The castle was declared a Work of Monumental and Artistic Importance by the decree of 17th October 1947. However, the garden was not considered part of the monument, and in 1960 the city council began its transformation into a sports area, with sports courts and a public pool,



*Fig. 16*  
Stratigraphic study  
of floors and levels  
of use

destroying parts of the ancient town wall as well as important remains of the fortress. In 1981 a new transformation was carried out that affected the entire enclosure of the fortress – to build an outdoor auditorium for 700 people. This is situated at the bottom of the old garden where the sports fields were located. The pool is now filled with stones and earth, making a new terraced garden. After this infilling, the new levels are located at 4.3 metres above the original level of the terraces of the fifteenth century – transforming, as noted, the defensive outer walls of the fortress into retaining walls for the infilling material.

S6: The twenty-first century. We have been working on the castle of Ribadavia since 1999. The work has consisted, mainly and slowly, of taking steps to regain the levels of its original use. This slow process of discovering traces allows us to understand the origins of the fortress, the history of the castle, the meaning it has for inhabitants, and the significance for the town. Archaeological excavations in 2009 and updated topographic documents exposed an original track between the levels of 105.2 and 100.7 metres. It crossed the fifteenth-century terraces, going down in the direction of the south gate of the town wall, passing under the auditorium that has probably destroyed its traces. The stratigraphic studies of levels and types of use has become in this case the main document for interpreting the historical, archaeological, architectural and landscape data (*Fig. 16*).

### **Discussion of possible intervention criteria**

The first consideration is that Ribadavia Castle was never completed as a building and has never been inhabited. There is a total absence of evidence indicating the existence of upper floors and roofs, or of structures other than the existing external walls. Any intervention to reconstruct it in whole or in part would be a journey into the world of invention rather than that of reality. We therefore ask ourselves one question: can we talk about the Ribadavia Castle as a ruin if it were never completed? In this regard, recall: ‘By definition, a ruin is the irreparable remains of a human construction, [which] by a destructive act or process no longer dwells in the unity of the original, but may have its own unities that we can enjoy’ (Ginsberg 2004).

We must understand that we are working on an unfinished building, but one which still embodies the concept of a monument, with all values of ‘antiquity, historicity and contemporaneity’ (Riegel 1987). We see the first value based in the successive colonisation by quotidian uses, the historical value is recognised in the sequential adaptations, the memory and the need to halt the deterioration, and the value for contemporary life is represented in the need for seamless integration with the village and with the life of the inhabitants.

Another consideration is the high degree of deterioration, due to the poor condition of the fabric and the transformations made inside the fortress over the years – the advanced decay of its walls, broken and missing ashlar masonry, reconstruction and replacement of walls without proper consideration, walls that have collapsed – all of which greatly affects the reading of the monument and contributes to the loss of identity. The analysis of the ashlar masonry undertaken during the excavations has been a task of great importance, as has been the reading of walls, which allowed the re-establishment of integrity to many of the existing walls, following the criterion: ‘The stability of a structure would be provided primarily by their shape, but not (or only very secondarily) by the strength of the material that composes it.’ (Heyman 1995).

Retrieving the identity of the place, its typology and the original dimensions of the existing walls and the original levels of occupation has meant establishing a position ‘to let the building speak for itself and believe that in the building there is a logic that somehow has a potential possibility of its completion and fullness’ (Sola-Morales 1982).

The final matter that we want to put into the discussion of the case study of Ribadavia Castle is that the idea of preserving essentially involves the idea of transforming the place: ‘Everywhere made present through constructive action is unique. Hence, the new modifying intervention should recognise the category of *unicum* any particular element deserves... to alter existing sites is only justified if we make them more suitable for human life’ (De Gracia 1992). Thinking of a future use for the castle which would allow the retrieval of the site for the village and the inhabitants required us to reflect on historical and contemporary meanings, to consider the emotional values that we must necessarily add through any new element that tries to bring balance without losing the identity and poetics. In short, we can allow an internal use, one through which one can perceive the whole castle and can exploit its essential nature with a didactic itinerary throughout its interior, showing the Castle as a *unicum*.

### Applying the methodology in teaching

In our opinion, all constructive process and any intervention leaves visible and hidden traces. Training the **perception**, putting into practice the **observation**, understanding the measurement of the walls and floors and improving the **intuition** must be a very important part of any educational methodology for architects who wish to maintain, intervene in, or transform the historic heritage. The methodology in every process is a necessary condition but not sufficient. One can establish different methodological approaches but these are only indicative and will differ in accordance with the place, the monuments, the

culture and the time. 'By intuition is meant the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects.' (Bergson 1912).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The drawing referred to is dated 1799, made by Rosendo Amado for the Spanish geographic atlas by the geographer Tomás López de Vargas. The drawing is preserved in the National Library.

<sup>2</sup> Led by Dr. Michael Tain Guzman, Ph.D. in Art History and Professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela. Middle Ages Research: Dr. David Chao Castro. Research, Modern Period: María José Villar Fernández. Research, Contemporary Period: Sagarrio Abelleira Mendez.

<sup>3</sup> The archaeological studies and excavations were directed by archaeologist D. Luis Orero Grandal.

<sup>4</sup> The study of stone and biological colonisation was carried out by the Department of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, Group Study and Conservation of Monuments Alteration, composed of Benita Silva Hermo, Teresa Rivas Brea and Beatriz Prieto Lamas.

<sup>5</sup> 'Parladoiro' is a Galician word that identifies a type of window common in monasteries and convents. On the interior there are two benches located in the jambs of the window where two people could sit and talk looking through the window.

<sup>6</sup> The necropolis was discovered during excavations directed by D. Chamoso Manuel Lamas during the years 1951 and 1952.

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# Ruins preservation, transformation in use: projects for the old town centre of Palermo

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Palermo has a particular history, being a geographical *topos* that has been inhabited for twenty-five centuries, whose most evident material expression is found in its architecture and urban morphology. Palermo has its own unique quality: it has been the centre, the place of encounter and conflict for many civilizations that dominated the southern area of the Mediterranean, from Punics to Romans, from Arabs to Norman-Swabians. Few other places have achieved such a degree of homogeneity as has this city 'tutto porto', home to people so diverse in terms of traditions and customs, religion and race. And from this melting pot a great urban civilization was born (De Seta 1980).

But Palermo is also the symbol – together with other Italian cities such as Naples – of all the misfortunes that the passing of time, the intolerable pushiness of greedy speculations, mixed with ignorance and roughness, has visited upon its face and on the magnificence inherited from its past. After the enormous destruction caused by World War II, some Sicilian historians of art have tried, on different occasions and for research purposes, to reconstruct the face of the ancient city. By speaking of *membra disiecta* of architecture, and recalling Cesare Brandi's concept of the formal fragment ripped off the integrity of the work, they have shown the possibility of a non-negative use that aims to recover the value of the architectonic fragment (Brandi 1956). The job of the restorer can be that of collecting the *disiecta membra* of the building and, by healing its wounds, bring it back to life. It is also necessary to think of a larger body, to think of the *disiecta membra* of the urban organism, which silently, but accusingly, waits for our rescuing work. We cannot simply stand still and just contemplate the scattered, though extremely noble, limbs of the city, such as churches, religious houses, palaces, and so forth. It is surely possible that with effort, they can be restored in the scenario of an environment that still exists, though wounded and despised.

The city of Palermo is a palimpsest that offers a stratified accumulation of data derived over several millennia; these data, sometimes dense, at other times scarce, are displayed uninterruptedly. Yet, it has been observed that owning

a dead collection of ancient treasures is not enough, since it is better to aim at an 'actual' vitality of culture and art (Calvesi 1997). For our modern sensibility, that statement amounts to the research and defence of our own identity. To deal with the problems generated by the survival of these memories of the past is not enough, because identity needs to benefit from the lessons these memories can still give us. We can refer to the interpretation of the work as a natural-cultural and anthropological-historical 'totality'.

This interpretation can be applied also to those parts of the old town centre that are still in ruins as a result of wartime bombing, in spite of the decades that have since passed. The warning that ruins carry with them reaches beyond any understandable gesture of rejection of the destructive results of tragic events such as wars, results that are aggravated by subsequent neglect. To be truly avoided in the future, tragic events have to be witnessed in all their resultant tremendous, irrepressible truth. This means evoking the concept of the 'pedagogical vocation' of ruins fostered by Marc Augé. In that context we think of ruins as historical statements "in terms of eloquent concreteness, which cannot be lost with impunity, without causing a substantial, severe harm to the souls and the future society" (Fancelli 2006).

However, to envisage restoration as preservation of the 'totality' of the work, taking in the entirety of elements, does not preclude – as the case of 'inhabited ruins' in the old town centre of Palermo suggests – the theme of transformation of their use, as long as this is rendered compatible, with the addition of new, necessary architectonic elements. With regard to the ancient building, we can consider the point of view that container and content observe different ageing processes, i.e. structure as against function (Eco 1968). The more ancient a building is, the more probable it is that its original structure is no longer intact and that its function has disappeared. Other functions will have taken advantage of opportunity, replacing the first and thus ensuring the building's continuity through time. The elements of many buildings are no longer employed as originally intended, though without detriment to their present function. It can be argued that the loss of function itself can "suggest conditions of survival, and function as a possibility for integration in our culture" (Corboz 1976).

As far as the other aspect of the theme of transformation is concerned - that of the insertion of new architectonic elements and of other devices for reuse - and even if the insertion is partly reversible, it inevitably causes an alteration of the remains as a whole, and of their exposure to the simple act of contemplation. Accepting the principle of 'equilibrium', which should regard every restoration as a separate case, for the *preservation* of values and memories the encounter between the figurative characters of the new parts

that are considered essential for the *transformation* of use, and the original forms of the architecture, must to be taken into consideration. A.C.

Interventions in the old town centre of Palermo: Between 'preservation' and 'transformation'

As mentioned earlier, more than fifty years after World War II, part of the area of the old town centre of Palermo still manifests in the texture of the old town centre as well as the marks of the damage caused by bombing and the related consequences (*Fig. 1*).

One of the symbols of these transformations is undoubtedly the place called Piazza della Magione. Before the war it did not exist as a square, but was instead a complex of blocks and residential buildings divided by streets and courtyards. The big square that exists today is the result of wartime destruction which was evidently concentrated in this place, and also of some interesting planning choices made in the last twenty years that were too weak and insufficient for the improvement and reuse of this space (*Fig. 2*).

The outline traces of the blocks that were destroyed – a planning decision of questionable quality – are marked by low walls that allow one to understand the building texture that previously existed. Within these, grass-covered areas have been created that are used for cultural events or as play spaces for the city. But as often happens, in a city full of contradictions and where managing its cultural heritage is poorly advanced, the total lack of maintenance and the licence given to small pedlars to use the areas of the meadow, have made this interesting space 'suspended out of time' into a place of decay (*Fig. 3*).



*Fig. 1*  
Palermo, ruins  
in the district of  
'Monte di Pietà'.  
Damages caused  
by the bombs on a  
palace in 'Via dei  
Cassari'.



*Fig. 2*  
Palermo, Piazza  
Magione. The walls  
of the blocks which  
disappeared after  
the bombings are  
intended as an  
archaeological site

Besides, the unjustified planting of forest trees in front of the façades of the monumental buildings prevents one from enjoying the view from the square of the most interesting perspective.

If for 'Piazza della Magione' the important opportunity to improve what already existed has not matched the unquestionable and acknowledged potentialities, other examples are as unfortunate, such as that of 'Piazza Garraffello' inside the historical market of the 'Vucciria district' (*Fig. 4*) or the market itself and its beautiful abandoned buildings. Many of the buildings scattered all over the old town centre have suffered the same fate, with no difference between common buildings, big noble residences, churches or former convents, which have been either simply made safe or have never seen any form of intervention (*Fig. 5*).

But what 'types' of interventions have been carried out or are under completion



*Fig. 3*  
Palermo, Piazza  
Magione. One of  
the few buildings  
which did not  
collapse after the  
bombings

today, within a plan for the reclaiming of the old town centre that is still changing? They could be summarised by identifying three different kinds of practice.

The first takes as a starting point the interventions that follow the slavish 'imitative rebuilding', ordered in the Detailed Plan for the Old Town Centre (Di Benedetto 2000), and backed by the Manual for the Reclamation of the Old Town Centre of Palermo (Marconi 1997). In this category we identify all the rebuilding - most of the time comprising complete rebuilding and carried out after unjustified demolitions - where building typologies, openings, frames, balconies, decorations and plasters are re-proposed ex-novo, thus cancelling every trace of material authenticity that had survived through the course of historical events to our time (*Fig. 6*).

The second type of practice is to intervene with openly contemporary new buildings that take into account the ratio between the building heights and the lacunae in the historical texture which they infill. There are only a few examples of this second type of intervention, but these exhibit an interesting alternative attitude which has given the old town centre opportunities for transformation that are far more stimulating compared to those more common examples of typological restoration (*Fig. 7*).



*Fig. 4*  
Palermo, Piazza  
Garaffello inside  
the 'Vucciria'  
market



*Fig. 5*  
Palermo,  
abandoned  
buildings in the  
'Tribunali' district

The third category of intervention consists of particularly interesting cases of re-use. We refer generally to those cases where ruins, through compatible transformations and the attempts to preserve existing traces – while not always fully successful – have activated the new practice of the opening of cultural spaces for the old town. Such interventions have often also improved the quarters where the monuments were placed (Fig. 8).

However, it has to be said that these interesting choices of intervention are not always the result of enlightened choices by the public authority. They are often an alternative, and not final, route of progressing incumbent rebuilding projects often forgotten on the desks of the public authorities because of lack of funds to carry them out. A case in point is the preservation of the ruins of Palazzo Bonagia (Fig. 9), which became an enchanting open space concert theatre. A baroque monumental great staircase that has been used as a backdrop for the events is now in a storage yard, due to a rebuilding project for the palace that is being put into effect.

In many cases rebuilding will not take place. The fact that timescales are long, coupled with the lack of funds, will probably save this 'transitional moment' in which both the ruins and their transformation co-exist and are still identifiable, as in the case of the impressive church of the 'Spasimo' and of the garden over its bastion, which has become the venue for some of the summer cultural events of the city. Another instance is the case of the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie di Montevergini. Here, in order to totally preserve the surfaces of the space intended for art and theatre festivals, a new independent steel structure has been built inside, with tents on its sides functioning as scenes.



*Fig. 6*  
Palermo, church  
of 'San Giovanni  
Decollato', in the  
district of 'Palazzo  
Reale'

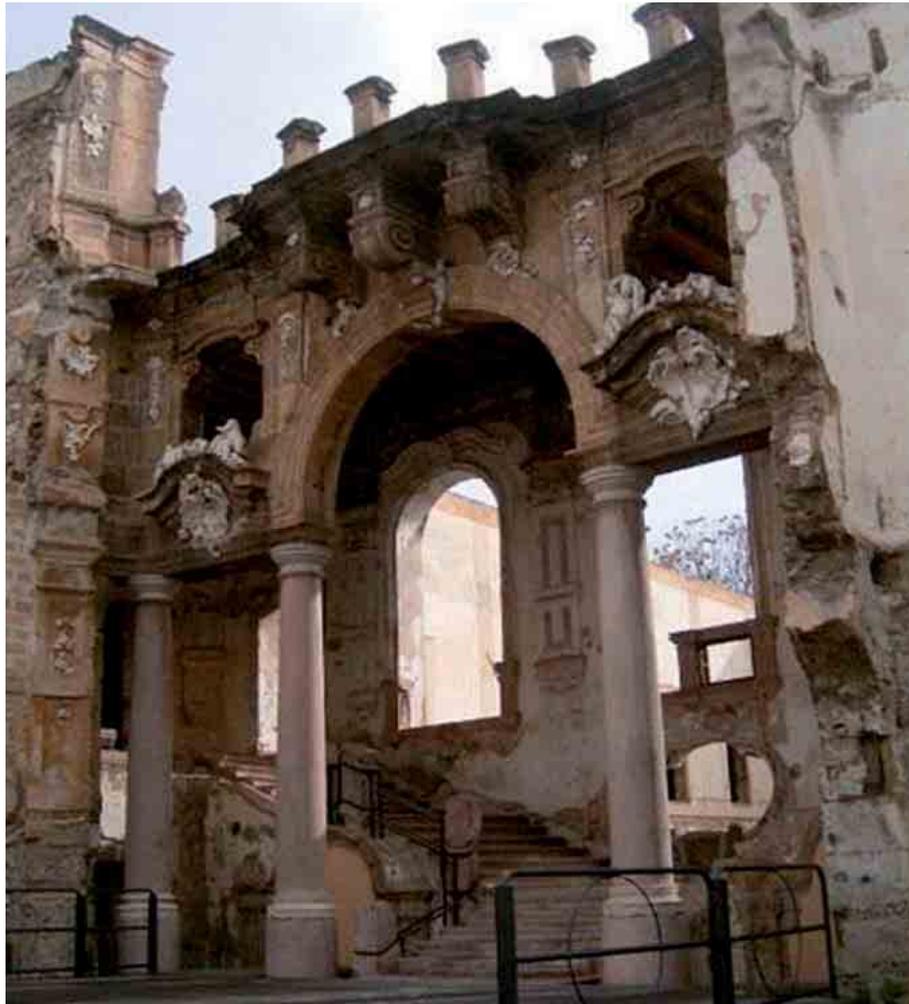


*Fig. 7*  
Palermo, the new  
project for the  
square in front of  
the court of justice



*Fig. 8*  
Palermo, church of  
'Santa Maria allo  
Spasimo'.

This new structure, due to its flexibility, can transform the space according to the needs of the fit-out without clashing with the pre-existing structure. These transformations have so far brought interesting results for both the 'preservation' of what already existed and the architectural 'transformation', with an evident revitalisation of these parts of the historic city, though with all the limitations that have to be acknowledged in each of them.



*Fig. 9*  
Palermo, ruins of  
'Palazzo Bonagia'.

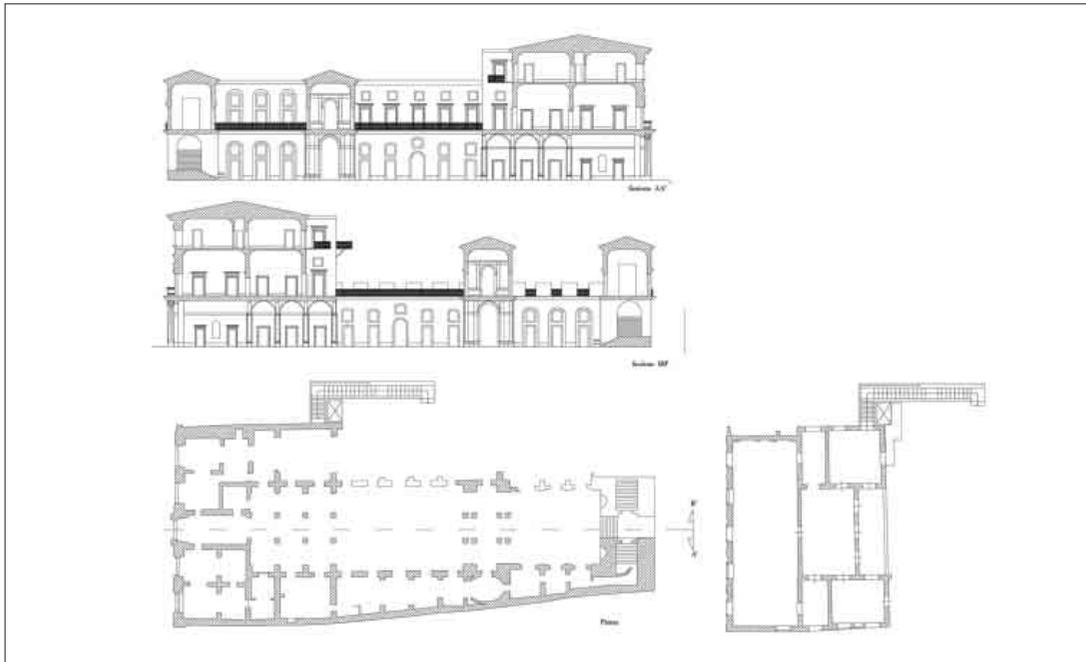
## Two examples: the Palazzo Belmonte-Riso and the 'Teatro Garibaldi'

During the 1943 air raids the Palazzo Belmonte-Riso suffered serious damage from bombing. The whole west wing was razed to the ground, while the east wing was destroyed only in part. The façade remained intact, and together with the rest of the palace, would remain abandoned until 1980, when the palace was bought by the authorities of the Region of Sicily. In the 1990s the palace underwent many interventions: one involving the reconstruction of the floors and of the roof covering, another the preservation – one concerning the surfaces with little addition to the façade and a third one dealing with the treatment of the interior and the surfaces of the court and with rebuilding of just the facades of two courts. In 2001 the palace was opened again to the public and in 2006 it became the seat of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Sicily.

The palace was not rebuilt apart from a portion of the volume of its west wing. This partial rebuilding leaves the typology of the baroque palace visible, with a volume in the façade and two volumes respectively to the right and left of the central court. Following the same requirement of maintaining the character of the baroque style of this space, the wings of the two courts were also rebuilt, with the columns separating them, and the great staircase in the centre as a background for the *efilade* (Fig. 10). The final project (by architect Matteo Scognamiglio), which is today being completed, provides for the building of the full extent of the curtain wall to its original height, with a differing treatment between the inside and outside surfaces of the court (Fig. 11). The rebuilding reproduced solids and voids but not the details on the outer face (Fig. 12). The space which before the bombing was occupied by the palace became an internal garden, hollowed out between the change of level between the blocks open to the air (Fig. 13).

During the works carried out in the 1990s numerous lacunae were discovered in the façade, which is substantially intact. These were restored through infill, treated with a mortar of a colour that was matched to the ashlar masonry but was still perfectly identifiable (Fig. 14). On the façade an intervention has been carried out (supervised by architect Franco Tomaselli) for the preservation of the whole surface. This provided for cleaning by means of a nebulised water system and for the pointing of the joints between the huge ashlar blocks of the limestone-faced wall (Fig. 15).

The surfaces of the courts and of the spaces inside the building have been treated in different ways. While new plasters have been made for the two courts and for the interior façades, for the two floors of the palace the treatment of the walls has been different. For the ground floor and the piano nobile new



*Fig. 10*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo Belmonte-Riso'. The project for a partial rebuilding by the Monuments and Fine Arts Office of Palermo



*Fig. 11*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo Belmonte-Riso'. Inside view on the face walls of the courtyard



*Fig. 10*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo Belmonte-Riso'. Outside view on the face walls of the courtyard.



*Fig. 11*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo Belmonte-Riso'. New staircase of access to the palace from the garden

plasters have been employed and the articulation of the decoration which originally covered the walls has been repropose, with new plasterboard panels. These are laid on the surface of the wall and are distinguishable from the original masonry. The result is the equivalent of an installation, without being imitative and always manifestly recognisable (Fig. 16). Much more interesting is the treatment of the surfaces on the second floor: these were left as they were found, without layering new plasters, thus highlighting all the changes of use, transformations, destructions and abandonments which the building has undergone in the course of time (Fig. 17), including the works for the consolidation and restoration of the lacunae carried out with the last

*Fig. 14*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo  
Belmonte-Riso'.  
Detail of the  
outside façade face  
wall during some  
of the phases of  
the yard



*Fig. 15*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo  
Belmonte-Riso'.  
Façade facing  
'Corso Vittorio  
Emanuele'



intervention.

The result is a space mangled by events. While unfortunately no coherent planning choices are evident, such as sharing the same treatment of the lacunae for all spaces, still the space retains its image thanks also to a new public and cultural use that employs its condition of ruin as a value-added starting point on which to invest for the future (Fig. 18).

The Teatro Garibaldi today faces the huge Piazza della Magione, which as we have seen earlier was created by the ravages of war. It is an Italian-style theatre and was opened by Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1862. Soon after World War II it was damaged by fire, abandoned for many years, then made safe to be used as a ruin (Fig. 19).

Having survived thirty years of decay as a ruin, it resumed use as a theatre at the beginning of the 1990s as a result of an almost archaeological rediscovery that occurred in the 1980s while Leoluca Orlando was the mayor of Palermo (Fig. 20). On that occasion no major work was carried out and the boxes, the stage and the stalls were reused in their spectral condition, leaving the sunlight filtering from the stage tower. The theatre was used by making the most of the infinite possibilities provided by the stage space and by employing contemporaneously both the hall and the stalls – an exploitation

Fig. 16  
Palermo, 'Palazzo  
Belmonte-Riso'.  
Hall, piano nobile



made possible by its particular defective condition caused by the fire and the subsequent carelessness. Only in the last few years has there been a project for restoration which is currently in the final phase of execution.

Today the 'Garibaldi' is a member of the Union of the Theatres of Europe. In 2003 the Union gave it an important acknowledgement as an integrated cultural operation, including the architectural project (by architect Giuseppe Marsala) (Fig. 21). The project, besides modernising the services and bringing its facilities into conformity with today's standards, is all based on a series



*Fig. 17*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo  
Belmonte-Riso'.  
Hall, third floor



*Fig. 18*  
Palermo, 'Palazzo  
Belmonte-Riso'.  
Hall, third floor.

of possible transformations of the stage space and on the flexibility of the relation between stage and audience, which can be challenged continuously and subjected to a wide range of possible changes: mobile stage; retractable apses; natural and artificial light that can be modulated; up to the total dissolution of the boundaries between stage and audience (Fig. 22, 23). At present the yard is still open; there have already been two changes mainly concerning plant engineering problems.

The spoliation of the elements, first through the damage caused by the fire and subsequently through the theft of all the wooden materials, has, paradoxically, 'linked up' the two spaces, the stage and the boxes. Time has become the main actor within this new space that the project aims at giving back, by avoiding the choice of in-style restoration and by including a series of services that are useful for the theatre and the quarter itself (Fig. 24). According to the planner this approach 'does not make the ruin sacred' but is instead a 'project strategy which puts the understanding of the transformations in the primary position'. So far we are still waiting for the results of this transformation of the total theatre which uses the traces of its history as a scene to be narrated, and are hoping they are encouraging. The transformation involves a new roof covering using wooden trusses, and a few added elements in the stage and boxes. At the same time, the lacunae are considered as resources of the project that should be turned to better account and brought out (Fig. 25). The proposal contained in the project is to leave the signs of time by not replastering the interiors.

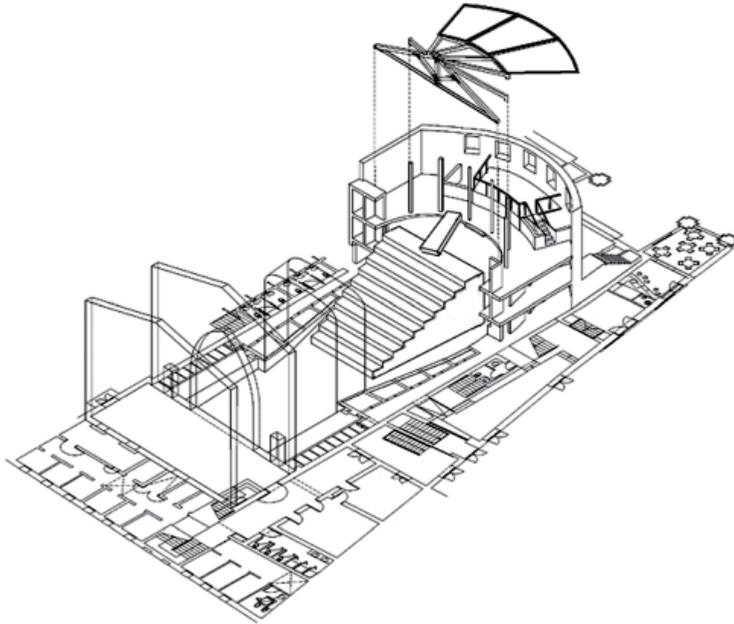
*\* Introduction by Antonella Cangelosi, the two following paragraphs by Zaira Barone.*



*Fig. 19*  
Palermo, 'Teatro  
Garibaldi' before  
the interventions



*Fig. 20*  
Palermo, 'Teatro  
Garibaldi' after the  
first reinforcing  
interventions



*Fig. 21*  
Palermo, 'Teatro  
Garibaldi'.  
Axonometric  
projection of the  
last project

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# Modern architectural heritage as a catalyst for education in conservation

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## Introduction

This contribution addresses the search for a role for modern architecture in the field of heritage education. The conservation of the heritage of our recent past is more and more frequently a topic of concern, both in practice and in the case studies developed in restoration courses or retraining workshops. There is a need for focused debate on the issue, as confirmed by the attention given by students on postgraduate courses and by workshops dedicated to the theme. The subject is presented as new, provocative and capable of renewing approaches to restoration. This issue is important, as restoration is often seen as already pre-defined, immovable, conservative and synonymous with the museum. The conservation of modern heritage, overcoming the technical problems and facing the challenges of the contemporary cultural, social and economic roles of heritage, is having to contend both with its own increasing complexity and with the contemporary evolution of conservation. The objective of this paper is to demonstrate that the conservation of modern heritage, even if not existent as a discipline, can exist as an educational tool, as a model, as a section of reality, and can be effective in addressing problems and pointing out conservation contradictions.

## Conservation evolving

'It has to be recognised that a language cannot be invented, as a lifestyle cannot. It has to be recognised that language is transformed to adapt to reality and to formalise it. There will not be room for the classification of what deserves special conservation attention or not. Everything will be recognised as an integral part of space, understood as a collective heritage, is subject, as such, to change and continuity'. (Siza 1997). Transformation within the existing built landscape is one of the most-discussed and thought-provoking issues across the disciplines of design. Conservation of what we consider cultural heritage is, in turn, one of the most challenging kinds of transformation because of the explicit, direct and difficult issue of dealing with the necessity for transformation/ evolution, as against the need for permanence/memory.

Nowadays the idea of keeping and caring for existing architectural assets is increasingly connected with the concept of the sustainability of our acting/designing within the built landscape<sup>1</sup>. These principles had already been identified and expressed in the 1970s within the statements of Integrated Conservation (Council of Europe 1975) and Planned Conservation (Urbani 2000). But the awareness of a necessary paradigm shift is recent (Avrami et al. 2000, Teutonico and Matero 2003, Pereira 2007, Gustafsson and Rosvall 2008, Engelbrektsson and Rosvall 2009). The economical and historical unsustainability of conserving individual monuments estranged from their context and environment led to a new awareness of the necessity for a holistic/systemic perspective for the management of change. Principles of 'sustainable conservation' are yet to be established (Johansson 2008), but the social demand to master the interactions between environment and cultural heritage, preservation/enhancement and economics are clear (Randall 2005, Capello 2007, Lehtovuori and Schmidt-Thomé 2007, Della Torre 2010). Within the field of architectural education, this is evident merely by looking at student preferences for graduate courses aimed at environmental and sustainable issues.

Any analysis taking into consideration the evolution of the idea of conservation must deal first of all with the evolution of the idea of heritage. Today this idea has become a nomadic concept, whose semantic abundance may result in the loss of any denotative capacity. The most advanced scholars, both in design and in conservation, are aware of the challenges posed by a heritage that is becoming global, and is then on the one hand, becoming the counterweight to the loss of memory (but in the sense of *fétichisme du patrimoine*, as defined by Françoise Choay 2006), and on the other hand, becoming a marketable consumer product. This situation, and the expansion of categories and objects that constitute heritage, increasingly highlight the importance of an anthropological approach to the underlying mechanisms.

The concerns of the design project are clear in Rem Koolhaas' talk, significantly entitled 'Preservation is Overtaking Us'. He represents a contemporary reality, in which everything we inhabit is potentially susceptible to preservation if we consider objects on the basis of their sociological substance, thus opening the possibility of including every type of building as part of our heritage. At the same time, the scale of preservation enlarges relentlessly to include entire landscapes. 'We are living in an incredibly exciting and slightly absurd moment, namely that preservation is overtaking us. Maybe we can be the first to actually experience the moment that preservation is no longer a retroactive activity but becomes a prospective activity.' (Koolhaas 2004:1-2)<sup>2</sup>.

Kathleen Dardes expresses, on the other side of the argument, the idea that:

*'while conservation was once viewed as a largely technical field,*

*conservation professionals now must be alert to the cultural, spiritual, economic, and other values inherent in heritage — values that may play a role in their decision making. In short, conservation's knowledge base is not just increasing — it is changing' (Dardes 2009). The most interesting among these changes are expressed in the awareness of relativism of our cultural positions, of the need for transdisciplinarity, and in the longterm vision of Planned Conservation, addressed in Stefano Della Torre's more recent works: 'to understand the mechanisms by which culture and heritage, and its forms of recognition, determine local identity, social capital, a weaker or stronger attitude to innovation' (Della Torre 2010).*

### **Evolution of modern restoration**

From its inception, within the realm of disciplines connected with restoration, the status of being modern has posed challenges for conventional practices and theories. Twentieth-century modernism became an acknowledged part of heritage and thus the object of conservation some time ago.

But with the rise of the 'Modern Monument' (Casciato 2002), the usual approaches have been stretched to their limits and even beyond, to the extent that the creations of the recent past have achieved their own space and identity, being apparently different from other kinds of historic construction<sup>3</sup>.

This notion was also mistakenly supported by the existence of programmes and institutions devoted to twentieth-century modernism, such as the 'ICOMOS 20th Century Heritage International Scientific Committee', the UNESCO World Heritage Centre's 'Modern Heritage Programme' and the UIA XXth Century Architectural Heritage Repository. In addition, the activities of DOCOMOMO, partners in these and other initiatives, have often been misunderstood. The need for reflection and attention to modernist roots has been interpreted as defining a separate field of study. Although the opportunity to reflect on the three dynamic dimensions of the concept of the modern (modernisation, modernity, modernism, corresponding to technical, social, aesthetic dimensions) – which would have represented a crucial moment of debate between academics, institutions of protection and the professional world – has effectively been shelved (Casciato 1998, 1999). 'Modern Heritage Restoration' has been set apart as a quite distinct discipline, based on its own conservation practices.

Issues arising out of such characteristics as the use of experimental details, the utilisation of new materials, solutions that had a short life-expectancy, or unknowns such as the materials' behavior or their capacity for decay, all highlight hidden crisis points. These may be regarding design issues, such as the difficult possible relationships between the new and the existing, or regarding preservation issues, for example, the replacement of mass industrially produced elements that are no longer available. Furthermore, the relationship between a

building and its documentation is seen to be definitely different – most notably as regards the photographic record, and also with regard to the emphasis on decay and replacement. The usual mechanisms underpinning the pre-modern built heritage seem not to be exactly appropriate: everything seems to be the exception to the rule – for example, the possibility of replicas.

Nowadays, after many experiences, the conservation of modernist buildings can no longer be considered so exceptional and experimental, and we could wonder if there are sound reasons for a distinction in the conservation realm between modern and pre-modern heritage.

The preservation of twentieth-century architecture, indeed, has been changing, evolving, and expanding both in scope and complexity over the last twenty years. In the same way as Modernism is not reducible to the white MoMo western masterpieces, but is nowadays recognised as a much more complex unity of fragments (Jokilehto 2003, Panayotis 2007), so preservation issues have to be considered together with changing political, social and economic situations, and with changes in our perception (Andrieux and Chevallier 2005, van den Heuvel et al. 2008, Canziani 2009). Tracing for example, the history of DOCOMOMO, it is clear that the conservation of modern heritage is perceived as becoming much more complex and less reducible to simple problems of techniques. Sessions and round tables of the last DOCOMOMO conference were indeed very significant, covering such topics as: Issues of Temporality; Buildings and Ideologies; Monuments and Icons; Myth Authenticity and Lived Practices; Landscape of Modernity; F(r)ictions of Flexibility; Sustainable Conservation Practice; and Education in Transformation.

It must be recognised, however, that despite the emergence of a differing point of view among more involved scholars, there remains the persistence of a common different mindset in the approach towards modern buildings as opposed to pre-modern ones, and persistent commonplace views about their inevitable restoration to former/original conditions.

### **Conserving the modern as a challenging educational issue**

Within the framework of evolution as set out, a critical re-reading is required of the approaches used so far on modern heritage conservation. From the educational standpoint, we should consider the following: even if the theme of modern conservation is not really distinct from that of the conservation of other types of heritage, it may well be, instead, an extremely efficient model for educational reasons, because it is deeply thought-provoking. It demands that the design project abandons the stereotypes of the relationships between old and new. It forces a confrontation with a less that is more, forces one to look for differences where others see the similarities. And above all, it requires the subject (the architect) to deal with objects, spaces, ways of living (and

consequently with a system of values) perceived as belonging to his cultural world, but in that moment put under discussion.

Going beyond the concerns related to techniques and materials leaves room for much more fruitful issues, for questions about 'why' we conserve rather than about 'how'. Among these issues are highlighted the overcoming of monumental emergence, the reflection on values, the mechanisms of recognition, and the constant evolution of understandings of what comprises heritage.

The nature of the challenge, which is associated with the large number and range of uses, means that we must address the idea of transcending the dominance of the single, exceptional monument, in favor of a focus on a more diffused heritage and context. This means finding the most appropriate ways to govern the transformation and evolution of large ensembles and open spaces, excluding any tendency to turn them into museums. The lack of monumentality forces us to address directly the issue of recognised or recognisable values, among which economic value has its own relevance.

Any reasoning about values that are related to modern heritage also leads to confrontation with the idea that its 'meaning' lies not only in its physical substance, but also in its ideas. Therefore, if the 'significance' does not reside so much in its materiality as in its intellectual achievements, then it is about 'essence' rather than 'substance'. Every consideration of conservation effort should be based on this difference. Of course, this approach is open to question<sup>4</sup>. We can only conserve the material of the architectural work – all the rest can only be reconstructed, reproduced or recalled. But on the other hand, we cannot ignore this intangible side of modernism – it is clear that the elements of the problem must be considered together, otherwise the idea of a 'conceptual authenticity' is compromised. There are plenty of documents, drawings, writings and images for modern constructions, but the uncritical use of this knowledge can go badly wrong, leading towards the restoration of supposed original states – or indeed, supposed ideas. Inevitably, as noted by France Vanlaethem and Céline Poisson, 'closely examining the arguments of professionals advocating conceptual authenticity, it is clear that the so-called preserved idea is less the concept existing at the start of the project, and more historiography's interpretation of it' (2008: 128).

The acute awareness of the multiple dimensions underlying the modern, inevitable (and wise) shortcomings in contemporary historical interpretation, is accompanied by another characteristic that is particularly significant for the relationship with conservation: that of recognition<sup>5</sup>. Far too often, there is a low level of awareness with regard to modern architecture and landscape – they are unrecognised heritage and still 'too new'. In other words, their use value prevails, and this cannot compensate for their limited ability to embody an

historic presence. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a large part of what has been built during the last century belongs to the domain of history, most of the time even before it has been listed by law as worthy of protection.

This should prompt a review of communication processes. Indeed crucial are: the efficiency of communication with regard to conservation principles that inform the choices (during the phases of a conservation work, directed towards users and other stakeholders and aimed to getting shared decisions); and with regard to the expected image of architecture as an educational task directed towards local communities<sup>6</sup>. This leads to becoming aware of the prejudices of modernity, and to becoming aware of the inevitable re-interpretation of heritage that each age applies in accordance with its own values. Using Peter Eisenman's example, to recreate the Barcelona Pavillion or to have someone to look at it and see within it the spirit of 1929, or what it signified at that time, is an impossibility because of the very culture that we live in (Cooke 2002:269). As Miles Glendinning has accurately highlighted, this is not a trivial task. It requires 'establishing and maintaining "the facts" (however defined)' and 'setting them carefully into their proper social and political context rather than disassembling them as timeless form-givers' (2008:73-74).

The fact that the boundaries of modern heritage are moving constantly forward, and that the dividing-line between modern and contemporary is blurred and sometimes highly subjective, blurs any distinction made between what is the heritage (and thus historicised and subject of conservation), and what is not yet capable of evaluation (and therefore part of a system subject to the rules of architectural design). Any distinction between architects and conservators then seems to be very temporary and vague. Keeping the modern is actually a design opportunity with a high critical potential, one that requires full understanding of the modern project, and reveals all the contradictions of the conservation project. This is actually one of the most discussed issues within the relationship between the architecture and conservation disciplines (UIA 2008, Kealy 2008, Stovel 2008) taking place in the context of the social, technological and cultural transformation of our time, but it is not yet seen to be central to the pedagogy of architectural education (Kealy 2008).

### **Learning from the Modern**

The comparison between two different experiences of DOCOMOMO International Workshops can lead us to some interesting conclusions with respect to the educational potential of the theme.

In the case of the Istanbul<sup>7</sup> workshop, which focused on the case of Ataköy, the goal was to conduct a detailed analysis campaign, and to offer guidance and documentation for sustainable conservation, the assessment of the significance of the utopian aspiration of the project and, at the same time, understand how

architecture is amended by inhabitants and how it can evolve in the future. After an initial emphasis just on 'original' qualities, it was accepted that it was not only impossible to deny the changes of use, but that these metamorphoses gave substance and contemporaneity to that heritage. The comparison between different approaches and conceptions showed the value of challenging prejudices and convictions in order to verify their operational effectiveness. From this point of view, it was significant that while some groups reached an effective, final synthesis, others faced insurmountable difficulties where there was no sharing of values represented by modern heritage.

The Rotterdam<sup>8</sup> workshop instead chose to focus on the functional response that an adjustment of the architecture of the area of Coolsingel required today. Objects were identified and their history and current needs were described. The preeminence accorded to the architectural project overlooked, however, a more complex argument about the relationship between the need for transformation, and that for permanence and memory. The supposed hermeneutical potential of the architectural design was not critically appraised or questioned. The response of the project, without any reflection addressed towards some of the issues noted above, has sought a re-enactment of the past, one that actually shelved any relationship between conservation and architecture in the various design proposals.

In this case, the strong emphasis on the development of creative engagement has been the sign of a disjunction between architecture and conservation, resolved to the detriment of both. In the words of Stefano Musso, we could say that 'it is plain to see how difficult it is for this sector's teaching to satisfy the fundamental need to conjugate prerequisites of the analytic study on the existing objects (method?) as well as the creative and projective needs (for their own essence synthetic or holistic) in a framework requiring great severity' (Musso 2008). Perhaps the duration of a workshop is too short to deal with such complex, multidisciplinary issues as those previously identified as pertaining to the modern: the constant evolution of what is heritage, the reflection on values, the problems of recognition. Moreover, it is not possible to go back on former elaborations in a path of trial and error and feedback<sup>9</sup>, and the linear process of the architectural project does not allow one to deal with the complex reality of heritage (Della Torre 2008: 150). Giving up on dealing with the way in which we construct and deconstruct the relationships with our recent past means leaving the subject without any hermeneutical and educational potential. Inevitably, this trivialises it. Overcoming stereotypes also involves thinking about the relationship between teaching and learning, because 'students are not necessarily learning what we think we are teaching' (Kealy 2008:42). For example, when we put the emphasis on knowledge of the original message,

that message can be translated into a predominance of historical value that leads to the choice of restoring a supposed original.

The experience of the case study of Kilkenny, during the EAAE workshop, has significantly demonstrated that in dealing with a diffused heritage without any architectural design task to respond to, themes have emerged that go far beyond the built object. The final synthesis has moved from macro issues such as Design and Conservation – contrast/accordance of new interventions (planning and policies) with the idea of identity/memory to Communication – pointing out the importance of inhabitants' perception and awareness of the conservation issues.

If 'heritage conservation is a continuous challenge to commonplaces, to standard solutions, to established beliefs', if 'the learning attitude operating inside conservation activities is also the attitude to unlearn, that is to criticise commonplaces and to get free from the bounds of misunderstood traditions' (Della Torre 2010), then modern heritage can stimulate new habits of thought. But the primary educational goal must be to constantly rethink the model and prove the conditions under which it continues to be effective, that is, giving methodological tools for rethinking and the experience of problem-solving (Cooke 2002) rather than technical solutions<sup>10</sup>.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is raising the awareness that to the sustainability's 3Es – economy, environment, equity – we should add the C of Culture. 'Yet, while there are many definitions of sustainable development, it can perhaps be better understood as an emerging vision rather than as a neatly defined concept or relationship. In truth, it is as much an ethical precept as a scientific concept, as concerned with notions of equity as with theories of global warming. Sustainable development is widely understood to involve the natural sciences and economics, but it is even more fundamentally concerned with culture: with the values people hold and how they perceive their relations with others. It responds to an imperative need to imagine a new basis for relationships among peoples and with the habitat that sustains human life' (UNESCO 1997:14).

<sup>2</sup> See also the other essays in the same *Future Anterior* issue dedicated to new conservation methods and boundaries.

<sup>3</sup> This is particularly true for the white architecture following the rules of the Modern Movement and International Style, but within this essay the word 'modern' is never used as synonymous with the Modern Movement, but rather as applying to any expression of Modernism up to the contemporary.

<sup>4</sup> For example, is replacing industrially mass-produced original components with handcraft elements an unacceptable betrayal of the original spirit? What problems arise from an integration of a glass blocks wall, where that type of block is no longer available and the new blocks, redone manually one by one, are recognisable as different? Is such a issue technical, theoretical or aesthetic?

<sup>5</sup> Modern heritage is particularly sensitive to the issues related to acknowledgment or recognition. The use of the two terms is equivalent, but the roots of 'acknowledgement' (from *knouen*; to know, see) do not suggest an awareness that something perceived had been previously perceived, as in 'recognition' (from the Latin *recogniti*; from *recognoscere*, to know again; from re- + *cognoscere*, to know, ascertain). Recognition is in any case used with a direct recall to the concept of Riconoscimento as used by Cesare Brandi in his Theory of Restoration.

<sup>6</sup> On attention to communication and education, let us quote the UIA Architectural Education

Commission. Reflection group: Heritage Education. Report July 2008: 'Professional training should be supported by a public campaign based on special but continuous education at pre-school and school levels, aimed at forming cultural/social values and priorities, including an understanding of how related fields of urban and regional planning, landscape architecture and civil engineering intersect with the built forms'.

<sup>7</sup> 'How to Preserve a Housing Utopia. The documentation and sustainability of modern heritage', Istanbul 2006. The large satellite neighborhood of Istanbul overlooking the Sea of Marmara is a single entity in which the built environment, community areas, urban green spaces, pedestrian and vehicle paths are integrated, suggesting a successful model of modern planning to recognise, protect and enhance.

<sup>8</sup> 'The Challenge of Change – Strategies for the Coolsingel strip, Rotterdam' 2008. The Coolsingel strip, developed just after the Second World War along one of the major arteries of the city, contains many large city blocks that are designated state monuments or important city heritage. It is currently under the threat of redevelopment.

<sup>9</sup> The importance of drawing a circular reflection of the themes of conservation is something that has emerged strongly in our own teaching experience in workshops on architectural restoration in the M.Sc. architectural degree at Politecnico di Milano. The reduction to semi-annual workshops made the learning process very difficult.

<sup>10</sup> I would like to quote here the very challenging experience of the workshops held within the Erasmus Intensive Programme entitled 'Reworking the Modern Movement'. Online URL: [www.reworking-the-modern-movement.org](http://www.reworking-the-modern-movement.org) and Jung et al, 2008.

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# Ancient Buildings and Contemporary Arts: conservation, re-use and transformation of the Insula of Santa Maria Donnaregina in the historic centre of Naples

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## Ancient Buildings and Contemporary Arts

Dealing with the conservation, reuse and transformation of the *insula*\* of Santa Maria Donnaregina in the historical centre of Naples means facing many issues concerning its urban and architectural restoration and the rehabilitation of its monumental buildings of different periods, which have been sometimes affected by unfortunate past interventions. It will not be possible, of course, to cover all these topics in this paper, although, since a whole section of the ancient centre of Naples has been used as Museum of Contemporary Art (*MADRE*), some consideration of the different planning scales can be undertaken.

The renovation of the architectural complex, resulting from the unification of two buildings dating respectively from the 17th and 19th centuries, was conceived around the idea of creating a new museum. As will be clarified later, the original buildings have lost their connotation because of the new configuration created by the Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza Vieira. Moreover the board of the new museum resolved to link it with the adjacent fourteenth-century church of Santa Maria Donnaregina. This has also been used as an art exhibition space. As will be explained later in relation to the choices of artwork, this usage has not been able to harmonise with the medieval architecture of the church and its remarkable sculpture of Tino da Camaino on the left side of the transept. In this regard, it is worth remembering what Roberto Pane noted in 1964; he made the point that it is necessary to avoid a situation where 'the practical adaptation of an ancient building could be harmful for the whole structure of the monument itself' (Pane 1987). Such a

risk could also arise with regard to the maintenance of the original use of the building, while often 'uses which are very different from the original ones can be much more respectful of the integrity of the work itself'.

Indeed, this is what happened in the fourteenth-century church of Donnaregina, when it became the home of the School of Specialisation in Restoration of Monuments (at present 'in Architectural and Environmental Heritage') in 1969. This current use, as Arnaldo Venditti has noted, can be considered as 'an exemplary case of a conservative use, fully respectful of the ancient building and of its relevant historical and spiritual values' (Venditti 2004). On the contrary, one cannot agree with the use of the church made by the MADRE Museum since 2007. To date, the contemporary art exhibitions have considered the architecture of Donnaregina church as though it was an anonymous container for artworks, instead of pursuing a dialogue between the old and new elements.

As it will be explained in the next paragraphs, the poor sensitivity of the administration and board of the MADRE Museum are seen in its misunderstanding of the cultural significance of the site. If different strategies had been put in place, such as an open debate with the local cultural interests and people with experience in conservation and cultural heritage re-use, the church would have become an important resource for the Campania region. Moreover, the authors believe that it has been important to participate in this relevant international Workshop, in order to clarify the negative aspects of what they consider to be an intervention not sufficiently thought through. Luckily enough, there is still time to make some improvements and some desirable changes.

### **Planning in the historical city: Álvaro Siza and the MADRE**

The Neapolitan cultural panorama of the 1990s was characterised by a renewed interest in contemporary art. This artistic activity was expressed through the relationship between the urban scene, distinguished by its 'permanent' character, and the artistic expression, often an open space, with its relative and transitory values. This affiliation between art and urban space started in Naples, symbolically, with the *Mountain of Salt* by Mimmo Paladino, installed in front of the Royal Palace in December 1995. Subsequently, a sequence of happenings represents some of the most remarkable peaks of a programme set up to open the city to new trends of art. These were: the artistic installations in the historical Plebiscito Square; the opening of a contemporary art section in the National Museum of Capodimonte; the city subway stations conceived as art places for passersby and expressively named 'stations of art'. One can include, as a successor to these events, the wider programme for the re-

use of the *Palazzo Donnaregina*, a structure composed of different buildings occupying a large section of an *insula*\* of the ancient centre of Naples. A strong political impetus was mobilised behind the conversion of this complex into a permanent museum of contemporary art, with the name of *M.A.D.RE.* (Museum of contemporary Art Donna REGina) (MADRE 2006). The site on which the museum has been housed, even though environmentally degraded, has potentials of some importance and is attractive; the adjacent *insula*\*, towards the west, is occupied by the old medieval church of Santa Maria Donnaregina, with its important Angevin architecture and its peculiarities in the Neapolitan context. Moreover, close to the latter there is the Diocesan Museum, arranged in the new seventeenth-century church of Donnaregina, a place of cultural activity and with an artistic heritage of high level in the context of the history of Naples.

Close by the city walls, which originated in the fifth century B.C. (Nava 2006), the MADRE is bounded by two *cardines*\*, corresponding to the *Vico Donnaregina* and to the *Via Loffredi*. The *Palazzo Donnaregina* is, in reality, the aggregation of an architectural core, historically recorded in the seventeenth century as *Palazzo Capano*, and the adjacent 'pawnshop', a building erected in the second half of the nineteenth century for the activity of money lending, on the security of personal objects surrendered. The nineteenth-century building was arranged according to a three-sided plan – defining a long rectangular courtyard inside – corresponding to piece of land which was left empty until the nineteenth century (*Fig. 1*).

The remarkable programme of the nineteenth-century transformations was followed by the construction, at the beginning of the twentieth century, of an upper-level atrium, engaging part of the courtyard, and of a block in reinforced concrete, hiding the seventeenth-century façade of the Capano's building and its portal in *piperno* stone. Finally, in the second half of the twentieth century, the architectural complex was affected by further alterations, such as the creation of partitions and lofts within the existing volumes.

Abandoned since 2001, the complex was sold in 2005 by the banking group *San Paolo Imi* to the Campania district, with the intention of converting it into a museum of contemporary art in line with the aforementioned cultural programme. The project for the conversion of the whole complex started in March 2004 and was completed in May 2007, under the direction of the Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza Vieira, assisted in the planning process and supervision of works by the DAZ study in Naples (*Figg. 2, 3*).

From the outset, it was intended in the phasing of the intervention that the museums sections would open first, while the works in the yard were being completed, over a timeframe of a year and a half. In June 2005 the spaces

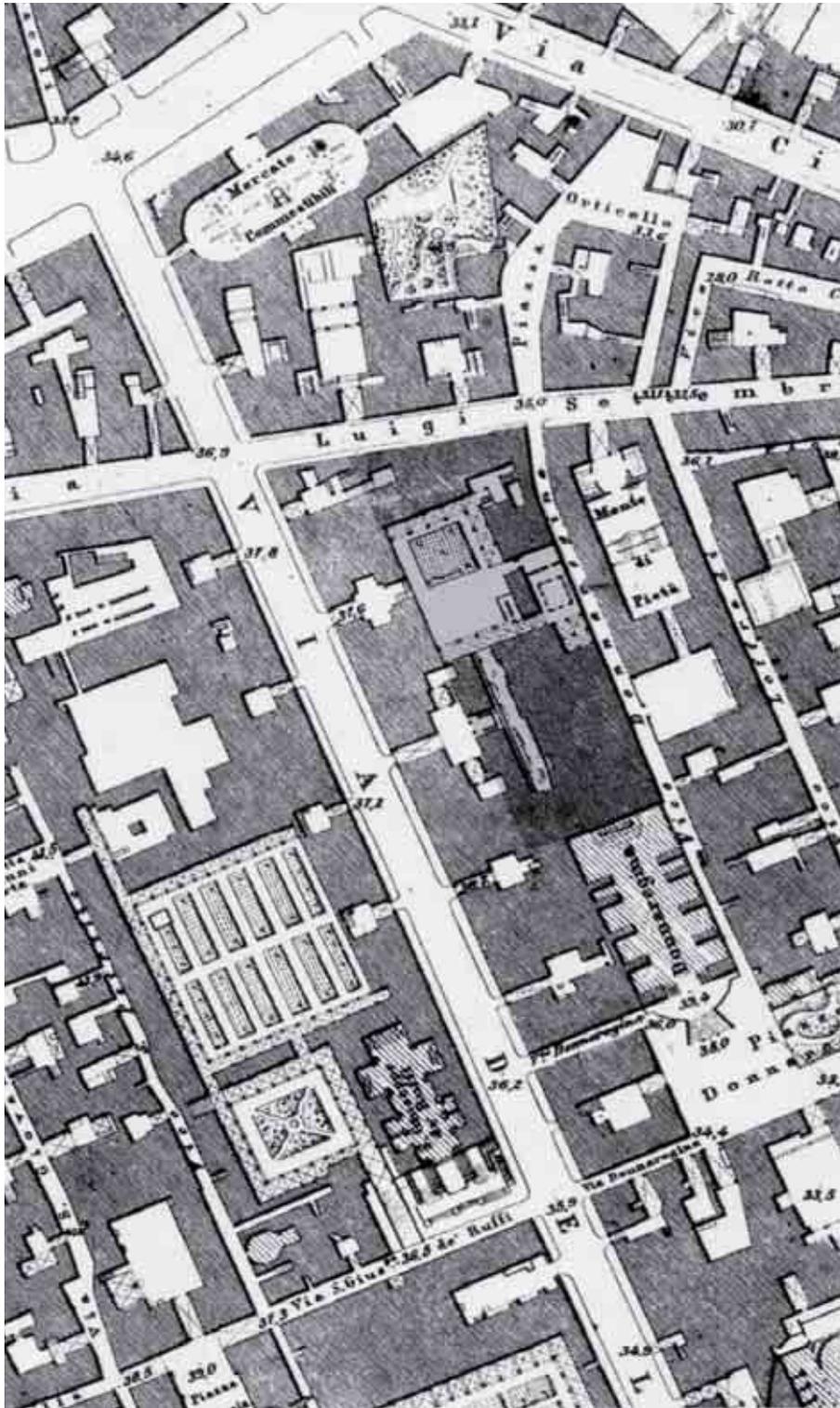
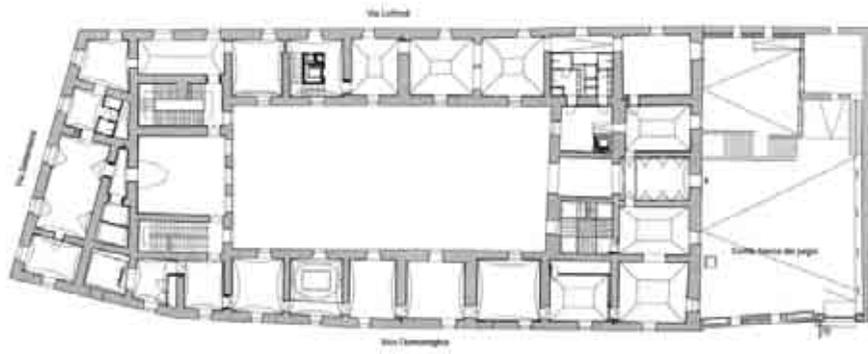
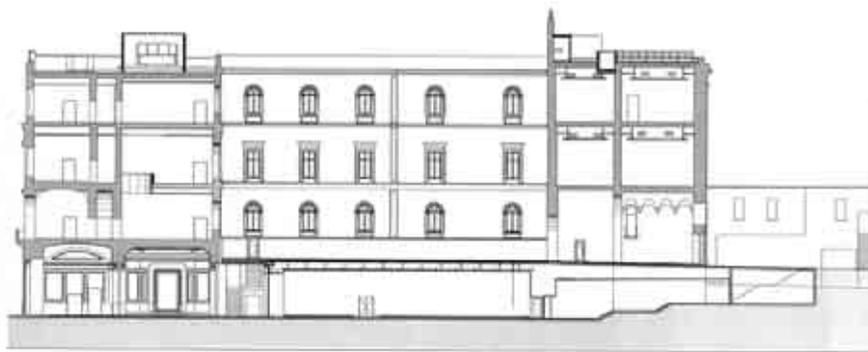


Fig. 1  
F. Schiavoni,  
*Pianta del  
Comune di Napoli*,  
(1872-1880), fol.  
13. Detail with  
the two *insulae*  
corresponding  
to the monastic  
complex of Santa  
Maria Donnaregina  
and to the adjacent  
buildings, used as  
pawnshop in the  
second half of 19th  
century

**Fig. 2**  
Naples, MADRE  
Museum. Plan  
of the first floor,  
containing site-  
specific art works



**Fig. 3**  
Naples, MADRE  
Museum.  
Longitudinal  
section. The  
excavation  
carried out for the  
construction of  
a multifunctional  
room can be noted  
corresponding  
to the internal  
courtyard



of the first level were opened with *site-specific* exhibitions (Giardiello 2005; Vergine 2006) (Fig. 4). In December 2005 the second level with the permanent museum collection (Fig. 5) and, finally in April 2006, the rooms of the third level were opened, housing the temporary exhibitions, among which the first one – on the work of Jannis Kounellis – stands out.

Thus the intervention planned by Siza caused, within a short time, the merging of buildings from different periods within a unifying function. The architect's own approach of 'understanding the building's spatial structure and potentials as the answer in addressing the new needs', has represented, according to the architect himself, the guideline in the re-design of the building, with a synchronic process within the study of the existing architecture and 'almost simultaneously, the action' (n.d. '*Un progetto felice*' con Álvaro Siza).

The MADRE museum-logic programme has provided, on the different floors of the building, a sequence of rooms with permanent and monographic exhibitions, spaces permanently dedicated to art experiences of the second half of the last century and, at the top level of the building, areas reserved for temporary exhibitions. Other spaces of complementary functions – a



*Fig. 4*  
Naples, MADRE  
Museum. The  
second floor room  
with the *Ave Ovo*  
by Francesco  
Clemente (2005).  
The hole in the  
floor puts the  
two levels of the  
room in a visual  
correspondence  
(photo V. Russo  
2009)



*Fig. 5*  
Naples, MADRE  
Museum.  
Second floor  
room dedicated  
to the museum  
permanent  
collection (photo V.  
Russo 2009)

specialised library, a restaurant, a bookshop and a large multifunctional room – are added to the exhibitions to provide diversification of uses in the museum. This new institution has quite rapidly become an important reference for people interested in the evolution of contemporary art. Probably unfamiliar with the objectives of architectural heritage conservation

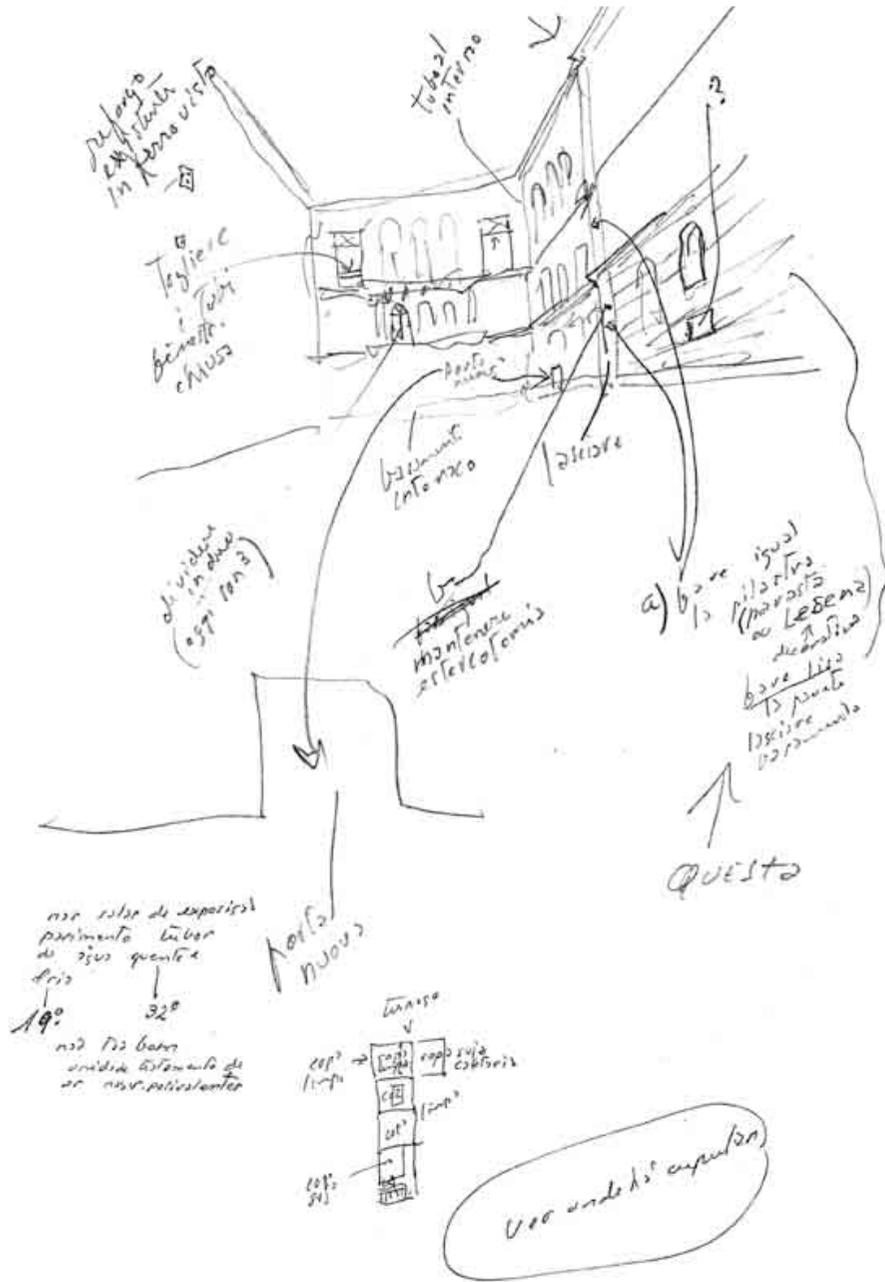


Fig. 6  
 Á. Siza Viera,  
 study of the details  
 of the vertical walls  
 in the internal  
 courtyard (from  
 Vergine 2006,  
 p. 90)

in its diachronic stratifications, the architect has pursued a methodology aimed at giving a new meaning to the structure rather than of restoring it. As Siza's sketches also give us to understand (Fig. 6), the design solutions seem to derive from an observation of the old architecture as *hic et nunc*. In fact, the architect gives prominence to single architectural details, almost as if exhibiting them, rather than pursuing the maintenance of the architecture of Capano Palace/Pawnshop as a palimpsest of historical signs. This has been well achieved for the fifth-century B.C. city wall, visible in correspondence of the box-office, and also for the portal of the Capano's building, enhanced in its roughness by contrast to the smooth plaster (Fig. 7).

Therefore, precise interventions, accompanied by the simplicity of the sign, have connoted the design methodologies of Siza as we experience them in the Neapolitan museum: there is a reduction in the 'signature' of the architect, which tends towards a calm neutrality of the whole, leaving only to the architectural detail the task of referring to the remote origins of the building. The author would like to refer to the extensive use of white plaster and plasterboard walls, the clearly false ceilings to rooms, and the uniformity of the flooring as reunifying the different building elements at each level, as to give an order to the disorder of the pre-existing structures.

*Fig. 7*  
Naples, MADRE Museum. Detail of the Capano Palace's façade. The opening which interrupts the *piperno* portal is the trace of an alteration carried out in the second half of 20th century (photo A. Pane 2009)



The intervention has assumed a character of 'lightness' (Giardiello 2005; Anon 2009) that corresponds to a formal result, but not giving indications of the process that has led to that result. It is a process through which the historical structure is interpreted and transformed by conspicuous subtractions. It entails accepting the cost of such works as, for example: the demolition of the aforementioned atrium; the excavation in the central courtyard in order to create a multifunctional space (Fig. 8); the major makeup of the floor slabs and the new reinforced concrete walls. Instead of a minimal approach and the maintenance of the fabric evidence, the architect has appeared more interested in visually opening the space to the dense context of the ancient centre of Naples, re-designing the openings, the building boundaries and its roof. In fact, the concrete block near to the Capano Palace was demolished, with the purpose of visually connecting the museum with the fourteenth-century church of Santa Maria Donnaregina, while the boundary wall has been re-designed with an over-scaled crenellation (Fig. 9). The internal circulation, as laid out, ends on the roof terrace (Fig. 10), where the air conditioning plant and ducts have been installed, although these are concealed by pebbles and grass (Anon 2009).

In conclusion, the Madre is an intervention in which the usual mark of Siza can be hardly recognised, especially if it is compared to his *ex novo* works. The solutions adopted by the architect in the Neapolitan example reflect a method of fine research, carried out with an approach that almost amounts to a 'reduction', and with the preference for the subtraction of parts rather than of their addition (Basso Peressut 2007); the slender bridge, a curved steel plate

*Fig. 8*  
Naples, MADRE  
Museum. The  
ground floor  
multifunctional  
room  
corresponding to  
the courtyard. An  
art installation by  
Jannis Kounellis  
(photo Studio DAZ  
2006) is illustrated.



built to link two wings of the museum, appears among the few and clearly distinctive signs of the work of a protagonist of contemporary architecture in his dealing with an historic building (Fig. 11).

### Contemporary arts in medieval buildings: the MADRE in the old church of Santa Maria Donnaregina

A few months after completing the refurbishment works designed by Siza for the MADRE, the board of the new museum – with the backing of the president of Campania district – showed an interest in reusing the fourteenth-century



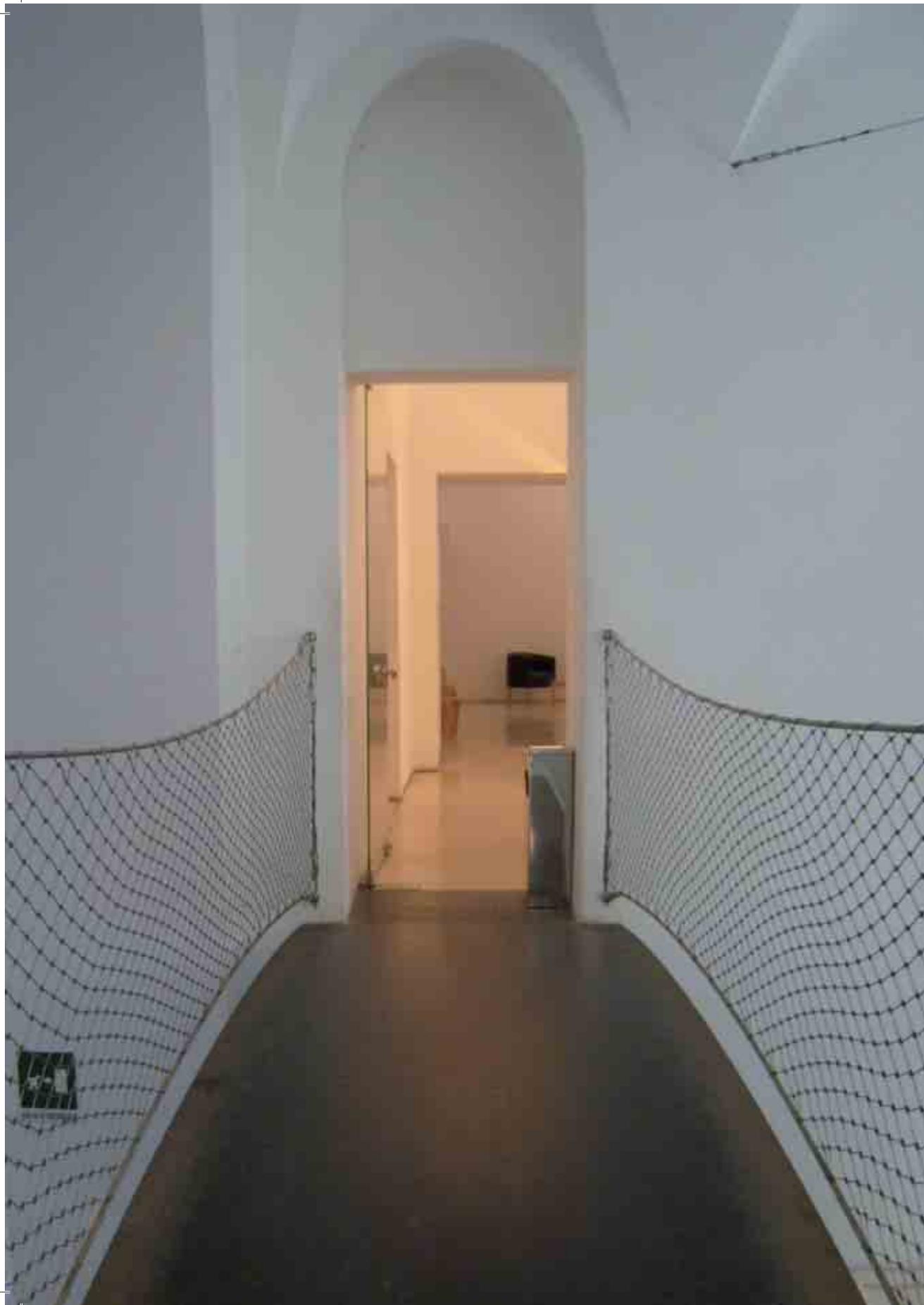
*Fig. 9*  
Naples, MADRE Museum. The second courtyard resulting from the demolition of concrete volumes. Below is the wall that separates the museum from the *vico Donnaregina* and, in the background, the 14th century church (photo A. Pane 2009)

church of Donnaregina, located beside the museum and separated from it by the homonymous lane. Indeed, the MADRE wanted to extend the permanent exhibition with other temporary art exhibitions, using the impressive space of the medieval church as a setting for contemporary artworks.

Since 1975 the church of Donnaregina has been temporarily let to the University of Naples Federico II, which used it to house the School of Restoration of Monuments, founded by Roberto Pane in 1969. Thus, in April 2007, the Board of the Madre proposed to the Chancellor of the University Federico II a first exhibition, with the ironic title of *You have not been honest*, consisting of some videos from the United Kingdom. This first exhibition project – marked



*Fig. 10*  
Naples, MADRE  
Museum. The  
central courtyard.  
At the top, the  
Horse by Mimmo  
Paladino (2006),  
installed on the  
terrace (photo A.  
Pane 2009)



by an almost uninterested approach to the basic principles of conservation – immediately raised many doubts, not only among the School of Restoration’s teachers, but also among the local public and foreign art historians. The MADRE proposal caused a wide debate about the delicate question of the compatibility between the reuse of a medieval building, strongly marked by its architectonic identity, and the exhibition of contemporary artworks, which often require the installation of multimedia, industrial products and audio-visual displays.

The old church of Donnaregina was founded by the Angevin king Carlo II, on the ruins of a pre-existing monastery, and was completed between 1293 and 1320 with the strong support of his wife, Maria of Hungary. It certainly comprises one of the most important examples of Angevin religious architecture in Naples (Venditti 1967, Carelli and Casiello 1975). The complex spatiality of the church is characterised by a unique architecture in the medieval context of Naples, due to the restriction of space. A suspended choir for the nuns, supported by a tripartite structure of octagonal pillars and groined vaults, opens at about two-thirds of the nave length in a full-height space, exalting the brightness of the double-lancet structured apse. Transformed many times and heavily altered in the second half of the nineteenth century, the church was systematically restored by Gino Chierici between 1928 and 1934. These later works are still considered among the most significant examples of good restoration in the first half of the twentieth century in Italy. Chierici aimed to reinstate the medieval form of the church, removing the walls added in the second half of the nineteenth century in the lower aisled hall, and bringing back the choir floor to its original extent. But above all, Chierici was able to relocate, using complex techniques, a frescoed wall of the adjacent new seventeenth-century church of Donnaregina, which protruded unattractively in the apse of the older church (Chierici 1934).

In the light of the above conscientious works, the new exhibition fit-out proposed by the MADRE in spring 2007 has appeared, on the other hand, more superficial and has raised many doubts. The board built white partition walls dividing the three-aisled church into several enclosures to be used as rooms for video viewing, therefore showing no respect for the medieval spatiality of the church, and conceiving of it as an anonymous ‘container’. Moreover, by ignoring the basic principles of preservation, the newly built partitions were attached directly to the ancient church walls (Fig. 12). In this way, the medieval space took on an unattractive look of a ‘commercial expo’, in which the Angevin structures were transformed into a sort of pavilion with stands.

In spite of the strong opposition expressed by the Director and the teaching

*Fig. 11*  
Naples, MADRE  
Museum. The  
steel bridge that  
links the exhibition  
rooms to the coffee  
bar at the first floor  
(photo V. Russo  
2009).

staff of the School, the MADRE's project was approved by the local Heritage Agency, and was completed in a few days. Soon after, new events were hosted: the video exhibition by Bob Wilson titled *Voom portraits*; and *A still life is a real life*, organised by the Teatro Festival Italia, between October and December 2007 (Fig. 13, 14). During the lengthy period of these two exhibitions, the wonderful spatiality of the medieval church was essentially altered. The direct appreciation of its architecture was denied to such an extent, that the church seemed to have been brought back to the untidiness of the years before Chierici's great restoration of the 1930s.

In the light of what has been said so far, it becomes natural to wonder on which finding of the compatibility assessment (if there was any), the fit-out described above was deemed appropriate, as set against the appreciation of such outstanding architecture of the Neapolitan Middle Age, with its unique integrity. In particular, doubts have been raised regarding the organisation and regarding the artist himself as curators, and more so with regard to their willingness to take on board at all the challenge of the dialogue with the ancient existing space. From the study of the project, the answer appears negative: the fourteenth-century church was conceived of as an anonymous building, like a container adapted for basic exhibition purposes. It is really surprising

Fig. 12

Naples, old church of Donnaregina. The exhibition of videos named *You have not been honest* (2007) has resulted in the insertion of some partition wall in the aisles for a period of several months, altering and denying the medieval space ([www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it))



how it can happen – even in the twenty-first century – that an architectural space of such historic significance and uniqueness can be treated as a plain ‘container’ for artistic expression. These are often considered so futuristic by *cutting-edge* critics, that they can prevail in importance over the space housing them. The multimedia exhibition, which downgraded the ancient building to the status of a fair pavilion, could have been more suitably located in one of those empty spaces generally available in the contemporary city, which, lacking historic and artistic value, are better suited to the flexibility required by exhibitions of this kind.

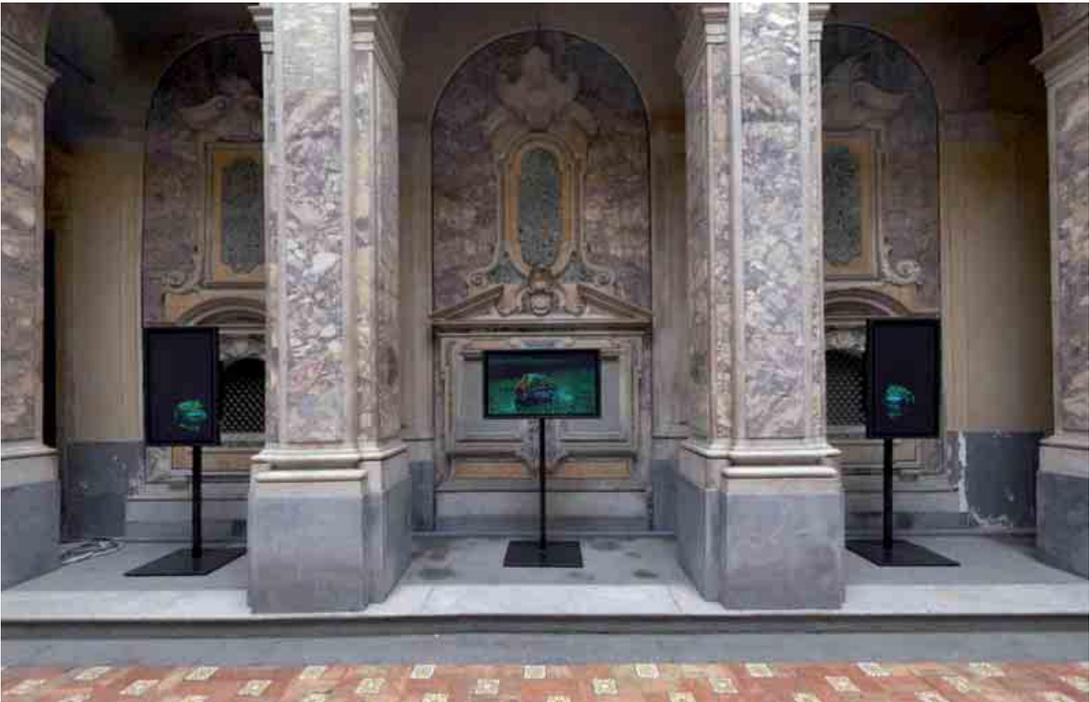
These complex issues demonstrate how in Italy, the subject of ‘compatible use’ of an historical building, even if that building is regarded as highly important for protection, is still confused and uncertain. In spite of the developments in the theory of restoration made in the last decades, the arguments in favour of heritage preservation still appear weak in the face of the major demands of contemporary art. It seems that contemporary artists, when successful and with the strong support of the financial and political world (and sometimes unable to produce any real artwork), take pleasure in detracting from the ancient spaces with their autocratic messages.

These are the reasons why it is necessary to emphasise the importance of an *impact assessment* of the effect of this kind of exhibition on our architectural heritage. Only a process based upon the search for careful balance between conservation principles and exposition requirements can generate a critical method capable of identifying guidelines for compatible uses for the church of Donnaregina, as for any other ancient building.

However, it seems that some recent exhibitions, organised by the MADRE in the church, have moved in the desired direction, a possibility also reinforced by the long-term use of the building granted by the University. The exhibition of the *Venere degli stracci* by Michelangelo Pistoletto (a sculpture surrounded by old clothes, located near the altar and displayed between December 2007 and February 2008) produced an acceptable integration between the former spatiality and the new artwork, reaching a good outcome in terms of compatibility (*Fig. 15*) – an arrangement partly incorporating the observations made by the teachers of the School of Restoration. Similarly successful were the exhibitions titled *Napoli in croce* (June – September 2008), consisting of some artworks by Mimmo Paladino shown in the nave (*Figs. 16, 17*), and the huge, tree-like, wood sculpture, with branches made by Doriana and Massimiliano Fuksas, installed in the apse. In fact, this last artwork has created an interesting integration with the vertical spatiality of the Angevin apse, even if the difficult process of assembling it had raised some concerns for the old masonry (*Fig. 20*). Even so, in the same event, an artwork by Paladino, consisting basically



*Fig. 13*  
 Naples, old church of Donnaregina. The exhibition of videos by Bob Wilson named *Voom portraits* (2007) in the Angevin apse ([www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it))



*Fig. 14*  
 Naples, old church of Donnaregina. The exhibition of videos by Bob Wilson named *Voom portraits* (2007) in the 18th century cloister in front of the church ([www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it))

of a delivery van loaded with old doors, was located in the small eighteenth-century cloister at the church entrance; this raised further concerns, both regarding the high loads on the ancient floor and the unsuitable setting in a small and valuable baroque space, which, the authors believe, does not require any further emphasis (Fig. 19). Certainly more convincing was the recent exposition of the two works by the artist Domenico Bianchi in the same cloister, consisting of two marble benches included in the *Barock* exhibition (at the end of 2009), which created a stimulating assonance with the baroque architecture (Fig. 20).

These later exhibitions generally demonstrate the good results that can be generated by preventive assessments, although in 2008 we again experienced a proposal going in the opposed direction, and so ignoring the improvements made in the meantime. The exhibition was to be by Jimmie Durham, with the title *Emergency Ornamentation*, in which the artwork consisted of the allocation *in situ* and exposition of some large reinforced concrete blocks resulting from the demolition of a building. It was anticipated that it would impose heavy loadings, totally unsuited for the medieval church floor. In this case the board of the museum, in the absence of a preliminary assessment, was forced by the local Heritage Agency to urgently undertake ground investigations by ground-penetrating radar, in order to verify the load capacity of the soil and the possible presence of voids. The results highlighted the incongruity between the proposed overloading and the actual soil conditions, hence forcing a relocation of the artwork to the courtyard at the back of the museum. This latest case confirms the crucial importance of preventive impact assessment, which appears essential not only for heritage protection requirements, but also for providing guidelines for the museum management, to assist in properly planning its artistic initiatives with respect to the space hosting the artworks.

## Conclusions

The two cases cited above highlight the importance of the controversial issue of the relationship between ancient buildings and contemporary art. This also represents a relevant aspect of the wider dialectic between conservation and transformation, which has been the central subject of the present workshop. Although basically different, the two examples are linked in their final outcomes by a poor knowledge of the architectural context. In the case of the MADRE museum, lack of historical knowledge has led to an unsatisfactory outcome, both in terms of conservation and of new design. As an example of rehabilitation of an old structure of non-monumental status, its understated values should have been brought to light, in the authors' opinion,

through a detailed analysis of its history. In contrast, the case of Donnaregina demonstrates discontinuous approaches for an outstanding architecture, the spatial values of which were already enhanced by Chierici's restoration of the 1930s. As illustrated, the MADRE temporary exhibition experience evolved in an erratic manner: from an earlier attitude of complete indifference (we refer to the multimedia arrangements and the separation of the church aisles with partitions); through some other, more appropriate exhibitions (we refer to the ones by Pistoletto, Fuksas and the recent one by Bianchi in the small cloister); to dangerous involutions, like the discussed proposal – fortunately avoided in time – of the large concrete blocks by Jimmie Durham.



*Fig. 15*  
Naples, old church  
of Donnaregina.  
The exhibition of  
the *Venere degli  
stracci* (2008)  
by Michelangelo  
Pistoletto near  
the altar ([www.  
museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it)).

The two case studies from Naples can be related, in some way, to the specific context of the Irish town of Kilkenny, one of the main topics of this workshop, where a fragility of the relationship between the historic fabric of the city and today's needs emerged in the discussion. During the workshop, participants stressed often how the absence of use in a historic building can be a greater source of decay than a compatible use. The nature of this use, however, should be based primarily on respect for the building's architectural identity, applying an analytic and complex survey designed to bring to light its values, instead of ignoring or even endangering them, as in the two Naples cases.



*Fig. 16*  
Naples, old church  
of Donnaregina,  
*Napoli in croce*  
exhibition (2008).  
The works by  
Mimmo Paladino  
in the aisles ([www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it)).



**Fig. 17**  
 Naples, old church of Donnaregina, *Napoli in croce* exhibition (2008). The works by Mimmo Paladino in the aisles and the tomb of Maria d'Ungheria by Tino da Camaino on the right ([www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it))



**Fig. 18**  
 Naples, old church of Donnaregina, *Napoli in croce* exhibition (2008). The big tree with branches by Doriana and Massimiliano Fuksas in the apse ([www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it))



**Fig. 19**  
 Naples, old church of Donnaregina, *Napoli in croce* exhibition (2008). The doubtful installation of a delivery van loaded with old doors in the small 18th century cloister by Mimmo Paladino ([www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it))

*Fig. 20*  
 Naples, old church  
 of Donnaregina,  
 Barock exhibition  
 (2009). The two  
 marble benches  
 in the eighteenth-  
 century cloister  
 by Domenico  
 Bianchi appear  
 well integrated  
 with the architectural  
 context (photo A.  
 Pane 2009)



### *Notes and References*

*Although the present paper is the outcome of a collective work among the three mentioned authors, para. 1 is attributed to Stella Casiello, para. 2 to Valentina Russo and para. 3 to Andrea Pane. The conclusions (para. 4) arise from a collective synthesis made by the three authors. Translation editor: Maurizio Coglia BArch MRIAI*

\* Definitions:

*Insula*: urban block of the grid of the Greek-Roman foundation city, which usually was merged to form a larger blocks during the historical urban transformations of the city of Naples.

*Cardines*: streets/axis of Greek-Roman foundation in the direction N-S.

*Decumani*: streets/axis of Greek-Roman foundation in the direction E-W.

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# Logique & philosophie analytique au service de l'atelier de conservation du patrimoine

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Il ne nous appartient pas ici d'instruire une nouvelle fois le dossier de l'interdisciplinarité. Le philosophe Edgar Morin (1994) et l'anthropologue Dan Sperber (2003) en ont dégagé les enjeux, les promesses et les risques, lors de colloques spécialisés auxquels nous ne saurions trop renvoyer le lecteur. Si nous nous sommes risqués à décloisonner nos cours pour mettre la philosophie au service de l'atelier de conservation, c'est probablement et avant tout parce que l'ambiance de l'école favorisait ce genre d'approche où chacun est amené à dialoguer autour de projets concrets : ce qui rend souvent plus modeste et nécessairement moins abstrait. C'est du reste la même attitude qui a prévalu au *workshop* Conservation/transformation lorsque des spécialistes de tous horizons géographiques et disciplinaires ont accepté le jeu enrichissant – Chris Younes l'a souligné lors de la séance de clôture – d'aborder un même cas, celui de la conservation de la *Borris House*, par exemple, à partir de points de vue aussi différents que l'approche technique, historique, économique, sociale et philosophique.

Nous l'avons une fois de plus constaté lors de nos rencontres en Irlande: la confiance qui s'est établie au cours de nombreuses conversations, profondes et techniques, mais aussi détendues (lors des repas ou des voyages en car), a favorisé tout un contexte, une sorte de mise entre parenthèses, qui a permis aux uns et aux autres de risquer dans un anglais parfois approximatif des idées qui elles ne l'étaient pas du tout.

Notre collaboration à l'Institut Supérieur d'Architecture Lambert Lombard, est née dans des conditions fort semblables : des idées échangées au déjeuner au sujet de la philosophie du patrimoine et des chartes relatives à la conservation, nous ont conduit à tenter de clarifier la notion plutôt floue d'authenticité, et de cette conversation amicale est née deux ans plus tard un séminaire de deuxième et de troisième cycle autour de la question, des difficultés qu'elle fait surgir et, bien entendu, d'analyse de cas. Nous y reviendrons brièvement après avoir exposé les principaux concepts et questions philosophiques que nous développons dans le séminaire.

Dans la charte de Venise, l'exigence d' « authenticité » apparaît comme allant de soi : rédigée à partir de l'expérience européenne en conservation du patrimoine, elle ne met pas en doute le principe d'une authenticité matérielle et/ou formelle. C'est depuis la mondialisation de la réflexion patrimoniale, en particulier depuis la *Convention du patrimoine mondial* en 1972 que les limites du concept d'authenticité sont apparues comme plus nébuleuses. Dans ce contexte, seront rédigés dans les années 1990 le *Document de Nara* et de nombreux textes tentant de préciser ce concept fondamental. Raymond Lemaire (1994), rapporteur du congrès de Venise en 1964 et l'un des principaux rédacteurs de la Charte, distingue ainsi authenticité matérielle et authenticité formelle, et pose la question des authenticités successives des monuments au cours de leur histoire.

Malgré cet intérêt soutenu depuis le début des années 1990, le sujet reste loin d'être épuisé, en témoignent des publications très récentes comme celle de Bianca Gioia Marino (2006) et Henri-Pierre Jeudy (2008). Il faut bien l'avouer, le problème apparu au Japon à propos de la reconstruction permanente des temples d'Ise, est d'autant plus sérieux que la représentation que l'on se fait de la *mêmeté*, et, partant, de l' « authentique », paraît varier selon les caprices de l'histoire et de la géographie, en fonction des intentions et des intérêts, en d'autres termes, en fonction des cultures. Or accepter d'intégrer les particularités c'est remettre en cause des fondamentaux de la philosophie et de la théorie de la conservation du patrimoine et c'est cautionner un relativisme qui mine déjà l'esthétique depuis le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle et que le sens commun ressasse et généralise depuis lors : « des goûts et des couleurs, on ne discute pas »... Malgré tout, la logique de mondialisation ne nous permet pas de faire l'économie de ce débat et nous impose d'y entrer puisque les chartes en vigueur n'offrent pas de réponse satisfaisante à des questions comme celle de la logique d'actualisation telle qu'elle est mise en œuvre au Japon et très bien décrite par Masahiro Ogino (1995). C'est ici que la philosophie peut venir au secours du conservateur : la logique formelle et dans son sillage la philosophie analytique connaissent ce problème épineux depuis très longtemps ; elle s'y est particulièrement intéressée au 20<sup>e</sup> siècle avec des figures aussi importantes que Frege, Wittgenstein et plus récemment Kripke (1982). C'est à partir de là que Stéphane Ferret (1996), dans *Le bateau de Thésée*, tente une synthèse du problème de l'identité à travers le temps. La question du bateau de Thésée, déjà bien formulée par Plutarque vaut la peine que l'on s'y arrête dans la mesure où elle fait la jonction entre un *puzzle* pour les philosophes, et une question inextricable pour les conservateurs, montrant ainsi l'interpénétration des deux disciplines.

Dans la *Vie de Thésée*, Plutarque raconte:

*«Le vaisseau sur lequel Thésée alla et retourna était une galiote à trente rames, que les Athéniens gardèrent jusqu'au temps de Demetrius le Phalérien, en ôtant toujours les vieilles pièces de bois, à mesure qu'elles pourrissaient, et y remettant des neuves à leurs places : tellement que depuis, dans les disputes des Philosophes touchant les choses qui s'augmentent, à savoir si elles demeurent une, ou si elles se font autres...» (cité par Ferret 1996 : 17).*

Cet extrait pose la question de l'identité d'une chose et montre comme les logiciens l'ont par ailleurs théorisé qu'il faut distinguer trois concepts pour lever l'ambiguïté du terme. C'est ainsi que les philosophes définissent l'identité numérique, l'identité qualitative et l'identité spécifique ou sortale (notamment Ferret 1996 :15). La première définit la relation qu'un objet entretient avec lui-même (le bateau de Thésée est le bateau de Thésée et pas un autre), la seconde, une relation qu'entretient un objet avec d'autres à travers au moins une qualité commune (le bateau de Thésée est un bateau *en bois* ou à *trente rames*) tandis que la troisième relie des objets appartenant à une même espèce (le bateau de Thésée est un bateau). Si l'on en croit Hobbes, les sophistes auraient poussé le jeu jusqu'à imaginer que pendant que l'on réparait le bateau de Thésée en remplaçant progressivement ses planches, un homme se serait ingénié à recomposer un bateau à partir des planches ainsi récupérées. Un beau débat pouvait dès lors surgir sur l'agora athénienne sur la question de savoir lequel de ces deux bateaux était vraiment le bateau de Thésée. Par exemple, si l'identité qualitative et l'identité sortale du bateau restauré ne posent pas question, en revanche on peut s'interroger sur son identité numérique étant donné que la totalité de sa matière a été progressivement remplacée. Ce problème, qui fait apparaître des fondamentaux de la philosophie comme l'identité, la référence, la substance, et la logique des noms propres, ne peut qu'intéresser le praticien de la conservation lorsqu'il se trouve confronté à la question de l'identité du monument après intervention. Dans la tradition occidentale, l'identité numérique est garantie par le couple forme-matière. La matière ne suffit pas même si elle est essentielle : construire une cabane avec les planches originales du bateau de Thésée ne garantit pas l'identité numérique de la cabane avec le bateau. Lorsque l'on se penche sur la reconstruction des temples japonais à l'aide de matériaux neufs, on pourrait croire que, contrairement à ce qui se passe dans notre culture, seule la forme prime ; dans *La machine patrimoniale*, H.-P. Jeudy (2008 : 92-93) résume d'ailleurs ainsi le problème:

*«Au Japon, bien des temples sont régulièrement reconstruits sans un quelconque souci d'une préservation de l'authenticité d'origine. La*

*conception occidentale d'une conservation monumentale qui résiste aux métamorphoses temporelles n'a pas lieu d'être : ce qui se fait à l'identique peut se refaire indéfiniment (...). La disparition elle-même ne fait pas sens puisque, ce qui dure, ne le peut qu'en étant repris dans sa propre forme».*

Mais l'article particulièrement intéressant de Masahiro Ogino (1995 : 57) semble montrer que les choses sont beaucoup plus complexes. Intervient dans la recréation de la forme la main d'un artisan, qualifié de « détenteur du bien culturel immatériel », souvent désigné par les média par le terme de « trésor national vivant ». Dans *The Seven Lamps of architecture*, Ruskin (1889 : 194) déclarait que :

*« (...) the life of the whole, that spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, can never be recalled. Another spirit may be given by another time, and this is then a new building; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts ».*

Il semble que les japonais aient tout mis en œuvre pour surmonter cette impossibilité en fondant leur politique patrimoniale sur l'actualisation de la tradition. Comme l'explique Masahiro Ogino (1995 : 57),

*« Parler de « trésor national vivant », c'est soutenir l'idée que la tradition ne réside pas toujours dans les œuvres déjà réalisées, mais dans celles qui sont en train de se réaliser. L'art traditionnel consiste donc non pas à conserver fidèlement l'héritage du passé, mais à actualiser ce qui aura été fait. Selon cette perspective, la tradition comme telle n'existe pas ou, même s'il y en a, elle est invisible et il faut donc la rendre manifeste pour qu'elle soit reconnue ».*

Pour saisir toute la subtilité de cette pratique qui peut nous sembler étrange, il est aussi utile de la confronter à une autre théorie philosophique qui nous vient du champ de la logique mais qui a très vite été mise au service de l'appréhension de l'art : celle que Nelson Goodman (1988) défend dans « Les langages de l'art » et qui à partir de l'authenticité distingue deux régimes ontologiques de l'œuvre d'art, l'autographique et l'allographique. Selon Goodman (1988 : 113), « a work of art [is] autographic if and only if the distinction between original and forgery of it is significant ; or better, if and only if even the most exact duplication of it does not thereby count as genuine ». C'est ainsi que la sculpture se distingue de la musique en ce que la première est produite directement de « main de maître » tandis

que la seconde réclame des exécutants et des directives parfaites pour être actualisée. Dans cette même idée, nous avons longtemps pensé que les temples japonais étaient actualisés dans une logique allographique dans la mesure où en respectant les règles de construction traditionnelle, l'œuvre architecturale était considérée comme authentique même si sa matière avait été entièrement remplacée. De nouveau, la description que nous fait Ogino (1995) de ce phénomène semble plutôt indiquer que les Japonais ont trouvé une manière de garantir le caractère autographique de la copie, ce qui paraît à première vue absurde mais se comprend à l'examen approfondi d'une culture qui appréhende le patrimoine selon des modalités tout à fait différentes des nôtres. La consécration de certains artisans comme « dépositaires du bien culturel immatériel », en l'occurrence ici de la tradition de construction des temples, non seulement authentifie leurs productions, mais semble conférer à celles-ci un caractère autographique puisqu'elles sont exécutées « de main de maître ». On a ainsi contourné l'impossibilité que soulignait Ruskin (1889) dans la mesure où la tradition produit elle-même les « trésors nationaux vivants », qui sont à leur tour à même d'actualiser la tradition. On voit à quel point les catégories élaborées par la conservation et la philosophie occidentales sont mises à mal par la culture japonaise ; néanmoins, ces catégories nous permettent de mieux circonscrire les problématiques et de mieux saisir les limites de nos approches, ce qui est l'un des objectifs majeurs d'un séminaire qui fait la part belle à la critique.

C'est d'ailleurs dans cette logique que nous analysons le cas de la reconstruction du Pavillon de Barcelone de Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe : la clarification des concepts d'identité et des deux régimes d'ontologie des arts selon Goodman nous permettent d'appréhender de manière critique un cas tout à fait exceptionnel de reconstruction qui ne peut pas ne pas susciter débat au sein de la communauté des architectes. Dans quelle mesure le pavillon est-il le même que le pavillon d'origine ? Ici interviennent les trois catégories d'identité. On ne peut parler d'identité numérique (techniques constructives différentes pour répondre à un souci de pérennité étranger à la construction originale, motifs dans les panneaux d'onyx doré qui ne peuvent être exactement les mêmes,...), mais les conditions des identités qualitative et sortale sont en revanche remplies : il s'agit bien d'un pavillon, qui répond au même programme de perfection architecturale, et qui plus est, partage un grand nombre de qualités communes avec son modèle originel (plan, élévations, la plupart des matériaux,...). Se pose alors la question de savoir si le fait de privilégier l'identité qualitative peut se justifier, car on ne peut qu'admettre que contrairement à ce qui est mentionné dans la plupart des ouvrages où l'œuvre est commentée, il ne s'agit pas *du* pavillon de 1929. Or,

c'est ici que les deux concepts de Nelson Goodman peuvent aider à apporter une réponse : en effet, une bonne connaissance de l'architecture moderne en général et de celle de Mies van der Rohe en particulier permet de situer le parti dans une logique intellectuelle et conceptuelle et même d'abstraction qui revendique pleinement le statut allographique de l'architecture. En effet, on peut sans risque de se tromper soutenir que Mies ferait sienne la conception d'Alberti (2004 : 47-48) qui dès le prologue de son *Art d'édifier* insiste sur ce que devrait être un architecte. Ses intentions sont claires, il s'agit bien de faire passer, cinq siècles avant Goodman, l'architecture du statut autographique au statut allographique lorsqu'il écrit:

*« (...) ce n'est certes pas un charpentier que je te présenterai pour être comparé aux grands maîtres des autres disciplines : la main de l'artisan ne sert en effet que d'instrument à l'architecte. Quant à moi, j'accorderai le statut d'architecte à celui qui saura, par une méthode précise et des voies admirables, aussi bien concevoir mentalement que réaliser tout ce qui, par le déplacement des masses, par la liaison et par l'assemblage des corps, se prêtera la mieux aux plus nobles usages des hommes. Ce que seules l'intelligence et la connaissance des choses les plus parfaites et les plus dignes permettent d'atteindre. Tel sera donc l'architecte ».*

Le pavillon de Mies est effectivement une œuvre programmatique qui à l'instar des œuvres musicales les plus savantes réclame une exécution parfaite. Indépendante de la main qui la construit, elle pourrait être reconstruite indéfiniment pour autant que la « partition » soit respectée. A partir de ce choix ontologique fondamental, on comprend dès lors mieux pourquoi ce n'est pas ici l'identité numérique qui compte comme dans bien des cas de conservation du patrimoine, mais plutôt les qualités de composition et de mise en œuvre dont Mies fait son programme architectural et qu'il résume si bien dans des slogans comme « God is in the detail » et « Less is more ». Nous sommes bien entendu conscients que ce cas d'étude est peu représentatif de la pratique quotidienne de l'architecte-restaurateur. C'est néanmoins à travers des cas extrêmes comme celui-là que nous tentons de rôder les étudiants à la manipulation de concepts philosophiques qu'ils peuvent par la suite tenter d'appliquer à des cas d'études plus modestes, mais souvent aussi plus complexes. Dans certains cas, le caractère autographique de l'œuvre ou sa valeur d'ancienneté n'autorisent pas à faire fi de l'identité numérique sans porter gravement atteinte au patrimoine, alors que dans d'autres cas, la priorité accordée à la valeur artistique ou exemplaire semble justifier davantage de distance par rapport à l'identité numérique au profit de l'identité qualitative.

C'est précisément le parti radical que notre collègue Paul Hautecler (cabinet PhD) a pris lors de la restauration très controversée de la collégiale Saint-Barthélémy : après avoir traversé le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle sous une apparence sombre et patinée garante aux yeux des liégeois d'une certaine valeur d'ancienneté, elle arbore aujourd'hui les couleurs vives qui semblent avoir été celles des églises romanes du groupe rhéno-mosan à l'époque de leur construction. La confrontation de ce cas d'étude aux outils que nous avons développés ci-dessus permet, sans que nous entrions ici dans le détail de cette analyse, de dépasser le côté souvent trop superficiel des réactions qu'il suscite en clarifiant le parti adopté.

Nous ne voudrions pas conclure avant d'avoir abordé le thème qui nous a été attribué lors du *Workshop* : la *Borris House*. Nous sommes conscients que nos outils ne sont peut-être pas à même de répondre à des questions aussi pointues que celles que pose la restauration d'un tel ensemble, mais nous résistons difficilement à embrayer sur une remarque faite en boutade lors d'un *brainstorming*, selon laquelle plutôt que la *Borris House*, ce serait les Kavannagh qu'il conviendrait de classer comme monuments. Cette réflexion semble en effet purement humoristique et pourtant, elle met en évidence quelque chose qui mériterait sans doute à lui seul un examen approfondi et qui n'est peut-être pas sans rejoindre d'une certaine manière une problématique dont nous avons abondamment parlé : celle de l'actualisation du bateau de Thésée ou des temples japonais. En effet, en termes d'identité numérique, *Borris House* a toujours été et est toujours la maison des Kavannagh, illustre famille irlandaise. Tant qu'ils habitent le domaine et le transforment à leur gré, il n'est pas possible de mettre en doute l'authenticité des lieux et on peut dans cette logique admettre de grosses dérogations aux principes généraux en matière de patrimoine, que ce soit dans la recreation par un membre de la famille des petites sculptures ornant la façade, d'insertion d'œuvres contemporaines dans la chapelle ou de choix paysagers forts pris en l'absence d'une stratégie d'ensemble. Les Kavannagh n'ont pas besoin d'être classés pour s'autoriser à le faire puisqu'ils sont les Kavannagh, et que d'une certaine manière, leur inscription dans l'histoire leur donne au même titre que les « trésors nationaux vivants » du Japon, le droit d'actualiser un patrimoine en se tournant vers l'avenir et non pas vers le passé. Voilà qui devrait les conforter dans leur envie de se lancer dans des projets ambitieux pour faire vivre ce magnifique domaine.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Nous serons intégrés à l'Université de Liège pour l'année académique 2010-2011, pour constituer la Faculté d'Architecture.

<sup>2</sup> Voir le programme de l'école doctorale à l'adresse: <http://www.archurb.frs-fnrs.be/spip.php?article23>.

<sup>3</sup> Selon Hobbes, les sophistes en débattaient déjà (Ferret, 1996, p 108).

<sup>4</sup> Cette question n'épuise bien entendu pas la complexité du débat soulevé par Ferret, auquel nous renvoyons.

<sup>5</sup> Sur la question des noms propres, nous renvoyons à Kripke (1982) et Engel (1985).

<sup>6</sup> Nous avons récemment découvert que cette problématique a été étudiée dans un travail de fin de maîtrise au Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Werning, R.C., 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Il est intéressant de souligner qu'au tout premier chapitre des *Dix livres d'architecture*, Vitruve montre bien que le statut de l'architecture est encore entre le statut autographique (la main) et allographique (la théorie) comme l'indique cette citation : «Itaque architecti, qui sine litteris contenderant, ut manibus essent exercitati, non potuerunt efficere ut haberent pro laboribus auctoritatem; qui autem ratiocinationibus et litteris solis confisi fuerunt, umbram non rem persecuti videntur. At qui utrumque perdidicerunt, uti omnibus armis ornati citius cum auctoritate, quod fuit propositum, sunt adsecuti » (Vitruvius Pollio, n.d.). Cela donne raison à la théorie de Nelson Goodman qui inscrit tous les arts dans un passage progressif de l'autographique à l'allographique : il s'est opéré il y a quelques siècles pour la musique et on le projette seulement aujourd'hui pour la danse.

<sup>8</sup> Pour un aperçu très synthétique des options prises pour cette restauration, nous renvoyons à l'adresse [http://www.st-barthelemy.be/4\\_LaCollegiale\\_Restauration](http://www.st-barthelemy.be/4_LaCollegiale_Restauration). [consulté le 10 décembre 2009].

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# ‘Sustainable conservation’: the inclusion of the future in the horizons of restored architectural heritage

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Over the last two decades, sustainability has become a key concept in almost all fields of human activity and the word can be detected in any ‘correct’ discourse on economy, development and the future. Curiously, in architecture, the concept has made its appearance first in design and building technology, and only subsequently has it explicitly entered the field of cultural heritage conservation, even though concerns for resources consumption, which are closely connected to the idea of sustainability, were at the base of the conservation movement.

However, concerns with the rapid change and deterioration of the environment and the living conditions of large parts of the urbanised population, caused by the effects of industrial revolution, were firstly and more directly voiced by the nature conservation movement. On the social and architectural side, reaction to these issues and related reflection led to the development of urban and territorial planning (Musso 1988). Concerns for the safeguarding of heritage were more explicitly motivated by a preoccupation for retaining national memories and traditions, and the fear of losing those artefacts that embodied prized and disappearing social values. Conservation, for its own part, grew from the need for the celebration of national pride or the construction of national identities, and ancient monuments served the purpose of acting as founding elements for what was often a new state or a new ruling order.

It was only in the 1960s and 1970s, in the middle of a severe energy crisis that had been fed by the post-war economic boom – a crisis that also cancelled expectations for indefinite growth – that a more stringent connection became explicit between the rationale that sustained the conservation of the built heritage and the necessity for conservation of natural resources (Bellini, 2001).

The need to reduce energy and natural resource consumption provided a different perspective to that of heritage conservation. The latter, meanwhile,

had also commenced widening its scope by including vernacular buildings and entire historic districts, going beyond the 'traditional' monuments of art and architecture that were usually considered the realm of preservationists (the evolution of conservation can be read, for instance, in the subjects of the conventions, recommendations and charters that have been produced since the 1960s until now).

However, the full potential that environment and energy consumption concerns could bring to revitalise heritage conservation were not fully grasped at that time. The preservation community was not ready to seize the opportunities of coupling the objectives of energy and natural resources conservation and of built heritage conservation. At least in Italy, the cultural background of conservation professionals (most of them historians, art historians or architects with a strong education in history) did not facilitate the widespread understanding of the centrality of this challenge. In addition, the debates in architectural conservation at that time revolved around more disciplinary issues. Furthermore, the first response of the building sector to the energy crisis led to the massive substitution of building components considered obsolescent and with poor energy efficiency performances. The replacement of window frames, glass panels, or of radiant elements, wall coverings, etc, was carried out also in buildings possessing heritage value, without much consideration of the impact on their appearance or substance. This pushed preservationists into assuming a defensive attitude towards the operational implications of energy and resources saving in existing buildings and, ultimately, towards the entire movement for 'greening' architecture.

Four decades after the first opportunity to establish an alliance between conservation and environment protection goals, conservation has found itself having to face issues that have revealed the inadequacy of its response to contemporary challenges – the continuing expansion and shifting of the scope of conservation from individual monuments of high artistic or symbolic significance to the vernacular heritage, historic districts, landscapes, traditional skills and intangible cultural practices – well demonstrates the uncertainties in which conservation has been revolving. Environmental conditions have worsened globally to the extent that readdressing current development trends has become necessary for survival. The marriage between the objectives of built heritage conservation and of sustainable development goals therefore today represents an opportunity and perhaps a last chance – one that should not be missed by the preservation community – to move forward from the *impasse* in which it has been stuck for such a long time, and to give architectural conservation the centrality that it has sought to acquire since the Second World War. The endeavour to ensure the preservation of built heritage

in its widest meaning will otherwise be definitively lost, and conservation will be reduced to a 'decorative' activity dealing with a few selected monuments. In the meantime the extant major part of historic built heritage will be probably be swept away by 'sustainable' architecture.

But how can sustainability help conservation modify its conceptual instruments and make them more adequate in addressing contemporary issues?

The most fertile themes within sustainability, from the perspective of a renewal of architectural conservation, seem to reside in its attempt to conjugate conflicting objectives and in its efforts to include the future in attempts to solve contemporary problems.

There is an evident commonality between the foundations of conservation and sustainability: irreproducibility or slow reproducibility of most resources (cultural and natural) and the necessity of transmitting these resources to future generations for the purpose of their own fulfilment and enjoyment.

However, within sustainable development, both goals have been pursued through a systemic approach borrowed primarily from ecology which has led to the elaboration of fresh conceptual frameworks, for example those of 'life cycle', the idea of 'ecological footprint' or of 'embodied energy', which may provide useful insights and new nourishment for reflection in conservation.

Heritage conservation has usually been considered as involving highly specialised and costly practice associated with monuments or with a selected family of built structures possessing certain values (artistic, historic, symbolic, social...) that justified the investment of additional (financial and technical) resources to ensure their retention. This opinion, although correct to a certain extent and certainly cherished also by preservationists, restricted conservation to a niche activity within the wide world of construction and building recycling. From the perspective of sustainability, however, the supposed additional costs of conservation may in fact be downsized, when they are assessed against the environmental costs of a whole building programme. When conservation bases its justification primarily on the necessity of saving energy and natural resources, it may advantageously become the prevalent attitude towards the built environment: any landscape, district, building, structure, will be then examined in the light of its residual capacity to host/perform a function, following intervention that will help give it back an active role within society. A different type of value then enters the playground of conservation: the value of the environmental resources that it has been possible to save through conservation intervention.

In this way the distinction between 'valuable' buildings and existing buildings will be progressively reduced. A famous slogan - 'the greenest building is the one that already exists' – well reflects this change in perspective (Moe,

2008). The concern will no longer be about establishing what building possess certain values that justify its conservation, but about identifying the most appropriate methods of ensuring its retention. It may be that, beyond the value of its 'embodied energy', these will be its additional distinctive character and features, which deserve to be safeguarded during and through the conservation intervention.

Turning towards 'traditional' heritage conservation, one must acknowledge that, as with any human activity, conservation also has an impact on the environment and on its objects through related effects – effects that trigger processes and mechanisms that are often beyond the control of those involved in the intervention. This suggests the need to include several additional factors in selecting treatment strategies and their technical tools – factors that take into account not merely the immediate final result of the intervention but also the behaviour of the treated object over time, the estimation of which, in turn, may influence operational decisions. Also, 'life cycle thinking' may help assess the effectiveness and duration of conservation interventions by considering the entire span of their 'existence', from the objectives underlying their conception to the subsequent realisation and up to the next intervention that will be made necessary. This type of evaluation may be the basis for accurate planning of maintenance cycles of building components. At a more general level, 'life cycle thinking' also allows one to take into consideration that those most permanent among buildings – monuments – are subject to the passage of time and are destined to change, and at a certain point will no longer exist. The understanding of this, in my view, is far from being a threat to monuments and cultural heritage. It may in fact stimulate the assumption of real responsibility for their care, beyond any rhetorical call for the inescapable duty of heritage safeguard.

The approach underlining the vision of sustainable development, if effectively transferred to conservation, thus implies two different endeavours. Firstly, it involves moving from one 'absolute' guiding principle – i.e. authenticity – towards multiple objectives, treated as equal. These will include: prolonging the life of a building; safeguarding its distinctive features; adapting it for use; and minimising resource consumption and waste production during the intervention, the attainment of which may result from a repeated process of reciprocal verification. Secondly, it involves looking at 'monuments' as having not only a past but also a future, and subsequently identifying possible future consequences of present choices. This might imply adopting treatments and products which ensure the stability of their results or byproducts, improving the operational performances of the restored building or reducing its management costs.

To accept that change is an inherent dimension of the lifespan of monuments implies moving the focus of conservation from the effort to retain authenticity/identity, reveal 'the true essence', re-establish the 'potential unity', recover their integrity as recognised at a certain moment of their life to:

- identify acceptable thresholds of modifications to forms, materials, use, distributions

These thresholds depend on different factors (present and future functions, potential for adaptation, limits of structural/distributional loadings, location, available resources, etc.), the acceptability of which should be assessed against the cost-benefits balance that, in this case, would include environmental costs that the various choices may give rise to;

- ensure the adequacy and quality of the modifications and additions

To be effective and usable, the assessment of the other above-mentioned references should be explicit and object- and problem-specific. In the light of sustainability, certain criteria may be constants: the degree of the retention of existing material; the costs (including the environmental ones) of the adoption of one methodology/product, taking into account its effectiveness and stability over time; the levels/costs of and ease of maintenance and repair of the new parts and of the restored building as a whole; the degree to which added components can be removed or replaced in the future; the improvement of energy and management efficiency of the rehabilitated/restored building; and the provision of systems for saving or recovering resources.

The assessment procedures developed for sustainable design may contribute to conservation at this more methodological/operational level, not mainly and solely in terms of outcomes that can be measured, but certainly as a way of managing the innumerable aspects and variables at play when dealing with conservation activity.

However, to obtain the most fruitful results, we should be aware of the limits of these methodologies, even in the fields for which they were conceived – primarily single industrial processes and waste management. Their adaptation to the building sector has already produced dedicated assessment protocols – LCA for buildings and building materials, the LEED rating system, and several others (USGBC – LEED 2009; EEA, 1997). Construction, however, is a very complex world, in which several different activities are involved, such as extraction of raw material, production of the most diverse materials/components, transportation, assemblage, use and so on, that make it very difficult to carry out reliable calculations and achieve credible final results. Nevertheless, the analyses that construction processes have undergone in order to break them down into simpler, more easily assessed phases may help position this activity in a wider perspective. However they can help in

considering the environmental impacts of conservation in a more specific way and contributing to their reduction, their direct transfer to the field of conservation should be avoided.

Some of the relevant oppositions can be set out: the complexity of the problems at stake; the difficulty of establishing 'sustainable' models encompassing use, financial and time costs; the still-uncertain reliability of these methodologies; and the continual demand for 'measurability' and comparability to generate 'objective' choices. These already brought about either an overestimation of the outcomes of these assessment procedures, or their dismissal as unreliable. There is also the danger of a rhetoric of sustainability. The notion is already on the verge of becoming a myth-word, too generic to have any real operational role.

While this is a general threat, it may impact more severely on conservation, also because of the tendency of the discipline since its appearance to select one guiding prevailing principle over others in order to orient theory and practice. After authenticity – or reversibility – it might be now the turn of sustainability. While, on the other end, the technocratic drift of our epoch may lead to reducing the achievement of sustainability goals in the conservation field to the rigid transfer and application of standards and procedures developed in the building sector to define 'measurable' indicators of sustainability in an operational manner. This normalising approach may easily provoke the loss of direct and tangible contact with the material fabric of our built heritage and its surprising and irreducible richness and variety, ultimately causing a progressive standardisation of the historic built heritage itself.

Other, more down-to-earth but nevertheless real, difficulties arise. Success in effectively twinning conservation and sustainability will encounter difficulties arising from the fact that the technical skill levels of practitioners in the field of construction have generally become lower and in any case have changed, on the basis of the evolution of building activity, which like other areas of industrial production has become less flexible and 'repair-friendly'. While highly specialised preservation treatments such as cleaning, chemical consolidation and protection have experienced progressive technological refinement, there has been an increased loss of competency in traditional building skills. By now, only a few workers can still understand the function of traditional building components and how to repair or maintain them in use. In addition, the demand for these skills has suffered a sudden drop.

In this scenario, establishing a dialogue with other fields may help. Dialogue with fields such as architectural design, building technology or the history of construction, as well as the world of construction enterprises (if this occurs in conditions of equality), may help identify relevant and specific goals as

well as tools for making more feasible conservation operational proposals (i.e., systematic repair versus replacement of building components). In addition, it may provide or inspire innovative solutions in conservation work, or new reasons for recovering/reinterpreting traditional building methods and materials.

The knowledge of built architecture that has been accumulated by conservation practice may also contribute to a better understanding, not only of the embodied energy of the architecture of the past, but also of the 'embodied knowledge' that our built heritage reveals, such as the choice of appropriate location of buildings, or the configuration of internal and external spaces and of openings, the conception of the building structure to optimize exploitation of climatic and exposure conditions, as well as of the proprieties of building materials and furniture to provide what today we would call comfort or quality of indoor environment. In this perspective, the study of ancient architectural treatises would be very useful in order to understand the approach of the builder of the past to the building problem, which can be crossed with the information yielded by the direct analysis of the old buildings.

The progressive expansion of the knowledge of the reasons why historic buildings were conceived and built as they were, their ability to meet human needs and to respond to contemporary exigencies with often fewer changes than are usually undertaken, may suggest a more respectful attitude towards 'old buildings' and may improve the effectiveness of their conservation and of the prospected adaptations to new uses, by interpreting the potentialities and purposes of the building itself. Meanwhile, the understanding of the long-lasting qualities of most historic buildings and of their components, which were built with long-term horizons, may stimulate architectural design to conceive innovative, contemporary solutions that embody and reinterpret past ones.

In my view, education, to effectively prepare future professionals for the challenges posed by/to conservation in relation to sustainability, should ensure that students are familiar with pre-modern technology from the beginning of their educational path – possibly connecting it with theory of construction, architectural design and history of architecture, which for its part, could be more usefully understood as a 'thematic history' of architectural transformations. A more direct contact with actual and specific examples of the architecture of the past may and should provide the opportunity to recognise that most of them have undergone repeated modifications over time, according to the needs of the occupants. It should be recognised too that the ability of certain buildings to accommodate change is also one of the secrets of their maybe silent success – one that has allowed them to survive, despite their less iconic or 'subverting' character (Brand, 1994; Rybczynski, 2001). On the other hand,

it may also be useful to scrutinize the 'totems' celebrated by the history of modern and contemporary architecture from the perspective of their ability to accommodate change, adaptation and to meet the constantly fluctuating needs of users (Rybczynski, 1986 and 2001). In this way students would have a chance to look through a different lens at the architectural industry and its implications, when considering a longer temporal perspective. Starting from the problems instead of the narratives would reduce the ideological component of all histories and the technocratic, procedural component of modern technology, and would allow architecture, its making, its use and its conservation, to regain the centre of our attention.

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# The sustainability of ‘ancient’: historical architecture as between needs of conservation and energy innovation

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## Introduction

In the last twenty years, environmental and energy emergencies have led to a series of guidelines, in the individual European nations and the European Union as a whole, which have resulted in declarations of intent, protocols of agreement and legislative action. As regards the building industry, current lines of approach are largely based on the improvement of energy performance from the reduction of waste, the optimisation of supply sources and the implementation of new technologies, while pursuing, at the same time, an increased use of renewable energy sources.

Oddly, the same level of concern has not appeared in studies closely related to the restoration of historical buildings, where the issue has been only occasionally addressed – although when it has appeared, it has been with insight. The consequent risk is that, once again, experimentation made in new buildings may be indiscriminately transferred to old ones.

The field of restoration and that of sustainability show, however, a convergence of intents, tools and methods. Within Agenda 21 for sustainable construction, the main interventions aimed at promoting the sustainability of urban settlements focus in fact on the protection of the historical heritage, which is closely related to the re-use of existing buildings. It is upon these issues that the culture of restoration has been building concepts that adamantly reject the idea of an architecture indifferent to time and place.

Historical buildings represent a field of great interest within the search for ways of interacting with the environment, in terms of sustainability, resource optimisation and adaptation to the climatic conditions of particular sites. Their relevance concerns their organic and conscious balance between the building and its environmental context. This leads to a synthesis between oft-conflicting exigencies – such as the search for a better orientation versus the constraints imposed by the site and the existing road layout, or the rational distribution of

rooms and windows versus style requirements and formal layout of facades – a balance which often appears dynamic and open to compatible changes. The purpose of this contribution<sup>1</sup> is the exposition, through the workshop experience, of the modes of interaction between historical architecture and its environmental context. These modes help to determine the roots of the identity of the architecture in a given region. Moreover, our intent is to propose some useful cues for a project in which the exigencies of sustainability may be harmonised with the lessons coming from our past heritage.

## **Sustainability and conservation**

The issue of how to reconcile energy innovation and the sustainability of architectural interventions with the preservation of the environment has long been at the centre of various branches of scientific research. Within this framework, intervention to the existing heritage undoubtedly occupies a central role in many countries where the number of new buildings is stable or declining, while the theme of the restoration and re-use of the historical ones assumes an increasing relevance in the context of, for example, housing policy.

Scientific output with respect to the topic of sustainability is now huge. The issue has attracted the interest of the whole world of architecture, from the area specifically related to plant engineering and technological research up to areas of urban scale, and has been intensely investigated in relation to landscape-related themes. Thus, research on the possibilities of a sustainable development has increasingly emphasised the need for a systemic approach, involving multiple disciplinary contributions. In particular, the theme of the cultural and specifically architectural heritage has often been the focus of debates on sustainability, dealing with problems concerning the future of cities, the revaluation and re-use of existing architectural ‘resources’ and the improvement of the quality of social and urban life. A very active area of research, not surprisingly, concerns the rehabilitation of buildings, in which energy innovation questions have been linked with the re-use and upgrading of existing constructions. It is an approach in many ways contiguous to restoration concerns, though it does not always pursue goals strictly consonant with the rationale for conservation. Studies in this field provide a substantial body of reference, in which specific technological aspects intersect with the search for strategies to control the quality of the interventions, with methods for assessing their compatibility.

Similarly, we can trace a second line of research in studies on the urban scale, which have made the environmental question the central focus for the planning of possible development scenarios. In this line of research, the issue

of sustainability has been combined with the attempt to recover the quality of the urban environment and, in particular, with the question of historical city centres and the architectural heritage – these two elements being interpreted as a resource to be exploited, and the grounds for development compatible with environmental exigencies.

It may seem strange that the same concerns cannot be found in the studies more specifically related to the issue of the restoration of historic buildings. The issue has been infrequently addressed, albeit on occasion with incisiveness of thought. Nevertheless, treatment of the theme of upgrading historical architecture to meet the new requirements of sustainability and energy saving is not negligible, if we also take into account that the impact of conservation technologies on the environment is not irrelevant.

We referred in the introduction to the fact that there is a risk that, once again, experimentation carried out in the construction of new buildings may be indiscriminately transferred to the rehabilitation and conservation of old ones. An appropriate location of the issue of sustainability within the broader issues related to the conservation of the architectural heritage today requires a theoretical reflection, which may constitute the basis on which to ground the specific contributions of applied scientific research. This will be necessary so that the exigencies of energetic innovation and the ones of the preservation of the environment may be reconciled. Creating interfaces between these fields of research, which up to now have been kept distinct, is essential to define strategies, guidelines and operational protocols that may direct action in ways that meet strict conservation requirements but, at the same time, provide innovative and sustainable solutions.

### **Methods and strategies for the ‘sustainability of the ancient’**

It is common knowledge that the definition of sustainable development was proposed, at an international level, in the report ‘Our Common Future’ introduced in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), better known as the Brundtland Report, and was sanctioned by the World Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In 1998, the CIB (International Council for Research and Innovation in Building and Construction) issued, through Agenda 21, guidelines on the subject of sustainable construction.

As we read in its *Executive Summary*, the concept of sustainability in construction has been progressively extended in its scope. The initial attention to energy resources and to the impact on the environment has gradually been widened to the search for products, construction materials and components that can effectively meet the new requirements. Moreover, recent developments show

the need for a more general approach, capable of relating technical questions to the social, economic and broadly cultural issues that are closely linked with sustainability. It is stated, in fact, that 'more recently also the cultural issues and the cultural heritage implications of the built environment have come to be regarded as pre-eminent aspects in sustainable construction'<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, the built heritage – in particular that of historical value – has become the object of specific interest in the field of sustainability. The challenge of a sustainable built environment cannot avoid, of course, confronting the issue of the wide range of existing buildings. However, it seems important to emphasise the significant convergence of interests and objectives between conservation culture and sustainable construction, about issues such as: the evaluation of the compatibility of materials and construction solutions; attention to the reversibility or revision of operations; interest in the safeguarding of what still exists; and the search for a minimal approach to operations. We can also appreciate that there is potentially a good relationship with the field of innovation, which appears to orient its production towards maximising durability as opposed to the logic of the new at any cost, which destroys the territory and its natural and cultural resources.

The planning of a sustainable restoration project can be carried out with regard to two coordinated areas of intervention: on the one hand, it is necessary to check the requisites and/or the faults of historical buildings in terms of sustainability, in order to draw a kind of map of the resources and the critical areas in which to intervene; on the other hand, we need a dialogue with the field of technological innovation, which is the source of the most advanced experimentation. Combining the needs of restoration with those of sustainability is not just to answer an increasingly urgent need of our present, but to open up new ways of reading, understanding and preserving the 'environmental stratification'<sup>3</sup> represented by the built historical heritage, where the spirit of the places inhabited manifests itself with respect to culture, technique, the materials used, the building sensibility and the presence of specific approaches regarding consumption of energy.

In the technological field and, more specifically, in that of the rehabilitation of buildings, the problem of sustainability has been closely linked to the knowledge of construction methods, in order to develop appropriate strategies to improve overall interventions. The analysis of artefacts and building systems – classified, for analytical simplicity, into structures, closures, partitions, plant and equipment – is combined with a larger-scale approach, in which the results of the analytical phase come together to define a framework of programming, planning and executive decisions. This division allows one to analyse, and to distinguish the areas of weakness from the areas of strength.

This allows for intervention through a project capable of turning constraints into opportunities, according to a working strategy that the discipline of restoration has extensively tested and refined with regard to maximizing durability, and which applies to all projects contributing to conservation.

However, as it has been aptly pointed out:

*When they have a choice, people will always gravitate to those rooms which have light on two sides, and leave the rooms which are lit from only one side unused and empty. This pattern, perhaps more than any other single pattern, determines the success or failure of a room. The arrangement of daylight in a room, and the presence of windows on two sides, is fundamental.*

‘...it is necessary to consider the characteristic of intrinsic emergency which connotes the specific properties of systemic realities: that means that these properties are characteristic of the system but they are not deducible from the analysis of its single components. An old building, rich in complex meanings, must be considered a dynamic system for which technological interventions inspired by the concept of ‘machine’ and ‘spare parts’ are absolutely inappropriate’<sup>4</sup>.

Traditional buildings very often follow construction principles that are naturally consistent with sustainability criteria, in terms of materials (finding and working the raw materials), and of the distribution and insertion of the buildings in the environment (exposure, orientation, rainwater collection). Intervening in existing construction by combining the principles of sustainability and those of a predetermined conservation approach implies the adoption of a planning logic aimed at researching the compatibility of the new elements, at enhancing the building resources and improving its performance.

A model for the evaluation of the environmental sustainability of buildings was introduced in 2004 with the ‘Itaca protocol’. It follows a logic of performance which is very useful for interventions on historical artefacts. In the case of such artefacts, it is impossible to operate only in terms of radical and dogmatic ‘adjustment’ to meet current standards. To intervene according to a logic of performance, as opposed to a purely prescriptive one, allows us to build a planning process, based on the reading of what already exists and on its evaluation according to specific indicators, and to identify, in the end, the appropriate intervention strategies – a progressive path where the choices are not normatively imposed, but are critically drawn from the knowledge of real situations.

It is evident that criticism regarding an analysis of historical architecture in terms of performance does not take into account the possibility – and the imperative

need – to undertake two key adjustments in dealing with historic buildings. On the one hand, it is essential to define different levels of performance that closely relate to the construction objective of the intervention. On the other hand, it is also essential to modulate in conservative terms the very concept of performance for a historical building, which may in time undergo processes of natural (but physiological) decay in the functionality of its materials, structures and equipment, but can for no reason suffer the practices of replacement and renewal<sup>5</sup>. Focusing on the conservation of what exists, and on the durability of the new interventions, allows a re-reading of the various interventions in historical artefacts in terms of a process, and seems to constitute not just a contrast, but an intersection between sustainability and conservation within a responsible project.

### **Historical architecture: between the perspectives of conservation and energy innovation**

In the last decade, the interest aroused all over the world by the issue of energy saving and renewable energy sources, owing to the risk of climatic changes and to the necessity to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, has been extended to architecture. In Italy, more than one-third of the consumption of energy is due to the construction sector, but only 10 per cent of the energy consumed is used in building, while the remaining percentage is spent in management. Likewise, the management of historic buildings can be improved in order to reduce consumption, and to get a better level of ecological efficiency<sup>6</sup>. As early as two decades ago, specific publications started to deal with the issue of energy consumption in buildings, by proposing both innovative technological instruments and the recovery of the potentialities of constructions themselves. Attention has been addressed to the most modern solar panels, with a view to laying them over the fronts of buildings or to inserting them in roofs.

At any rate, as regards historical buildings, the terms and the conditions should be different in order to avoid the risk that, for the sake of sustainability at any cost, the same interventions may be indiscriminately applied both to historical and modern buildings. What arouses a certain concern is the possibility that these innovative technologies (solar and others), that are in general use in new constructions, may be simply transferred into the field of restoration. The key issue is about meeting the imperatives of extremely important resources; on the one side the solar resource, on the other the architectural heritage. While they may appear to be opposing considerations, they share objectives tending to the same end – to preserve and make available both the energy resources and the architectural and artistic heritage. Procedures such as

those described above, despite their noble aim of saving energy, run the risk of missing the essential end of restoration, which is conservation with a twofold value, historical and aesthetic.

To completely abhor the idea of photovoltaic panels in historical buildings and protected neighbourhoods may seem the simplest stand to take, but it does not help to face the problem of the energy emergency. On the other hand, the indiscriminate permissions given by the various Monuments and Fine Arts Offices on the basis of criteria such as 'reversibility', 'low visual impact' and 'temporariness' of photovoltaic panels are not acceptable at all. The challenge, instead, is to seek the reasons and the terms according to which the installation of photovoltaic cells can be allowed and regulated, while respecting the culture of restoration. The problem is delicate and more relevant than ever. In Italy, in cities like Venice, this operation (insertion of photovoltaic panels) is possible, though limited to an area not exceeding 6 per cent (for protected buildings). The situation across Europe varies. In countries like Germany, Ireland, France and Spain, photovoltaic panels are quietly inserted into old buildings, sometimes with severe consequences for their appearance<sup>7</sup>.

In most cases when we talk of solar panels, we usually refer to simple panels anchored on the roofs with no special care for design. On the contrary, a common awareness is growing that attempting only to maximise energetic efficiency is not enough, and that the use of these installations should become widespread only when their aesthetic quality is improved. Photovoltaic panels, mainly consisting of silicon, promise an interesting creative development because of their flexibility, versatility, size and adaptability, as they can be used as real architectural elements and replace windows, shutters, covers, sunshades, canopies, pergolas, and so forth<sup>8</sup>. So we can consider the advent of PV modules as a common building material as not being far-off in the future. The application of PV modules in the field of historical buildings conservation can fall within the theory of critical restoration, as it has been conceived and formulated in the Roman and Neapolitan schools of restoration from the 1960s to this day. According to this outlook, in interventions where some additional elements made of innovative materials such as steel and glass are generally used, it is possible to replace such materials with modules of photovoltaic panels, with the result of also improving the energy performance of a building. It is all about a new alternative approach to planning, one that applies also to restoration, which bears an analogy with the contemporary use of materials like concrete, glass and steel, but which has the further advantage of using clean energy to meet the energy needs of the building. In some cases, renewable energy may be the only appropriate solution, in terms of both conservation

and respect for the environment, especially in works on archaeological sites or in the case of buildings located away from the energy supply network.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that in any restoration work, whether small or large, it is essential to adopt the criteria of good restoration practice, which, not focusing exclusively on efficiency, aims at keeping the aesthetic aspect of the work intact. It is possible to use less efficient but more respectful modules, which at the same time produce a positive energy gain, with no loss of the inherent values of the construction.

*Fig. 1*

Tourist Office, Alès (Lyon -France): Romanesque church turned into a tourist office. Within the three arches is included a metal structure with cantilevered photovoltaic cladding. Despite attempts to reduce the impact by improving the colour structure of cells and hiding the wiring, the impact on the context is very striking. (picture from M. E. Corrado)



*Fig. 2*

Lighthouse Des Poulains, Belle Ile en Mer (France): The placing of solar panels on the ground to the south has been carried out as the only way of overcoming the impact of the over ground provision for the electricity grid which, for many years, has crossed over the beach, disfiguring the landscape. The impact on the building is strong because of the excessive brightness of the panels, resulting, however, in a reduced environmental impact. In such cases we must consider whether the value to be protected and to prevail is that the building or the surrounding environment. (picture from M. E. Corrado)



*Fig. 3*

Portovenere, La Spezia, Italy, Doria Castle with luminous "solar flags" (Image from [www.pvaccept.de](http://www.pvaccept.de))



*Fig. 4*

"Solar Information Board" at S. Giorgio Castle, La Spezia (Italy) (Image from [www.pvaccept.de](http://www.pvaccept.de))



*Fig. 5*  
Portovenere, La  
Spezia, Italy, Doria  
Castle, nocturnal  
sight (Image from  
[www.pvaccept.de](http://www.pvaccept.de))



*Fig. 6*  
Neckar (Germany)  
"The learned man  
makes nature his  
friend". F. Schiller  
(Image from [www.pvaccept.de](http://www.pvaccept.de))



Fig. 7  
S. Giorgio Castle,  
La Spezia (Italy)  
nocturnal sight  
(Image from [www.pvaccept.de](http://www.pvaccept.de))

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The paragraph 'Sustainability and conservation' is credited to G. De Martino, the paragraph 'Methods and strategies for the 'sustainability of the ancient' is credited to M.R. Vitale, the paragraph 'Historical architecture: between the perspectives of conservation and energy innovation' is credited to A.M. Savia.

<sup>2</sup> *Agenda 21 on sustainable construction*, CIB, July 1999, 18.

<sup>3</sup> De Vita, M. and Neri, V. (2009) *Restauro e sostenibilità*, in "*Il progetto sostenibile*", 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> Della Torre, S. and Minati, G. (2004) *Conservazione e manutenzione del costruito*, in "*Il progetto sostenibile*", 2.

<sup>5</sup> Canziani, A. and Scaltritti, M. (2009) *L'approccio prestazionale alla risorsa culturale*, in "*Il progetto sostenibile*", 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> De Santoli, L. (2007) *Gli aspetti energetici nella conservazione dei beni culturali*, in Carbonara, G. (ed.) *Trattato di restauro architettonico, Primo aggiornamento, Grandi temi di restauro*, pp. 504-508.

<sup>7</sup> The examples were taken from: M. E. Corrado, *Possibilità di impiego per il restauro e nel recupero insediativo di sistemi alimentati da energie rinnovabili con particolare riferimento al fotovoltaico*, (PhD 'Riqualificazione insediativa e recupero urbano', Faculty of Architecture Vallegiulia, La Sapienza, Roma, XIX cycle).

<sup>8</sup> Spagnolo, M. (2002) *Il sole nella città. L'uso del fotovoltaico nell'edilizia*, p. 32.

# From ‘monument’ to ‘place of memory’: a plea for measurable standards and clear terminology in a ‘Eurocode for architectural conservation’.

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In the last decades, ideas about ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ in the conservation sciences have developed very fast and some limited ‘transformation’ can be accepted. Equally, in architectural sciences (‘architecture’ being understood as the discipline for the creation of new buildings and spaces), the merging of historic with modern structures is becoming more widely accepted. This is a positive evolution but there are still many questions and many discussions. Such merging is quite often based on an unequal valuation as between ‘conservation’ and/or ‘architecture’, which gives rise to unbalanced results or unhappy compromises. Many of these discussions and conflicts have their basis in the vague descriptions or the most interpretable principles in our Conservation Charters. Although neither conservation nor architecture are ‘exact’ sciences, much opposition or confusion could be avoided, or consensus found, by using precise terminology, and, where possible, by introducing measurable standards for what is possible and where to place borders between different types of intervention.

Modification, integration or transformation is not restoration! The Italian ‘recupero’ is not ‘restauro’! However these actions are not always clearly separable in architectural practice. The continuous extension (and sometimes ‘devaluation’) of the traditional concept of ‘monument’ from ‘quia monet mentem’ (definition by Diderot and d’Alembert within their ‘Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné...’ of 1751-1772) or ‘gewollt oder nicht gewollt’ (cfr. A. Riegl 1903, ‘Der moderne Denkmalkultur’) towards the modern ‘place or bearer of memory’, and the even larger concept of ‘built heritage’ including tangible and intangible values, creates a permanent threat to so-called ‘orthodox’ conservation principles. A lack of hierarchy within all the ‘new’ heritage buildings often leads to one-sided interpretation or reduction of that new ‘monument’ to an accidental ‘existing structure’ (whether with cultural

value or not). This is strengthened and boosted by the pertinent concern for economy in dealing with existing structures, and mostly also by respect for and (re-) valuation of the efforts of earlier generations. The proper need to prepare students for both of these attitudes is the reason why, in all European architectural master-curricula, a project working on 'existing fabric' is compulsory for at least one semester. This is an excellent development, but of course this one semester project, or the short theoretical introduction that this entails, does not allow the master student to tackle historic monuments adequately.

Certainly, democratisation of the monument-object is a positive thing, but it may engender overconfidence and even recklessness in creation-driven architects, convinced by the need and the right of modern times. They consider themselves supported by awarded projects published in the journals. Not all designers have the same sensibility as those architectural coryphées and not all buildings represent the same values. Just as the theory of Viollet-le-Duc acquired a bad reputation because of his many less gifted epigones, so too the good results of a Louvre Palace, a Rivoli Castle, a British Museum and many others cannot endorse or approve those less successful results, in which, with inappropriate reference to such examples, the authentic message of the monument may have been distorted. In the 1930s in Germany, one spoke about 'schöpferische Denkmalpflege' (creative conservation), and in the 1960s in Italy we heard about 'restauro artistico' – different names for similar behaviour. Today one sees again in some projects that cultural or historic values are considered inferior to aesthetic or functional ones. Too often we are beaten by extravagant design or inappropriate new use with forced infill.

The extension of the monument-concept, and the constraints on integrating existing structures within modern life, are blurring the borders between transformation and conservation. Not only may the personal taste or judgement of each individual be different, but even the great important guidelines, such as the many ICOMOS Charters, may not explain clearly the path to follow. These are deontological and qualitative guidelines, but do not give clear, measurable and controllable solutions for each individual case. Neither conservation nor architecture, nor history or sociology are exact sciences. Each requires interpretation and adaptation to the different contexts of the object. Precise borders are missing, evaluations depend on people, place and time, and the results over the long term are never sure.

Nevertheless, the architect and conservator have to decide and to act within their mission: passing a valuable building with a complex cultural message on to the future within the best possible conditions. 'Doing nothing' or freezing the existing without any change or intervention is seldom an option! It is even

more difficult or risky for the political (or other) decision-maker, not being a specialist in the field, to decide whether or not some proposals or projects should be realised. Even his/her advisor, for example the civil servant of a small town, not being a conservation expert either, cannot always give the appropriate advice to his/her mayor.

For this reason a new kind of conservation charter, or an explicative addendum to the many existing charters, might be most useful. Such an explicative addendum should describe all possible cases in order to avoid the fading away or decay of moral and deontological principles. It should contain a clear and complete epistemology of all possible interventions, when they are acceptable and when not, with qualitative and quantitative criteria, including measurable numeric thresholds, based on international 'benchmarking'. These might include, for example, the minimum percentages of authentic material and/or volume to be retained, the degree of authenticity and number of changes made throughout history, and the measured values according to objective scales. Within such a 'Eurocode for Architectural Conservation' one could establish a 'conservation index' or 'conservation label' based on quantitative criteria. I do not believe that this will avoid all extreme projects, such as some of the more fundamentally conservative ones where not even a minimum of change is accepted, nor the most progressive ones with 'design à la mode', but it certainly will help the project team in its self-control for a optimal result. Together with a clear hierarchy in the value of the historic fabric (also based on quantifiable criteria), such a 'Eurocode' could provide proper standards for each type of intervention and help the restoration-architect in his/her dialectic mission. The first initiatives on standardisation for instrument-based control or testing in the field of cultural heritage are already running for some years, under the aegis of the CEN (European Committee for Standardisation)<sup>1</sup>. They could also be a starting-point to establish (tangible and intangible) content-based indicators with descriptions of possible acceptable or non-acceptable architectural and/or urban consequences.

As architectural conservation today is above all value-based, there are as yet no laboratory instruments to measure the cultural value of a building. We all know that measuring cultural values or evaluating architectural or artistic work is a most difficult thing, always generating discussions. There exists, however, a number of indirect systems to quantify specific aspects of a building, and mathematical calculation models to compare the results of intervention<sup>2</sup>. We are all also convinced about the great potential of cultural heritage as a resource for social and economic development. For that reason, evaluation models used in social- or (cultural-) economic disciplines could be used in some adapted format.

Many countries also consider different categories of protection levels (for

example, listed, pre-listed, inventoried, established, accompanying), for which they use objective criteria. The type of community to which the heritage is appealing, such as 'local', 'regional', 'national', or 'world-heritage', can also provide weighting factors in the appreciation. Similar kind of categories can mark out certain type of possible interventions, for example, a first-grade building must be preserved as if it were a museum, without any kind of transformation. All this might appear to be too prescriptive for conservation activities, or as an excessive desire for regulation from authorities, but it certainly can and will save built heritage.

Applying such thinking to the ruins of the Augustinian Priory in Kells can help guarantee a safe future for this unique heritage. Some 'numbers and measures' could be established, such as: a maximum number of visitors within specific periods of the day and the year; where and how to integrate a small visitors' information centre; minimum and maximum indications for designing necessary interventions for protection (for example against rainfall and flooding) and eventual transformations by adding new structures; quantitative and qualitative specifications for maintenance and management; the organisation of accessibility and related traffic and parking aspects; and, finally, the integration of Kells Priory in the larger network of other ruins in the county. All this data (and maybe more) must be defined within an open process with all stakeholders. This will make Kells Priory a most interesting witness of Ireland's history and a unique landscape ensemble at the same time.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Technical Committees of CEN on 'Conservation of Cultural Property' are preparing different standards with different applications, all of them still in pre-standard status, e.g. for built heritage: prEN15898 'Main General Terms' / pr EN16085 'Sampling...' / prEN16095 'Condition report – visual inspection' / prEN16096 'Condition survey of immovable Heritage'.

Further information on [infodesk@cen.eu](mailto:infodesk@cen.eu) (CEN, Av.Marnix 17, B-1000 Brussels)

<sup>2</sup> More evaluation methodologies are available: e.g., 'Monument Coëfficient' (Rijksdienst Archeologie, Cultuurlandschap en Monumenten, Nederland); Valuation of the historic environment (English Heritage); Design Quality Indicator (Cabe, UK); Assessing Values of Cultural Heritage (Getty Conservation Institute). Other systems have been developed by New Economics Foundation U.K., Parks Canada, Council of Europe, ICOMOS and UNESCO.

Cfr. (not published) research report Artesis University College of Antwerp, Dep. Architecture by: Vranckx M., De Wachter B., De Dijn C.G., Laporte D.: '*Waardevol erfgoed, volwaardig beheer*', Antwerp 2008

# Historic cities and sustainability: conservation, transformation and planning in the city of Kilkenny. A preamble to a special problem

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The meaning of conservation and the implementation of appropriate transformation inexplicably seem to have been researched little, if at all. Appropriate transformation contributes to sustainability, which can be defined as the transmission to future generations of vitally important resources that involve the historical environment, peoples and their identity, the formal values that history has entrusted to us.

This opens a new scenario in the panorama of restorative action that draws upon premises pertaining to the culture and practice of restoration in order to transmit to future generations the identity of places in the light of technical-scientific, ethical and economic needs that cannot and should not be ignored. Not only are the permanence of artistic, constructive and material expressions of history at stake, but also the requirement that these material expressions participate in increasing sustainability via an intelligent and well-balanced transformation of the territory and its component parts.

Restoration activity is always sustainable because its intrinsic nature is to maintain and increase the value of that which exists, rather than needlessly consume land and abandon or dispose of viable existing material. The historical environment is in fact an infinite cultural and environmental resource, accounting for a very high percentage of the global architectural heritage, and it should be the starting point for all urban planning activities and correlated socio-economic studies.

The increasingly systematic research into traditional techniques and materials, the constructive characteristics of architectural works of historic-artistic interest and how these were used to meet their energy and climatic requirements can lead to forms of operational coherence, and to respect for constructive solutions that not only reveal the characteristics of their identity, but are also strongly rooted in the environmental values of historical localities. An international debate on these arguments, and the discussion of case studies such as Kilkenny in restoring/transforming historical buildings and

localities is an important presupposition, not only for updating the restoration project, but also for updating the teaching of restoration in our universities and the training of the architect restorers of the third millennium.

### **Kilkenny and its spatial sequences**

The visit to the City of Kilkenny for the workshop, despite its brevity, immediately revealed strong settlement and evolutionary criteria, clearly impressed on the territory with an easily recognisable identity. This identity is unique, shaped by the historical events of the city, but it also interprets and makes legible the spatial relationships well beyond the city confines, thus revealing a wider culture and relationship between the city and its territory in Ireland.

Between St. Canice's Cathedral and Kilkenny Castle, along the main streets and the secondary streets, between the innermost parts and the river, diverse urban narratives take place. But in reality these are very concise and held together by an 'ancient density', revealing the proximity of lives, people and events. The urban façades, the hospitable interiors (like the 'Hole in the wall'), the small open spaces embedded between the buildings of the historic city, with their stones, their colours, their openings and closures, communicate the sedimentation of culture, of a plethora of human relations and of construction techniques, all of which have appropriated history and its numerous transformations with the most powerful binding agent known – a respectful awareness of their identity. There are widespread signs of this vital material culture that is still capable of transmitting the characteristics of its own identity, and it is a pleasant surprise to see that there is little or no deterioration that could indicate decay of the structures and abandonment of the sense of the historic centre as a residential centre.

### **Risks and fragility in a historic centre**

Kilkenny is an important historical centre, a national and international tourist destination. Travellers wishing to learn something of Ireland visit the city that has been consecrated as a symbol of the history of its territory and as an icon of recognisability of its forms and architecture. This condition, experienced in many other important historic centres, embodies and conceals considerable risks, related to the intrinsically fragile nature of its fabric that is not easy to preserve, but related also, paradoxically, to a mistaken understanding of the conservation process.

The fragility of this fabric is furthermore highlighted and exacerbated by economic and management problems, and also by customs that make the historic centre uncompetitive for residential purposes, compared with new buildings and new settlements, if it is considered on the basis of the economic

advantages inherent in its collocation.

The fragility of a historical centre is both tangible and intangible. The tangible aspects refer to its concrete data: centuries-old buildings, their component parts and elements, street routes, squares, gardens, forests and watercourses and all the 'authentic' material that collects the sedimentation of history, and which is subjected to various and changing forms of deterioration. *Direct tangible deterioration* is the most obvious and also the most likely type of fragility to be encountered in a historic centre. Stone walls, plaster, door and window frames, roofs, floors, road paving – all historical constructions – decay and deteriorate. Appropriate use and maintenance have always seen to repairs, transformation and transmission to future generations. The landscape and its component parts in their turn deteriorate and lose authenticity, but this form of conservation can also be undertaken by recognising the landscape itself as an extraordinary resource to be preserved.

*Indirect tangible deterioration* is another form of alteration of historical centres. This deterioration is less noticeable, thereby making timely intervention less likely. It affects the relationships between the parts and the elements of constructions, the so-called connective fabric as well as the relationships between the different areas and between the areas and the settlement criteria which generated them, evolved over time. Key vulnerabilities are: the use of the connective system (squares, roads, open spaces); the organisation of the traffic system; the relationships between the built-up areas; the parks and gardens and the areas along the river; the care provided for the system of parks and gardens; and the maintenance and restoration of street fronts and the fittings in open spaces. Very often, these forms of deterioration are considered to play a less important role in conservation than the alteration of single elements or materials in historical architecture. The two forms of deterioration are, however, closely linked and the deterioration of the connecting fabric only becomes evident when it is very advanced – at this point it involves the material characteristics, the perception of the so-called urban landscape as well as questions related to the use and management of the city.

Another very important manifestation of indirect material deterioration is the result of the use, the inappropriate use and the disuse of parts of the city. The forms, materials and connections of the historic city are bound up with the settlement characteristics of the locality, and especially with its role as a dwelling place, which requires many other functions that slowly evolve and mutate in response to changing productive and economic-financial conditions and the structure of land ownership and land management. The fragility of the historic centre is due to the difficulty of maintaining an acceptable balance

between the different functions, including its residential role, and dealing with transformations, new needs and moments of crisis, without renouncing its identity – its ‘citizenship’.

So-called ‘tourism deterioration’, which reveals itself partly as tangible deterioration (direct and indirect) and partly as intangible, is a further form of deterioration, typical of the ‘art cities’ and of important historical centres. The concrete, visible aspects of this type of deterioration in the short term include the inappropriate use of, and lack of respect for, monumental buildings, and the presence of means of transport and services connected with tourism that are inappropriate when compared with the prestige of the historical vestiges. This particular aspect is not apparent, or not at a macroscopic level, in the city of Kilkenny. Other forms of deterioration to be found in cities that are tourist attractions include the slow, unprogrammed transformation of urban spaces and places to meet the needs of tourists. These unregulated transformations rapidly bring about a loss of identity in the areas affected and the historic centre loses both its authenticity and its residents. Obviously this does not mean that tourism in itself necessarily implies deterioration, but rather that a careful programming of tourism development, the provision of high-quality services, a constant awareness of the city’s sense of identity and of its component parts, are not only an effective antidote to the loss of meaning of urban history but are also an incentive for tourism. The manifestations of intangible deterioration have their origins in an increasing lack of interest in the history of the locality and in a mistaken sense of progress, which causes the younger generations to identify with recently created settlements and urban spaces, whose creature comforts, technology and prestigious functions compete with the historical centres that are considered only for the economic advantages inherent in their collocation. The problems related to these aspects of urban deterioration need to be jointly analysed by architects, economists, sociologists and cultural operators with different training backgrounds.

### **Conservation and transformation in urban planning**

All the questions posed thus far are interconnected. Often, the different forms of deterioration interact and amplify each other, and the experience of important historical centres and art cities is that these phenomena can very rapidly trigger the loss of a sense of history, the loss of identity and the exodus of residents. This quickly results in a lack of maintenance. The time and the means required for reversing these phenomena are, however, extremely uncertain.

The analysis of the deterioration of historic centres (in all its parts and manifestations), and the definition of the measures and norms required to protect existing centres, should be an integral part of normal city planning.

This planning should indicate development priorities and decide the city's destiny, including that of the historical centre, and so it should also decide the balance between conservation and transformation. Traffic and infrastructure problems, choices relating to the pedestrianisation of certain areas, decisions as to whether to accept new functions in the historic city or to maintain certain types of usage, the question of residents, the greater or lesser presence of public functions, the designing and restoration of open spaces, pollution-related problems, sustainability and energy saving options, functional decentralisation, the expansion of the city and new constructions, are all activities that form part of urban planning and affect the fundamental balance between the historical centre, new buildings and the natural ecosystem.

The idea of planning as a tool for dividing the city into different functional zones has been outdated for some time; nowadays planning's role is to ensure that a given place maintains its identity. Conservation and growth are the means used to attain this objective: two different aspects of the same process of balanced transformation of the existing reality.

There are, therefore, many questions to be posed regarding planning and conservation action in Kilkenny. These include: what relationship currently exists between Kilkenny and the river? What relationship exists between the buildings and the open spaces in the historic centre? What role do the streets and squares play in the historic centre of Kilkenny, and what infrastructure requirements can and should they meet? What type of pedestrian areas and how many, and what type of bicycle tracks for Kilkenny? What is the role of the new roads and routes in relation to the historic built-up area? What is the continuity-discontinuity relationship of the urban façades and how well are they conserved? What are the principle functions of the historic centre of Kilkenny and which functions and public buildings characterise this centre? Which are the monumental buildings, which are the most important buildings, what is their relationship today with the city, and what functions do they house? What is the meaning and the role of these functions today? What is the museum and cultural system of Kilkenny? What does the city offer its tourists? What services are available to young people in the historic centre? What services are available for the elderly? These questions and others of a similar nature I consider pertinent to a new dimension of planning that accords primary importance to the historic centre, raising the questions that describe its authenticity and its identity and that will ensure the transmission of these values to future generations.

### **Instruments and rules for transformation**

The conservation and transformation of the historical city of Kilkenny has another level: the architectural scale that derives from historical architecture

and architecture with historic-artistic qualities. This scale includes: individual buildings; the surfaces and architectures of the open spaces between the buildings; the component building parts; and elements of detail. Planning plays a vital role at this level too, for two reasons. Firstly, the close relationship between analysis and choices at the urban-territorial level and at the block-building historical parts of buildings level, means all the input is included in a well-balanced material and functional development framework. Secondly, the need to establish clear, rigorous norms which protect the identity of the various localities, but at the same time ensure that the historical centre is a pleasant, interesting place with easily accessible services that make it 'competitive' and appealing for residents of all age groups, when compared with new buildings. The norms in question should include the criteria for intervening in historical buildings and spaces for conservation purposes, for technological upgrading and for building upgrading. On the one hand, it is important to substantially maintain the internal spatial relationships of the historical buildings and the characteristics of their façades; to use traditional technologies for the structures and to preserve the existing building as carefully as possible, with a project that safeguards the individual characteristics of its architecture. On the other hand, it is also important that the project provides for the alterations required for updating electrical installations, plumbing, sanitary fittings etc, for resolving problems of accessibility and generally updating historical buildings so they comply with the norms, laws and the expectations for contemporary comfortable living.

Such choices are difficult and delicate, and they require a careful monitoring of the transformation to avoid the historic city becoming theatrical scenery, emptied from within and deprived of its structure and the spatial data handed down over the centuries. It is however, also necessary to avoid needlessly crystallising those parts of the historical architecture that can and should make domestic life, work and access to public services more practical and convenient, thereby satisfying the expectations of today's residents. Resident expectations are often unforeseeable, and if left unsatisfied, can trigger strong decentralising tendencies that in a short period of time generate 'ghost cities', where the 'density' of events and meanings is only apparent. The specific norms relating to the conservation and transformation of historic buildings are difficult to devise and to implement, especially as every historic centre is different. The vehicle of this transformation, however, is certainly the restoration project, which always considers the global characteristics of a building or of recognisable unit parts of a building, even when the planned restoration is of modest dimensions. A restoration project is made up of all the reflections on the space involved (which may be minimal); it describes the

characteristics of that space and it guides the transformations of that space with a careful understanding of the identity of the place, using contemporary instruments and language and thereby transmitting to future generations that same identity, enriched by the critical interpretation of the present.

An important aspect of comparing diverse conditions existing within the same reality, a characteristic of all 'historic centres', is to compare the characteristics and the meanings of 'conservation and transformation projects' at different levels: monumental, buildings comprising the urban fabric and historical open spaces. Open, analytical discussion during the preparation of the restoration project, rather than evaluating results when the project is completed, would considerably facilitate international comparisons and debate on one of the most important instruments available to architecture: the restoration project, its general principles and its specific details. This discussion would also facilitate a much-needed expansion of training courses for European and international restoration architects for the third millennium.

'Ancient', 'modern', 'sustainable': three terms for an urban maintenance programme; three proposals for extending the workshop.

Returning to the topics introduced at the beginning of this paper and wishing to re-unite the different levels described in this paper with proposals for the workshop on the conservation and transformation of the city of Kilkenny, I believe the trinomial ancient-historical-sustainable should be considered key to interpreting the measures that could be implemented for historical centres and, in particular, for Kilkenny.

### **The territory and the landscape.**

Caring for and, if necessary, restoring the territory and the landscape around Kilkenny are appropriate actions for safeguarding one of Ireland's most beautiful and important ecosystems, for the Irish themselves and for foreign visitors. This landscape is currently in an excellent condition and it would appear to have no signs of deterioration, but monitoring its authentic characteristics and regulating interventions in the area should be considered a high priority. These norms obviously must deal with new buildings, maximum heights, aggregative characteristics, distances from watercourses, the traffic system, and whatever else is required to demonstrate via the architectural project that all proposed new buildings and urbanisation meet the requirements of effective landscape conservation – or, where appropriate, contribute towards the amelioration of whatever type of deterioration may be present in the territory or the landscape. This reflection arises from the extraordinary state of conservation of the landscape around Kilkenny and the difficulties at European level of finding appropriate ways of regulating and controlling architectural projects within the

framework of landscape protection, the primary matrix of the historical city. Kilkenny and the results of the workshop could well provide extremely useful indications and proposals for dealing with this problem.

### **The monuments, their use, their materials.**

Another line of research for the workshop could pose the question of updating the use of monumental buildings and of conserving their component parts. Ancient materials should be conserved and functional integrations should speak the language of their times. At the same time, caring for monuments also means searching for more advanced ways of using them, to ensure they are constantly in use, and to amplify their didactic cultural message. A question that still remains open, and could be addressed during the workshop, is the relationship between the monument and its use as a museum or as a centre for public services, and new forms of communication and furnishing. This relationship exists in well-preserved buildings as well as those that have been abandoned or are in ruins. Such actions have a high sustainability value. A further step might be the evaluation of these same actions with a view to using alternative energy sources, and to obtaining the most fruitful relationship between architecture and natural elements, or spontaneous or designed parts of the territory. The relationship between the castle of Kilkenny and its park, for example, is particularly important and intense: their significance, views and spatial relationships are shared and this relationship should be protected. This protection depends on planning the activities carried out in both places, maintaining their component parts, conserving the various materials and determining their use (routes, paving, lighting, urban furniture, arboreal species etc), all in great detail. This same relationship conditions the perception of the castle as having a public function, giving greater or lesser importance to the proposal that the castle is a place for public cultural use for both residents and tourists. Then, the ways in which cultural functions are proposed, the means of communication, the fitting out and the criteria of the exhibition, updating the global cultural proposal will be felt in the inside-outside relationship, in the interaction between architecture and the territory and in the way the castle is perceived and used in the city.

### **Materials and functions of the historical city.**

A similar exchange of ideas and critical reflections on the materials used in the current buildings and urban fabric, as well as in the open spaces of the historic centre of Kilkenny, could provide a further development of the workshop. Given that there is a strong reciprocal link between the quality of an urban locality, the quality of its component materials and the quality of life,

a third point to be examined could be the contribution that a careful analysis of these materials would provide for research on sustainable conservation and transformation. Floorings, walls, mortars, floor and roof structures, building systems and the internal divisions of buildings, roofing, door and window frames, electric installations, plumbing, heating systems, the colourings of the facades, signage – these are the elements that can be analysed for each building sample so that the conservation process safeguards the authenticity of the localities. This process also makes it possible to evaluate how, and to what extent, these elements can contribute to the overall sustainability of the historic city. The thermal characteristics of the materials used and the traditional building systems, the historical layout of the buildings and their aggregations to optimise heating and cooling, the orientation of the buildings, the historic sense of dwelling and of the city as the place for living in the best conditions possible – all these characteristics should be conserved and protected from modifications that introduce incongruous spatiality and materials, often both culturally and thermally wasteful. It should also be remembered that today, compatibly with the historic characteristics of the buildings, a careful and respectful use of technology can positively contribute to the historic city by reducing energy consumption and co-producing energy.

These considerations should be developed following the principle of conserving and transforming the functional characteristics of the historic city; the fragility of the historic city has been emphasised and leads me to connect the urge to ‘learn from Kilkenny’ to an appeal for the urgent need to ‘work for Kilkenny’, and for a hundred other cities that require alert, careful and up-to-date custodians.



# An Archaeological Itinerary within the Irish countryside. Around Kells Priory

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## Introduction

The EAAE Workshop posed a particular challenge for architects specialising in restoration and engaged in the field of built heritage conservation: requiring them to develop thoughts regarding the general issue of the future of the historical heritage, it offered as its starting-point sites that were unknown to the large majority of participants. This meant that each scholar had to change their usual methods of approach, with the essential preliminary research having to be replaced by bibliographical data backed up by information provided by local archaeologists and researchers. Allowing for the inevitable simplifications and approximations, one's perception of these sites and understanding of the themes raised was a full test of professional experience. Bringing together the traditions and approaches implicit in the training provided by the various 'schools' in different countries throughout Europe, the entire exercise resulted in an exchange of experience, knowledge and ideas – all focused on problems relating to the conservation and use of buildings, sites and urban fabrics that are typical of the chosen territory in the southeast of Ireland. The examination of these various contexts would reveal close analogies and noticeable differences with the sites and circumstances known to each one of us, raising issues regarding the role of the available instruments for heritage protection and the form architectural design projects can take in different circumstances. The following notes are in part a 'work diary' of those days in Ireland and in part an account based upon subsequent reflection; they take into consideration the discussions on the final day of the Workshop and the questions that were raised there.

## The journey south

1. The journey from Dublin southwards, in the region of Leinster, through the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny and Tipperary, takes one through a significant part of the Irish landscape. The distinction between city and countryside is here still fully visible. Those of us who come from Italy, in particular, note a

real distance between one city and the next. Outside the area of the capital and its vast urban spread, the concentration of built-up areas appears limited; villages are small and the farms dotted around the countryside stand isolated amidst fields, pastures and woodland. One gets the impression of travelling through an ancient landscape that has preserved methods of settlement and rhythms of life very different to those one finds in an urban context, the observed differences also having socio-economic implications.

Ireland seems to have little of the building speculation that has resulted in what is the most recent hallmark of territorial development in Italy: a disorderly *continuum* of residential, commercial and industrial expansion. In Italy, buildings of the most varied types are scattered across the countryside, often without the slightest respect for building norms and planning, whilst in rural Ireland it seems that tradition still inspires the types of structures built. As has been the case in Italy's small historical centres for some time, Ireland too reveals a growing concern about the dangers of profound changes in the character of small settlements: 'Many villages in Leinster and near large cities are losing their character and being turned into dormer towns or are being swamped with suburban developments, others are being over-developed with tax-efficient holiday homes while some remote rural villages are under threat from neglect and population loss' (Heritage Council 2005). However, when one leafs through *An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of County Kilkenny* (Government of Ireland 2006) – the catalogue of listed monuments in the southeast of Ireland, the most populous area in the country and that where urbanisation first occurred – one finds that the rural houses built between the eighteenth and nineteenth century continue to be some sort of model for the types and forms of farmhouses and for the village houses that cluster around the core of church, school, pub and post office. In each case, these are low, one- or two-storey houses, with a pitched roof and a certain repetition of motifs in form, building materials, decorative features and door/window openings.

Destined to express the development of cities, contemporary architecture seems predominantly restricted to urban areas, and in particular to Dublin, a city which is home to around a third of Ireland's population (Irish Architecture Foundation, *Open House Dublin. 8-11 October 2009. Next generation Architecture 2009*). Such architecture does not seem to have affected the layout of extra-urban areas, where it makes itself felt primarily in the interior refurbishments intended to adapt monumental complexes for new use (Kilkenny Castle, for example).

The area around Kilkenny, the ancient capital of the county, contains a number of important medieval monuments: forts, castles, churches and monastery cloisters, some restored in the period since the nineteenth century, others

in ruins or deliberately left unroofed. The walls of towers and buildings, the tympana of facades, the colonnades of porticoes and naves stand out against a changing sky, resisting time and – with the aid of added support which, depending upon its date, varies in materials and technique (see Jerpoint Abbey) – apparently defying the very laws of statics. Very often there are only slight traces of plasterwork and surface decorations, with the bare structure of the walls predominating: heavy blocks of dark stone, quoins and slabs, all skilfully shaped and mounted, amidst a mass of irregular-sized stones. Often – as is the case at the Rock of Cashel – the shadow of the imposing ruins falls across cemeteries whose tombstones form a sort of lapidary Spoon River Anthology, recounting the history of the families that have lived here for generations.

And the landscape itself plays a part in making these huge ruins such unique sites. With their famous variety in tonalities of green, the hills form a backdrop to these ancient buildings, the two comprising a whole that is the very essence of the Irish heritage.

### **A composite landscape**

The ruins of Kells Priory are, to quote the words of the Workshop Introduction, located ‘within a setting of productive agricultural landscape’. But at the same time they themselves are a distinctive feature of that landscape: the upper walls interrupted by towers, the ruins of the church and ‘water castle’, and the stone outlines that have emerged from the excavations around the cloister make this one of the largest and most significant archaeological sites in Ireland (*Fig. 1, 2*). To the south, the fourteenth-century fortification (Burgess Court) seems still to stand in protection over ‘The Precinct’, the remains of the Augustinian foundation which dates back to the late twelfth century and is bound to the north by the Kings River: ‘One of its most striking features is a collection of medieval *tower houses* spaced at intervals along and within walls which enclose a site of just over three acres (12,000 m<sup>2</sup>). These give the Priory the appearance more of a fortress than of a place of worship and from them comes its local name of *Seven Castles*’. Nowadays, Kells Priory is a National Monument, therefore preserved by the State of Ireland and is in the guardianship of the Office of Public Works.

On the other side of the road, the modern settlement of Kells (*Fig. 3*) presents the visitor with an ideal destination of cultural tourism: ‘Kells is a vibrant, welcoming village, popular with tourists and holiday makers. There is easy walking, friendly pubs and excellent accommodation. Fish the Kings River or picnic at Mullins mill, also a popular canoeing spot. The mill pond is a haven for ducks, swans, moorhens and the occasional heron’ (<http://www.kellsvillage.bravepages.com>).



*Fig. 1*  
The tower-spaced walls of Kells Priory, surrounded by fields and pasture land

The presence of the ruins of the old Priory and the other ‘historical and archaeological treasures’ form a resource and tourist attraction that seem to offer an opportunity of rebirth to a community that, up until a few decades ago, was in drastic decline: ‘In 1992 the Kells Region Economic and Tourism Enterprise was formed, its aim being to “preserve the historical and archaeological treasures, the natural beauties and amenities and the uniquely,



*Fig. 2*  
Kells Priory: the remains of the oldest settlement seen in relation to the enclosing walls.

*Fig. 3*  
The relation  
between the  
archaeological site  
and the village of  
Kells



friendly atmosphere of Kells village and surrounding area'. Clearly, the future of the area is bound up with the need to balance the necessary conservation requirements of landscape and archaeological site with the needs of the local population that manage the territory; the optimal exploitation of resources has to allow for the use of the monuments and landscape by tourists, visitors and scholars alike.

Another important feature of the territory is the Kings River. As in numerous other cases, the religious house was founded beside a river, and the relation between this waterway and the ruins of the Priory is one of the special aspects of the landscape (Fig. 4, 5). After the foundation was abandoned, various mills were constructed along the watercourse and have now been converted for use as recreational or museum facilities. Flowing at the foot of the hills, the river clearly adds to the beauty of the landscape; it was and still is an important territorial resource. In recent years, its level has risen, with the flooding of the archaeological site posing a significant conservation problem. The images of the partially submerged ruins suggest that one of the major problems in coming years will be how to prevent that which was unearthed by archaeological excavation from once again becoming covered over; the hydro-geological issues posed by the situation have yet to be resolved.

Nevertheless, the paths that run alongside the river and up the hillside bear witness to humankind's longstanding familiarity with this setting: the stone-bound river banks and the bridges across the waterway are clear evidence of an age-old rapport with this feature of the landscape.



*Fig. 4*  
The ruins and the  
Kings River

Originally inhabited by a small number of Augustinian canons, the most ancient settlement on the site was attacked and burnt down a number of times before being finally abandoned in the sixteenth century and left to fall into ruin. During the seventeenth century, the cloister would actually be used as a stable, and the tombstones in the cemetery next to the aisle of the church are themselves stripped from the fabric. Over time, the crumbling ruins became buried and would remain so until the 1970s, when a programme of excavation

*Fig. 5*  
The breach in  
the walls facing  
towards the river



began, slowly revealing the base levels of the buildings together with areas of brick paving; other finds included French and English ceramics, fragments from the church's stained glass and various practical objects which made it possible to identify and date the spaces of everyday life enclosed within the stone walls (Clyne 2007).

Archaeologists, however, are well aware that while their excavations may bring to light evidence of life at a certain period, they also destroy age-old sedimentations and other traces of the past; the movement/removal of archaeological finds inevitably alters the juxtapositions resulting from the collapse of structures and the superimposition of successive layers of use. What one sees now – the latest phase in the work of excavation – exposes to view solely the extant architectural evidence: of the more than 20,000 pieces unearthed, numerous unused stones still lie in the area of the cloisters.

From the very start, the archaeological site has been a site of restoration, in the widest sense of the term. For example: 'It has been hoped for years after the excavation of much of the material from the original cloister arches that the Board of Works would try to reconstruct it. Despite the assertion by Dr Fanning that this is a feasible project and would make the ruins far less attractive, the Board has so far shown little inclination to commit the resources' (Smith 1993). When one observes the horizontal and vertical outline of the walls, one sees that they have undergone various changes. This is clear, for example, from such deliberate distinctions as: the 'undercut' buttresses (with a difference in level of a few millimetres between the reconstructed and original surfaces)

(Fig. 6); the presence of a membrane between an original layer and that added above to protect and consolidate it (Figg 7, 8); the mortars used to hold the stone quoins in place. In changing the existing outlines, such protection becomes a form of 'reworking' – that is, both conservation and transformation.

Always viewed as a place where conservation is the main focus (Fig. 9), ruins are in fact the result of a re-organisation of remains within a changed and simplified layout which is then made available to the public. And at Kells Priory



*Fig. 6*  
The undercut  
reinforcement spur

*Fig. 7*  
Sheathing between  
the reinforcement/  
protection layer  
and the layer of  
wall beneath



as elsewhere, that layout is a work-in-progress, either the fruit of ongoing maintenance (*Fig. 10*) or – as in the case of the Prior's Tower – an example of restoration-as-completion (to use Gustavo Giovannoni's well-known term).

### **The experience of the community and the visitor**

Tourists pass through the monastic settlement as if it were part of the 'natural' landscape. Set between pastureland and river, the ruined buildings seem to have returned to become part of their surroundings, now that their practical use has come to an end (*Fig. 11*). In effect, in this age of the Internet, one can find various websites that chart visitors' 'journey through the ruins', complete with photographs and brief descriptions and comments written in English or Spanish. These family photos, of young and not-so-young visitors, give us an initial idea of the public attracted to the Kells site, an idea that could be more precisely defined by systematic detailed research.

The projects developed by the local communities for the correct exploitation of the site and surrounding area involve proposals at various levels: improvements of the links between Kells and other archaeological sites; facilitation of circulation between sites of historical monuments; greater availability of catering/accommodation facilities (restaurants, cafés, bed & breakfast, etc); the provision of cultural and recreational activities. The mills near the Priory ruins, for example, have already been restored for reuse, and events and exhibitions involving various sites have been held there. Greater communication within the village of Kells might be provided by the creation of an Information Centre. This could offer illustrative material (videos, guides,



*Fig. 8*  
The change in the outline of the wall as a result of consolidation: in the background, the Priors Tower after restoration

annotated maps, etc.) and guided tours for those visitors who require more than a chance encounter with charming old ruins and who wish to understand of the layout of the site.

For the architect-conservator, the central theme of one possible project within a complex overall approach, might be defined in terms of 'the archaeology of landscape'. Whilst fully respecting the distinctive features and characteristics of that landscape, various partial possible alternatives



*Fig. 9*  
The ruins of Kells Priory seen from the opposite side of Kings River, in a photograph taken before the restoration of the Priors Tower

are legitimate. However, it might be useful to pose a preliminary question. The introductory notes to the Workshop in fact state that ‘apart from repairs and some archaeological excavation, it [the site] has remained untouched and free from on-site interpretation’, but is that really the case? In other words, which approach is more ‘conservational’? Leaving the archaeological site and surroundings in their present state, which seems rather like that of a restoration worksite for incessant modification to the ruins? Or limiting



*Fig. 10*  
Restoration of the  
corner wall of the  
choir in the church

intervention on the archaeological remains to the bare minimum of repetitive maintenance (scarcely more than the removal of weeds), with the addition (or perhaps simply the skilful highlighting) of certain 'signs' within the landscape which make it available/accessible to a larger public?

Being listed as a national monument not only implies that rigorous measures of conservation must be taken with regard to the archaeological site. It also requires that there should be controlled yet extensive access to the site, with



*Fig. 11*  
A walk amongst  
the ruins

provision for an understanding of its history and present state. The protection of a landscape incorporating archaeological sites can also be approached *via* a project envisaged at a territorial level, with reduced-scale intervention that is carefully focused to be 'light of touch' – that is, does not alter the density of construction within the territory or the quality and features of the landscape. At Kells Priory there is no need for the striking gestures with which contemporary architecture appears so often enamoured. And at the same time there is no need for the project choices to be inimical to the existing landscape, to violate its beauty and distort its environmental characteristics.

One might here cite here a number of examples of balanced solutions to similar problems. One instance is the monastery of Santa Clara a Velha (Fig. 12) in Coimbra (Portugal), which is now entirely incorporated within an urban area. Finally abandoned in 1667 after a series of devastating floods caused by the river Mondego, the area became the object of land reclamation in 1995, with excavations beginning in 2000. At the same time as this work was proceeding, plans were drawn up for a system of access and visitor routes between the ruins and the new reception centre (complete with museum, conference room and a cafeteria built on other side of the parterre leading towards the excavations). Just a few years ago, I myself had the opportunity to participate in the project for the reorganisation of the archaeological site of Monte Nebo in Jordan, where Franciscan archaeologists had begun excavations in the 1930s (the Franciscans are the custodians of Christian monuments in the Holy Land). Here, the study of the Paleo-Christian architectural remains, set within a remote landscape of extraordinary beauty, began with topographical

*Fig. 12*  
A. Alves Costa,  
S. Fernandes  
and L. Urbano,  
Development of  
the Monastery  
of Santa Clara a  
Velha, Coimbra  
(Premio Municipal  
de Arquitectura  
"Diogo Castilho"  
2009). The visitors  
Reception Centre  
as seen from the  
excavation site



reconstruction – both a ‘legendary’ topography (to quote Maurice Halbwachs) and the actual topography of the uplands overlooking the river Jordan. The survey of the ruins, which have themselves been extensively ‘redesigned’, and the altimetrical survey of the terrain provided the guidelines for the project proposals (Fig. 13) and for the study of the layout of facilities. These latter were carefully designed so that they would fit in along a ramified foot route that leads up to the Moses Memorial.

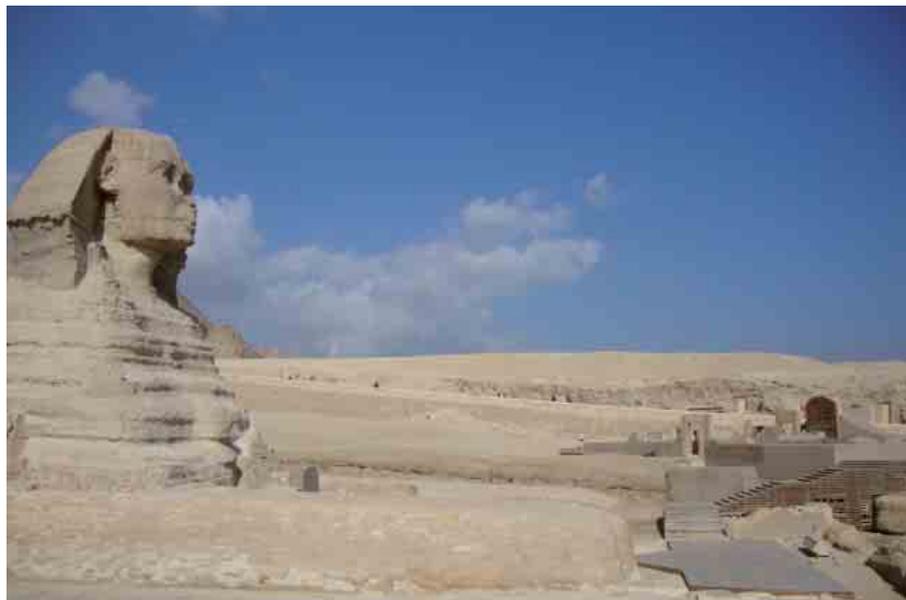


*Fig. 13*  
D. Vitale, C. Di Biase, A. Esposito et al., Surveys and project designs for the Monte Nebo area (Jordan), 2004. In the lower centre one can see the new tree-lined space paved in stone which is intended as an area for rest and contemplation. To the side of the ramp giving disabled access is the Reception Centre (information office, toilet facilities, first aid, café)

## To deepen the experience

In the case of Kells Priory, for example, the buildings nearest the ruins could be equipped as possible information points, supplying a plan of the site with indications of the former uses of each area of the structure. Such material would enable all visitors to understand and distinguish the evidence and stratifications within the ruins, thus moving beyond a mere spontaneous reaction to the charm of old ruins. With suitable small additions, those same buildings could also house facilities and a cafeteria.

And even before such intervention, the network of footpaths leading to the monumental sites and to points affording panoramic views could be carefully surveyed and mapped, with clear indications of the lie of the land and changes in level. This network could also be made more easily recognisable by such minimal changes as the clearing-away of weeds and a clear definition of pathways using sand-lime-and-earth mortar and fine gravel. Having left their cars and other means of transport in the parking areas near the residential area, the visitors would proceed along footpaths or cycle paths that might also be equipped with facilities which would enable them to stop and contemplate the view before them, or else to engage in reading or conversation. The iron bridge created by the local inhabitants could be redesigned in combination with other possible transport links – for example, the moorings for boats at the entrance to the Precinct. In effect, a parallel route might be devised along waterways, with the boats travelling along the Kings River to the mills and beyond.



*Fig. 14*  
The Sphinx in profile (El-Giza, Egypt) and, opposite, the bleachers providing seating for audiences

Finally, the area within the site (opposite the Chapter Room and the Prior's Tower) might house temporary bleachers of wooden seating that could be used for concerts and other performances in the summer months. Such facilities are already to be found in the most ancient area of the Pyramids (*Fig. 14*), in the temples of Sicily and at Pompeii – not to mention the use that is made of the Verona Arena, now a prestigious opera venue. They make it possible to bring together various forms of art and knowledge, as well as making an economic contribution to the maintenance of sites and monuments.

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# Can continuity survive the transformative process in interventions on historic structures?

## The importance of craft as an aspect of continuity.

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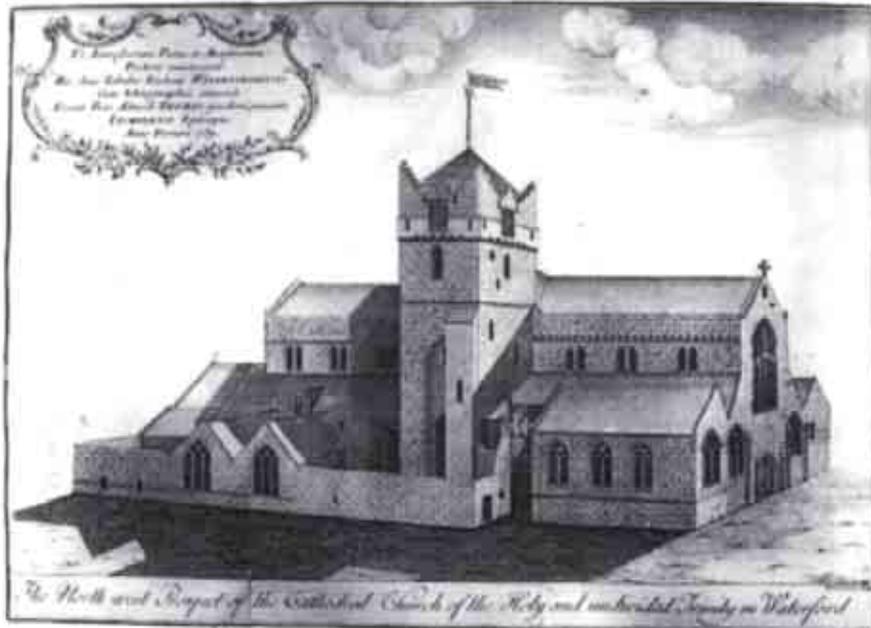
Some years ago, when the Office of Public Works was carrying out replastering works to the interiors of Christchurch Cathedral in Waterford, Ireland, substantial areas of the structure had to be exposed, revealing the composition of the masonry walls. As well as the usual mix of species of rubble stonework (consisting primarily of shale, sandstone and limestone) which formed the bulk of the structure, there were significant amounts of re-used limestone ashlar bearing mediaeval picking marks, as well as carved pieces of Dundry stone (a yellow oolitic sandstone from Wales) indicating a Norman origin. On closer examination, these revealed splayed window dressings and tracery as well as individual blocks of pointed ribbing and vaulting elements. Occasionally, fragments of funerary monuments and gravestones were apparent. We know that the mediaeval cathedral on this spot, which was substantially rebuilt by the Normans on the site of an earlier Hiberno-Norse structure, was demolished in the 1770s to make way for John Roberts' current neo-classical one. From the evidence in the exposed walls, it would appear that much, if not all, of the earlier masonry was used in this process. As part of this rebuilding, each block of demounted stone had to be sorted, shorn of mortar, sometimes reshaped and then fitted into position within the new structure. This reconstruction therefore was also a process of re-crafting, whereby the attention of a workman was applied for a second time to each piece of stone in an evolutive process of transformation.

While the destruction of a mediaeval cathedral and its replacement with a Georgian structure could be interpreted as an iconoclastic action, it could equally be seen as an extreme version of the mediaeval penchant for developing sites over long periods while applying a contemporary style to each phase of the building's evolution. History had not yet become an

objective art. In 1770s Waterford, enlightenment principles of a recognition of the past through the recent science of archaeology and a burgeoning interest in mediaeval artefacts had not yet taken sufficient hold. The city fathers would have regarded the 'replacement' of the Cathedral as the last part of their master plan for this area, which had seen the creation of a Mall in the 1730s, the building of the Bishop's palace and the City hall from the 1740s to 1760s, including the planned extension of a 'Georgian quarter' as far as the former site of St Catherine's Abbey. It could equally be interpreted as the final, physical act of the religious reformation in Waterford and the replacement of a major public building which had fallen into disrepair. It therefore represented, by the standards of the day, an ideological and affirmative act of modernisation and of urban re-creation, more than an act of cultural vandalism. While the exact volumes of stone generated by the demolition of the old cathedral are not known, an interesting thought suggests that John Roberts' building may have been limited in size by the volume of building material available on site (apart from the spire and Doric portico, which are substantially 'new' limestone<sup>1</sup>). Despite the terrible travesty that the destruction of such an historic monument would represent in today's thinking, the eighteenth-century 'rebuilders' were working in a sensible and sustainable way by reusing a natural resource on the site in the pursuit of a cultural reinterpretation of the site. This confers some measure of authenticity on their endeavours. The idea that the *fabric*<sup>2</sup> of the current neo-classical cathedral could be considered as merely the reordering of its mediaeval predecessor gives some comfort to those who may still mourn its loss, while imposing a substantial degree of legitimacy upon it in historical terms. It could also be claimed that it adds a layer of meaning to the site in architectural terms while providing archaeologists and historians the possibility of centuries of serendipitous discovery. If a place's cultural significance can be determined by the quality of its *continuity*, then as well as to the more obvious facets such as cultural, physical and architectural continuities must be added continuity through craft, as applied to each act of transformation (Fig. 1, 2).

A recent visit to St Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny provides an example of a much more anodyne intervention, but one which also holds many lessons. Here is found a mediaeval cathedral in the Gothic style which, unlike its Waterford counterpart, survived the reformation relatively unaltered, retaining most of its structural and decorative masonry intact. In order to provide access to the church's interior over a change of level, a ramp has recently been installed just inside the entrance. The addition of this stainless steel ramp with glass guardings in a stylistically contemporary architecture creates a strong contrast with the all-limestone interior, ensuring that future historians will have

*Fig. 1*  
The medieval  
cathedral of  
Christchurch,  
Waterford, from  
James Ware's



no difficulty tracing its origins to the late twentieth – early twenty-first century. Another clue will no doubt be found in its primary use as an access-enabling addition to the monument's infrastructure, a clear break with traditional approaches to design and construction and an expression of the importance for our society of equality of access and enjoyment of the monument by all. Therefore the necessity for this addition is not being questioned for the purposes of this discussion.

However, despite this functional need, the ramp has an air of discomfiture about it which seems linked to its material character and its points-of-contact with its surroundings. The ramp is very visible and by its presence reorders the space in which it sits. At least it can be removed, goes the argument, if it is deemed to be inappropriate or no longer fit for purpose. By proposing this kind of material inconsequence, the ramp betrays a certain lack of confidence in its own capacity to endure. By proclaiming its own reversibility as its principal virtue, it fails to legitimise its own presence in the very composition it reorders. It suggests that it has no roots in this place, either physical or contextual, thus setting itself at odds with its surroundings. This is not an issue of style. By refusing any claim to character based on craft and by proclaiming its independence from its surroundings (albeit more through a misconceived sense of deference rather than a conscious desire to repudiate), it compromises its own claim to exist equally within the stones and history of this place. While serving as an element providing physical continuity between

levels, it fails to provide continuity between the different periods of history that it also links.

We therefore have two different kinds of intervention from these two examples: one involving the physical removal of most of the fabric and its rebuilding with confidence in an unselfconscious way; and another which seems to reveal the tip-toeing, as if in awed reverence, of a selfconsciously deferential 'contemporary' intervention within the maintained historic setting. One boldly recreates, the other compromises, and ironically it is the one which recreates the setting through the reordering of its fabric that seems to possess the greater integrity.



*Fig. 2*  
The 1778  
Georgian  
structure by  
Roberts Bishops  
of Ireland, edited  
by Walter Harris  
1739

With reference to the Ruskinian principle that ‘...the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts’<sup>3</sup>, the notion of craft becomes paramount in any discussion of character, particularly in the context of pre-industrial building types<sup>4</sup>. In Ruskin’s reference, he denies the possibility of being able to reproduce, through mimicry, the work of the past. However, his very reference to craft as an inherent attribute tends to legitimise workmanship as an essential quality of the character of these structures. Ruskin regarded any form of attempting to alter, or worse, to ‘improve’, a structure as mimicry and pastiche, and this view related to the pre-eminence that craft held for him as the defining element of fabric, and thus as witness to a monument’s continuity.

Another important element of continuity is ensuring a critical mass in terms of the surviving, in-situ amounts of physical fabric of the place. In historical terms, a place’s authenticity is often directly proportional to the amount of ‘original’ material it contains. Ironically, it is this fabric that is most at risk during any process of transformation, as changes due to physical intervention frequently require the removal of existing, and the addition of new, material. These elements of older fabric often have no practical use in the modern construction process and thus are frequently discarded, almost always off-site. Even with the best will in the world for its re-use, this older fabric is often incompatible with modern construction techniques and building codes. It is difficult to justify building walls of single-leaf rubble stonework from the points-of-view of occupants’ comfort and the structure’s energy compliance. There are modern materials which are much more efficient in structural terms and also more widely available, enabling us to build more with less, a critical consideration in these days of diminishing planetary resources. In the ICOMOS 2003 charter ‘Principles for the Analysis, Conservation and Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage’, Article 1.3 states that ‘the value of architectural heritage is not only in its appearance, but also in the integrity of all its components as a unique product of the specific building technology of its time’. The time in question could be any time, past present or future, once the legitimacy of the intervention and its respect for character have been agreed. In fact, one could argue that a monument’s relevance to the culture that uses it is directly proportional to the cadence of the interventions on it over time. This continuity of use is as equally worthy of respect as continuity of fabric. Since functional honesty is also a critical aspect of authenticity<sup>5</sup>, it behoves us to use the materials of the intervention in an honest and unsentimental way. No building project can take place in a budgetary vacuum, and again, as architects, we are obliged to spend this money carefully and to the greatest effect.

If craft can be regarded as the making of things, in the context of existing buildings this meaning can be extended to include the *remaking* of things in the way that the same material formed both the mediaeval and Georgian versions of Waterford's cathedral. But, within the notion of craft there is also the 'spirit of the workman' which Ruskin understood so well. The workman crafts the material in the image of the idea, the spirit, that moves him to do it. Craft as the making of things skilfully is therefore allied with the idea that inspired the maker of the thing, in order to produce works of varying degrees of quality. If we can accept that craft is the result of an intellectual *and* a manual process, then the same process can be deemed to result from the design and construction process in the case of the remaking of a building, at whatever level the intervention requires.

The workman's 'spirit' therefore becomes the design intention of the architect, the quality of the work a result of the skill in putting the various elements together. For the true crafter however, this intention cannot take place independently of context. It happens within the strictures that craft (the project) and site (the setting) impose. Only then can it be of its time and place, in the knowledge that future appliers of craft will be assessing it for the same qualities of spirit and workmanship, regardless of style, that craft will always impose. When applied in this way, craft becomes an element of historical continuity.

If it is accepted that craft can provide a common thread for all *valuable* interventions in a place over time (valuable meaning in this case, interventions combining spirit and workmanship) and that these can provide the quality of continuity, how can this quality find an expression in the process of the *material* transformation of the place? When does physical transformation become an act of worthy continuity? Given that one epoch's incidental pressed metal flashing could become another's ode to a bygone industrial era, how can the introduction of new materials contribute to the continuity of meaning?

In terms of the use of a material (rather than its re-use), the works of Carlo Scarpa or Sverre Fehn are relevant modern examples of how materials can be used to create a sense of continuity through texture, colour and even mass. Much of the detail design by Carlo Scarpa in the Quirini-Stampalia foundation is an example of continuity through craft; the mathematical finesse of Renaissance detail is represented in the moulded arch and pilaster jambs which meet the uniformity of twentieth-century technique as represented by the reinforced concrete shoring, with its exposed white aggregate then being hand-finished by the modern workman's intervention. This process has direct parallels with nineteenth-century conservation details, probably most clearly exemplified in the work and writings of Viollet-le-Duc, where the

craft of decorative detail as well as the same Ruskinian spirit of the workman combined to proclaim continuity even while recarving statues or rebuilding walls.

There is another way, however, to ensure continuity by combining craft and existing fabric, and this is through the recrafting of re-used fabric. This approach can be said to represent conservation action in the broadest sense. It involves a conscious decision by the designer to 'craft' the design process around the necessity to incorporate this fabric into the transformed result. The normal 'checklist' of actions by the responsible designer in the conservation context will already have been adhered to, such as: is the developer's proposed use for the structure one that is compatible with the spirit and fabric of the place? Is there ample opportunity to add value to the existing qualities of the place? Will there be sufficient time to ensure that an optimal solution can be realised? Will the project be sufficiently resourced in order to meet the requirements of quality? This also assumes that the basic groundwork of the transformative process has been met through the production of a conservation report identifying the qualities of interest of the fabric and its components. It goes without saying that the designer is not the sole arbiter of conservation values and that historic fabric can only be altered or removed as a last resort. The determination of what, if any, fabric can be removed as part of the transformation is the resort of the conservation report's findings and their interpretation in the spirit of the Charters. This report stage should always precede the design stage so that its recommendations can be incorporated into the design brief from the outset. It is only in this context that the legitimacy of any transformation of an historic structure can be considered.

Once these 'ground rules' are clear then the process of adding value can be broadened to include this re-use of existing fabric. By re-using existing fabric in-situ, not only is continuity given form, but waste to landfill is decreased or eliminated, materials which often have a zero-carbon footprint because of their pre-industrial age origins are re-used with a minimum of expenditure of additional carbon, and principles of sustainability are promoted, which in itself is a very contemporary preoccupation and will undoubtedly be seen to have a value of integrity by future generations.

To illustrate this point, I propose to briefly outline two examples by our office where these principles were applied: one from a recently completed project, the other from a current one.

The first example relates to the conversion of the Presentation Convent in Waterford to a medical centre. This structure, designed by AWN Pugin in the early 1840s, encapsulates his thinking on the ideal monastery plan, as illustrated in his 'True Principles'. It was constructed in a version of the local

vernacular (as imagined by Pugin and subsequently widely copied) consisting of coursed rubble shale (a local stone) with limestone flush dressings to door and window opes. It was never rendered, nor ever intended to be rendered externally. The structure had a significant gable facing the road which was deemed to be the only suitable new entrance location. However this gable had been significantly altered in 1960 when the volume behind it, probably still a double-height space as Pugin would have intended, was filled in with rooms and corridors, and the quadruple lancet window arrangement of the original was changed for a single, centralised modern window in a conflicting style. The conservation report identified this element as being one of the few elements of fabric which could justifiably be altered. The subsequent design approach suggested that the combination of proximity to the road, the previous alteration of the fabric of the gable itself and the necessity to restore the volume behind it, justified the decision to physically remove it and to replace it with an extended volume finished in structural glazing. The remaining stone of the gable (many of the previous lancet opes had been filled with concrete block in the 1960 conversion) would be re-used to clad the walls of two new blocks forming a new courtyard to each side of this entrance. Our initial appraisal of the feasibility of doing this involved a calculation of the volume of stone available in the gable, coupled with considerations as to how continuity could be ensured through its re-use, without the risk of mimicry in the context of the existing stonework. Our calculations showed that there was insufficient stone to clad the areas required by the new blocks. We therefore decided to consider the possibility of cutting each piece of stone in two, thus doubling the quantity, and presenting the cut face of the stone as the new, finished face. This stone-sampling stage was allowed for in the tender documentation. After numerous attempts with various cutting techniques, a high-speed, diamond-cutting saw proved to be the most suitable tool. Each piece of stone was sifted, chosen, cleaned and cut before being reincorporated in a new external wall build-up, only a few metres from where it had originally sat. Its appearance in relation to its texture and jointing had changed, though not its colour or variety, and it is expected that this new face will itself be transformed further by weathering over time (*Fig. 3, 4*).

The second example, which is ongoing at the time of writing, is the provision of a new accommodation wing for the Cistercian community of Mount Melleray. For reasons too lengthy to detail here, the new structure is to be provided for by locating it on the footprint of a disused existing wing of the monastery, necessitating the partial demolition of the wing. In this case, continuity of fabric is to be assured by the preservation of the undemolished parts and by the reuse of stone in new walls and cladding, as well as the incorporation

*Fig. 3*  
Existing stone  
recrafted and  
reused in the  
new walls

*Fig. 4*  
Existing stone in-  
situ (both images  
to same scale)



of as much crushed stone as possible as aggregates for the new concrete work (much of the original stone was boulder stone, lacking the quality and consistency of the stone in the previous example). At the time of writing, tests are being carried out to determine its suitability for structural purposes. It is also to be incorporated into the prefabricated elements of a screen wall. In this way it is hoped that the spirit of the dead workmen will have some presence in the new structure – in this case the spirit of the monks who toiled to clear the land, using the stone to build the monastery with their own hands.

In conclusion; this paper proposes that an artefact's qualities of continuity can be enhanced by the re-use of its historic fabric through a process of transformation of the artefact itself, when justifiable change to its current state is required. This quality of continuity can be enhanced through the application of craft to this process of transformation. Re-using historic fabric in this way can be regarded as an act of cultural conservation in its own right, when it is guided by the spirit of the charters. Furthermore, the application of craft will always add value to the transformation of an artefact in the same way as it initially gave meaning and value to its creation. Craft, when responsive to context, is a powerful enhancer of the integrity of the intervention and need not necessarily equate to expensive and time-consuming, artisanal processes in every case. It can become a normal part of the constructive or reconstructive process, requiring in some cases only minor departure from existing working methods, and should be considered as a feasible part of the design and specification processes in conservation projects involving transformation.

### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> We know through detailed study of Richards and Scalé's survey of the city in 1763, prior to the demolition, that the footprints of the old and new cathedrals are dimensionally the same, apart from the addition of the spire and portico, which were extensions to the west.

<sup>2</sup> The term is used here as defined in the Australian (Burra) Charter

<sup>3</sup> The Seven Lamps of Architecture; The Lamp of Memory

<sup>4</sup> In the Irish context, this probably covers most buildings up to the 1860s or so, before the widespread introduction of industrialised materials such as Portland cement and engineering brick.

<sup>5</sup> The Venice charter, articles 11 and 12.

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# La mixité un outil de veille et de balance entre sauvegarde et modernité. *(Fig. 2)*

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*Fig. 1*  
Irish unchanged  
landscape  
from the Rock  
of Cashel in  
Tipperary

Si James Bond et ses gadgets nous ont d'abord fait rire après qu'Orwell eut éveillé notre conscience d'un futur possible, force est d'admettre aujourd'hui que la mutation des Hommes et de la Terre est passée au tout premier plan s'imposant comme l'enjeu majeur de ce début de XXIème siècle. Il ne s'agit plus de constater avec encore quelques réticences que l'homme et son environnement tels qu'ils étaient dans les années 50 ne sont plus, mais bien d'abandonner cette image définitivement, sans nostalgie, afin d'accompagner les profondes modifications en cours.

La question est posée à l'ensemble de la société. Elle ne peut plus être réservée aux seuls spécialistes et aux quelques visionnaires car chacun est



Fig. 2  
Kilkenny

acteur de ce grand mouvement. Si, comme le souligne Chris Younes, « An ethical environmental attitude requires the long duration of the human species journey and its future », il serait de notre responsabilité d'adopter, d'urgence, une attitude telle que notre idée de l'humanité future et de son environnement ne se construise pas face mais avec ce mouvement. La proposition invite à regarder, accepter et projeter l'évolution des êtres et des sociétés ainsi que de la terre qui les porte pour pouvoir la penser.

Pour sa part, le programme de recherche Image et Patrimoine qui associe la pratique de l'image à la réflexion pluridisciplinaire des politiques patrimoniales, s'intéresse aux regards subjectifs posés sur le présent afin de mettre en lumière des questions relatives à l'évolution des édifices, des villes et donc des modes de vie. Actuellement, l'« effacement » des édifices et des villes anciennes et en parallèle, les stratégies de l'« apparition » de l'architecture contemporaine sont au cœur de ses recherches. Une grille de lecture intitulée « Effacements 02, la ville » est à l'étude (en référence à une première étude « Effacements 01, l'édifice » publiée aux Ed de l'Espérou qui propose un classement des dégradations contemporaines subies par le patrimoine bâti). En participant aux travaux du séminaire de l' ENHSA-EAAE, Conservation/Transformation, et plus particulièrement à la visite de la ville historique de Kilkenny en Irlande, il était intéressant de confronter les observations faites in situ à la grille de lecture en gestation. En effet la grille « Effacements 02, la ville » ayant pour objectif d'aider à percevoir les stratégies

d'apparition du bâti moderne voire de l'architecture contemporaine, la traversée de Kilkenny a raisonné comme un exemple riche et complémentaire aux recherches menées pour l'établir. Kilkenny est à la fois une ville historique reconnue pour sa valeur patrimoniale et une ville d'aujourd'hui, active et vivante. Ainsi la visite était-elle l'occasion d'expérimenter un site placé au cœur du continuel mouvement de confrontation de la ville nouvelle et de l'ancienne et de mieux comprendre la richesse et la complexité de l'effacement des marques du passé et de leur lent recouvrement en un processus sans cesse répété.

## Mixité

Toute ville se transforme ainsi au fil du temps dans un mouvement plus ou moins rapide mais continu. Dans le même temps chaque geste constructif, quel qu'en soit l'échelle, obéit aux règles, aux us et coutumes, aux savoir-faire, aux modes de son époque et les reflète faisant de la ville le témoin de son histoire. Vue sous l'angle de la mitoyenneté des époques, la traversée de Kilkenny porte cette image de MIXITÉ architecturale. Cette notion, Image et Patrimoine suggère de l'explorer afin de la prendre en compte dans la définition des attitudes patrimoniales d'avenir.

La MIXITÉ est mesurable, elle peut être cartographiée, il est donc envisageable de la tester comme l'un des éléments de comparaison et d'évaluation pour le développement harmonieux des villes.

Il fut un temps où tout projet d'intervention contemporaine sur un édifice ou dans un site historique pouvait être aussi bien l'objet de réticences qu'admiré comme un exploit esthétique. Aujourd'hui, alors qu'une attitude nouvelle et responsable est souhaitée pour le futur des villes et de l'environnement, il serait d'actualité de tenter d'être moins puriste, plus souple et de donner toute leur place aux mixités dont celles qui concernent notre environnement.

On peut avancer qu'à bien des égards le degré de mixité accordé dans la définition d'une politique urbaine est un acte politique et signe une attitude sociale. Cela concerne aussi l'architecture et les politiques patrimoniales. Une ville historique aurait peu d'avenir en effet si en opposition avec un environnement en pleine évolution elle demeurait ceinte dans sa dignité. Elle peut au contraire tirer avantage et vie, voire survie, d'une mixité des époques. Considérée alors comme un élément positif de développement et afin de mieux l'accompagner, la MIXITÉ urbaine devra toutefois être comprise, il s'agit pour cela d'en saisir l'expression et les échelles et de créer les outils de sa mesure (Fig. 3).

Kilkenny, ville historique mais dont le projet est clairement de rester vivante et de se développer, offre à l'observateur tous les aspects de la mixité.



*Fig. 3*  
Kilkenny

On y trouve les traces les plus anciennes, des édifices protégés et visités, des maisons dans leur état d'origine, les murs d'enceinte et les ponts. On y discerne aussi des traces plus subtiles et éparpillées. L'ensemble donnant à la ville son fondement historique.

Puis apparaissent les édifices qui ont évolué au fil du temps, dont une partie a été transformée, qui ont été réparés, surélevés ou associés à des commerces qui en ont redessiné la façade. Ils font en grande partie le centre ville.

À une autre échelle des parcelles entières ont été dégagées ou bien occupées par des bâtiments nouveaux qui se sont glissés dans les interstices.

Enfin, depuis la moitié du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle, des édifices neufs apparaissent, des bâtiments publics principalement, qui affirment leur modernité en s'affranchissant de l'homogénéité urbaine et par cette transgression, se démarquent délibérément. Jusqu'au surgissement dès la fin du siècle d'immeubles d'habitation et de bureaux dont les proportions marquent définitivement l'entrée dans une ère nouvelle pour la ville.

Des rues puis des quartiers naissent autour du centre qui inversent peu à peu, à mesure que l'on s'éloigne, la proportion entre le bâti ancien et le moderne. Ils racontent l'histoire du développement de la ville jusqu'à sa périphérie et ses quartiers nouveaux et reposent fortement la question des liens urbains entre les différentes époques. Ils posent aussi celle du lien entre la ville et son environnement paysager et agricole. D'une lecture de la mixité des époques dans la ville on attend de mieux comprendre comment se transforment au fil du temps les règles de l'urbanisme afin de construire une ville en évolution

plutôt qu'en rupture. Une ville qui accepte de se renouveler, d'être riche de son passé et non coincée par lui. Une ville généreuse.

Mais une ville aussi qui donne sa place au passé car elle intègre que son histoire lui confère spécificité et personnalité, la rend unique et identifiable.

La rue centrale de Kilkenny montre bien comment le fond historique donne une cohérence à la coexistence des différentes époques de bâtis et comment cet axe central mixé est consolidé par la présence des quelques maisons



*Fig. 4*  
Kilkenny

anciennes sauvegardées. Celles-ci renforcent son image et ajoutent une profondeur. Un équilibre existe là qui serait vite brisé si à une époque ou une autre les quelques édifices témoins des temps les plus anciens avaient été démolis et remplacés par des immeubles modernes. Sans négliger la réussite esthétique de certaines inclusions il va sans dire que l'image de la rue principale et donc de la ville en aurait été bouleversée.

Prendre en compte la mixité des époques permet ainsi de repenser la valeur du patrimoine et de lui donner une juste place, de s'en saisir comme d'un atout de développement. Sa gestion sur l'ensemble du territoire de la ville apparaissant comme un des éléments décisifs de la décision pour mettre en place une politique de développement urbain.

### **Résistances** *(Fig. 4)*

L'observation de la mixité des époques du bâti fait aussi apparaître comment s'effectuent les « résistances ». Comment certains édifices ancrés sur leur site ont défendu leur intégrité et traversé plusieurs périodes. Ce phénomène s'observe à différentes échelles : traces, édifices ou quartiers entiers demeurés intacts et qui marquent la ville de leur propre histoire. Ces résistances sont de véritables points forts dans les villes probablement parce qu'au delà du témoignage architectural elles informent sur les choix culturels et politiques qui à chaque époque ont présidé à leur sauvegarde. Elles sont un rappel vivace de l'histoire et d'événements dont la société locale a tenu, au fil du temps, à entretenir la mémoire. Porteuses de la complexité des villes et des sociétés, ces résistances dans la ville seront analysées avec d'autant plus d'acuité et de pertinence que leur analyse sera pluridisciplinaire. Ainsi argumentées, ces marques de la mémoire vivante de la ville, témoins les plus évidents des processus de mixité apporteront une meilleure compréhension des choix culturels de la société et rappelleront les événements dont la ville a voulu garder la mémoire. Elles seront à ce titre un soutien solide à la décision des politiques patrimoniales et urbaines.

# ‘Less is more’ and ‘continue-creating’: reflections on communication, sustainability and design in historical sites

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## **Abstract**

Intervention in historic buildings and sites must consider two main issues: conservation imperatives (ethical-philosophical, material, economical and ecological), and the inevitable transformation, in its adaptation for new uses and socio-cultural contexts.

Conservation is nowadays the most suitable term to define interventions focused on preserving and safeguarding architectural heritage, considering it as a material document to be transmitted to future generations. Notably in Italy, this culture has increased over the past years, not only philosophically but also technically, for example with regard to knowledge instruments (surveys, diagnosis, analysis), compatible techniques and materials, sustainability and renewable technologies, planned conservation and maintenance.

But when transformation is inevitable for heritage’s use and future life, interactions should be established with the tradition and the site, without renouncing the contemporaneous nature of the project. Within the Portuguese context, this approach has been developed with interesting results, namely by Fernando Távora, whose work and teaching has strongly influenced culture and design in existing buildings and sites. In his own words, an ‘analytical and creative process’ should determine design choices (case by case) – ‘continue-creating’ – and never a ‘routine’ or an ‘impulsive’ operation.

Lastly, it is important to underline that synergies between conservation and transformation are essential in a progressive society. Those who teach and design in historical buildings and sites should be familiar with both issues: a dialectic and interdisciplinary collaboration among architects, conservators, engineers, urbanists, scientists, etc. is required – a conscious and careful equilibrium linking the conservation of ‘memory values’ and the introduction of ‘contemporary values’.

## Introduction

In the twenty-first century we observe the emergence of a new significance of heritage and the means of its appropriation. Heritage is now a wide concept, comprising an enormous multiplicity of material or immaterial significances. As Chris Younes maintains, nowadays we observe apparently paradoxical phenomena of *disinheritance* and *heritage inflation*. On the one hand, *disinheritance* is related to individualism, globalisation of information, increasing mobility (*Erasmus*, professional, touristic); on the other hand, the *inflation of heritage* is connected to the crisis of identity, the absence of paradigms, the diffusion of new 'artificial memories' and marketing related to the consumption of heritage.

Nevertheless, we have observed during the workshop that *heritage* is a young word in Ireland, recently revaluated as collective identity significance, transmissible to future generations. This valuation is generally reflected in the *popularisation* of old structures, as the elected 'portraits' of national, aesthetic, religious and political significations. Therefore we have observed the merchandising of the slogan 'Kilkenny 400 years' celebrations, spread all over the city. Although *heritage inflation* is globally positive, it is important to underline and *communicate* that heritage is not only for the *consumption* of tourists, but also for identity, sustainability and the everyday life of local inhabitants.

In the era of globalisation and information, 'artificial memories', developed through electronic and digital means, contribute to a growing 'cult of monuments' and superficial appropriation, which often perverts a site's original cultural and material significance. In addition, the economic sustainability of heritage demands restoration, tourism and marketing, which inevitably submits structures to an exhibition process which removes them from their original context and meanings. As a result, heritage becomes one more 'site' for public consumption and entertainment, just like the Internet, shopping malls, stadia or theme parks. In such a scenario, is architectural heritage itself becoming a 'theme park', a nostalgic escape into the security of the past when facing an uncertain future? Are we respecting the original significance of cultural heritage sites, or are we just using them as narcissistic mirrors of our own identity? (*Figg. 1a, 1b*).

## Design: 'Less is more'

Conservation culture, particularly in Italy, has been consolidated for many years, theoretically and in concrete methodology and interventions. Conserving the 'material document' rather than the interpretative or subjective 'image', provides for a more authentic and trustworthy transmission to future

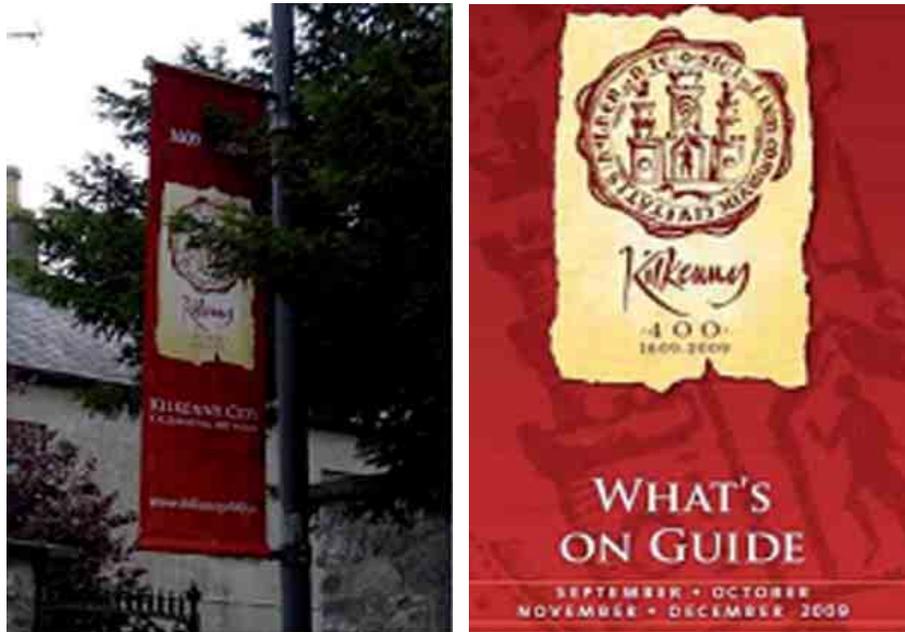


Fig. 1a, 1b  
Kilkenny 400  
years «brand»

generations. Ruling transformations, adding new signs only when necessary, interpreting without destroying (Bellini, 1996). But also clarifying the fil rouge connecting knowledge, surveys, diagnosis, the project and its maintenance along the time (Di Biase, 1993), not only of the great monuments, but also of the diverse and minor heritage. Besides, considering that nowadays heritage isn't sustainable on its own, integrated and sustainable development issues must also be considered, as well as planned, cost-controlled and ordinary conservation over time (Della Torre, 2003).

In Kilkenny, one of the most representative historical centres in Ireland, we could observe sensibility regarding conservation of the signs from the past and nature in constructive structures all around the city, but also in classified buildings such as the 'Rothe House' or the 'Hole-in-the-Wall' (Fig. 2a, 2b, 2c). Nevertheless, as in mostly European historical centres, much more could be done for sustainable conservation, namely on the maintenance and substitution of constructive elements such as plasterworks, doors, windows, pavements and so on.

As far as mobility and public space design are concerned, workshop debate on Kilkenny discussed the absence of a 'mobility plan' and the possibility of the use of soft mobility (such as a bicycle), more pedestrian streets, green corridors and connections with the 'natural', particularly with the river. Moreover, there was a group consensus on the fact that accessibility and universal access were insufficient. If in some situations they were acceptable, in others they could be far improved.



*Fig. 2a, 2b, 2c*  
Rothe House  
and the Hole-  
in-the-Wall,  
Kilkenny

For example, to provide for a more conservative approach, and when substitutions are inevitable, more attention should be invested in the public space design, on its relation with pre-existences, continuity, coherence, simplicity. It must be recalled that most of the time, when dealing with heritage sites, 'less is more' (Fig. 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d); (Fig. 4a, 4b, 4c).

### **'Continue-creating'**

Reflecting on Kilkenny's workshop impressions, it has been observed that most of the new interventions seemed to look conceptually for an accentuated 'contrast' (with regard to both form and materials) with the old buildings, as it has been written in the workshop report, 'glass and steel as the only materials for new intervention' (Fig. 5a, 5b); (Fig. 6a, 6b). Recalling Boito's emphasis on 'notoriety', it is important to retain that the 'new should not shout down the old' (Boito 1883). Furthermore, as we all know, modern movement rupture and more fundamentalist interpretations of heritage charters and recommendations (from Athens 1931 to Venice 1964) have promoted accentuated contrasts between old and new, both in form and material. Nowadays, in a post-modern culture, the absence of a common paradigm dictates that there is no rule, leading to case-by-case judgement. Nevertheless, it would be important to reflect and recall that there are alternative ways besides (and between) mimesis and accentuated contrast (Solla Morales 1985). This reflection has also been undertaken, since the 1950s, by modern movement reviewers all over Europe, who reclaimed the connection with context and tradition.

For instance, in the Portuguese debate, Fernando Távora (1923-2005) defined a different line of intervention in the pre-existing, a way of integration that seeks continuity with the tradition and the place, without renouncing the contemporaneous nature of the project. The method is based upon critical understanding of the context of the monument – using 'tools' such as drawing, deep knowledge, history, typological analysis, composition – through a careful analytical and creative process. This approach allows for different types of

intervention considering the specificity of each case, providing for maximum knowledge and conservation of pre-existences and, when additions are necessary, for dialogue and continuity between 'old and new'. About the conversion of the Convento da Costa (Guimarães, 1975-82) into a hotel, he writes 'the general criteria adopted (...) was to 'continue-creating', we wanted a dialogue, seeking more for similarities and continuity, than cultivating the difference and rupture' (Távora 1985) (Figg. 7a, 7b, 7c).

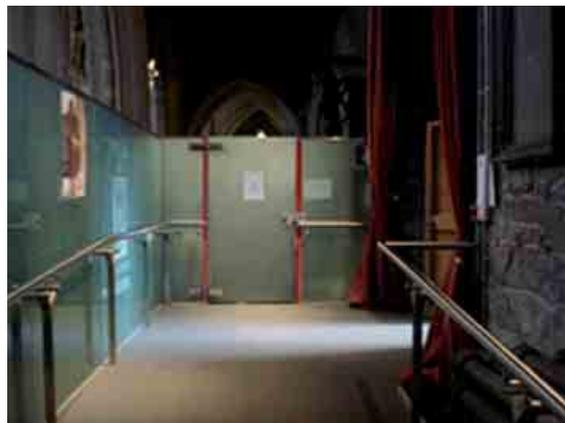
With the intention of preserving the authenticity of the organic unity of the



*Figg. 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d*  
Around Kilkenny:  
different types  
of situations  
concerning  
public space  
design

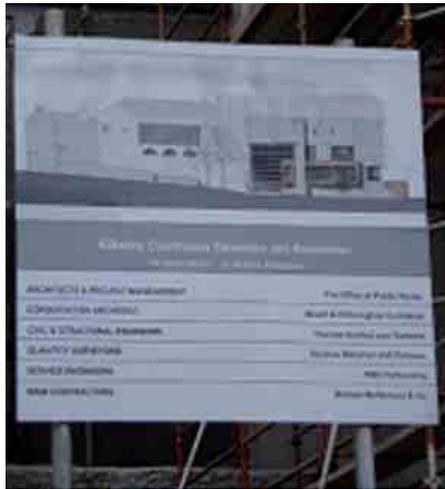


*Fig. 4a, 4b, 4c*  
Around Kilkenny:  
different types  
of situations  
concerning  
public space  
design



*Fig. 5a, 5b*  
Entrance to  
St Canice's  
Cathedral in  
Kilkenny

*Figg. 6a, 6b*  
Entrance to  
St Canice's  
Cathedral in  
Kilkenny



*Figg. 7a, 7b, 7c*  
Conversion of  
the Convento da  
Costa into the  
Hotel Guimarães  
(Fernando  
Távora, 1975-  
82). Recent  
interventions  
in the area  
of Couros,  
Guimarães  
(2009)



sites, traditional materials and construction technologies can also be used – with contemporary or analogical design (not mimetic) – often proving to be more compatible, economic, repeatable, sustainable and comfortable, and to engage in dialogue with the old structures.

Therefore, the relation between ‘old’ and ‘new’, the subject of many debates (Vassalo 2007) can also be one of searching for dialogue and continuities with the pre-existing context and structures, on different levels – conceptual, typological, material, tectonic, compositive – as an alternative to pronounced contrast and rupture. Understanding the transformation process of the pre-existence, the ‘new’ interprets the continuity line of history, without shouting or fearing, but just naturally.

Finally, conservation, ‘less is more’, is a trustworthy and sustainable way to preserve our collective memory and cultural landscapes. ‘Continue-creating’, considering the specificity of each situation, can be a good motif when transformation is inevitable for heritage conservation, use and transmission to future generations.

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# A Debate on Restoration: Reflections around Borris House

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There are many reasons why the debate about architectonic restoration should today reflect on its correct stance in the international domain<sup>1</sup>. The development of concepts and practical experiences which have structured the discipline in the past have always come from meetings and exchanges between different countries and cultures. This has occurred above all in the West, and in particular in Europe, where, for almost two hundred years, there has been convergence around the varied and ever-broadening questions of operating approach and competence. Thus, the eighteenth century saw a certain syntony regarding the restoration of monuments, thanks to a reliance on the investigation of the existing asset, and also on the achievement of a shared planning language. On these bases, a development of operating principles and protocols and a refinement of methods and tools occurred in the last century. The field elaborated its historiography, orientated schools of research and favoured the international convergence of criteria and objectives, at least until the Venice Charter in 1964. All of this promoted, for decades afterwards, the development of operating methods and engendered two lines of thought: on the one hand, in central and southern Europe, one greatly concerned with a general theoretical planning; and on the other a more pragmatic approach aimed at operating and technological aspects, encountered in the Anglo-Saxon world.

This process of cultural expansion has generated numerous results and carried certain costs, particularly obvious in this first decade of the twentieth-first century. Foremost, we note the greater attention paid to the question of conservation in previously unknown areas and thematic fields, as well as a marked enrichment in studies. Secondly, we also observe the difficulty of overcoming the distancing of research conducted purely at the planning level (contemporary to and parallel with the 'fracture' brought about by the modernist movement); a certain tendency towards a rigidity of discussion on the ideological plane which has resulted in schools being set against one another, and has encouraged differences of purpose rather than similarities; and a progressive 'rarefaction' of the theoretical contents of the discipline, directly proportional to the widening of the sphere of interest and application,

only apparently offset by a potentiality (mainly uncoordinated) generated by inherent technological and innovative aspects.

Theoretical rarefaction has changed the way of looking at cultural heritage, as witnessed in orientations that clearly appear in the most recent editions of the Restoration Charters, which have abandoned the notably architectonic concreteness of the first international documents to favour a more political and social line (Nara Document on Authenticity of 1994, Burra Charter of 1999, Charter of Krakow, 2000 etc.).

These new approaches, the interpolation of differing interests, the desire to bring the image and meaning of the job, material and immaterial assets back into the same frame and preoccupations with organisation and strategy, have gradually moved the interest for conservation away from the architectonic object itself – understood primarily in its figurative, historical and material sense – towards the activities that happen around it, whether they be aimed at safeguard, promotion, popularisation or exploitation, re-proposition, interpretation or commemoration. This seems to be at the heart of the current difficulty in the sharing of arguments that would put architectural conservation on course.

Indeed, the present situation shows the paradoxical counterposition between the proliferation of non-architectonic competences in the field of restoration and the rarefaction – or the delegation – of the area of research in architecture. In point of fact, the culture of restoration has been subject to discussion on a series of facets: with respect to the possibility of confronting theoretical problems, principles (respect for material authenticity, reversibility, minimum intervention etc.), method, project specificity and lastly even the legitimacy of re-reading episodes from an historiographic angle. The discipline of restoration, at least that imposed on a theoretical level, has been progressively emptied from within, and following this stripping of its contents there remain only limited areas of practical workability, for example on planes of technology, management and historical construction. As a result, architectural spatial planning has been claimed by architects intent on designing the 'new', choices of architectural surfaces have been taken on by chemists and art restorers, and structural engineers have claimed an autonomy that would once have been unthinkable on questions related to a building's equilibrium. Added to which, fundamental considerations of what to restore and how to restore it have become factors of an eminently political and economical nature. If this tendency should win the day and find support within the international debate, not only will it mean the end of restoration that requires a theoretical grounding, and the pursuit of method, but it will also mean the end of an empirical orientation that draws on lateral thinking for its social, political, economical and technical activities.

Indeed, in these conditions, it will not be the architects who decide when and how to restore, as suggested above, but rather the managers *tout court* who will establish the contents and objectives of the project.

This change of approach has at times been justified by the presumed necessity to adapt to 'today's culture'. A basic misunderstanding comes from trying to tally culture with a hegemonic vision which sees reality as substantially political and economic, and here in particular, there is room for serious reflection unless we want to render everything subject to the simple and reductive formula dictated by the laws of the market. The change in the centre of gravity of restoration's interests also seems to correspond to the weakening of its main architectonic and historical aims, accompanied by a particular enthusiasm for a programmatically interdisciplinary approach, the better if supported by a consensus 'democratically' obtained from customers and users.

Therefore, the definition of the focus of the debate on restoration, particularly when seen on an international level, becomes a priority: it is obvious that, the more the range of interests widens, the more important it should be to find shared references and yet the more we continue with generalisations and approximations. It is not by ignoring the basic premises of architecture and history that research and restoration planning will be defended and consolidated.

While it is clear that various problems related to the question of conservation might attract the interest of economists, sociologists, philosophers, psychologists, historians etc., these bring considerations and competences that should accompany rather than replace the activity of the architect. Nor should the architect presume to invade areas in which others know better, thus neglecting the major architectural and planning considerations that dictate choices in the work to be carried out on historic buildings. This is not to suggest that levels of interaction, linked to use and, within certain limits, to 'valorisation', should not exist; on the contrary the coordinated work of architects and other experts is not only necessary, but indispensable.

It must be remembered that there is a considerable difference between an 'interdisciplinary' approach and a 'multidisciplinary' one: the first does indeed indicate a sharing of aims and methods on the part of different disciplines, while the second implies the convergence of different courses of action regarding a particular problem. I would maintain that the latter route turns out the more successful and scientifically controllable, while the former – despite bringing benefits – risks compromising the control of methods, competences and responsibilities<sup>2</sup>.

If every specialisation could bring to the discussion table its own share of knowledge and experience, the pre-eminent job of the architect would be not

so much defining the cultural frame of reference (an argument that would be assessed by philosophers), nor measuring reality through management graphs and tables (usually the domain of economists), nor tackling problems of accord and balance with social and economic factors (clearly the political field), nor yet in-depth examination in the field of chemist or physicist. Here it might be opportune to clarify the cultural, functional and communicative role that has traditionally belonged to the architect: setting out, that is, from architecture, the study of architecture and the interpretation of architecture. If the architect fails in his job, no one, despite the obvious appetite of some professionals, such as the art historian and, above all, the archaeologist, can take his place. Perhaps some architects could carry out a new and alternative role successfully, but it is certain that the original job, at the foot of the monument, will be left undone. And a building like Borris House (*Fig. 1*) would no longer be a flagrant testimony of a restyling conducted on a pre-existing nineteenth-century house, a problematic case as regards the control and treatment of damp in the walls, a structured palimpsest of construction and decorative display, an extraordinary *Gesamtkunstwerk* of architecture, decoration, furnishing and books, but would become something else: a testimony to passing human activity, a symbolic item, a functional object, an asset subject to the dictates of the economy, public opinion and so on.

Faced with urgent and complex problems such as the preservation of 'costly' architecture that is not easily adaptable to the exigencies of the modern day –



*Fig. 1*  
Borris House in  
september 2009.

for example private houses, castles and palaces and, in some countries, even churches – it would seem that today it is less important to subject these problems to a preliminary historical architectonic survey. The embarrassing aspect to the historical dimension is surely the effect of the particular trend for architecture to affirm itself as ‘modern’, a trend that is in reality both age-old and problematic. To suggest that there is no difference between conserving and creating, and to draw from this the basis for a worrying ‘strategy of remix’ means, from the point of view of restoration, to regress to the situation of centuries past, before the development of restoration concepts but also of scientific disciplines as we know them today. In fact, such a disorientation also occurs in other fields related to architecture, notably that of planning, due to the opinion that creativity in architecture does not require method (or even principles), or reference to contexts, but rather poetics, and that poetics, like every other act of artistic expression, belongs to the sphere of free and spontaneous suggestion. This theme is important and has already provoked reflections on the part of artists and critics for some time; it merits further investigation (impossible here) but what is evident is that the main aspect to be evaluated concerns the manner of judging pre-existence, understood as the object with its own identity to be respected, or as material that can be subjected to reconfiguration.

It is true that construction is eroding ever vaster slices of the planet and it is natural that themes of recycling, transformation and re-mixing should inevitably impose themselves onto future planning, but the temptation to draw an analogy

*Fig. 2*  
Simulation of  
S-W and S-E  
fronts of Borris  
House after the  
intervention of  
cleaning and  
chromatic  
balance on the  
façades,  
respecting  
patina and  
avoiding evident  
substitutions..



with the apparently 'close' problem of sustainability of resources should be kept in scale; there are no common parameters to gauge the importance of an object of culture such as a historic building next to a natural one. If we do not employ our historical architectonic knowledge as the principle aid in the selection of what should be recycled, re-styled and remixed, to what should we entrust such assessments? To brutal economic standards? Under such circumstances, Borris House would be damned: why would the conservation of a concern that could never deliver, in productive terms, much more than the survival of the residence of an ancient and noble family be of interest?

The new problems arising in architectural restoration in the recent years of 'globalisation' and the phenomena of cultural hybridisation should consequently be managed mainly with the inclusion of architectural restorers in both cultural and practical fields. Such work certainly needs to be made comprehensible for an ever-larger and varied public but above all, it must return architecture's centrality to them.

In this context, obvious difficulties of exchange emerge on an international level: restoration is an activity that is particularly tied to the geographical and historical context in which the architecture comes to life and its comprehension requires preliminary knowledge of the local culture, the situation of the terrain, the building's original conditions and conversions undergone, as well as aspects related to its material, figurative and historical construction. The acquisition of this knowledge constitutes the point of arrival following long and complex research, which may also need to be checked; beyond the assessment of these arguments, methods and objectives can be re-discussed, as can the relationships of cause and effect between diagnosis and cure. What makes every restoration 'unique' is the individuality of the process that leads from research to intervention proposal; but a consideration of restoration cannot arise from the sum of this attainment of knowledge with every single work of architecture. Rather, it must find a way to regenerate itself above all in the crossover 'in progress' at every stage of the analytical and planning process; in other words, in content and method.

In the case of Borris House the 'objective' data comes from knowledge of the architectonic and spatial identity of the house, of its material and technical make-up, of the architectonic relevance and that of the landscape, the nature of transformations and the characteristics of its deterioration.

Although Borris House is generally presented as an emblematic product of a restructuring in neo-Gothic Tudor style carried out in the second decade of the nineteenth century, on a building dating from the early 1700s (which in turn probably incorporated a medieval castle), architectural layering and transformations in the building play an important role in its current aspect.

Indeed, the building seems to be almost entirely clad in plasterwork and, in the main rooms, to have been re-lined in wood and stucco; however, at closer analysis, obvious structural disparities and irregularities can be observed. More than a monolithic example of figurative coherence, the house presents a combination of distinct versions of Irish country house architecture: the exterior in the Tudor Revival manner, the alcoves and reception rooms tending towards classicism in the interior and building palimpsest in marginal areas. Apart from areas concealed by stucco and cladding, and the intended axiality of the southeast and southwest façades (that of the current entrance and the hypothetical eighteenth-century entrance respectively), the plan and the other two prospects show in their obvious asymmetries and the lack of a real ordering principle the true nature of the building, providing useful interpretative clues for the project. The house's interior, partly due to its plan that is irreducible to a model, partly due to the intentions of the nineteenth-century architects, seems to be the fruit of the paratactic arrangement of single spaces, each marked with its own logic and internal magniloquence. Among these are: the entrance hall with a square plan surmounted with a circular stucco ceiling and supported by low curved arches, in turn supported by columns; the rectangular drawing room with concave shorter sides and minor axes marking the chimney; the dining room with a colonnaded screen; the staircase leading to the upper floor, with elegant profiled steps and a flat vault with flamboyant decoration; and the library, where the design depends more on the furnishings and books.

The current version of Borris House is, for the most part, the same as that of Richard and William Vitruvius Morrison, apart from erosion due to the material deterioration of plasterwork and fittings, the loss of lanterns on the little towers, still witnessed in late nineteenth-century photographs, and the destruction of the wing that joined the house to the chapel.

Unlike what may be observed in the other buildings of the park, the intervention on Borris House shows limited necessity for figurative innovation, mostly confined to the interior of the wings to the northeast of the building. Above all, the restoration of the house would involve apparently only technical issues: the damp in the walls, the substitution or lack of plaster and certain figurative elements (*Fig. 2*). However, these elements create important links with the local building culture, with the historical architectonic context of the nineteenth century, and with the diachronic sedimentation of the building, whose architectural stratification, carefully hidden in the nineteenth century, re-emerges due to the effects of deterioration and turns the project into a search for balance and maturity. This would involve the usual questions related to the use and functionality of areas and the extraordinary relationship between the building and the objects contained within it. It is precisely these last that

present the greatest problems with regard to the future use of the building: if we do not want an alteration of the consolidated balance of life and story that the house has maintained, no other function, even that of a museum, 'frozen' and made into an artefact, can substitute the current, straightforward and conscious function of residential use by the owners.

In my opinion these are the true themes to be confronted by architectural restorers: the problem of defining the right balance between diachronic and synchronic image, where firstly there is a need to substantiate with clarity the significance of the Morrison's intervention. Secondly, it is necessary to form an accurate picture of the structural stratification of the building – the delicate questions of integrating missing elements, whether or not to substitute the damaged heads in relief with casts, whether to restore all the missing window frames or to leave some of them in their damaged state; the different treatment required by diverse states of conservation and diverse coherence on the main façade and the lateral façade towards the chapel, the former most marked by a nineteenth-century search for symmetry and unity and the latter more irregular and 'imperfect'.

All this confirms the ongoing need for a general prioritised inspection of the project; only this could ascertain the efficacy of various chosen solutions. These, in the main, should not include the introduction of modern elements, bold materials and colours or technological gadgets, but as far as possible, harmonic and coherent elements: accurate cleaning, stucco work, finishes, external coverings and protection, probably small additions and even well-considered 'cuts'. The damp problem, for example, cannot be easily dealt with without an estimate for a constant monitoring of the microclimate in the cavity between the nineteenth-century plastering and the eighteenth-century masonry, the likely ventilation of the same and, possibly, the stabilisation of the wooden parts that are already damaged. This would probably involve selected dismantling, reassembly, the positioning of permanent and accessible sensors and central unit, as well as the creation of passages that help the movement of air. Technical problems inevitably pit themselves against the possibility of bringing about solutions coherent with the rich scenario of nineteenth-century stucco that characterises the interior of the house.

It is not a question of countering one decision with another, but of contrasting arguments with arguments: the replacement of casts where heads are missing on the cornices might damage the original parts that are removed and alter the material composition of these important decorative elements (in 'reddish-brown Roman cement' on metal hinges). Furthermore, such a decision reduces the wide spectrum of the possible treatment of gaps (from simple protective plastering to '*a corpo*', to the complete plastic reconstruction of the piece) to a dry alternative

*Fig. 3*  
Detail of a window's cornice on a façade of Borris House in the actual situation, with evident lacks of fragments and the loose of a shelf, modelled as a woman head



*Fig. 4*  
Detail of a window's cornice on a façade of Borris House: simulation of an intervention with the minimum integration of fragments (just to defend from water penetration) and the plaster consolidation





*Fig. 5*  
Detail of a window's cornice on a façade of Borris House: simulation of an intervention with the plaster consolidation and the integration of the fragments and the decoration 'a corpo': the woman head has been integrated with a simple stucco volume



*Fig. 6*  
Detail of a window's cornice on a façade of Borris House: simulation of an intervention with the plaster consolidation and the integration of the fragments; the woman head has been integrated with a "calco" of a shelf from another window. Patina on surface has been conserved

between decorative 'completeness' and 'incompleteness' (Figg. 3, 4, 5, 6).

Incidentally, it is interesting to note that Roman cement, used mainly in central Europe from the middle of the nineteenth century for its easily modelling and rapid hardening properties as well as its propensity to age well, found in this Irish house one of its most remote applications.

Alongside architectonic considerations is the fuller and more complex question regarding the garden and landscape. This dimension constitutes the indispensable basis for the existence of the house and its relationship with its context; the park, reduced in size, is offset by the presence of certain minor, but nonetheless significant, architectonic elements such as the gate at the entrance along the main road, the gatehouse and the chapel to the north of the house itself. The gate is the work of Robert Morrison himself, announcing the identity of the house; it is situated half way between it and the village and is an extraordinary copy of the ruined entrance gate at the castle in Thomastown. If the state of conservation and substantial figurative integrity of these three constructions suggests the need for simple maintenance procedures, a more liberal re-interpretation would appear necessary on the more recently built structures, which are also open to more flexible uses.

In my opinion, to use Borris House as a fulcrum for an international architectural debate means confronting the building's recognisable value, but also managing the balance between figurative unit and micro-transformations; it means to convey these convictions through proposed strategies on which to orient the project (which nonetheless requires further data and further checks, especially graphical), to structure priorities of intervention and locate the operation on an adequate technical foundation. I believe that this will create the right basis for discussion if we want to participate actively, rather than in an ancillary manner, in the enrichment of cultural identity and research in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>1</sup> General references on the international debate are in D. Fiorani, *Un panorama europeo del restauro oggi*, in G. Carbonara (edited by), *Grandi temi di Restauro*, Primo aggiornamento del Trattato di Restauro, Torino, UTET, 2007, vol. 9, pp. 51-113 (see the related bibliography) and in F. Musso, L. De Marco (edited by), *Teaching Conservation/Restoration of the Architectural Heritage. Goals, Contents and Methods*, ENHSA-EAAE Conservation Teachers' Sub-Network, (Genoa, 18-20 October 2007), EAAE, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The way in which interdisciplinary work can result destructive to a discipline can be observed, in the twentieth century, on the sorts of geography, that suffered for the colonization of other sciences (biology, geology, anthropology, economy etc.) and for the lack of an historical vision (see K. Schögel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, Carl Hamer Verlag, München 2003).



# Designing the future of non-monumental Heritage

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## **Introduction: the experience at Borris House**

During the second EAAE workshop on the teaching of conservation studies in European Faculties of Architecture, there circulated a brief review on the topic of conservation and transformation of non-monumental architectural heritage, which made particular reference to isolated rural settlements. Such places, often abandoned and left to ruin, nevertheless represent part of a country's cultural and environmental patrimony. The experience during the seminar of a visit to Borris House and the introductory presentations held by organisers, in particular Chris Younès, led to a deeper enquiry into topics that had been only quickly touched on or set aside.

Borris House itself is an extraordinary example of the achievement of harmony between buildings and landscape, both in terms of the architecture and setting of the manor, and in terms of the settlement which came to be built around it, including the smaller edifices within the park, built to host agricultural and trading activities, which are currently being considered for transformation. Based on these premises, the present contribution intends to develop a few reflections on the role of didactics in the area of conservation (without forgetting traumatic events such as ruin and collapse) and re-use, as well as on the necessary transformative interventions connected with those rather simply constructed buildings which can often be found set within sensitive areas and treasured environmental contexts (*Fig. 1*).

## **Transformation and conservation as elements for the future to be built on**

The need to transform is one of the fundamentals in the times we live in. Our present society is characterised, if compared to the past, by a strong acceleration of the need to change, felt in all areas including the ways we inhabit the landscape. All too often, in the Schools of Architecture, one knocks against disciplinary walls, wherein the antinomy 'conservation/transformation' is expressed as being constituted by two exclusive, rather than inclusive, concepts. In the world at large, from the perspective of contemporary culture, a memory with deep roots in the past, as was almost always the case in



the eras that preceded us, is perceived as 'potentially invalidating, often misleading, and almost always useless' (Bauman 2009). From this stems the interpretation, difficult to share fully (yet attractive, especially to the young) that to achieve the construction of a new architecture is the sole possible true expression of a project. This division amongst the disciplines comes, quite often, dangerously close to 'paradigmatic blindness' (Morin 2001). What we should be asking ourselves, especially those of us who participate, in any role, in the teaching and practice of restoration, is if and how the conservation of our architectural heritage may have a role to play in envisioning - and building - the future.

The preservation of the environment, of ecosystems and of cultural identities as 'one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence' (UNESCO 2001: art.1-3) is, after all, a focal concept in the area of sustainability, an area which in itself is now thoroughly diffused throughout contemporary culture, pervading all of human activity.

Precisely because it is pervasive, the term 'sustainable' may be abused, or employed within a very limited scope. Particularly in architecture, a project

*Fig. 1*  
Borris House,  
rura buildings in  
the park

may be defined as 'sustainable' as long as it tackles the issues of energy efficiency, reducing the emission of dangerous gasses into the atmosphere, and/or employs technical devices powered by renewable sources (sun, air, water, earth)... as if 'sustainability' and 'quality' could be easily measured in gallons of fuel saved.

Of course, mitigating the greenhouse effect and reducing pollution is part of a global environmental emergency effort, but on a local (architectural) and particular (construction) level, the problem seems to be quickly solved by employing a ready-made array of 'ecological' solutions (wherein ecology seems to reside in the choice of materials and/or types of installation). This circumscribes the conservation/transformation issue to the application of innovative technologies or, with an eye to the past, 'natural' materials. And yet in the past twenty years, so many words have been expended to establish the folly of basing any idea of architectural and building quality on the application of 'standard' technical solutions, to be indiscriminately applied to a variety of situations and contexts. Looking past the issues that concern our field directly, we may ask – as Bauman did – whether our generation is truly ready to face the issue of sustainability. We inhabit 'planet Earth' as if it were a gigantic consumer good, in a life of instant gratification, and therefore of waste (Bauman 2003), as Italo Calvino prophetically wrote of Leonia, a city whose richness is measured in terms of the waste it produces (Calvino 1972).

### **A heritage of abandoned buildings: collective and individual responsibilities**

Contemporary philosophy and sociology have often warned us about the condition of post-modern society. As the myth of progress wanes, a feeling of 'being unable to fully solve all problems within the span of a generation' spreads, and with it a need must be recognised to 'give time and space to the future generations so that they may complete, perhaps in different terms from ours, all these changes' (Derrida 2008). This call to caution and prudence is welcomed to landscape and environmental studies, especially in critically vulnerable contexts. To transform the lived environment while at the same time preserving its identity and cultural heritage, are the twin requirements of our relationship with the material culture we have inherited (from the near as well as the distant past). These two terms characterise our responsibility, as heirs, towards future generations as well as towards our ancestry.

Such are the theoretical insights upon which I have founded teaching activities such as a workshop, and graduate theses that deal with transformation projects set in circumscribed geographical areas, characterised by abandoned rural settlements. The final aim, it can be said, is to lend new significance and

new life to villages that have sometimes turned into 'ghost towns', without mistaking them for 'an archive, (...) a museum, (...) a luxury hotel, (...) a business park (...)' (Derrida 2008). Much inspiration came from Giancarlo De Carlo's project for the area of Colletta di Castelbianco. Ahead of his time, he applied a highly creative approach, connecting 'physical closeness' to 'spiritual distance' by incorporating a single technological advancement within the project, an invisible, yet essential cable network. The task is, in brief, to work on individual, singular cases, keeping an eye on the existent, and responsibly enabling various answers to the need for change.

### **In search of paths to a 'pertinent knowledge'**

(Morin 2001, Gardner 2007)

This didactic experience (within a course on construction and technology of architecture) is open to multi-disciplinary contributions (architectural restoration, urban studies, landscape studies, building physics and installation...). It is informed by the awareness that, before acting on an existing object or series of objects, one must achieve an intimate knowledge of these things. Before acting upon something, one must be familiar with it, enquiring about how it was built and why, in what state it is in, and what caused that condition – to understand, finally, not just the material of construction, but the very language it speaks. To teach this is to suggest how to achieve a certain intimacy with traditional artifacts, highlighting limitations due to materials and tools available, or to the techniques known, as well as the methods applied to materials and products. All these constrictions should be attentively looked into, while retaining a sense of the extreme variety of vernacular situations and the awareness of a certain freedom in individual choices. Our heritage, of which we would be stewards, 'spells out in silence, according to the laws of a pre-structured space, instructions, prescriptions, and even prohibitions' (Derrida 2008).

In analysing the relationships that exist between landscape, morphology, settlement structure, material culture, technical ability, resources available, effects of time and climatic conditions, current needs and so on, the student learns to refine his or her learning abilities. This is a multiple-scale and multiple-focus approach, which in itself leads organically to a highly projectual *forma mentis*.

The student is encouraged to 'replace thoughts which separate and order with thoughts which distinguish and connect' (Morin 2001), invited not only to acquire analytical data (characteristics of the building materials, building technologies, ruin and structural deterioration events and processes...), but rather to gain understanding of the interactions *amongst* these data. To

comprehend and describe the interaction of artifact and 'microscopic' and 'macroscopic' context – the apparently 'simple' object and the 'complex' system of relations it has established with the physical and cultural environment, the parts and the whole (of a building), the whole and its connection with more wholes (in the landscape) (Figg. 2, 3, 4).

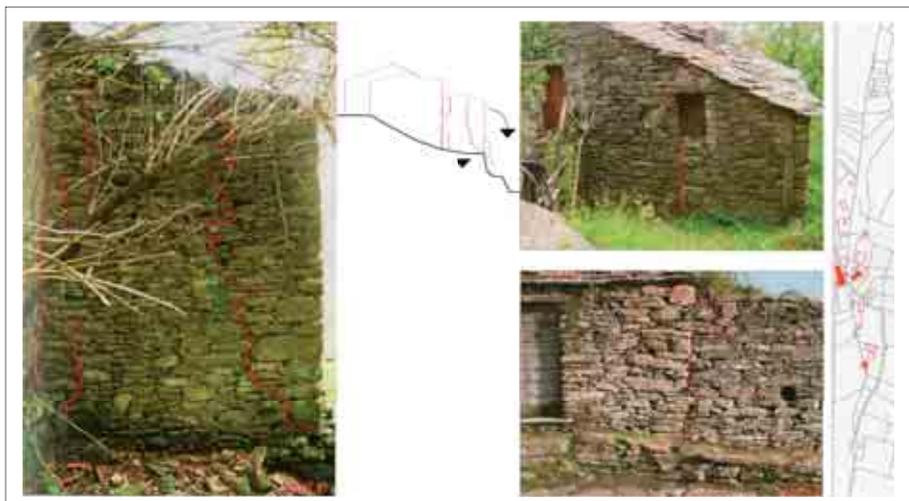
*Fig. 2*  
Vergheto, near  
Alpi Apuane



*Fig. 3*  
Drawing of  
Vergheto (E.  
Massa)



*Fig. 4*  
Vergheto,  
structural  
decay after an  
earthquake (E.  
Massa)



## Quality in the project, quality of the project

In teaching this workshop, fundamental importance is given to project-based experimentation at various scales and from various perspectives: to project and experiment with the edifice's new life and new structure, to predict implications, consequences, effects of an intervention, to perform a sustainable activity in the widest sense – a synthetic (rather than 'creative') act, condensing research and invention with care and reverence for what is already there.

Since the student is going through the second year of a degree at this point, he or she is often disoriented in the face of the teachers' various requirements, and looks for reassurance – for answers – in 'models' which may be adapted and applied to different contexts, but basically respond to a personal taste which is often – at least at the beginning – the only signpost available on the path between conservation and transformation.

The unceasing proliferation of images and shapes – sometimes barely comprehensible from the geometric, structural and building point of view – which characterises contemporary architecture is a source of surprise, interest, curiosity (as it feeds our society's need for constant change) which many strive to emulate. Therefore, the student's first step in searching for his or her personal style is often the choice of forms completely dissonant and divergent from the existing settlement and environmental context, built with evidently different materials. To refine this initial approach involves a long process, and team work that is oriented to enhance awareness of the influence of (pre-existing) images fed to us by architecture magazines and the like, images which must be approached with a critical understanding of their underlying complexity. Here the teacher's responsibility is most apparent. S/he is responsible for educating the students to a sense of quality in the project, as well as quality of the project, where the latter mostly resides in the individual capacity for synthesis and 'creativity'. What must be awakened – in reference once more to Morin's teaching – is a mental process that is conscious of the 'ecology of an action': a way of thinking cognisant of the 'complexity embedded in each (projectual) action, with its risks and unexpected turns', because 'each action is a part of a universe of interactions and, in the end, is taken over by the environment' (Morin 2001).

Practicing 'logic' more than 'design', each student is invited to imagine – insofar as possible – the consequences, implications and effects caused by small or vast transformations imposed on the balance of existing micro- and macro-systems. The didactic experience related to rural heritage, once articulated, elevates the project to a key role in the active preservation of the landscape.

The essential design conditions are detailed as follows:

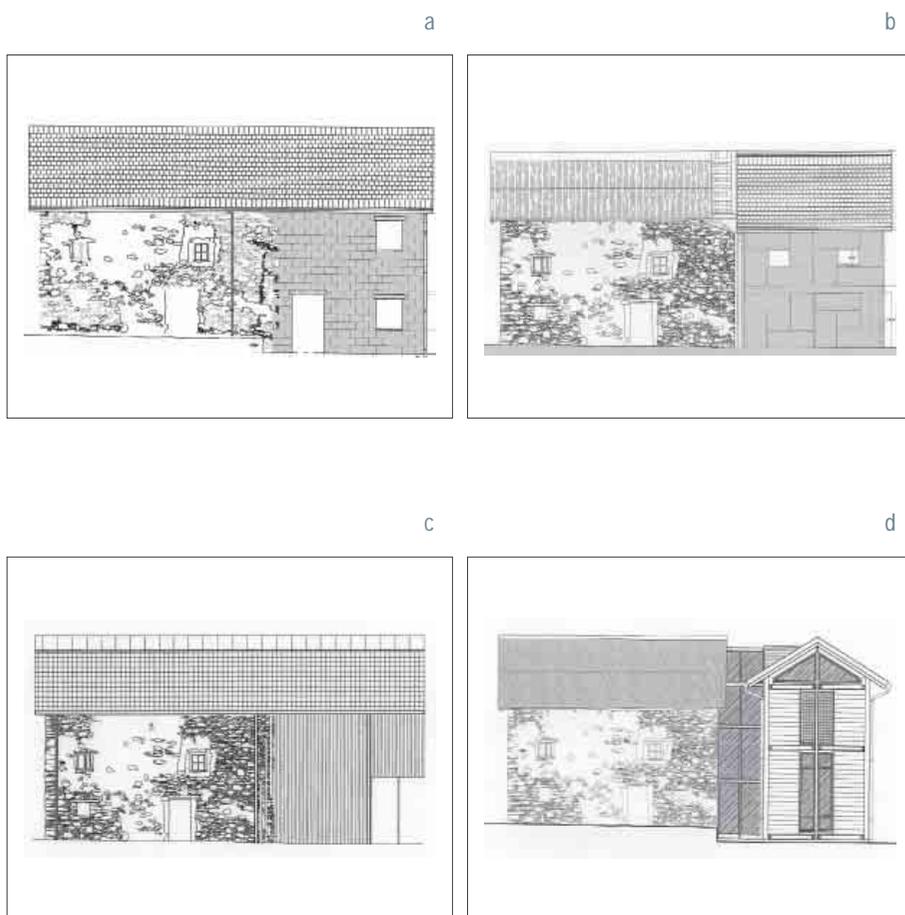
- to acknowledge that any project implies a risk, and therefore, to share a common attitude of caution and prudence;
- to look at the compatibility of the different aims of a specific project, maintaining as the highest priority the conservation and enhancement of the existing;
- to keep in mind conditions and limitations imposed by the context (i.e. the relationship with the environment, possible uses, choice of a new function, technical-executive actions);
- to lucidly identify any conflicts that might arise in relation to new functional or technical requirements, economic/financial issues, limits related to land use or planning legislation, the active protection of rural artifacts and of the landscape they are set in;
- to select from amongst technical devices, those most apt to address and solve the problems identified. Maintenance, repairs, changes, integrations and additions are all intervention actions, and therefore are ultimately technical operations. Like all technical operations, they should always stem from more general considerations related to the intentions of architectures that contribute to shaping a constructed landscape, as well as defining ways of perceiving and inhabiting an area. On its own, technique cannot answer these questions. Operative actions are informed by strategies, aims and values attributed to the existing building(s), a fact that leads us once more to strongly affirm the project's central role as a responsible, univocal choice, taken amongst a plethora of possible configurations. Technical abilities, technical solutions, must return to their proper role as means to an end, and not constitute an end in themselves, as often seems to be the case in contemporary times (Gregotti 2002) *(Figg. 5, 6,a, b, c, d)*.

## **Developing project topics**

Elaborating on study experience in the field of rural architecture reclamation conducted by Professor Musso's research team, a number of possible project topics have been identified. These function as broader containers for the individual proposals, which should all have in common the desire to achieve as a priority the re-appropriation of a kind of cultural significance which, more or less from the Second World War onwards, appears to have been lost. Environmental sustainability today must find fertile ground in the reclamation of these artefacts which originally represented the outcome of a complex economy-production-life system in which humankind and nature were kept in balance.



*Fig. 5*  
Veirera, rural  
building partially  
collapsed



*Figg. 6: a b, c, d*  
"Veirera,  
proposal of  
integration"  
a (L. Sandigliano,  
L. Quaretti).  
b (F. Gasparetto,  
G. Galmozzi, S.  
Roncallo).  
c (E. Barale, E.  
Botto).  
d (D. Ghetti)

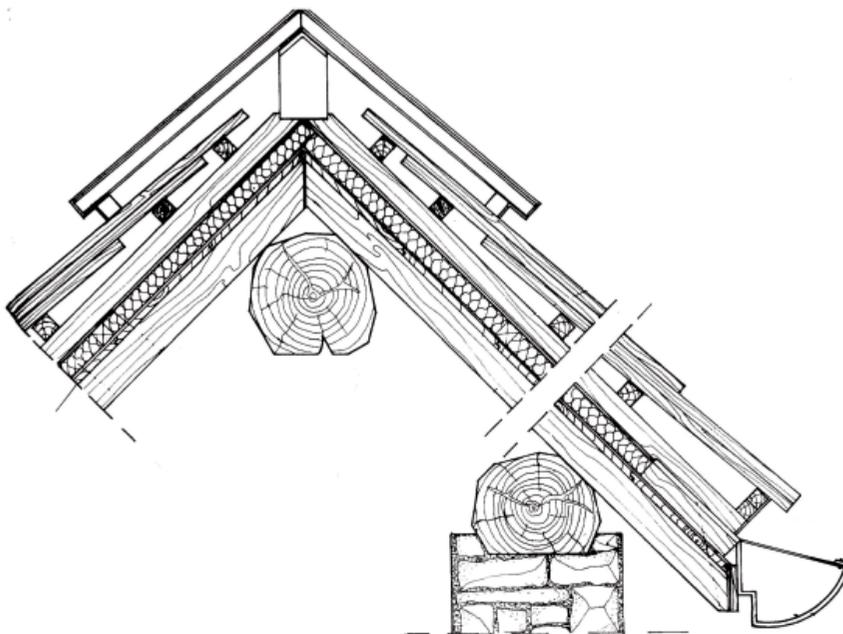
In designing a project, ideas related to new shapes and functions are developed by working with questions of accessibility and availability on different levels, on the settlement's structure and on those paths and connections which, just as much as the buildings, contribute to define the landscape, and must therefore be maintained and strengthened. In imagining new functional roles for settlements built in areas not connected to the infrastructure network, we must also keep in mind the novel possibilities offered by self-powering technologies (electric and heating systems) and by new developments in hydraulics, water conservation etc. At this point, a more in-depth study is made in relation to technical feasibility, with the aid of expert consultants, as well as in relation to the environmental and aesthetic compatibility of these devices (in particular, photovoltaic panels). The necessary 'functionalisation' of entire settlements or artefacts and scattered rural buildings, or at least their updating, opens up another topic: the enhancement of the quality of living spaces, both in terms of comfort and efficiency (including energy efficiency) and in terms of the quality ingrained in traditional architectures. Once again, this is more than merely an issue of technical feasibility: it raises questions such as what impact a new device (such as thermal insulation in an old-fashioned roof) may have upon the whole building's morphology (e.g. in the modified relation between the new roof and the gutter line) and upon the landscape (if, say, the insulation is applied to a number of the settlement's buildings) (*Figg. 7, 8, 9, 10*).

At the same time, to put abandoned rural settlements previously left to rot and ruin back to use raises issues of integration and enlargement, and the question of new additions to buildings. In such cases, students are requested to carefully 'keep on top' of technical solutions, in order to acquire competences in the areas of structural stability (how to integrate ruined/fallen sections; using which structural principles; employing what materials?), as well as in the worlds of language, symbols, and materials. Our search for architectural quality on a small scale (such as a rural building) is ultimately expressed through technical decisions, be it the surface treatment chosen for a certain kind of stone, the selection of which materials to set close to each other, or the highlighting of certain shapes and connections amongst different materials and 'light' elements.

The rural heritage, being generally characterised by massive forms and by the 'implicit power' of stone, can also – often does – encourage students to search for a new language, articulated in the interconnection of the light, the flexible, the translucent. Contemporary debate, especially in the field of technology, has often revolved around dichotomies such as heavy/light, natural/artificial,



*Fig. 7*  
Casoni di  
Chiappozzo,  
traditional stone  
buildings and  
roofs



*Fig. 8*  
Proposal for  
a ventilated  
wooden roof (M.  
Gnone)



*Figg. 9, 10*  
Details of  
traditional  
wooden roofs  
in Beigua Park

longlasting/ephemeral, singular/modular, always seen as opposites and inexorably separated by the chasm of the twentieth century. But, come to think of it, we can add to this linear view of time (new follows old, to reclaim the past we must innovate) a different world-view, where time is circular and tradition and innovation are not opposites, but complementary. In this circular timeframe, building 'archetypes' may remain unchanged, as the world of matter, of constructive tectonics, finds its alignment with a renewed taste for craftsmanship and detail.

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# Intervention with Design

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## Introduction

Located in the south of Portugal, the project 'Companhia das Culturas' aims at the creation of a sustainable environment. It is an old rural farm that has been completely redesigned to accommodate cultural events that run throughout the year, instead of the current summer tourism that only runs for six weeks a year. 'Companhia das Culturas' stands as an alternative to the cultural panorama of the region.

Construction methods that are driven by principles of sustainability and water supply with recycling capacity are also included in the project. Old walls were kept to show the history of the place – through their presence it becomes possible to read back in time, as if the walls could give us the ability to reveal the past and understand the evolution of local culture. Some former walls integrate the new scheme, creating two courtyards. The courtyard in the centre of buildings brings natural light and cross-ventilation. The project seeks to reinvent the function of the whole complex, without erasing the complexity of distinct technologies of construction standing with its own distinct character. Rainwater is collected at both courtyards and stored underground in water reservoirs for use in all sanitary facilities. Due to its low level of contamination it is re-used for irrigation, toilet flushing, and the washing of exterior courtyards. In short, the use of these solutions adapts to the shortage of the resource within the region, and avoids environmental problems common to this dry region with very scarce rainfall.

'Companhia das Culturas' is a place that provides culture-related services for the local community and the tourism sector, developing a variety of initiatives. Culture in its various expressions includes the local gastronomy, dance meetings, workshops, exhibitions of contemporary art, seminars and meetings that are hosted by artists and lecturers. The project aims to value local cultural expressions and make use of contemporary technologies to achieve a high standard of sustainability.

## The Site

An old collection of ruins that was part of an extensive agricultural property in the south of Portugal, São Bartolomeu do Sul, in Algarve, has been transformed

to give place to a new concept of life. To achieve this it was necessary to work with the difficult task of converting the memory of a place, a vernacular architecture that was to be conserved, mixed with new transformations, and guided by a contemporary aesthetic..

The settlement looks like a small village. The houses were built after the earthquake of 1755, when the frightened population moved away from the coast, fearing a tsunami like the one that destroyed the Algarve coast. In this property of forty hectares, crossed by two roads, is the train stop that links Faro to Castro Marim – a breathtaking journey along the extreme south (Cordeiro 2008).

Analyses of the site included paying attention to the movement of the wind, essential in a region where it rains on average no more than thirty days a year. Unlike the usual adjustments that involve adding something to the project, here the strategy was instead not to build but to subtract, removing the ceiling in interior spaces, increasing the area of the yard, creating external spaces for ventilation and natural cooling essential to the popular architecture of the Algarve, and the introduction of natural light into each of the seven new rooms of this unit.

The 'Companhia das Culturas' is not a commercial business. It is owned by two people – an anthropologist and a writer – Eglantina Monteiro and Francisco Palma-Dias. Eglantina is a freelance anthropologist involved with art exhibitions and Francisco is a poet, and manager of the space. The couple took about a decade to implement the project without any institutional support. The project was a way they found to balance the financial property, where only organic farming practices are carried out. Before coming to this family heritage of four generations, they lived in many countries, where they shared experiences and different ways of looking at the world. At present, people from around the world constantly visit them.

This is more than a project, it is a 'work in progress' – a project that began with the first recovery of the building market in 1998, and is not finished. The next ruin to be rehabilitated is the restaurant for lovers of local cuisine. The project intends to present in this location a rare perception of what cultural tourism can be. This is a place that invites us to stay, to gather around the table outside throughout the year. Here, overlooking dry land dominated by the carob tree, farming activities and the production of biological products also take place, with the help of local producers (*Figg. 1, 2*).

## The Concept

Re-organising and upgrading the existing structure rather than demolishing it with the aim of transforming an area where it was located, the project entered

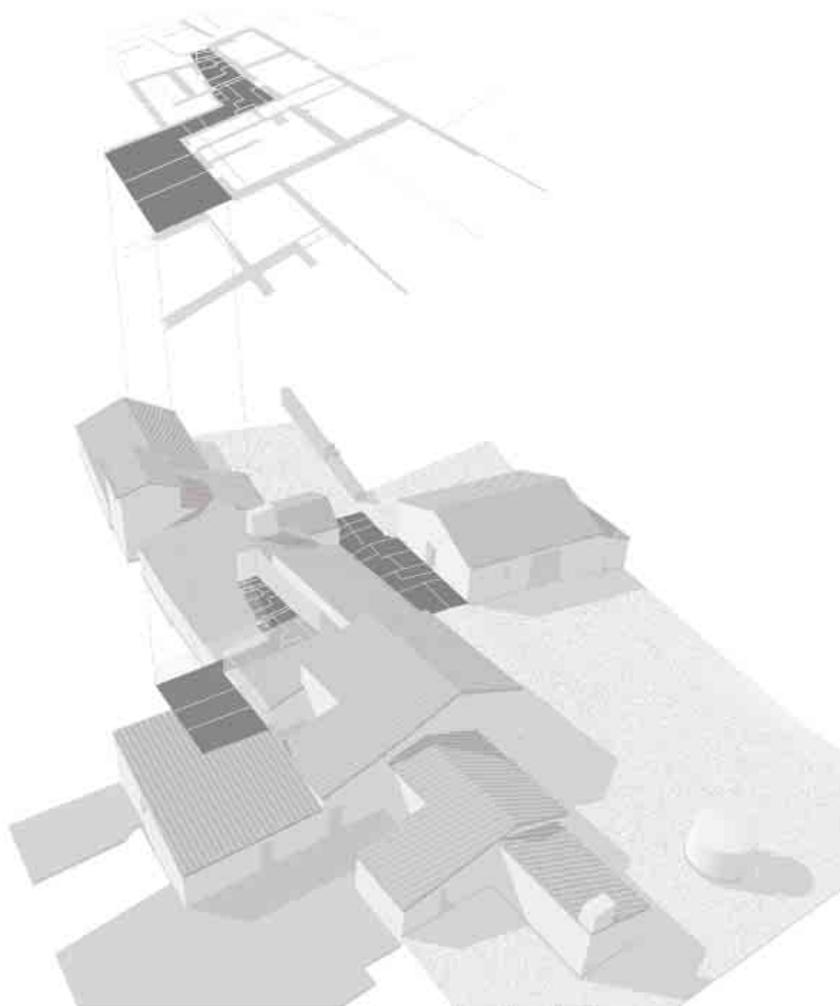
the history of successive constructions and abandonments that marked this farmhouse. The aim was to establish an empathy with people who relate to cultural production, while reflecting deeply about the present constraints and potentials of the site. The empathy that is established by this place not only arises from the many and varied leisure activities recommended by the owners – the architecture is intended to play a key role. This property had an abandoned core formed by the old house, mill and garage for the harvester, a goat shelter, and a barn and olive oil manufacturing plant



*Fig. 1*  
Garcia, Atelier  
PR., 2008

that occupies about one thousand square meters. The intervention integrates features of traditional architecture and intervention characteristics from last century, with contemporary design. The contemporary aesthetic was decisive in how the project executed the rehabilitation of the old farm buildings, to make them into an ensemble that resembles a Mediterranean settlement, where each part is distinct.

There are walls that tell the story of the place: there are different layers of intervention that are always possible to read back in time, because the past is clear. The ruined walls were built using different construction technologies: the adobe, the cut rock, panelling, tiles and the industrial brick. There is concrete, *tout venant* walls and cement. This variety of construction solutions is like a text about technical and building methodologies, presenting different



*Fig. 2*  
Garcia, Atelier  
PR., 2008

reports, carrying information that concerns the lives, the knowledge, the culture throughout the centuries. The reading of the walls presents layers of time coexisting together, and the variety of materials reflects the spirit of an ongoing project that has characterised the construction of this village, and reveals a very organic growth, made according to its needs.

Once this concept was shared between client and architect, it became possible to address the problems of conservation and the necessary transformation from the same perspective. Observation of the settlement revealed a rich variety of types, and yet there was a deep unity of the whole. Together they understood that the construction methodologies followed common criteria, which resorted to any material available at hand each time. This was the

building condition for many generations. This then was a contemporary option for the project. Transformation should be associated with convenient materials, such as plaster, concrete and cement. The project intends to deconstruct the concepts of tradition and modernity. The interventions only tried to avoid conflict between materials. Apparently this is what being contemporaneous is about: living along with different time periods, adjusting the functions of each space to the current needs. Interestingly, such options made the budget significantly lower.

Since the basic idea is the mapping of time, in an attempt to reveal the existing walls without modifying them, the design proposal valued the idea of transparency – to give the eye the understanding of their evolution in time. It is possible to read the place's history through the walls, through the sedimentation of layers that transformed them – to value time, silence and shade, absence and empty spaces. This is clearly a lesson of modern recovery, inspired by the mythic Italian architect, Carlo Scarpa (1906-1978), and is a record of memory in his great work, the recovery of Castel Vecchio in Verona. Like the old Italian master, a modern vision of recovery draws the history and reinvents new and old materials – drawing detail and furniture, adapting them to a new reality of use.

The main concept for the re-organisation of the ruins was to gather the old buildings around two courtyards. The inner courtyard was created by a subtraction within the former buildings, in which the roof was removed, bringing light, natural ventilation and greater coordination among spaces for different rooms. The second courtyard was created between buildings, turned south and facing the panoramic views. The courtyard serves as the unifying element while, at the same time, it is essential as the articulation of passageways between rooms. This has created a body of architectural harmony, articulated with inner courtyards that are a kind of labyrinth – bright and fresh – achieved by removing part of the early divisions of the main building.

The project has seven bright rooms, each different from the other. White is the dominant color and the key materials are timber, cork, glass and stone. With these were built the sinks in the bathrooms, the stairs of the two mezzanine rooms, the openings in the walls and ceilings so that the light is not reduced by the openings. All the rooms face a whitewashed and trimmed courtyard like those of a North African medina, protected by upper level shading – a pérgola, where a young vine begins to curl. The rooms are kept cool thanks to the original thickness of the walls and the recent insulation of the ceilings. The rooms: in an old kitchen, for example, the cover of the fireplace was preserved over a footbath; in others, the old wooden shutters have become functional sliding windows. But the marks of the interventions remained

visible, so that the visitors can understand and make the reading of multiple construction techniques that this farm has encompassed over time. Sometimes it is a part of the wall made of stone and clay that is exposed, at other times it is the wall built in mud and stone or with laid tile.

The project has been described by Amaro thus: 'the way the architect approached this work was a kind of archeological research of the place. He tried to understand how the territory had been occupied and inhabited. Which techniques and building materials used at the construction corresponded to each period. The owner of the place states that the initial idea was to make an adjustment to the place according to their needs but at the end, also adapt the proposal to the suggestions made by the place itself. There was no intention to demolish and erase previous construction processes in order to save time and money' (Amaro 2008).

On the surface of the whitewashed walls, each layer represents a year, and, as if they were giant screens, each apparent irregularity or imperfection in the texture is assumed as a detail of a work of art left to the contemplation of the visitor. The Companhia das Culturas project creates a place for contemplation, long walks and rest, accentuated by the absence of television.

Both courtyards are paved with a clean cement floor that creates an intriguing puzzle: multicolor sometimes applied in blocks so as not to crack, suggesting a design composed of different geometries, the same as the existing buildings. The complex geometry of the pavements reveals another level of information to help solve the intriguing puzzle. It contributes to the transparency of the



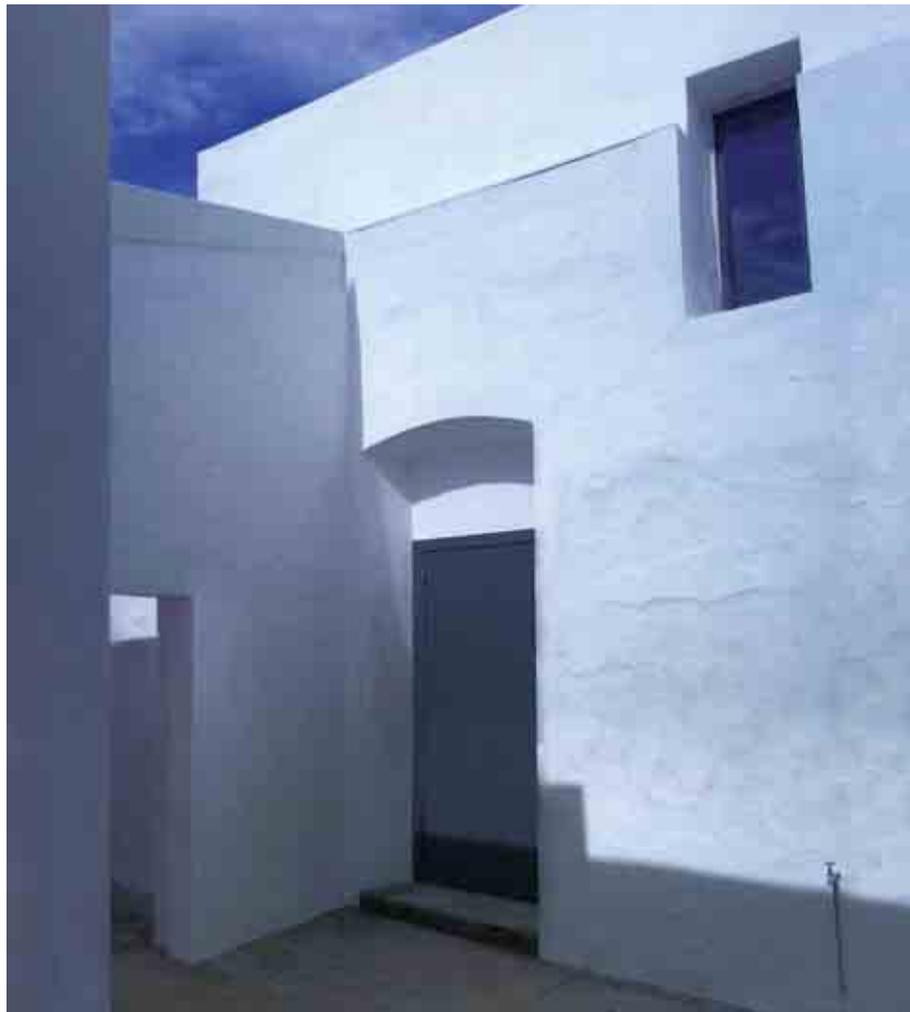
*Fig. 3*  
Garcia, Atelier  
PR., 2008

design strategy by writing on the floor the volumes of each building (*Fig. 3, 4, 5*).

### **The Intervention**

An inscription mentioned in the old kitchen fireplace records the year 1838. The door and the shutters in the Art Nouveau style evoke a familiar aesthetic in vogue at the beginning of the twentieth century. And yet the cracks on the walls and the low ceilings explain the previous lives of the former home-keepers and reflect the character of vernacular architecture.

The shape of these spaces is designed by necessity, or at least for strictly practical purposes; each space also evokes the unique materiality and the contained nature of the building. This is a location for retreat, so the rooms handle different environments with different characteristics. The wide variety



*Fig. 4*  
Garcia, Atelier  
PR., 2008



*Fig. 5*  
Aguiar, M., 2008.  
[A Cartografia  
do Tempo], in  
CUBO, 14, pp.  
58-69

of types does not interfere with the sense of unity carried by the whole settlement.

An example that describes the care to make visible – but always in a subtle way – specific aspects of recent interventions and the testimonies of old building: leaving exposed sections of mud walls, with characteristic dark red now framed by the whitewash, and others where the stone lives with the tile placed on high, thus contributing to the feeling of being in a place that integrates all the time.

It is an enormous challenge to renovate a building according to alternative construction methods that are contrary to the culture of the local builders, in this remote countryside area. Here an old wall is to be torn down and new walls are made in the same manner – always. The old walls at the project

were covered and stabilised, and protection of the plaster was demanded. Local builders had to be retrained. Intervention with design reveals against all odds the cosmopolitan way of living in a rural environment; such is the difference in understanding at all levels.

Sustainable strategies were also included in the design. As previously observed, rainwater is collected in both courtyards and stored underground in water reservoirs for use in all sanitary facilities. It is re-used for irrigation, toilet flushing, and washing exterior courtyards. The use of these solutions adapts to the shortage of the resource in the region, and prevents environmental problems common to dry regions with very little rain. From the ecological point of view, the main concerns of Companhia das Culturas are the use of solar panels to heat water, which are then treated in a waste-water treatment plant, and afterwards used to irrigate the property. Because of a lack of materials for re-use, doors, shades and windows salvaged from the demolition of buildings in the surrounding areas were brought here. The poolside pergolas were built with the leftover wood from abandoned bars at the beach. Other than that, the priority was to intervene as little as possible, and in the best possible way, and always to choose local materials to make sure transportation would not be the responsible for higher levels of carbon emissions.

In a time of crisis but also of excess, more and more people are looking for products and services distinguished by their authenticity. The owners of the project state that the future objective is dependent on the creation of its own brand and associating this with the production of traditional and regional delicacies (Ladeira 2009). The environment that provides such delicacies has been beautifully described: 'to walk along the fields and feel the variety of perfumes through the orchards of dry land, of apricot and orange blossom tree, of pine and rosemary, then slowly (...), to the end of the mountain that rises to Mértola through the Northeast of Algarve, where spring of heather in bloom for the honey labor and goat cheese, to the old wine, acidic, acrid, sweet and bitter, flavors that welcome you when you get there' (Valagão 2007). Help local producers and the region, so that the culture of a region of a country is not lost in a Europe without borders. Today through the Internet, you can spread a brand around the world, and with the help of the designer Francisco Providência, the logo-mark of 'Companhia das Culturas' was created and associated with the production of certain regional products. Rehabilitation and re-use have been guiding the whole process, alluding to the progressive modifications to the base during the discovery that was the recovery of this settlement.

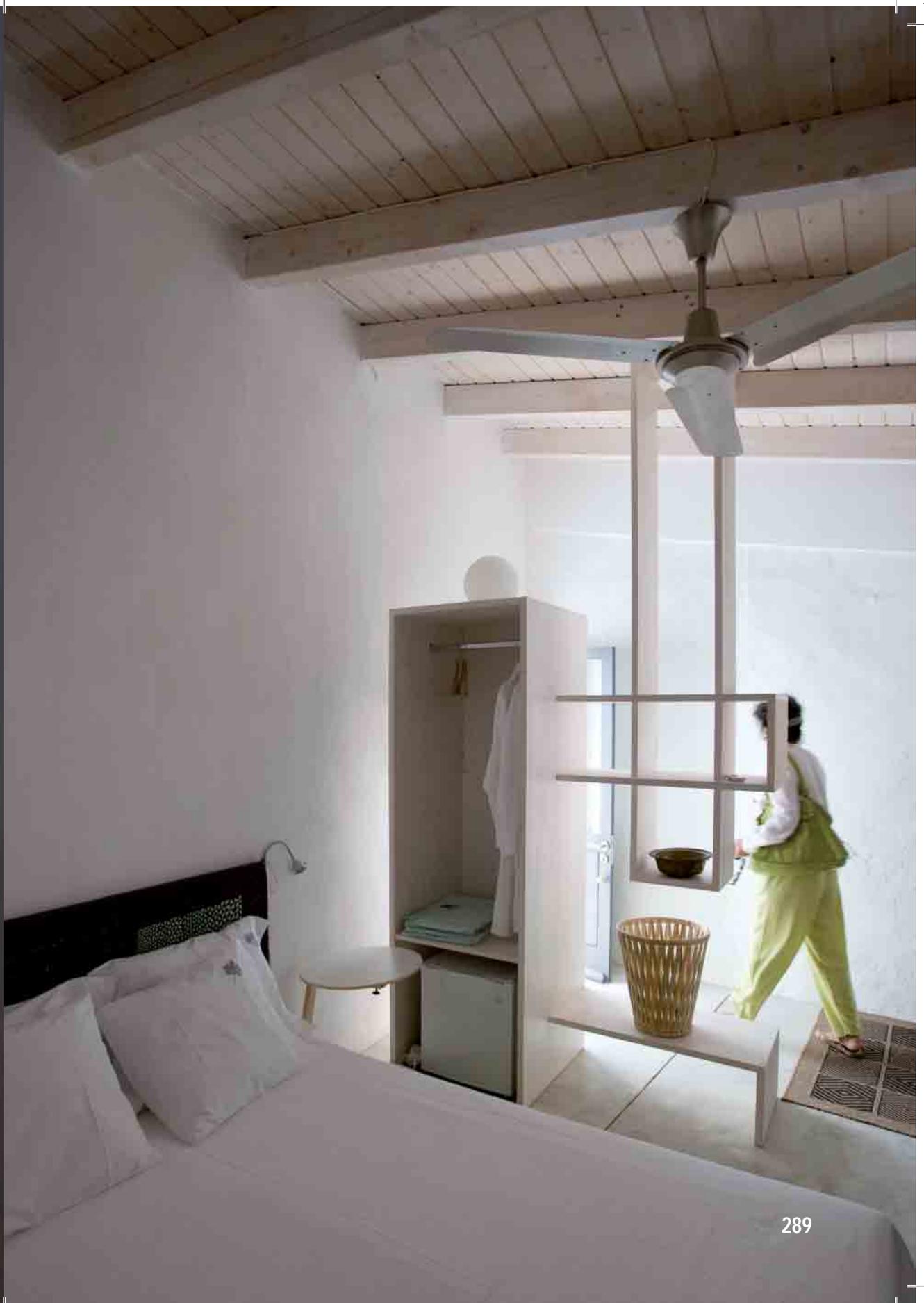
The owner Eglantina states: 'It is an architecture that has been done over the years and adapted to different needs, a place with a huge architectural

dynamic and various techniques and materials, both traditional and contemporary' (Amaro 2008). She is not alone, since the project has been on the cover of a popular magazine with the title Pure Mediterranean Charm, and briefly described as follows: 'in São Bartolomeu, Companhia das Culturas proves that intelligent architecture, simplicity and respect for the surrounding nature, are synonyms with elegance and welfare, a good example of ethical tourism and a way to sustainability' (Silva 2008). The stone, wood and cork appear conjoined, at present, as materials of choice in the entire structure of the property and are also prominent in the arrangement of the interiors. Taking advantage of available resources in the twenty-first century, combine ancestral methods of construction with the contemporary technology of thermal insulation, recovery of waste water and solar energy (Figg. 6, 7, 8).

*Figg. 6, 7, 8*  
Aguiar, M., 2008.  
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do Tempo], in  
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# New additions and their physical relation with the existing building

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The relationship between preservation and transformation of old buildings is an ever-present aspect of all restorations, but in some cases it is particularly critical. In places where the situation has been compromised by demolition or even collapse, the conservation of the remaining parts, though often called fundamental, is often circumvented by the need (real or imagined) to adapt the existing parts to new requirements as foreseen by the project. The new construction can therefore lead to substantial demolition of parts of the ancient artefact, even if contrary to the declared intention of conservation.

Both the St. Trinita Bridge in Florence and, about half a century later, the Stables of the Villa Medici of Poggio a Caiano near Florence were renovated, having suffered severe damage as a result of collapses. In the first case, the damage was certainly more devastating, having been caused by actions of war. In the second case, the damage affected limited parts of the structure and arose as a result of a long period of neglect. The interventions to the stables and to the bridge were also opportunities to introduce new functions. In fact, if we consider that the bridge had been built in the late sixteenth century to serve as a passage for wagons, we can see how it could withstand other stresses, and especially the force of floodwaters. The rebuilt bridge was tested with three vehicles whose total weight was nearly a hundred tons.

In both interventions, the relationship between preliminary statements of principles and the design provides more than a hint of reflection on the problems posed by the preservation of tangible artefacts.

## **The Santa Trinita Bridge <sup>1</sup>**

The Santa Trinita Bridge (*Fig. 1*), which was begun by Bartolomeo Ammannati in 1566-1567 and completed in 1571 by Alfonso Parigi (Belluzzi 2003: 25-65), was struck in August 1944 by two acts of war. The first was due to the mines placed by the Germans who in order to slow down the advance of the allied troops blew up all Florentine bridges, except the Ponte Vecchio (*Fig. 2*). The urgency of restoring the links between the two banks of the Arno river to allow the passage of British and American troops inflicted further demolition on the



surviving piers of the Santa Trinita Bridge. These were flattened on top with mines (*Fig. 3*) and jackhammers to obtain appropriate supports for the metal structures of a Bailey bridge (*Fig. 4*) (Paoletti 1987; Belli 2003).

The recovery of fragments of statues and of stone revetments began just a few days later and lasted for about a year (*Fig. 5*). In the initial phase, this activity took place in a rather confused way, and many revetment stones fell into the river in the impetus to demolish unsafe structures. The large concrete blocks of the arch spandrels, slumped at the foot of the piers, were reduced to fragments that were dispersed by successive floods. The most urgent works were completed, and the ruins of the piers remained with no revetment, protected by a wall faced with brickwork.

In the following months and years, there was a substantial and broad consensus concerning the choice to rebuild the bridge in its original form, albeit with some variations. For Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and Gillo Dorfles, such a choice could be justified as compensation for the population. Bernard Berenson argued that Florence is a work of art in itself, and the loss of the bridge would have been unacceptable and therefore should have been rebuilt as it was, where it was. According to Roberto Pane this was a decision supported by sentimental motivations and 'reasons of art'. De Angelis D'Ossat believed

*Fig. 1*  
Florence, view of  
the Santa Trinita  
Bridge before  
the war

*Fig. 2*  
The Santa Trinita  
Bridge after  
the destruction  
caused by  
German mines



that this was a complex 'reconstruction' of the revetment, of an anastylosis. Emilio Lavagnino even wrote that the bridge could have been 'reassembled with its own elements'; the same went for Cesare Brandi, who asserted that 'restoration and anastylosis' had to be attempted 'at any cost' (Belli 2003: 180-187).

More controversial was the question regarding the structure of the bridge. Roberto Pane and Piero Sanpaolesi did not exclude the use of reinforced

*Fig. 3*  
British mines  
exploding on  
the top of the  
remnants of the  
piers





*Fig. 4*  
The remnants  
of the piers  
supporting the  
Bailey Bridge,  
built for the  
passage of the  
Allied forces



*Fig. 5*  
Ashlar stones of  
the revetment  
numbered before  
dismantling

concrete. Both Guglielmo De Angelis d'Ossat and Emilio Lavagnino seemed to agree to this solution. Raghianti had a different point of view, as he considered that the construction technique could not be separated from the form.

The numberless opinions regarding the reconstruction of the bridge all ignored the problem of the material remains of the piers and their destiny. Moreover, the problem of verifying the real quantity of the recovered revetment material had still not been posed. It is no coincidence that when passing to a detailed design stage, unavoidable decisions took the project in different directions.

The first two designs were developed by Emilio Brizzi and Riccardo Gizdulich, and were commissioned by the Municipality of Florence and the Superintendency respectively. Both projects re-proposed in a paraphrastic way the shape of the original bridge, with an overall design largely derived from photographs and rather approximate surveys, and from the choice to lower the weight of the structure in order to reduce loading on the original foundations.

The two proposals differed considerably as regards their structural solution. The project of the Municipality planned to use cement-based concrete up to the arch spandrels, and from this level up to the decking of the bridge, a lightweight concrete would be used. The solution of the Superintendency (*Fig. 6*) drastically deviated from the original building features of the bridge: it was planned to build over the piers, and to be extended to about one third of the arches, a series of rooms covered with transverse parallel barrel vaults – a solution very similar to a multi-arched viaduct (Belli 2003: 194-201). This project was judged better by the Supreme Council of Antiquities and Fine Arts, because it was more detailed in its formal aspects. However, the two proposals were both rejected by the Superior Council of Public Works, which considered a structure of reinforced concrete with a Pietraforte stone revetment to be more appropriate (*Fig. 7*). The design of the Superintendency adopted this hint, and was therefore approved by the Superior Council of Public Works. The contract work was awarded in February 1952 (Belli 2003: 200-201).

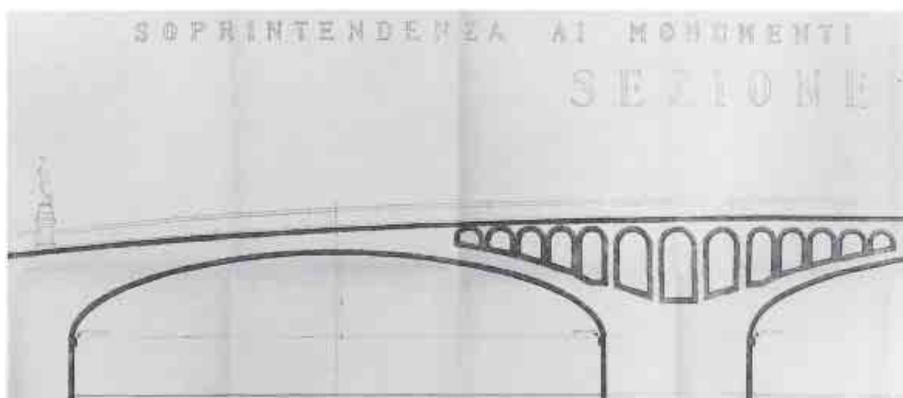
The guidelines on the bridge structure dictated by the Superior Council of Public Works aroused a fierce controversy that led to the appointment of a committee of experts, in order to assess the suitability of a structure based on traditional building techniques. The committee, made up of Gustavo Colonnetti, Arturo Danusso and Giuseppe Albenga, considered this choice of construction to be feasible, excluding any possible damage to the original foundations.

So even before construction started in June 1952, Gizdulich and Brizzi were committed to developing a new executive design, which was worked out by

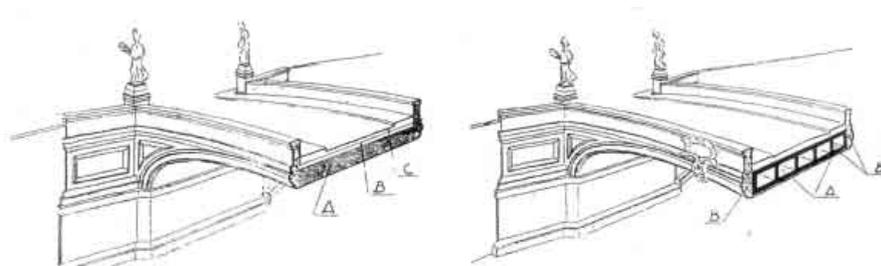
taking into account both further investigations made on the piers, and also the information obtained by foundation drilling, performed at this stage for the first time (Fig. 8).

Study of the remains of the piers disclosed a structure formed by a core of concrete covered with two connecting walls: an intermediate rubble masonry wall in contact with the concrete core and an outer moulded ashlar wall. The remains also showed that the two side arches had a thickness at the crown of 73-75 cm, and the central arch a thickness of 90 cm. Over the piers, the concrete extended up above the stone arches, assuming a relatively thin layer above the keystones, and showing homogeneous characteristics throughout. Thanks to a trench excavation conducted in a pier, which confirmed the excellent quality of the concrete, the wall structure of an arch abutment was revealed: between the spring and the spandrels, the arch extrados had a variable profile, tied to the backing masonry of the pier core. Thus, the connection between arch, masonry and concrete helped to significantly stiffen the spandrels, turning each into a sort of large corbel.

Drilling started in October 1952 and highlighted the fact that the piers rested on a block of concrete, of similar quality to that of the structures above, about 4 m deep and resting on chestnut timber piles 4 m long; in the left pier, the piles rested directly on the Pietraforte bed, while the right ones were inserted



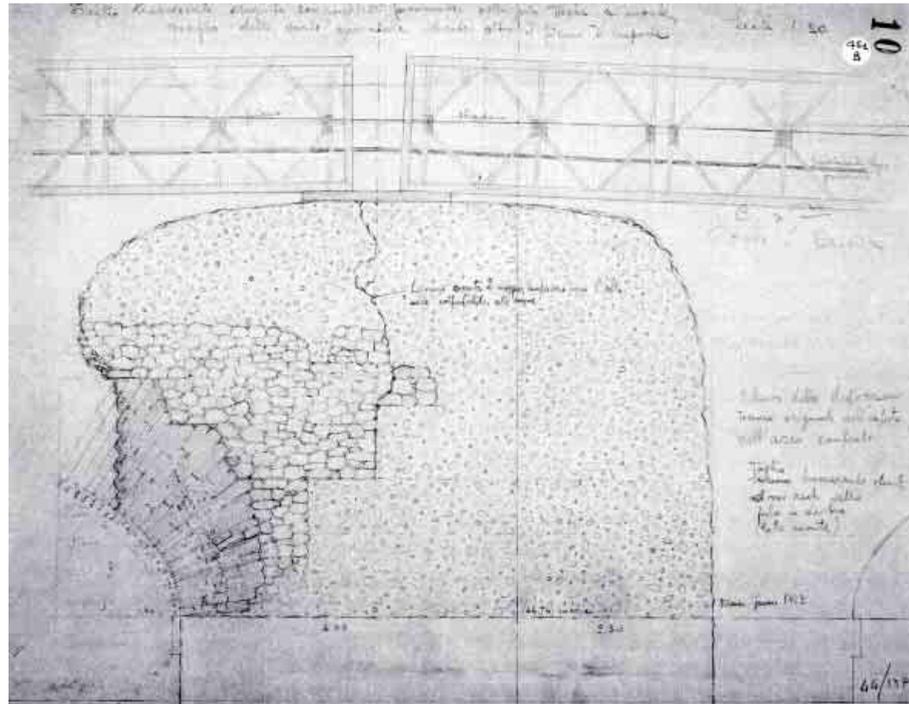
*Fig. 6*  
Design for the bridge reconstruction by the Monuments Superintendency of Florence



*Fig. 7*  
Design of a reinforced concrete structure clad in Pietraforte stone.

into a conglomerate of poor mortar. In the latter, above the piles, there was also a layer of boards amounting to a total thickness of about 75 cm (Belli 2003: 214). In light of these findings, the foundations were judged reliable, so it was decided to re-use them in the project. It was decided merely to protect them from erosion using a palisade of pine piles located downstream of the slab foundation.

The new proposal by Brizzi took into account what was discovered in the remains of the piers, but came to a substantially different solution: he bifurcated the arches at their springing, inserting between the two branches a third arch (*Fig. 9*). Due to this, Brizzi increased the section of the arches at the



*Fig. 8*  
Survey of an  
arch springing of  
the bridge

springing, abandoning the three different cooperating parts – the arch, the masonry and the concrete – of the sixteenth-century bridge, in order to use lightweight concrete above the arch spandrels. Brizzi did not exclude using the nucleus of the pier if this were found intact, but in the parts to be replaced he allowed for the use of cement-based concrete, and in project designs he indicated the use of cement-based concrete in the in-filling of the piers (Belli 2003: 223 and figure 7).

In January 1954 Brizzi and Gizdulich completed the final design (*Fig. 10*); the following May works began, and in 1957 they were completed. During the works, the Pietraforte ashlar stones of the piers were numbered and taken apart; the concrete of the piers, together with the stone walls that contained

them as a disposable form, were completely demolished at many phases of the work, exposing the top of the foundations (Fig. 11).

These are the only partially preserved parts of the original bridge (Fig. 12), while the re-used revetment elements seem to have been approximately no more than 15-20 per cent of the total ashlar stone facing (Paoletti 1987: 105 note 2; Belli 2003: 231 and note 247) (Fig. 13).

The result achieved is certainly far from being the product of a process of anastylosis, nor can it be seen as the revival of the same building techniques as those of the Bartolomeo Ammannati period. But what is most interesting to emphasise is the split between the statements of principle and the preservation of the tangible remains of the bridge. In other words, no reflection is made on the surviving ruins and on the problems posed by their conservation, nor on the relationship between the remains and the proposals for the new interventions. Eligibility or sustainability of the intervention was judged/verified from the beginning without a close comparison with the artefact on which the operation was to be carried out. This resulted in the loss of control of the restoration works at the project execution phase, when sometimes choices of great relevance could have been made: the arches of the Santa Trinita bridge were destroyed by mines, but the piers were completely demolished during the restoration works. The problem of pure aesthetic issues dominated everything, obscuring the reasons for preservation.

### The Stables of the Villa Medici of Poggio a Caiano

The stables are annexes to the Villa Medici in Poggio a Caiano, with quite distinctive architectural features. They were designed and initially built by Baccio Bigio in the years 1516-1521, and then completed by Tribolo from 1545 to 1548 (Fig. 14).

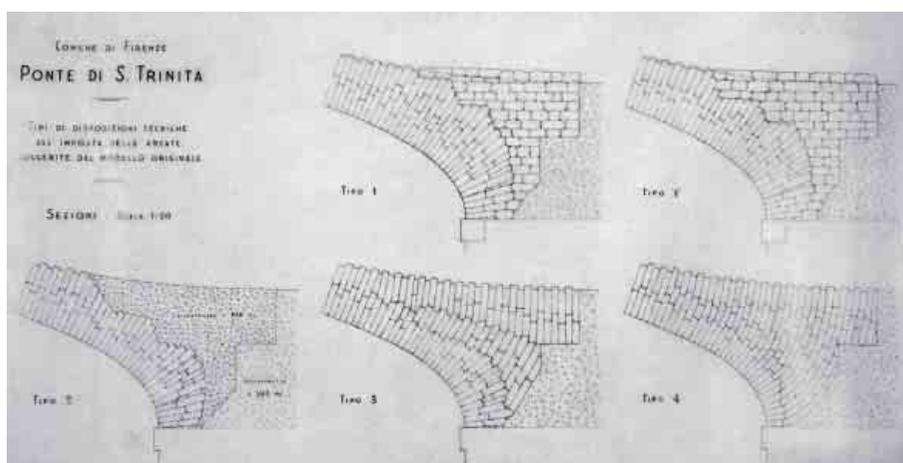
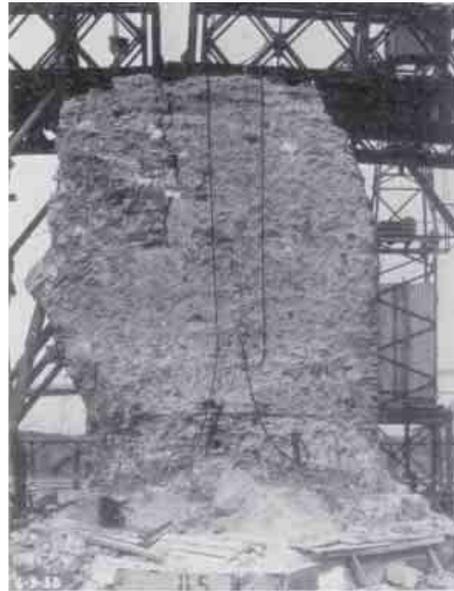
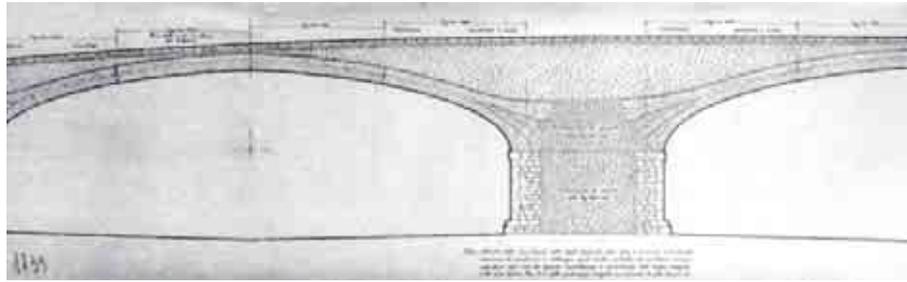


Fig. 9  
Alternative solutions for the reconstruction of an arch springing

*Fig. 10*  
Approved  
design for the  
reconstruction of  
the Santa Trinita  
Bridge



*Fig. 11*  
The sequence  
of images shows  
the gradual  
dismantling of  
piers carried  
on during the  
reconstruction



*Fig. 12*  
The springing  
of an arch  
during the  
reconstruction



*Fig. 13*  
Only the  
highlighted  
ashlar stone  
came from the  
original bridge;  
all the rest were  
newly made

The ground floor consists of two symmetrical blocks side by side, each formed by three naves divided by monolithic columns in Pietra Serena stone and roofed by groin vaults. The naves received light through windows in the external walls, while in the dividing wall doors connected the two triple-nave spaces. It would also appear that these doors were opened regularly at intervals of two bays, thus reiterating the correspondence between windows and doors.

The central nave of each block is wider than the aisles and consists of twenty-six spans, nearly ninety-four metres long. One end of the building has a large entrance hall covered by vaults with lunettes, to the left side of which is a staircase leading to the first floor. The vaulted entrance hall has two longitudinal portals (in one case later closed by a partition wall), whose arches rest on central pillars aligned with the inner rows of columns of the three-naved blocks (Fig. 15).

On the first floor there is a central corridor bounded by load-bearing walls (about 50cm thick), resting on the two inner rows of columns below. This long corridor, lit by large cross windows at both ends, is flanked on either side by rooms used in the past to accommodate travellers, servants, grooms and coachmen. A structure of limited height, built to be a kennel, leans against a side wall. In this new structure are incorporated masonry buttresses which testify to the stability problems of the building present since the eighteenth century.

The structural arrangement of the stables, with three naves covered by vaults, refers to an illustrious tradition that can be traced back to the refectories of

*Fig. 14*  
*Giusto Utens,*  
*Villa Medici at*  
*Poggio a Caiano,*  
Florence.  
Museum  
Firenze as it  
was between  
1599-1602.  
The stables of  
the Villa are  
represented to  
the right



the mendicant orders of Santa Maria Novella and S. Domenico al Maglio in Florence (Rocchi 2002): in both cases there are octagonal pillars in Pietra Serena supporting ribbed vaults. Even more convincing is the comparison with the humanistic libraries that sprung up from the middle of the fifteenth century. The libraries of San Marco in Florence, the Malatestiana in Cesena, of San Domenico in Perugia, dell'Incoronata in Milan and of Monte Oliveto Maggiore near Siena are all divided into three naves by stone columns, covered by groin vaults and in some cases by a barrel vault in the nave. The almost-contemporary Medici stables of San Marco in Florence have the same three naves pattern. Similarities with the Medici stables at Poggio a Caiano are also observed from the point of view of statics. Sometimes in the libraries, the columns rest over the vaults of the rooms below, while in the stables, the two longitudinal walls of the first floor are supported by the columns and the vaults.

Equally important are the similarities between the Medici stables and a sketch by Leonardo da Vinci, where he depicts a two-tier stable model: a ground floor with three naves divided by columns, supporting vaults and an upper floor consisting of a large room with longitudinal walls resting on the rows of columns below (Rocchi 2002).

In the twentieth century, the stables were divided into several properties, and some housing units were created by the construction of additional floors. The increase in loading, the lack of maintenance and a fire led to the collapse of some structures. Emergency works to secure the structure were later executed, and the situation remained unchanged until 1990, when the Municipality of Poggio a Caiano announced a competition for the restoration of the stables.



*Fig. 15*  
The main head  
of the stables  
with a cruciform  
window.

It was won by Franco Purini's project in 1992. The new functions planned for the building were: education, museum and conference venues, as well as a library. The works began in 1998 and to date have been carried out only partially. In front of the stables, this project planned the construction of an external block like an auditorium, since removed in an implementation phase. The part of the restoration works examined here, because of its importance in relation to the building and to design choices, is the part affected by the collapse. In one of the three-nave structures, three columns and the surrounding webs fell down (*Fig. 16*). This was followed by the collapse of the wall above on the first floor, together with a portion of the roof. Eight spans were involved in the collapse, but not all the vaults fell down. In fact, images taken after the securing of the structures show that half of the four corner bay vaults resisted, in addition to a part of the groins that leaned against the inner wall and the opposite side. Therefore, of the eight spans, only a small part of the vaulted structures were spared from collapse.

The project's aim was to ensure that no trace of the history of the building was erased, even the most recent, related to the collapse. But this attention to all the aspects of the building did not prevent the complete demolition of the surviving vaults (*Fig. 17*). This was probably due to the need to regulate the form of the void left from the collapse, to facilitate the insertion of a reinforced concrete structure (*Figg. 18, 19*), enclosed by glass surfaces and emerging from the rooftops (*Fig. 20*). This was an insert that actually negated the very reason it was made: in fact today one may question whether the void was pre-existing or whether it was created to incorporate the present structure. Moreover, the empty space that should have witnessed a dramatic moment in the stables' existence became a closed volume (even though by glass windows), where a staircase had been deliberately and pragmatically included. The most refined aim of the initial project turned out to become a stairwell.

The stables formerly had well balanced lighting, which has been totally changed by the new glazed space. In addition, the extraordinary sequence of serial vaulted spans of exceptional length appear now heavily transformed, and cut by the new staircase (*Fig. 21*).

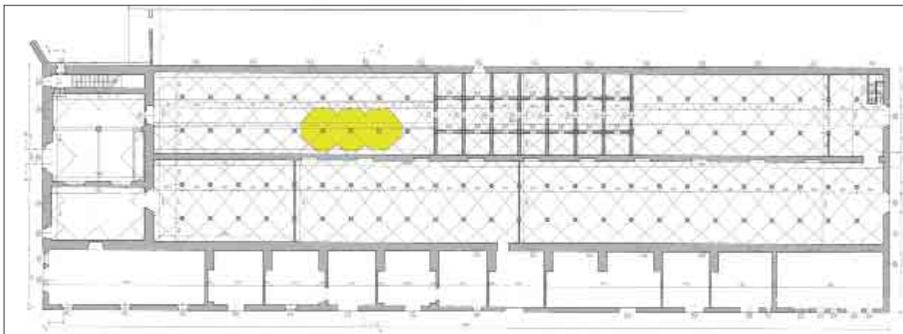
After the demolition of the remains of the vaults and the addition of the reinforced concrete structure (*Figg. 22, 23*), some conservation scruple was invoked, and the inviolability of the abutments of the vaults that had been exposed to view was declared, without considering that this material was dry-compressed and therefore tended to gradually fall off (*Figg. 24, 25*). Equally odd is the choice of using some of the collapsed columns to make unusual benches at the entrance of the stables. The addition of the internal staircase, enclosed in a glass box, has also worsened the thermo-hygrometric condition. From this

point of view, the use of large glazed surfaces as roofing structures does not seem sustainable, as this causes a strong temperature increase in summer and heat loss in winter, controllable only at the cost of a great waste of energy using air conditioning systems.

Nor has the problem of accessibility been fully resolved by the new internal staircase. In fact, it was necessary to build an external staircase with a lift (*Fig. 26*). The addition of this structure, placed side by side with the long facade facing the Villa Medici, shows that the invasive construction of the glazed interior box could have been avoided, possibly by a doubling of the external structures.

The reconstruction of the Santa Trinita Bridge and the restoration of the Medici stables were two interventions made at a distance of half a century. In both cases there was a lack of knowledge of, and attention to, the existing building. Moreover, there was no verification of the proposed interventions in relation to their implications for practical implementation, nor in terms of invasiveness and reversibility, or of aesthetical result. The preliminary declarations of intent prevailed over any other aspect, and the problem of the sustainability of restoration works has been evaded.

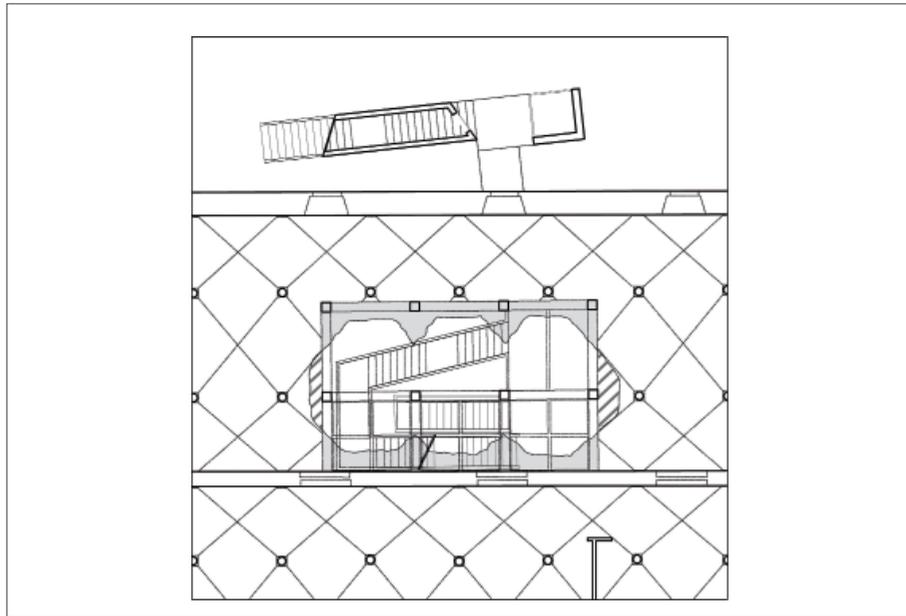
The restoration principles followed in the two interventions are opposite. The bridge of Santa Trinita was rebuilt with a shape similar to that of the original bridge, while at the stables of the Villa Medici they abandoned the reconstruction of the collapsed sections and introduced a character of contemporary architecture. The outcomes of the two projects can both be considered creative interventions which have caused decisive changes to the existing structures, to the point of abandoning their original characteristics. To achieve a more virtuous relationship between design and conservation action, we need to ask whether historical buildings should adapt to our principles of restoration (and their volatility) or whether the principles should not harmonise with the many lessons that we could learn from the study and understanding of these buildings. The buildings can teach us a lot and provide crucial information for their most appropriate conservation/transformation.



*Fig. 16*  
Ground plan  
of the stables:  
the area of  
the collapsed  
vaults and three  
columns is  
highlighted

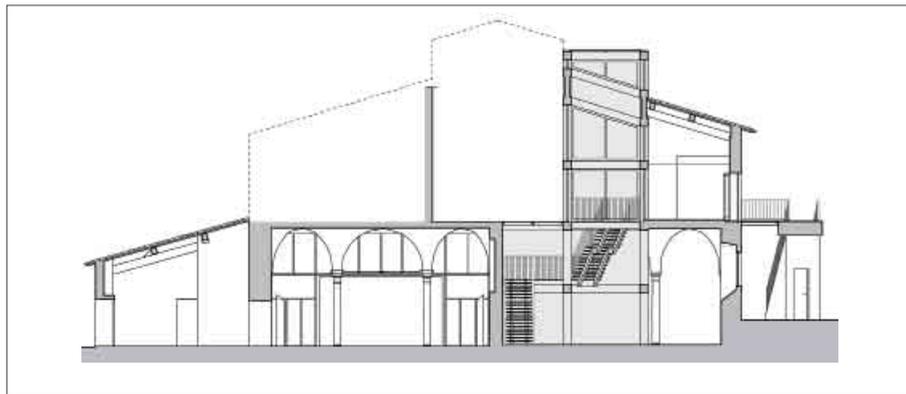
**Fig. 17**

Detail of the ground plan with the new internal staircase. Highlighted are the rebuilt portions of two groins (hatched), and the remaining parts of the collapsed vaults (in grey). These parts have been demolished to insert the reinforced concrete frame enclosed by glazing at the top; above is the new external staircase



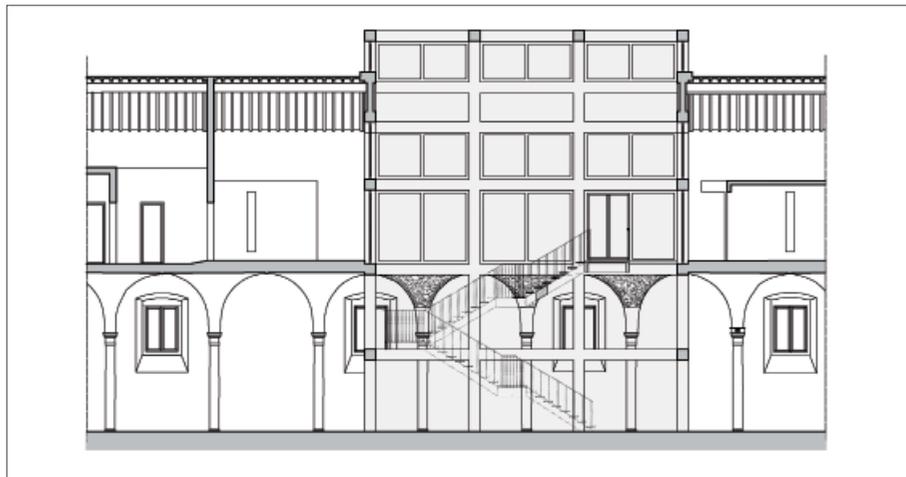
**Fig. 18**

Cross-section of the new structure in relation to the remaining parts of the ancient building



**Fig. 19**

Detail of the longitudinal section



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> On the reconstruction of the of Santa Trinita Bridge, see Paoletti 1987 and the recent Belluzzi Belli 2003, very well documented, even on the sixteenth-century phase, and with extensive bibliography.

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*Fig. 20*  
The reinforced concrete frame with glazing that encloses the upper floors.

*Fig. 21*  
The long block  
with three naves  
interrupted by  
the new structure



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*Fig. 22*  
The new frame  
on the ground  
floor.





*Fig. 23*  
The new structure, columns and vaults of the remaining aisle



*Fig. 24*  
The new metal staircase and the remnants of the vaults left exposed to view.



*Fig. 25*  
Details of a  
vault springing



*Fig. 26*  
The new  
external  
staircase  
on the side  
facing the Villa  
Medici.



# Conservation and the visitor experience

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Conservation involves doing whatever is necessary to sustain the unique and valuable qualities of a building or place. Such buildings and environments must also be made suitable for people to visit them, to experience these qualities and have insights into their historic past. Forms of conservation range from stabilisation of ruined structures to complete and detailed repair and renovation of the building and contents to full working condition. Since each heritage site is unique, the level of intervention must be established to optimise its special physical characteristics, showcasing its popular associations or historical significance.

In determining the measures necessary to prolong this legacy for future generations, a strategic plan should decide which aspects to show to visitors and how this may be accomplished, both in terms of aesthetic experience and in providing access safely and comfortably for visitors. Just as in new built environments it is no longer acceptable to exclude people with disabilities, so too should the conservation strategy be devised to allow anyone to visit the building. In the case of some sites that may be less accessible even to the able-bodied, or where the form of the building precludes additions or alterations that might create unacceptable intrusions that spoil the visual quality, temporary ramps are one possibility (*Fig. 1*).

The balancing act both to conserve the building in its best possible light, whilst simultaneously making it visitable, requires sensitivity and consideration. It is generally accepted that conservation is most successful where it can be justified as making a contribution to the cultural background of a country, has economic viability and enhances tourism, domestic or international. At one extreme this can take a themepark or even Disneyland approach which, although commercially successful, demeans the heritage values intrinsic in the buildings (Vergo 1991). At the other extreme it may be simply a matter of ensuring that a simple edifice continues to survive and be seen by the independent traveller who journeys to see it; indeed, its value may lie in its remote and unspoiled state.

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Ireland 's Skellig Michael is a precipitous island with monastic settlements dating from the sixth century. A maximum of



*Fig. 1*  
Wheelchair at  
Little Moreton  
Hall, a UK  
National Trust  
building

250 visitors per day are permitted to make the 12km boat journey but the site has very few facilities or safety features (*Fig. 2*).

In more sophisticated heritage sites, provision should be made for a larger and more diverse range of visitors. This in itself presents potential problems, as tourist buses arrive to disgorge their passengers, who will expect cultural satisfaction and also need facilities for their comfort – parking, toilets and refreshment. A satisfactory visitor experience may be seen as a combination of the attractive and exotic tempered with familiar aspects of convenience, accessibility and safety (Harrison 1998). The chosen form of presentation of the site and its constituent parts will influence the way that conservation of the fabric is actually carried out.

All buildings have limited lives, varying according to the materials and techniques used in construction, effects of climate, how it has been used or abused, and the degree of maintenance given. Conservation seeks not only to stem inevitable deterioration but also to enhance intrinsic qualities and to allow access by people who would, in the past, never have been able to



*Fig. 2*  
UNESCO World  
Heritage site,  
Skellig Michael,  
W Ireland has  
ancient monastic  
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visitors per day  
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features.

experience such places. Modern conservation agrees that intervention may go beyond structural repair, damp-proofing or the preservation of old timbers. Interiors may require temperature and humidity control to preserve vulnerable materials. Fireproofing, security, gates, fences and more sophisticated systems of motion detectors and alarms will be needed to safeguard valuable assets. As far as possible, these must present the minimum degree of visual intrusion whilst remaining consistent with the integrity of the original.

Allowing or encouraging visitors to the site presents more challenges. The notion of 'visitability' implies new interventions to make the experience not only possible, but also rewarding, for the widest range of interests and abilities. Many buildings were designed to exclude, for reasons of defence or reflecting the hierarchy of the occupants, such as the clergy or aristocracy. Flights of steps often indicate the grandeur and status of a building. Historically, health and safety rules did not apply, but nowadays we expect to access places that would have been unthinkable in other times. The concept of Universal Design has spread around the world, causing people to think more carefully about the built environment, to provide independent access for a wider range of people – not just those with disabilities but also elderly people, expectant mothers and small children in buggies (Preiser 2001). But even the term 'disabled' encompasses a vast range of needs, physical, sensory and cognitive. In the design of new projects this can generally be accomplished, but is in existing buildings more difficult to achieve – particularly when these have sensitive visual significance. Rather than applying 'broad-brush' Universal Design principles, it may be better to identify ways in which particular aspects of access and communication can be facilitated for particular ability sets.

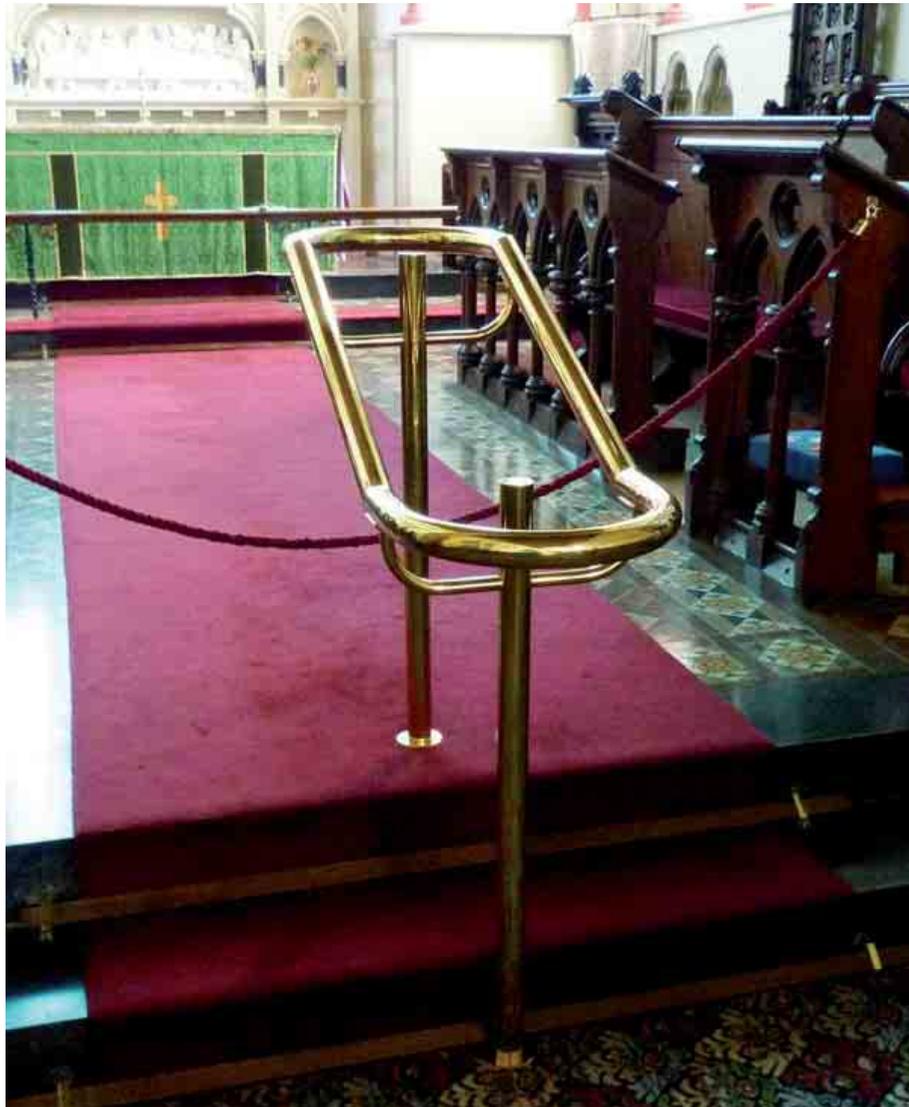
As well as people with a disability, many visitors will be aged 60 or over, and their comfort, safety and dignity should be recognised in planning the experience. Although there is plenty of practical information on making built environments accessible, it usually refers to individual elements and details, rarely to connected systems. But to allow unencumbered access, intelligent solutions are needed to create a complete and seamless pattern of routes, wayfinding and information. Legislation and guidelines on access exist in many countries, but mainly concentrate on removing barriers for the most noticeable group of users - wheelchair users. While people in wheelchairs need particular consideration in physical access and amenities, often in the provision of generous ramps and wider doorways, other form of disability must also be accommodated. For many ambulant people who are not necessarily regarded as disabled, ramps can be disconcerting, especially where surfaces could be slippery. Steps with a gentle 'going' and adequate handrails may be preferable to ramps. Items such as handrails or ramps should be discreetly

sited and constructed in ways that do not permanently damage the fabric; putting a handrail in the centre of a wider staircase ensures that the walls remain intact – and also has the advantage that hemiplegic users who can only use one arm can have a choice both ascending and descending. At Ferns Cathedral in Wexford, Ireland, a new central handrail ensures worshippers' safety and looks appropriate to the setting (*Fig. 3*).

Heritage sites may range from basic open-air sites such as megaliths, to carefully designed guided tours through palaces restored to their original splendour. Whatever the degree of sophistication, however, an imaginative approach is needed, sensitive to the limitations of potential visitors and to the particular qualities of the site that make it worth conserving and visiting. Simple replanning of routes might allow better access for physically disabled visitors, even if this may at first seem to imply entering by the 'back door'. For instance, the visitor experience of a country mansion could be presented from the point of view of the servants, rather than the aristocrats. Entry via the kitchen hall would allow for more dramatic effect, by withholding the grander and more exotic interiors for later in the visit. If all visitors were routed in this way, rather than just special needs users, the insertion of an access lift or ramp might be possible in the less aesthetically significant parts of the building, as at Muckross House in Killarney, Ireland (*Fig. 4*).

Even where users with physical impairment can be accommodated, it may be more difficult to cater to those with sensory or cognitive limitations. Legislation may require elements for access, safety and wayfinding, but creating a strategy for a conserved building or environment which is also enjoyable and instructive is harder to achieve. While it may not be always practicable to allow everyone to go everywhere with the same degree of access, people with vision impairment should expect their visit to be as satisfying as that of anyone else. Most people's experience of buildings will be primarily visual – distant views, appreciation of space, architectural detail, collections and furnishings, but for others, compensatory experiences allowing for limitations of mobility, sight or hearing can be achieved.

Writings on experiential architecture by acknowledged theorists and designers (Palissmaa 1996) describe the value of a host of non-visual experiences, but are limited in citing useful detailed exemplars or techniques for reproducing these in either new buildings or restoration works. Whilst the visual experience of a place may often be backed up by other sensory elements such as sound or smell, for sight-impaired people it is nonetheless possible to identify and emphasise any special non-visual features that the site offers. This depends on anticipating what people expect to see, what is to be seen and how the visit can be made more meaningful by explaining important facts on each site's

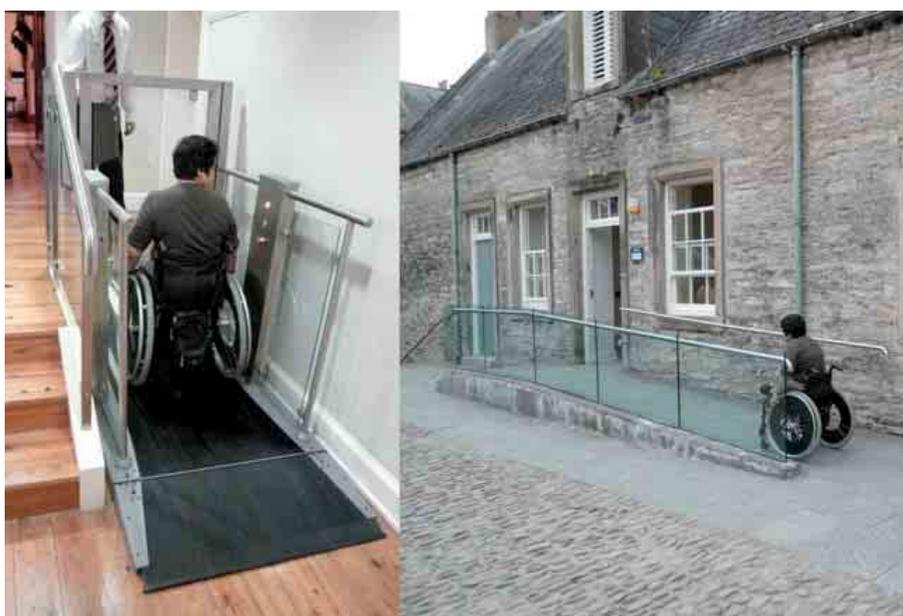


*Fig. 3*  
A handrail in the centre of a stair at Ferns Cathedral, Ireland, does not damage the fabric of the building

unique features – with various approaches for different interest and ability groups. For those visitors who cannot see, things that can be experienced with other senses should be given prominence. Some heritage sites may lend themselves more than others to providing such experiences. Acoustic qualities of many interiors are particularly unique and combine with other sensory factors such as smell, air-movement or temperature to give a particular fingerprint to a place. Sometimes these are well known and enjoyed by everyone; the ‘Whispering Gallery’ in London’s St Paul’s Cathedral, for example, has a more compact counterpart at Clonmacnoise in County Offaly, Ireland, where an arch allows a whisper from one side to be heard at the other (*Fig. 5*).

As well as echo-like acoustic character, sounds of water also add to any experience in different ways. Gardens of country houses planted with traditional scented plants and other sensory features may be given prominence. One organisation that has developed imaginative and useful projects is the UK-based charity, the Dog Rose Trust, whose work on techniques to achieve greater communication to sensory-impaired people includes creating audio guides to heritage sites and making tactile maps and models. Their publication 'Another Eyesight: Multi-sensory design in context' is an invaluable compendium of practical approaches to tactile and audio initiatives for the blind (Ionides 2005).

While the most common factor preventing disabled people from visiting places is a lack of physical accessibility, Lars Stenborg of the Sensory Trust is quoted as saying that the second reason is a lack of information (Ionides). Simply to know, both before and during the visit, what is available, what is worth seeing, how accessible and what supporting facilities exist, is invaluable for any disabled visitor. Putting the right information across in the right way becomes a key element in any strategic decisions on the layout of the site and its facilities. Visitors should be able to ascertain how accessible a site is before planning their visit; the UK National Trust provides such advance information through its publications (National Trust 2009). Once on site, orientation centres at the point of entry, then introduces visitors generally to the place and its history; thereafter, information boards, strategically located at specific points of the visitors' route, should be accessible to people of different stature, vision or



*Fig. 4*  
Ramps or lifts  
can be effectively  
sited in less  
architecturally  
sensitive parts of  
the buildings

ability (Fig. 6).

Getting the balance between too little and too much information needs care – not least because signage and display can be visually obtrusive, detracting from the qualities that a particular place may have. Whilst for people with low vision, large print signage is very useful, this inevitably takes up much of the visual field. Similarly, colour contrast is an important part of defining accessible routes or nosings on stairs for sight-impaired people, but may not be aesthetically acceptable in conservation settings.

Although Braille is still considered to be the communication medium for blind people, only a minority of those registered as blind read the dot-patterns. Many of those registered 'blind' have some residual vision, with less than 10 per cent being actually without any visual perception. But most sight-impaired people can understand tactile maps or diagrams. These may be of vacuum-formed plastic sheet, of microcapsule paper, the surface of which swells where printed, or of fabrics screen-printed with resins to provide tactile surfaces that can be 'read' by the fingertips (Tiresias 2009). Thus visitors can orientate themselves and be able to anticipate what the site has to offer, as well as providing portable graphic information about the structures, spaces or the artefacts contained in them. As well as such low-relief techniques, fixed three-dimensional models can be made of durable materials such as cast bronze or ceramic material. These provide a realistic, scale representation



*Fig. 5*  
Accessible signage may be a problem for some users

of the buildings' exterior forms, though interiors are obviously more difficult to describe. Scale is crucial, as the model must be capable of being reached by the hands of those reading it, and yet portray sufficient detail to inform the visitor. One major limitation is the fact that such models need to use text to name the various solids that the visitor is feeling, probably with two hands. Designers of any such model should seek the experience of specialists in the field, such as the Dog Rose Trust or Sensory Trust (*Fig. 7*).

Tactile exhibits are not new and often provide additional information for people. At Tokyo's Edo Museum low-relief reproductions of Japanese prints and other exhibits are located at a strategic point. Interestingly, many visitors who are sighted also enjoy experiencing the relief pictures with eyes closed. The famous Ryoanji Garden in Kyoto, with its stones set in raked gravel, has a small tactile model to show the whole layout – invaluable, as the stones are cryptically placed so that one cannot see all of them at any one point from ground level (*Fig. 8*).

But any such model has a fundamental limitation: someone must be on hand to explain, or else Braille information needs to be placed where it can be easily accessed – even assuming the person can understand it. But by using embedded sensors, in the same way that the track pad on a laptop responds to fingertips, it is now possible to create a 'speaking' model, which would overcome this communication problem. A network of wireless sensors detect



*Fig. 6*  
The unusual acoustics of the Whispering Arch at Clonmacnoise Abbey in Ireland allow one person to hear a whisper from another person on the other side.

what the visitor is touching and a processor activates a recorded commentary, which is transmitted to the user's headset. This could be followed by instructions to move the hand in a particular direction to experience the next significant part (Abowd 2002). Although not applied in the cast alloy model at Sanchichaiprakarn Fort in Bangkok, such technology could increase user-friendliness by giving key information (Fig. 9).

The use of headsets is now commonplace in many heritage sites and museums, using a hidden induction loop system, similar to that used for people with hearing aids, giving a general commentary as visitors progress from room to room. This has the advantage of reducing the need for visually intrusive information signage, but it is only activated at particular locations and is unselective in whom it addresses. A more advanced form of technology, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) allows the headset itself to be programmed to the individual's specific needs before being worn. Staff can easily input a person's requirements, such as a foreign language or the degree of visual or physical limitation and this will be recognised by sensors embedded invisibly in the fabric at various locations as the visitor progresses through the place. Appropriate information on exhibits or spaces will then be relayed through the headset. In addition, this technology can also accurately pinpoint the user and their location and then provide audio instructions to help them navigate from place to place, as well as warning of imminent hazards.

For many people with low vision, lighting is especially important, not just for navigating in safety but also for seeing the spaces and exhibits in darkened interiors. Using the embedded sensor technology, networked to a bank of recorded data, it is possible to literally 'highlight' key architectural features or exhibits for these visitors by temporarily increasing lighting levels. The same RFID information with proximity sensors could be used to increase lighting

*Fig. 7*  
Tactile relief exhibits at Tokyo Edo Museum can be experienced by everyone, regardless of ability..



levels temporarily when a visitor approaches a visually confusing place or hazard such as unlit steps. Work by the NEMBES Group at the Cork Institute of Technology (NEMBES 2009) is currently exploring the technology of networked embedded sensors to realise their potential in such applications. Naturally, as well as providing the hardware and software for this technology to become a reality, the recorded information to be transmitted would need to be expertly designed to respond to both the individual and to the situation.

## Conclusion

It is axiomatic that built environments should be as accessible and user-friendly to the widest range of users in all existing buildings, and heritage sites are no exception. But access features are not easily concealed where the architectural quality is sensitive to alien features. The scope of strategic planning of the visitor experience can be extended by the use of innovative



*Fig. 8*  
The iconic Ryoanji Garden in Kyoto Japan features a tactile model for blind visitors

technological solutions, including assistive devices programmed to an individual's particular needs. Embedded sensors have the advantage that they can be invisible, and still be useful to activate tactile and audio information for those who need it, without impinging on the building's aesthetic qualities. What is appealing about tactile and audio information in heritage sites is that, whilst increasing user-friendliness for people with sight impairment, their use reduces the need for obtrusive large-scale graphics whilst delivering more focused and personalized information.

Deciding on the total experience will affect the way in which conservation is carried out. Priorities to safeguard the fabric of the old building must be supported by the discreet intervention of non-original elements, requiring informed decision-making and a strategy consistent with the *genius loci*. The range of elements and degree of sophistication to facilitate visitor access and amenity will vary in each case, but in order to design successfully for people with limited abilities, specialist advice from pan-disability groups is necessary.

*Fig. 9*  
A cast alloy tactile model helps visitors to understand the Shichaiprakarn Fort and Park in Bangkok



The range of appropriate creative applications is unique to every conservation site, but when properly planned should allow everyone, no matter what their abilities or limitations, to enjoy the full aesthetic experience of their building heritage.

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# Imagining a vacation / a workshop in Kilkenny

Wolfgang Jung

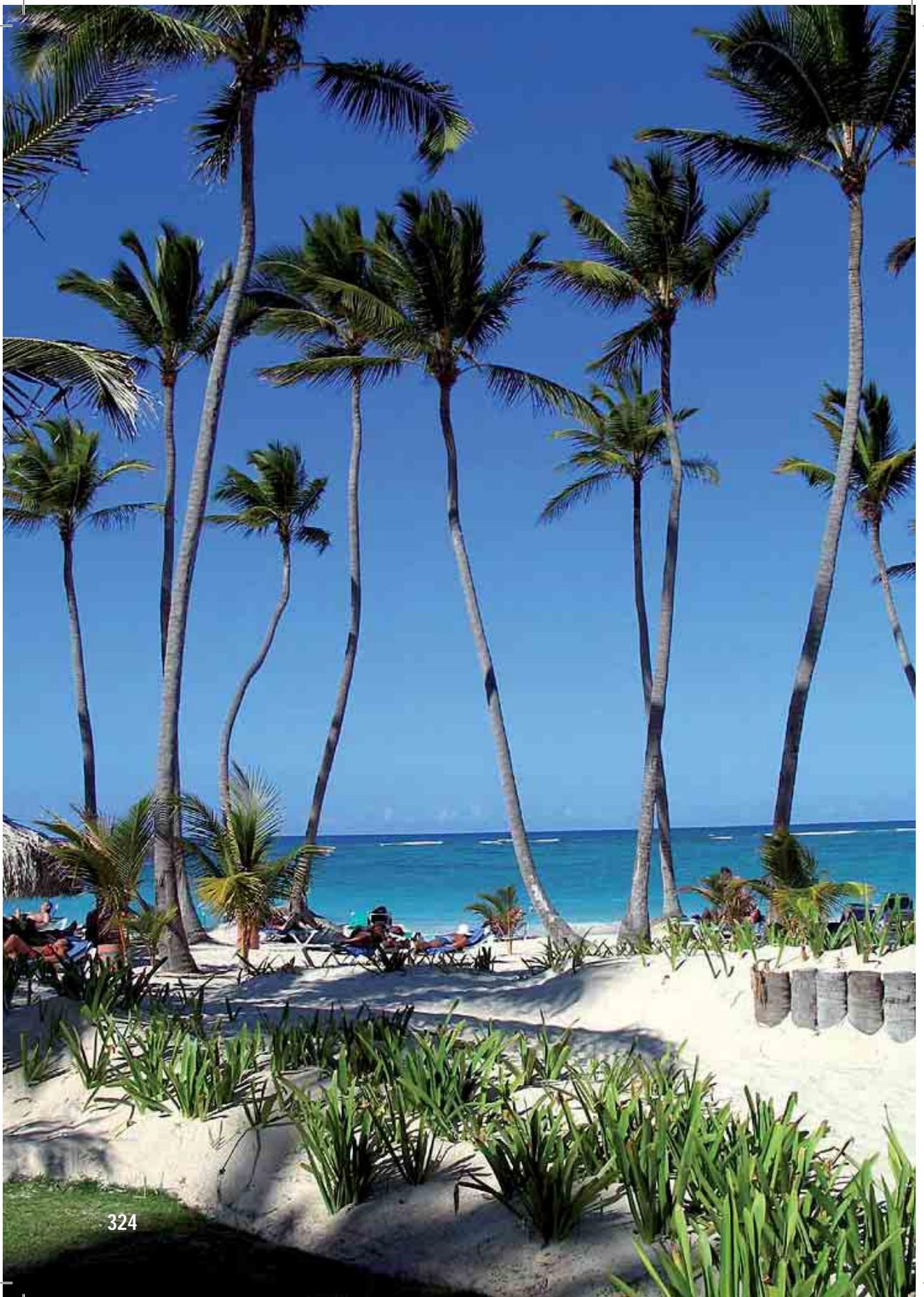
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The EAAE Thematic Network on Conservation meeting in September 2009 in Kilkenny, Ireland, was held under the title of Conservation/Transformation. We, the participants, were asked, „through the medium of real sites, to reflect on some key issues that impact on conservation/restoration practice and theory and on how these may be explored in teaching“<sup>1</sup>. To have had the chance to do so not in the usual format of a conference but in the rather unusual format of a workshop, introduced in the programme as an experiment, was a double challenge to the participants. It requested us, to refer our contributions as different as they were in their interests and approaches specifically to the chosen sites, and it asked us, mostly teachers, to work (again) as students. This choice resulted to be a very constructive one and much welcomed by all of us - certainly, first of all, because the workshop had been developed with so much commitment, prepared so well and coordinated so enthusiastically. As the time given to the workshop allowed us to reflect primarily if not exclusively on key issues and their impact on conservation/restoration, I would like in my post-seminar-paper to reflect on the second request of the programme, which is, on how these impacts may be explored in teaching.

I would like to imagine a workshop for students, in this case „real“ students, with the intention to work on the possible relations between conservation and transformation. As my focuss is primarily on the structure of the workshop itself, I do not touch here in more detail upon themes such as which past, after earlier transformations, is the past to conserve. At the same time I shall discuss the requests for transformations and the interests behind them only in a more general form. I would like in this post-seminar-paper to take the chance to introduce my first idea to you, looking very much forward to your comments<sup>2</sup>. I would like to start my considerations with a working hypothesis.

## Learning from St. Kitts

St. Kitts is a charming island and a serene and slow-paced retreat in the Caribbean. Please imagine a former sugar plantation turned into a fascinating retreat (*Fig. 1*): the main building with its wooden porch faces a white beach, directly in front of the house, with palm trees framing the seaside; this retreat







*Fig. 3*  
L'ateneo delle  
belle arti,  
Domenico Piola

and reinforced. Equally a workshop can not be a three month term condensed into around two weeks, as there is hardly the time and distance to reflect upon, to ponder and revise the work in progress (*Fig. 2*). Second, the time schedule of workshops should be structured around phases like the vacations introduced earlier, in order to allow all participants to enter a workshop setting totally different from the daily routines, to get accustomed to this setting and to turn it into a productive situation, both in the groups and for the work (*Fig. 3*). A good time frame needs to include also breaks from the workshop and to define the right moment to conclude the experience, before all start longing – as in vacations – for something new and different. Last but not least, the tasks formulated in a workshop should be focussed and allow for them to be responded to in the time given. The task should stimulate curiosity (*Fig. 4*). It even could provoke an unfamiliar stance, in our case, eventually even one which is not immediately recognizable as being in defence of the monumental context. But challenges can certainly enrich workshops, just as they can enrich vacations, can they not? I am convinced that they can equally, without wanting, of course, to take the listed analogies too far. In the following few pages I would like to elaborate on my view.

The question at this point is: how could the scenario of a student workshop, as just delineated in rough lines, be transferred to Kilkenny?

"Invent your own work: nobody else can do it for you... Make use of our magic box. It's a temporary toy, **laboratory**, street university, science playground, promenade: where you can eat, drink, talk, **think**, listen, lounge, **argue**, act, sing, rest, gossip, laugh, **grumble**, watch, spy, eavesdrop, **build**, **destroy**, compose, shout, dance ..."

— Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, ca 1964

Fig. 4

\_Invent your own work\_ ..... Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, ca 1964

### Two workshop-scenarios

In response to this last question I would like to discuss the third analogy first, and the workshop's principal intention and task. One intention could be to analyze in all detail the various elements determining the conservation/transformation in order to formulate than a first and more general strategy of intervention. In this case the essential task would be to define, in the time at one's disposal and on the basis of the detailed analysis, what is more and what is less important in the specific case under examination. The two weeks suggested earlier as an adequate time for a workshop seems to me an acceptable time to respond to this task in a more than in superficial form only. However, when planing a workshop, as how provocative a challenge would you, and your students, grade this intention and task on a scale from one to ten (in vacation and for a workshop alike)?

If, however, the workshop's intention and task would be instead to elaborate directly proposals for intervention? In this case the preliminary phase of analysis, and the following step of understanding the essential criteria in order to formulate a general strategy of intervention, all have to be greatly abbreviated to leave sufficient time to focuss on this different task. How can this preliminary phase be abbreviated in a form productive for the workshop-participants? I would like to suggest here replacing the many initial sets of

information, which provide a first overview, by directly confronting the diverse strategies formulated by the various players involved in our study case - no information to be pondered, but positions to be taken. These positions can be, or better should be, in opposition with each other. In this workshop-scenario participants are requested to adopt one of these positions. The idea is, if there is no time to do a thorough analysis, investigating the essential facts as much as the fundamental parameters so as to develop a strategy of intervention, then these specific strategies (more than the information) have to be introduced. The task in this case is to develop these strategies further, as diverse as these might be, in the attempt to understand the positive or negative impact these strategies can have on the monuments to be protected.

### **Walking along Main Street, Kilkenny**

This seems to me an more adequate approach also as in Kilkenny some impressions we collected and the information we were introduced to when walking the first day along Main Street, were contradicted, in part at least, by other more detailed information and intentions discussed the second day, when we were introduced to, among others, the political and economical situation today, and to the plans for the future development of the city centre, of the city's periphery and of the region. Three instances might be listed here. Rothe House can serve as a first instance. Close to a group of anonymous houses which show a few signs of neglect, this monument seems somewhat overly dressed up. At the same time the interior of Rothe House oscilates between a charming messiness and a musealisation which seems to have been uncertain in its intentions (*Fig. 5a*). The many restorations and transformations that Rothe-House has experienced over the past 100 years or so were primarily driven by the committment of the people involved. They also seem to disturb the visitors, primarily tourists, little if at all (*Fig. 5b*). They certainly, however, do not correspond to a monument protection way of thinking. Now, a revision of

*Fig. 5a*  
Extracts from  
the library of the  
archeological  
society of  
Kilkenny, on  
display in the  
Rothe House



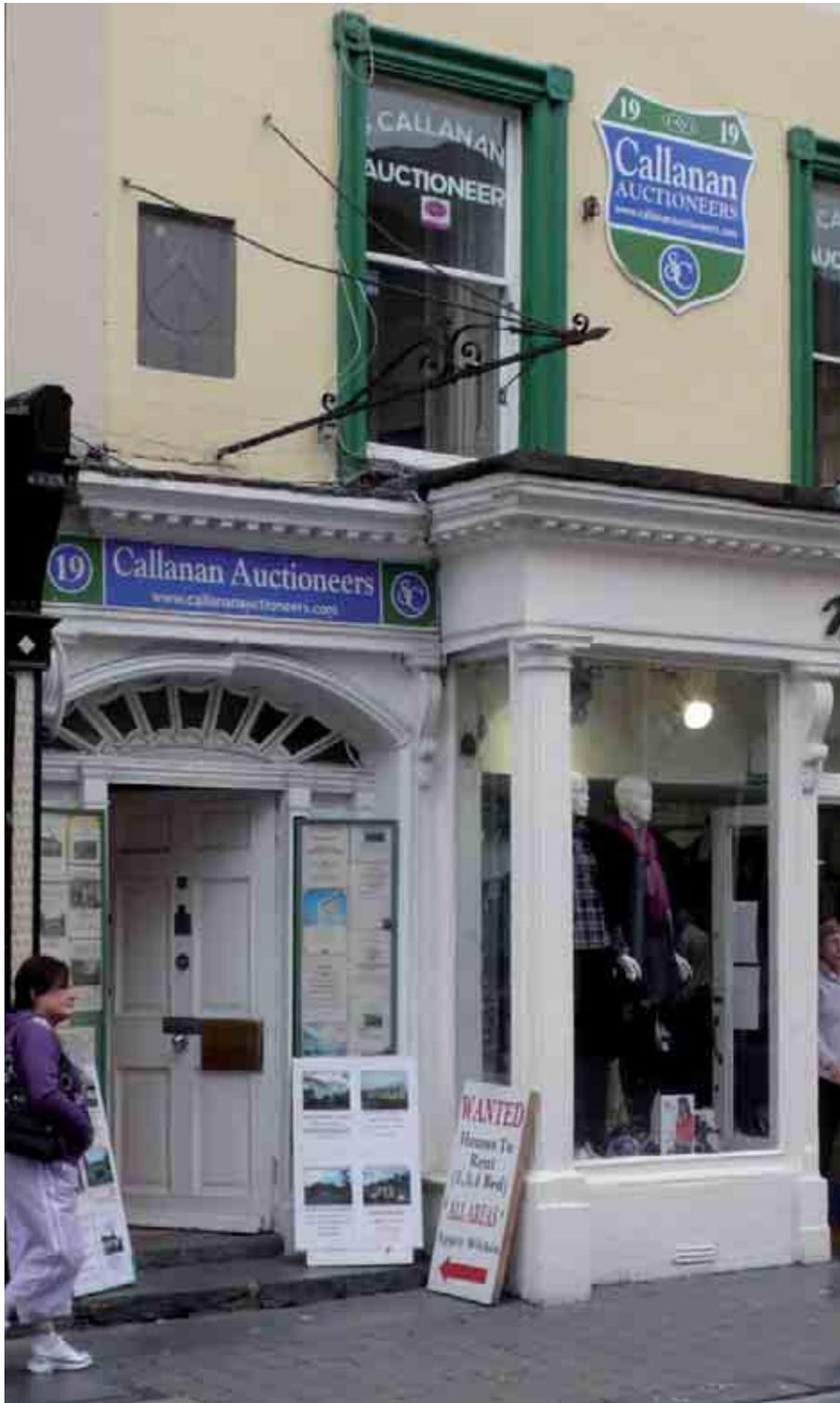
*Fig. 5b*  
The Rothe  
House in the  
Rothe House  
souvenir shop



the museum's many restorations seems to be considered by the authorities in monument protection, but at the same time we heard the position formulated by a representative of the same institution, that „heritage is not belonging to the experts but to the people“.

A second example: Leaving Rothe-House and continuing the walk southwards along High Street one encounters more and more shops with windows all decorated in houses all coloured. Here many people were standing in groups between pieces of street furniture and huge vases of geraniums. But these people seemed to appreciate Main Street, its scale and its character, although traffic is in this part more and more dominant (*Fig. 6*). However, we were informed, that the city is intended to grow by about a third (from about 23.000 to about 30.000 inhabitants). Close to the Main Street the area of the brewery could turn into housing, but would the city be able in its current state to take the additional traffic, provide additional space to work as much as more recreational areas? Or should Main Street provide only more shopping (and parking) since many people, as we heard, prefer to live in the periphery and in the countryside?

Last here but not least, when asking what is the city's identity, or more percisely which identity has the city formulated, the response was, that Kilkenny would claim to be a quite intact medieval city. However, to whom is this addressed? To the people of the place? Or to the people considering to move to Kilkenny? Or to the tourists on their way from St. Canice's in the North to Kilkenny castle towering the southern hillside, and to the buses parking beyond, and for whom did the city of Kilkenny at the time build a wide ramp to arrive at the castle, all reserved for pedestrians, with a kiosk, cafes, and shops to its sides (*Fig. 7*)? However, the moment that all these groups are taken to represent Kilkenny's principal economical sources, it seems of lesser importance to whom this claim is addressed, but rather which requests for transformation of the built heritage do these groups formulate (*Fig. 8*)?



*Fig. 6*  
Wanted - houses  
to rent, as seen  
on main street,  
Kilkenny

## Competing interests, positions, and strategies as a challenge

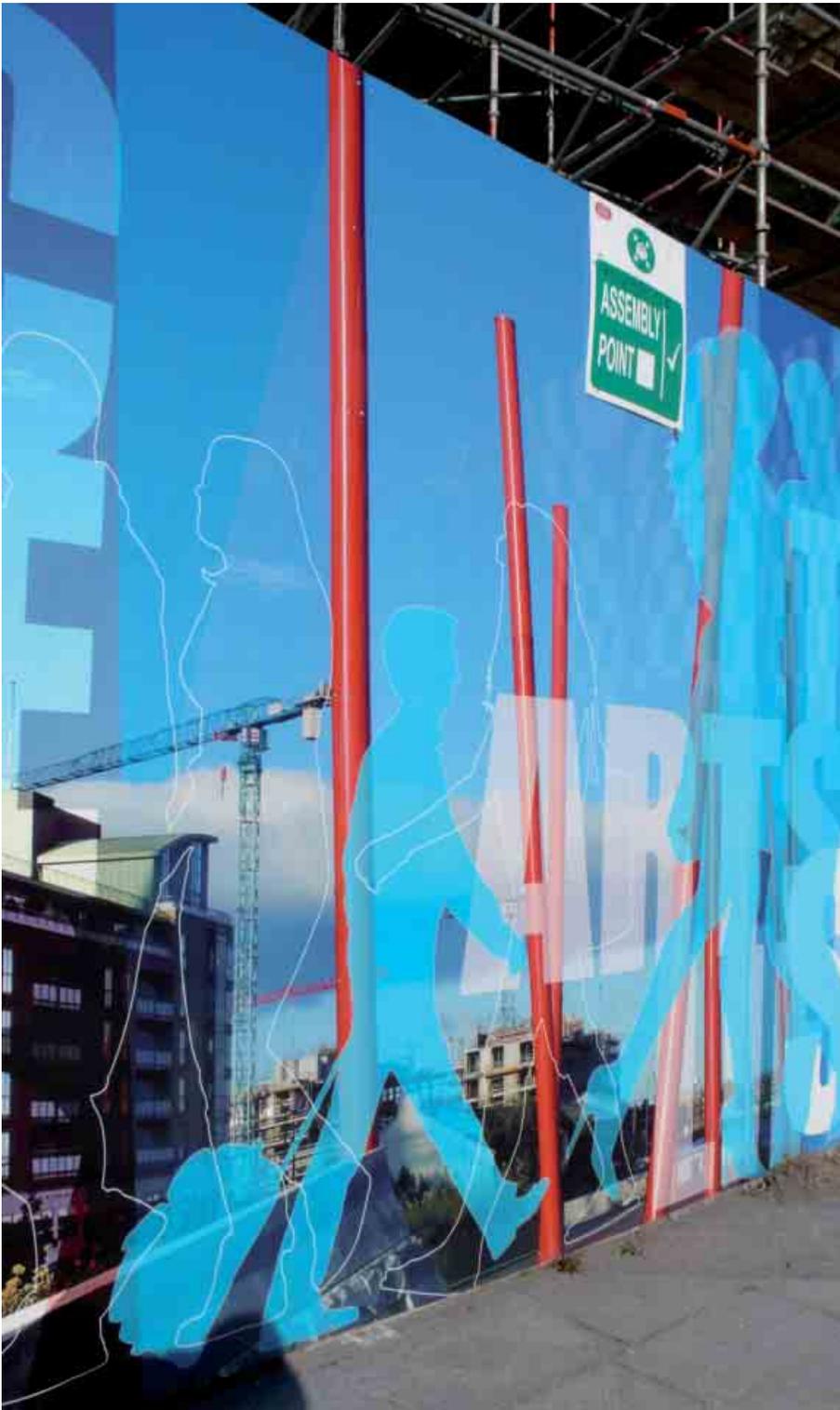
Considering the analogy vacation-workshop, introduced in the beginning, and further the two workshop-scenarios (the first aiming for a strategy of intervention, and the second for the formulation of projects), and last the specific situation in Kilkenny just delineated here in very rough lines, the question is, which workshop format would be able to respond to all these aspects?

One format could be the following. The participating students are as many as we have been in the EAAE-meeting in Kilkenny, coming from as many different cultures, and fields of studies, bringing in the most different expertises, many-faceted commitments, and last but not least speaking as many different languages. These students form as many groups as there are interests, different positions and strategies currently involved in the transformation of Kilkenny. These groups are asked to become fervent defenders of one of these various interests, positions and strategies. The same time, they are asked not to take into consideration at all the other interests, positions and strategies. The task in this first phase is to translate the interests, positions and strategies, they have chosen, into projects. No coordination is requested, and even less to match the interests of the monument protection, at least not in this first phase of the workshop.

Among the many competing interests, positions and strategies to find in Kilkenny I would like to name here only three, proposing the following scenarios. In scenario one the city manager is interested in a rise of the population by a third, seeking to raise the number of appartments, of offices, and of shops as well by a third ... all along Main Street. His only condition is to keep the existing. Here a sub-group could turn the brewery, which is located in walking



*Fig. 7*  
The future  
esplanade  
leading to  
Kilkenny castle



*Fig. 8*  
Wanted -  
tourism, as seen  
in the Dublin  
Docklands

distance, into a shopping mall. In scenario two the real estate developers are asking for central areas to tear down the existing, but not „so important“ structures to propose new constructions, eventually labelled energy-efficient. In this scenario a sub-group could become advocats formulating sufficient areas for recreation in the nature in close vicinity to the river and to the city centre. Whereas in scenario three, the local economy would like to limit the competition of shops, at the same time raising the number of customers and especially of tourists, by valorising more „efficiently“ the historic monuments. A sub-group could turn into an advertising company, promoting Kilkenny as a city of strong historic identity.

There are more interests, positions and strategies to consider. At least the last two positions and interests just listed are, of course, primarily if not exclusively driven by considerations of economic efficiency and profit. Private owners can not proceed differently, can they? (Fig. 9) The other position is the public body, however, and more precisely the heritage board. Its task is to be the advocate of all listed buildings and sites, which is our cultural heritage, is it not? (Fig. 10) In this case, should the heritage board not request to develop proposals both for the conservation and for the additions by taking as the principal reference the existing complexes and their sites, and not the return rates? More precisely, should the heritage board not ask the parties involved to find primarily convincing responses to basically two questions: First, which are the re-uses most adequate for the monuments and their sites and which are the best strategies to conserve the architectural monuments as well as the monumental sites? Second, what is the form, the scale and the allocation of the additions, most suitable for Kilkenny, and coherent with its design, and which could be the uses for the planned additions capable to define a kind of surplus? Here one among the many subgroups could investigate also the possibilities and limits of the monument protection given by Irish laws; others could elaborate themes such as design, access, sustainability, and communication.

### **At the end of the first half of the workshop**

As indicated earlier, the workshop's hypothesis, at least for its first half, is that antagonism can be most helpful to focus better one's attention and energies. Of course, in this phase there should be no attempts to reconcile the diverging positions just delineated in some form - on the contrary. A workshop such as ours with so many groups, each of about 4 to 5 students coming from different cultures and fields of studies, bringing in different expertise, a many-faceted commitment, and last but not least speaking different languages, is at its best, I am convinced, the more the views and standpoints expressed are of



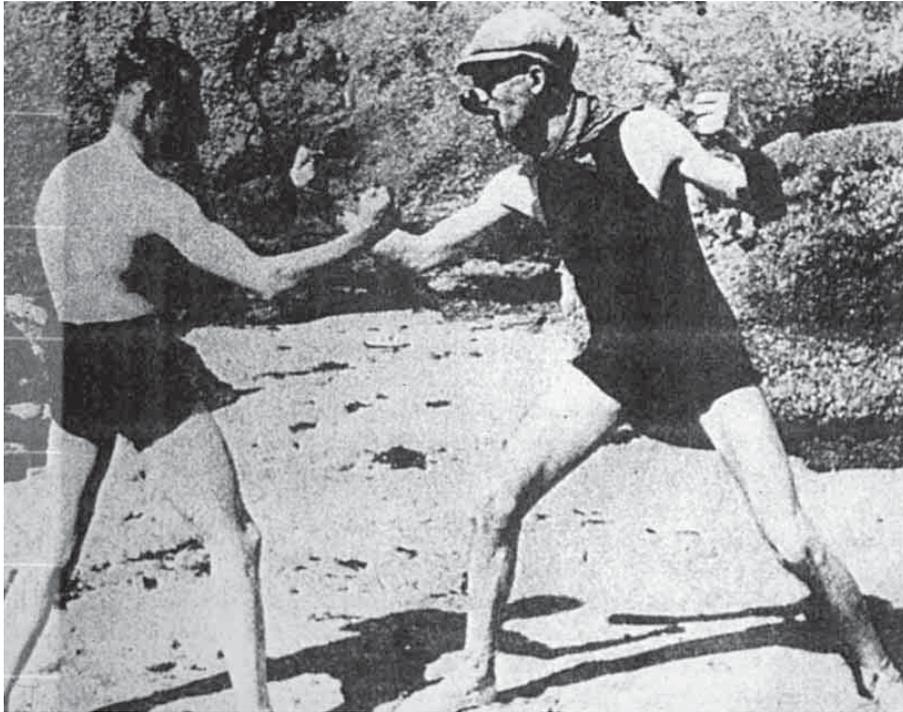
*Fig. 9*  
The banker,  
merchant,  
and real estate owner  
Jakob Figger in  
his office

a wide variety. To be partial is, in this phase, accepted, if it is well argued; also to be very focussed on just a single problem is, as long as the solutions proposed are intended to serve pars pro toto. Ideas have to be tested by drawing. Alternative views are required to be formulated again by drawing. And it is just fine to bring ideas and contributions forward in a provocative form, constructively provocative, to make a point effectively.

At the end of the first half of the workshop, finally the opposing positions and interests, are presented in a common forum (*Fig. 11*). It is asked to give particular emphasis in these presentations to which requests the opposing positions



*Fig. 10*  
San Francesco  
d'Assisi saving  
the christian  
church (in  
the dream of  
Innocenz III),  
Giotto



*Fig. 11*  
Pierre and  
Charles Edouard  
Jeanneret at the  
beach

have, and where these requests interfere with the interests of other groups. That these interests will clash is not only inevitable, it is desired. At this point all participants are asked to evaluate the arguments brought forward, to consider their reciprocal relations and importances and to elaborate which of the various interests can be combined and which ones will always be in opposition with the interests of the monuments.

The intention is not only to stimulate all participants ~~in-vacation~~ / of the workshop but also to stimulate all players involved, in our case in particular the owners, the heritage board and the architect, to consider and reconsider eventually their first decisions.

### **... and what is the programme in the second half of the vacation / of the workshop?**

Two were our primary intentions. In the first half, to understand the object under risk, to evaluate its strengthes and weaknesses, and to discuss the adequate approach(es). At this point ~~the-vacation~~ / the workshop has left its ivory tower, reaching reality. It is the moment to turn to the workshops second half and its intentions. This is to formulate with the students proposals to protect the heritage and to conserve the monuments, and to make in this form conservation and transformation, continuity and change possible.

## **A conclusion**

In conclusion, I have to apologize to have focussed in the last about 3000 words exclusively on the first workshop's half. But I had no time, to write a brief text, to include also the second half<sup>3</sup>. At this point it remains my task, in some future occasion, to pose the question to which extent also the workshop's second half could be as productive as a vacation in the serene and slow-paced *St. Kitts / Kilkenny*.

## *Notes*

<sup>1</sup>To cite here the programme of the meeting.

<sup>2</sup>I would like here to share here with you my ideas, after having in the last decade or so elaborated, organized and coordinated 10 international workshops with all together around 400 students from 16 different european universities. These workshops were focussed on similar topics, but were done in very different locations and contexts: we reworked historic contexts in Rome from the 20thC and in Voltera from Antiquity, we reworked factories in Milan, on the Atlantic Ocean close to Cadiz, and in Aveiro / Porto, and we reworked more recently the Modern Movement in Copenhagen, in Pärnu / Tallinn, and in Stockholm. For a more detailed information please see our websites [www.reworking-the-factory.org](http://www.reworking-the-factory.org) and [www.reworking-the-modern-movement.org](http://www.reworking-the-modern-movement.org). For contacting us, please see the same websites.

<sup>3</sup>Here my thanks go to Loughlin Kealy not only for the seminar, organized and coordinated with Stefano Musso with so much committment, but also for this reference.



# Relict lines, a strategic model for the opening up of cultural Heritage.

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## Introduction

The American Heritage Dictionary defines transformation as ‘a marked change, as in appearance or character, usually for the better’ (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). From this definition it is clear that a transformation refers to a reinterpretation, and this is not limited to buildings but is applicable for spaces like landscapes and relict lines as well.

A study has been done on the relationship between relict lines, cultural history and landscape by the Public Space Lab of the Artesis University College of Antwerp in order to create a vision, an opening-up concept and a communication strategy for this heritage.

Cultural heritage, as a symbol of regional identity and diversity, plays an important role in the quality and sustainability of our environment. A primary objective for managing heritage in a sustainable way is to communicate its significance and the need for preservation and conservation to visitors and to its host community. Opening up the heritage by line-relicts is a way of examining the tension between how to develop the landscape in accordance with the current heritage statement, and the development of a vision, which means communicating a ‘concept’ for this cultural heritage.

A specific and explicit vision on the opening-up of a heritage site is one that does not try to determine the past, but rather creates a reflective space, a meeting-place, by demanding a permanent dialogue between the visitor and the historical site or monument. Creating this reflective space is one of the basic objectives of ‘opening-up’, hence the implementation of culture perception and experience.

The ‘charter for open monuments’ established by the King Baudouin Foundation in 1998, states that ‘the opening-up of heritage requires that a perspective is developed which both maintains and updates its historical values. It builds on a contemporary reading of the historical value of the heritage and on the opportunities and impulses this heritage can provide today for new cultural and social developments’ (King Baudouin Foundation 1996: 165).

An interdisciplinary workshop brought together students from different domains such as art history, history, archaeology, architecture, engineering and urban planning in order to discuss their perspectives on the opening-up of heritage sites. This workshop was designed to reflect on heritage management and the need for regional cultural identity. The participants first of all considered all forms of collective conscience, which are colored at several levels by historical concepts and image-forming.

Cultural identity is related to physical or spatial quality and geographic diversity, in which the cultural landscape and the built environment are connected. Cultural identity contains both software and hardware. The software borrows its content from the process of social representation and significance, while the hardware or the objective form is structured and materialised in the topography of the landscape.

### **Philosophy and objectives of the workshop**

The goal of the project was threefold. Firstly, we wanted to investigate the relationship between landscape, heritage and opening-up interventions. Secondly, we felt the need to explore the experience of the landscape by confronting the natural and cultural context in relation to the opening-up of this heritage. As a final goal, the students were required to create a communication strategy in accordance with the cultural biography of Haspengouw, a regional landscape in Limburg, also called the fruit-belt of Belgium. In this beautiful heritage site of Haspengouw lies the opportunity to engage and define regional heritage within an existing framework, the Roman road and the fruit track. The Roman road that connects Cologne in Germany with Boulogne-sur Mer in France, better known as the 'via Belgica', is the most important military road of the countries of Northern Europe. This military road was not only important for the movement of the Roman legions, but also for their provisioning. The fruit track, the old railway between St. Truiden and Tongeren, built in 1878, is one of the first infrastructural elements for the industrial fruit cultivation of this region. This track is less complete than the Roman road, but its impact and the incision in the landscape is equally impressive.

Line-relicts have had a clear impact on the landscape and its history. Even if these infrastructures are no longer used, they can still have a spatial significance. These linear structures not only have a large planning strength, but thematic routes related to these existing historical line-relicts can upgrade the heritage values of the site in a national and international context. These line-relicts have a story that needs to be told. Only when using the right interpretation of the historical significances can they play an important role by creating new spatial developments today.

In opening up a heritage site, one needs to take into account the historical context (past, present and future), the socio-cultural situation and the spatial basis. The landscape, the physical layer of the remains, gives the site a meaning and a value. To study the landscape is to see it as an integrated system, a whole which is more than the sum of its parts. Studying landscapes demands a holistic approach. To give the cultural landscape a future-oriented perspective and to make it readable for a broad public, an expressive and coherent story must be told. Under the motto 'the future of an executed landscape', we want to create a surplus value for future regional developments by contemporary interpretations of the heritage and by opening up this cultural landscape by relict lines.

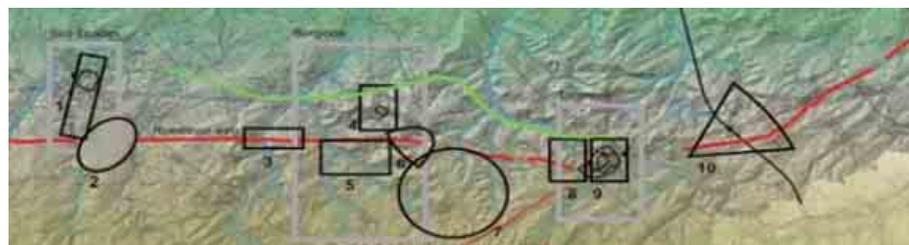
The study of the cultural biography of the landscape is a starting-point. Cultural biography means that we conceive the landscape as an entity that has evolved organically and as the carrier of historical, economic and social information. One might compare the landscape with a palimpsest that clarifies the cultural stratification of the site. The past significance lives on in the present meaning, and here and there manages to rise to the surface. This cultural stratification defines the particular specificity of the landscape and the self-esteem and dignity of its inhabitants. One's heritage is inherently linked, and therefore contributes, to the evolution of cultural biography. Heritage-related sites possess an intrinsic value for all people and form a basis for cultural diversity and social development.

Three assignments were launched: the first objective was to design links along the Roman road or the fruit track which will be the keys to enclose the different landscape rooms. Secondly, the aim was to develop a concept for a landscape room. These rooms are special entities that act as a specific cultural heritage area with a unique identity. The main goal of the third assignment was to create a new concept of opening-up, by connecting the Roman road and the fruit track and the mobility system of this area (Fig. 1).

### Educational methodology and strategy

A step-by-step approach was used as a guiding principle for systematic research. The application of a step-by-step method gives insight in the process of opening-up and provides a synoptic understanding of the site's history as

**Fig. 1**  
The Roman road (red line) and the fruit track (green line) (PCCE: Open call: the Roman road, 2007:40)



good basis for reflection.

The project was examined at three scale levels: the macro scale starts from the existing urban plans; the meso scale represents the regional level with the landscape rooms, and the micro scale is the spatial intervention in relation to the strategic projects. The different scale levels must be considered as being parallel, so that each scale will influence the other.

The most important factor in recognising the values and meanings of the rich history of the region and its heritage is the characteristic palimpsest on different levels, namely the historical, spatial and thematic levels. The information should not be presented as 'hard data' but must incorporate the emotion of human experience (Jensen 1999). Communicating the survey outcome and the vision by a set of postcards visualises the most important elements and also presents the experience. This will help the urban planners to empathise with the users. Postcards are an attractive medium for communication because they provoke inspirational responses.

#### *Step 1. Survey and inventory of relevant plans.*

Studying the site is the starting-point for the examination of the values of the natural and cultural heritage, which is essential for the opening-up strategy. The first step examines the inventory of relevant maps and plans concerning the area. This descriptive phase starts from the previous spatial conditions, and summarises the properties and characteristics of the site. This gives a clear view of the site under examination with insights in the physical and structural dimension as well as the visually sensitive dimension.

The contextual part of the study concerns the factors relating to the geographical settings, although in order to determine the values, the emphasis lies on identifying qualities. The geo-morphological layers, the topography and hydrology, the plant cover, the settlements, the exploitation, the routes and pathways and the historical evolution are mapped.

In this step the various historical layers are analysed with attention to the spatial and temporal links. This information is organised in a 'time-space' matrix wherein both the tangible and intangible aspects of the site are gathered.

In order to be able to collect the necessary data for the study of the changing patterns in this landscape, and in order to define the importance of territorial parameters in relation to the identity of the site, it is important to compile an inventory of relevant maps.

A variety of sources should be used when collecting and analysing information to provide varied and balanced perspectives for addressing the different problems of this heritage site and when recommending appropriate solutions. These contextual records are visualised by a postcard anno 2009 with a slogan that visualises the survey (*Fig. 2*).

### *Step 2. Contextual analysis*

In a second step the chosen area is analysed with respect to relevant layers, particularly geomorphology (landscape, water and plant cover), land use, movement patterns and cultural heritage, and this is done with reference to the host community, occupants and visitors. The main questions are: 'What are the most important qualities and values of the landscape and the historical environment, and what are the respective development potentials and capacities for change?' This requires thorough research of both the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the existing structure. Therefore a SWOT analysis is implemented. Together with the opportunities and threats,

*Fig. 2*  
Historical layers  
– masterplan  
Borgloon (PCCE:  
Open call: the  
Roman road,  
2007:38)



the SWOT analysis gives a clear view of 'the capacity for change' in relation to the vulnerability of the site, determining its development potential.

We can establish that a landscape consists of different layers by providing new images. By clarifying these layers and their matching image-language, the space becomes readable. It is important to recognise and to understand the language of the transformations, in order to see the patterns and to mark which elements belong to a corresponding layer and time. This also reveals the reason and the significance of these elements.

### *Step 3 Vision*

The results of the survey and analysis are converted into a vision and a concept, formulating the interventions and recommendations for the re-evaluation and the opening-up of the heritage site. The question is asked: 'which social and economical objectives must be realized in this phase?' The students need to examine how to insert and activate the site evaluations with the aim of promoting further development. These recommendations must be

associated with, and be relevant to, the objectives and then be translated into a goal-oriented plan.

The opening-up of cultural heritage cannot be developed as an exclusively touristic strategy, because this is in contradiction with the values of cultural heritage. Correspondingly, tourism cannot be considered as the exclusive user of heritage; cultural tourism is a co-user. The principal user must be the local inhabitant. A concept of co-usership looks for consensus by asking adaptations of all users. This imposes restrictions and takes into account the vulnerability and possibilities of the monument or site. This ensuing vision is expressed by a postcard showing the intended development twenty years later (*Fig. 3*).

#### *Step 4 Concepts*

The concept must deal with the current problems in order to obtain the desirable development by formulating the interventions and critical recommendations for the re-evaluation and the opening-up of the heritage site. A concept is a guiding principle for the investigation of a deeper cultural meaning. It gives an intellectual dimension and an additional value to the idea. This idea provides an aim, a form and tangibility. Since Plato stated that behind the world of things there is a world of ideas or concepts where the real value is located, the use of concepts is a well-known phenomenon.

#### *Step 5 Storyboard*

Which heritage stories do you want to communicate to the host community and to the visitors? How will we communicate them? These are the main questions for creating a significant proposal – a kind of storyboard – which is strategically important with regard to the present planning regulations. The observation of the spatial structure can improve both the implicit and explicit opening-up of the amelioration of the condition of the existing cultural



*Fig. 3*  
Postcard 2009

heritage. The storyboard will be used as a communication strategy to inform and educate the inhabitants and the public about the significance and values of the heritage to be developed.

In this task, storyboards are a valuable aid to the design. They provide a common visual language that people from different backgrounds can 'read' and understand (Corrie Van Der Lelie 2006). Working with storyboards supports visual thinking, which is vital to the creative process during the synthesis phase.

### *Case studies*

The case studies illustrate the positive role of linear relic-lines in the accessibility and the opening-up of cultural heritage.

These studies analyse and evaluate the heritage of the landscape room of Borgloon, which is famous for its syrup industry and is situated in the middle of Haspengouw, a region in the southeast of Flanders, Belgium. Borgloon is the only place where the Roman road and the fruit pathway are connected with each other. The search for a revitalisation strategy for Haspengouw means that we have to reinterpret the heritage and landscape together with the fruit cultivation tradition in such a way that we may fit them into contemporary values.

The opening-up of this heritage requires that we make its meaning accessible and its development possible, while steering the process in the right direction. A contemporary project is culturally and socially oriented and demands a multidisciplinary interaction with the heritage endowment, whereby mobility and economy play their respective roles in concert with tourism. Francoise Choay (1992) declares that it is necessary to deal with heritage in a contemporary way to secure the possibility and promise of being able to pass it on to the future.

The SWOT analysis of this site exposes three key issues. Firstly, the different identities of this landscape room are not communicated as a whole entity; secondly, the information and tourist routes are complex and confusing, and thirdly, the most important problem is that movement around the area is limited to transport by car.

## **Creating a concept for the landscape room of Borgloon by communicating the different identities of this landscape room as a whole entity**

It is clear that 'nature', 'fruit' and 'built heritage' are the major elements for the future development of this region. They are the authentic elements that give the region its particular identity and character. These three anchors will

brand this site and have to be developed in a sustainable way. The challenge for fruit cultivation lies in a renewed economic approach that reinterprets the relationship between production and processing. This will unlock the industrial heritage with its traditional production process. This tension field, capable of transforming a meaningful integration into a new social process, will result in a logical model that is able to maintain and sustain itself, and thereby safeguard its continuation for the future.

The syrup factory, the last remaining intact witness of the industrial fruit cultivation of this region, won the Flemish monument competition, a version of the BBC2 program 'restoration'. This factory, as a starting-point for the rediscovery of the site, can function as a centre for tourist information and fruit know-how as well as a museum (*Fig. 4*).

The landscape room of Borgloon, with its associated fruit cultivation tradition, has the opportunity to be a very important player in the sustainable development of this region. The structure of this settlement represents a journey through time and space. These different timeframes and styles must be connected with the structure of the region and the underlying landscape.

Making the area more readable by connecting information regarding the heritage and touristic routes

The answer to the question 'How can we make the area of Borgloon more readable, while maintaining the surprising effects that are the undirected result of the diffuse traffic system?' is given in two case studies. The first aspect is to generate more interest and curiosity by spreading more relevant information and therefore creating appreciation for the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage.

The first case study presents a kind of interactive GPS system, the 'mobilofoon' as the storyboard to communicate the heritage stories. Mobile (tele)phones together with location-sensitive devices are used to gather information while moving from one location to another. This system gives relevant information about the landscape room, the routes, the 'crossing points' as well as the heritage objects of interest. The 'mobilofoon' maps routes of action in accordance with the preferences of the visitors. This interactive GPS system is the perfect solution to link the different sites of the community: the Roman route, the fruit pathway and the city centre of Borgloon (*Fig. 5, 6*).

This strategy offers a structure which links separate locations with each other and stimulates the development of relations between location and stories with specific themes. Stories cannot be an obstruction for future developments; rather, they are a guiding principle which brings coherence in the tourist offering. The GPS technique lends itself extremely well to expressing story elements such as shared folklore which is inscribed in the collective memory



*Fig. 4*  
Syrup factory,  
Borgloon

of the inhabitants, myths, legends and fairy tales. The users' experience is built up by two elements, what the communicator provides and what the receiver brings to the interaction. The actual communication occurs when the two elements overlap. Knowledge about the users' experiences was gathered by



*Fig. 5*  
Postcard anno  
2009 – How  
can we make  
the area more  
readable?



*Fig. 6*  
Postcard anno  
2029 – The  
mobilofoon

interviews. The use of a 'mobilofoon' can generate more interest and curiosity by spreading more relevant information and therefore creating appreciation and support for the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage. Increasing the accessibility of the area in accordance with a new concept of opening-up by connecting the Roman road and the fruit track.

The cultural heritage must be easily accessible for the public. According to Wil Munster (2007), this asset is even more important than the intrinsic values of the cultural heritage itself, because when public access is easy, the cultural heritage sites will be more attractive.

Together with the improvement of communication and access, the public transport provision needs to be re-evaluated, not only with the intention of turning it into a viable link in the promotional chain of the region's great cultural heritage, but also in order to enhance the economic potential and benefits that are offered by the cultural treasures of the province.

Interviews with the inhabitants and visitors show that nowadays the Roman road and the historical fruit track are not well known. Even the employees of the tourist information offices don't know where these two relict-lines are situated, and which special heritage sites are connected with these roads. Access to transportation within the region becomes an essential part of 'good daily life'. Intra- and extra- rural and urban mobility as an ingredient

in the current mutations of the rural and urban scales and societal forms are imperative for current planning, strategies and practices.

A second case study connects the two relict-lines with three other existing routes, so that five routes of the landscape of Borgloon are examined: the Roman route, the fruit track, the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, the hidden pathways that arose as a result of the erosion of the soil and an axis through the city centre of Borgloon. All these different routes reveal the characteristics of a labyrinth. In this proposal the existing junctions of this transport network were pointed out and new ones were generated. Three types of nodal points or 'crossing points' are defined. The first ones are the 'resting-wellness and relaxing places', where silence and tranquillity are the keys. Secondly, there are 'transfer points' where you can switch to another kind of transport. The third type of crossing point comprises the 'visiting places', with valuable and interesting historical heritage. These 'crossing points' must function as architectonic instruments within the orientation of the landscape. A rich identity is achieved if they refer to historical elements such as the footpaths, the horizon and the usability aspects of added elements, which cross each other at several levels. You can compare these 'crossing points' with image-signs, places that reveal experiences and associations. In this way a sensorial layer, a new architectonic frame of reference, is added to the landscape.

The subway map of London is used as a metaphor for creating a communication file for the explication of the site. The complex subway routes are visualised in a very simple and clear way. This concept is translated into a network with lines for the historical routes that connects places of interest in relation with four categories of users: the inhabitants, people who work there, people who use this area as a transit zone, and long-stay and short-stay tourists (*Fig. 7, 8*). This network can be communicated in different forms: on the one hand, in a classic way by means of tourist brochures or information boards; and on the other hand in a virtual way, by using computer routes. The final goal of this project is that this network becomes a part of a greater cultural preservation system.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state that a well organised multimodal opening-up strategy must be created in order to switch easily between the different forms of transportation – walking, biking and public transportation, and in order to create an established link between the Roman route and the fruit track in order to stimulate sustainable tourism. The heritage area can be made more readable by defining communication strategies for public transport and

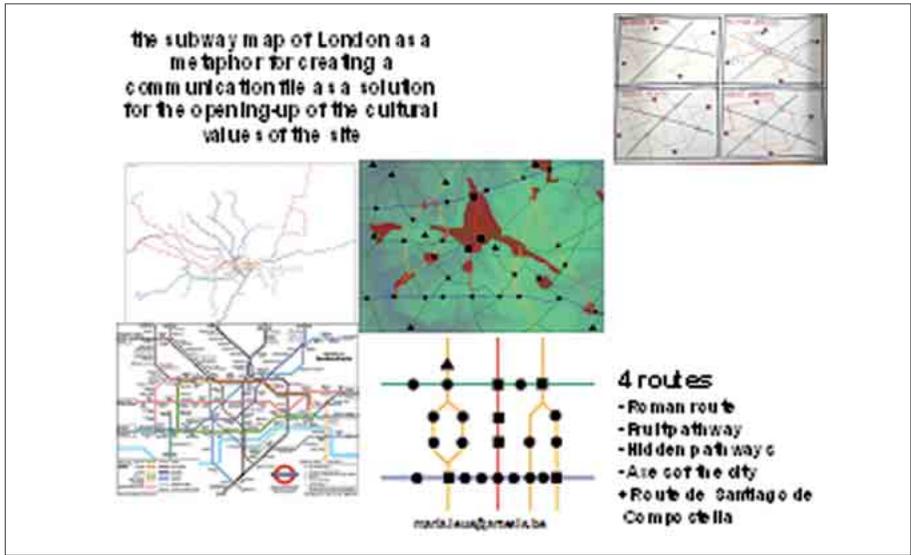


Fig. 7  
A communication file for the explication of the site

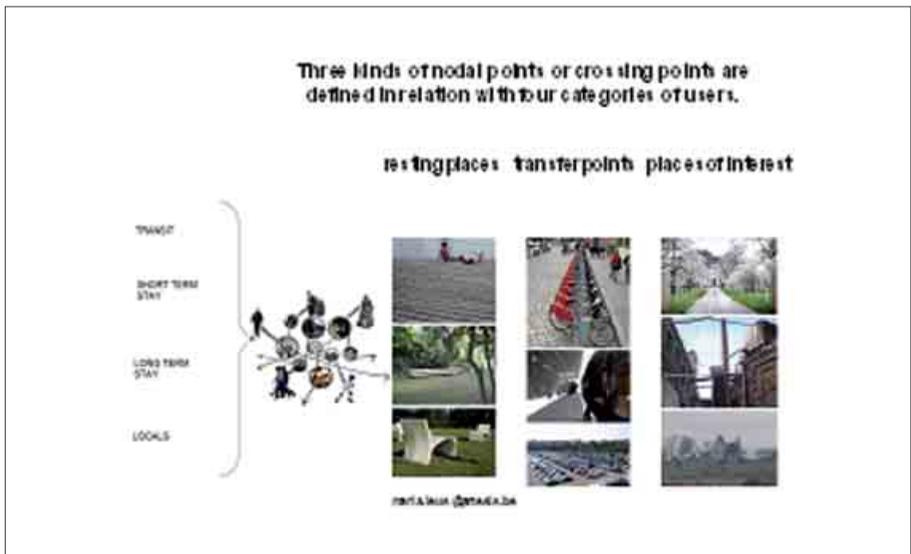


Fig. 8  
Three types of crossing points

mobility in relation to the significances and values of the heritage. Heritage management education is the key to an intensification of the engagement with, the appreciation and the care of cultural heritage and landscape. Lynch (1960: 120) states that:

*'In the development of an image, education will be quite as important as the reshaping of what is seen. Indeed, they together form a circular, or hopefully a spiral, process: visual education impelling the citizen to*

*act upon his visual world, and this action causing him to see even more acutely. A highly developed art of urban design is linked to the creation of a critical and attentive audience. If art and audience grow together, then our cities will be a source of daily enjoyment to millions of their inhabitants.'*

This statement can also be applied to the design and development of landscapes in relation with cultural heritage.

Synergy between different disciplines such as architecture, urbanism, transportation, ecology and economy offers opportunities for creating a strongly linked network. All forms of fragmentation of the cultural heritage must be avoided. The approach and the preservation can be organised in an integrated way in order to achieve a project that crosses boundaries.

### *Acknowledgements*

I would like to thank my colleague Koen Stuyven and the students of 'Conservation & Restoration Monuments and Sites' and 'Urban Planning' for their work in the Public Space Lab, an interdisciplinary workshop, at the Artesis University College of Antwerp, Belgium, from 13/11/2008 to 27/11/2008.

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# Towards a Terminology of Temporal Structure - an authentic language for architecture?

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*What would it change in our arts, our sciences, and our technics if time were conceived as something real?*

*Sanford Kwinter*

The existence of architecture over time is highlighted in a very practical way by current global developments: issues like increasing urbanisation, environmental sustainability and economic concerns are obliging architects and urban planners everywhere to focus on re-use and adaptation rather than on tabula rasa projects. This ongoing process is creating an increased awareness of the life of architecture in time – future as well as past. Furthermore, these developments have turned built heritage into an expanding field. No longer the prerogative of a historically minded minority group of practitioners, the interpretation, adaptation and utilisation of existing architecture are increasingly regarded as the basis of all architectural projects.

This paper is made up of two main parts: in the first section I shall use the thinking of Canadian architectural theorist Sanford Kwinter and neuroscientist and philosopher Francesco Varela to briefly outline the temporality of architecture. Furthermore I shall argue the expansion of the concept of architectural heritage in the age of global urbanisation in light of Kwinter's work. In the second I shall use some of ICOMOS' doctrinal texts to attempt a critique of the term 'authenticity' as a communicative concept vis-à-vis time and architecture, before finally suggesting the exploration of an expanded terminology.

## **Architecture Transformed**

Within the field of built heritage management, attention has shifted in recent years from restoration and conservation to the more fluid concept of transformation. This is not merely a question of a single field within architecture adopting a new technique; the architectural side of heritage management is

increasingly merging with general architectural practice. This shift towards transformation has occasioned a broader understanding of what actually constitutes architectural heritage.

This tendency is perhaps associated with another phenomenon. During the twentieth century, cities have spread and densified to become the predominant human habitat on a global scale<sup>1</sup>. In such a pervasive, entangled and highly complex urban context, the impact of architectural intervention on existing architecture is no longer a concern mainly for those works or sites designated as historic, or in some way particularly worthy of preservation. Instead, such analysis is increasingly relevant to all interventions in existing architecture, and there is an acknowledgment that individual works can rarely be meaningfully separated from the urban fabric in which they are embedded.

The shift towards temporal and environmental enmeshment is merely one expression of a movement, which has been taking place at a more overarching, theoretical level in general architectural discourse. In the preface to his 2001 book 'Architectures of Time – Towards a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture' Sanford Kwinter presents the essays that make up this book as an attempt to respond to 'a clear and emerging interest among designers and architects in the problem of time and its relation to form' (Kwinter 2001: ix). Kwinter seeks to trace a shift in formal understanding: detailing the progression of architectural perception through a series of paradigms from an object-based understanding, advancing by a rhythm defined by scientific developments<sup>2</sup> and arriving over the past century at a more processual view, centering on the fundamentally temporal concept of the event – a continuous unfolding in which the object, once 'virtually slick and featureless (...) now swarms with individualized points, inhomogeneities, trajectories, complex relations' (Kwinter 2001: 31).

This new interpretation of architectural form is highly significant for the field of built heritage. Architectural practice within the area of restoration has – up to now – been understood as a specialised branch, dedicated to the design and execution of the interventions necessary to preserve and maintain existing architecture. These interventions were primarily carried out on architecture somehow judged particularly 'authentic'. This concept of authenticity – which I shall discuss later – constitutes the main criterion in value judgements relating to built heritage.

This position is now changing: there is an increasing understanding that architectural practice in the context of heritage, of necessity, involves not only conservation but transformation. Furthermore, there is a growing tendency to execute architectural interventions in 'non-historic' settings as transformations of existing architecture rather than starting from scratch employing a 'tabula

rasa' approach. In other words, most architecture is now considered transformation, a continually ongoing event unfolding not only in matter but in time.

Understanding architecture as event means not only that individual works cannot be meaningfully separated from their surroundings, it means perceiving all architectural environments as open works – as a set of flows consisting of other flows, which come together for varying durations of time to create a form of 'metastability' in which architectural form simply constitutes what Bergson's termed 'a snapshot of transition'<sup>3</sup>. As an aside, it should be mentioned that this development is underpinned at a technological level in everyday architectural practice by the development of new types of tools, more precisely by the use of computer-aided design tools, which enable a clearer understanding of form as something that is not static, but evolves over time. For example, the use of BIM – Building Information Modelling – which is currently changing the entire process of architectural design through its capacity to illustrate for architects, contractors and clients the complete life cycle of the building, including the processes involved in design, logistics, construction, operation, wear and facilities management. The effect is to enmesh what would previously have been considered an individual work in a network of materials, construction calculations, users, manufacturers etc. already from the design phase – all in so-called 'real time'.<sup>4</sup>

### **Architecture and Hybrid Temporality**

In an interview entitled *The Deep Now* (Brouwer 2000), cognitive scientist and philosopher Francesco Varela discusses the concept of time. Varela speaks of the two seemingly oppositional aspects: the lived 'first-person' experience – to which we all have direct access – and the external, objective, measurable 'third-person approach' of science (idem: 8). This is nothing new: the dual nature of time has been a recurring philosophical problem dating back at least as far as the origination of the Platonic concepts of *aion* and *chronos*<sup>5</sup>. Varela, however, goes on to offer what he calls a 'neurophenomenological' explanation in favour of a certain hybridity of temporal experience, arguing that the two aspects of time are not entirely separate. He writes that: '(...) the lived approach and the objective approach are not just correlated, they actually shape each other mutually.' (idem: 9), thereby proposing a combination of lived time and material, objective time.

Perhaps this hybrid quality is what above all else characterises the creation and experience of architecture in time. Sanford Kwinter emphasises the significance of the emergence of Benedictine monasteries in the early Middle Ages as one of the most important developments in the history of

Western modernisation, simply because they effectively functioned like clocks, subdividing the 'continuum of duration'. Kwinter goes on to describe the actual, material buildings themselves as the vehicles through which the action of the bell and the intervals it defines are made to act upon 'the bodies they seize' (Kwinter 2001: 15-17). He describes the actual monastic buildings arising as a form of 'hinge' between – amongst other things – the bellringing which acted upon the bodies of the inhabitants (micro-architecture – see note 2) and the ecclesiastical power structures of the time, which acted on societal bodies and power structures (macro-architecture), all of which in turn seized the architecture itself, continuously transforming it. The buildings themselves merely arose, endured and continue to do so as a form metastability, as an 'illusory essence' (see note 3), temporarily created by the confluence of these – and countless other – flows.

Hence the buildings – the architecture – effectively constitutes a conflation of lived and objective time. As outlined in Kwinter's example of the Benedictine monasteries, it not only objectively subdivides time but also constantly imbues it – and is in turn itself infused – with new meanings both at the individual and societal levels.

## **Time and the City**

Nowhere is this more so than in the city – the ultimate image of architectural form as a metastability, an infinitely complex 'n-dimensional' hinge. Urbanity is an assemblage – a temporary alignment – of the countless material and formal flows of an infinite multitude of mutually impacting 'forces, wills and actions', each incessantly undergoing and occasioning continuous transformations and mutations, combining and recombining, coming together to constitute forms which merely appear recognisable at first glance, yet are in fact chronically unstable and destabilising. Such complexity cannot be approached with traditional, object-based understandings and concepts.

If architecture can be neither experienced nor understood independently of the time in and by which it exists, and time furthermore – in keeping with the thinking of Kwinter and Varela – must be understood as highly complex and non-linear, then attempting to describe architecture without its temporality is inherently futile. In a city currently becoming so dense and pervasive that individual architectural works can no longer be extricated from their material contexts, time too can no longer be subdivided into the aion and the chronos – we find ourselves at a loss.

If architects are to act in and on the city in a meaningful way, it is necessary to take time seriously. We are now obliged to begin – in the words of Sanford Kwinter – considering time as something real.

## The Breakdown of Authenticity

As I have described above – while there is a growing understanding of the fundamentally temporal nature of architecture – the field generally appears to be facing a lag in expressive ability. We simply do not seem to have at our disposal a sufficiently varied and practical language with which to communicate about the experience of architecture in time. In the second part of this essay, I shall examine a key concept in assessing and communicating the values of architecture over time.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, the quality of ‘authenticity’ has been considered an essential parameter – in fact the main parameter – used to judge the worth of existing architecture in order to determine future courses of action. So vital is this concept that UNESCO/ICOMOS devoted an entire conference to exploring its significances in 1994. The conference, however appeared mainly to pinpoint that, at the time, the increasing significance attributed to the concept of authenticity seemed – and indeed still seems – to be matched with a growing uncertainty concerning the precise meaning of the term.

The final outcome was the formulation of the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity. This document seems to be rather disclamatory vis-à-vis a fixed definition: Paragraph 11, under the heading of ‘Values and Authenticity’, reads: ‘All judgments about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgments of values and authenticity within fixed criteria.’ (UNESCO 1994)

It is perhaps something of a paradox that a significant conclusion of such a definitive document on authenticity is the apparent difficulty of ascertaining any criteria on which to base judgements of authenticity. This complexity is further emphasised a little later, in paragraph 13, by a listing of some of the multiplicity of underlying sources of the information underlying such value-judgements: fraught as they already are with uncertainty:

*Depending on the nature of the cultural heritage, its cultural context, and its evolution through time, authenticity judgments may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information. Aspects of the sources may include form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors. The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined. (UNESCO 1994)*

So it appears not only to be impossible to establish a fixed set of criteria by which to pass judgements of authenticity; furthermore, the resulting assessments can be associated with value of any one (or more) of a diverse and bewildering number of 'internal and external factors'. These uncertainties amount to a conceptual confusion, which I would claim has contributed to the significant difficulties currently faced by architects concerning the specifically urban issue of public space: as it has become increasingly difficult to extricate individual works from the pulsating entanglement of the city, it appears to simultaneously have become all but impossible to establish meaningful public space within this mass of urbanity<sup>6</sup>. Can this sorry situation be the real result of the failure to establish a conceptual framework?

It is my claim that we are now experiencing the breakdown of the concept of authenticity as a useful tool for determining and communicating the value of architectural heritage, and hence of architecture as a whole. Perhaps the omission of the term in the subsequent 1999 'Charter on Built Vernacular Heritage' (UNESCO 1999) may be interpreted in support of this understanding? However, no alternative concepts have arisen for discussing architecture over time in spite of the fact that the potential applicability of such a concept is greater than ever before.

Returning to the Venice Charter from 1964 and considering it in the light of the current architectural concerns outlined above, it is clear that the hermeneutic context has changed. According to the Venice Charter, the main object of assessment is the 'historic monument'. This is defined as 'not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting (...)' (UNESCO 1964). This notion of a distinct monument is rooted in the concept of architecture as 'work'. The same passage continues: 'This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time' (idem)<sup>7</sup>. We are no longer dealing with delimited architectural objects but with the tangled, living, pulsating metastability of the continuously unfolding city, whose architecture, as previously mentioned, is persistently being (re)created not only in matter but in time itself.

The question then becomes whether it is possible to outline a set of concepts capable of accommodating such a radically pervasive understanding of architecture and its transformation? Perhaps the experience of authenticity is defined neither by the cultural setting, nor by the underlying sources informing and shaping creation, both of which have effectively been rendered null by their sheer multiplicity. Perhaps the experience of architectural authenticity may be expanded and understood as the experience of time through architecture?

## Implications of a Temporal Approach

The ideas I have outlined above can at best be described as tentative. A great deal of work remains if we are to approach an understanding of the expression and experience of time through architecture. Nevertheless, I wish to suggest that there is much to be gained from expanding our conceptual range to include temporality – to focus on the experience of time, of the ‘evolution through time’ of architecture and the significances it acquires in the process. For example, it would be interesting to explore the communicative potential of concepts like temporal structure or rhythm, but unfortunately such investigations lie beyond the scope of this article. For the present I will



*Fig. 1*



Fig. 2

limit myself to pointing out that there are certainly a number of modalities – material and immaterial, collective as well as personal – in which time is expressed and experienced through architecture. As global urbanisation is pushing to the forefront the challenges of the city and public space, exploring a set of ‘temporal concepts’ reflecting the range of these experiences may offer a route towards bridging the conceptual gap between the solidity of the object and the complex hybridity of the urban event.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Since 2008 over half the world’s population lives in cities and this development is expected to continue (UNFPA 2007)

<sup>2</sup> In the essay ‘The Complex and the Singular’ Kwinter argues for a reconception of the (architectural) object as a product and producer of forces larger and smaller than itself (micro- and macro-architectures). He writes:

*‘It would therefore be a mistake (...) to limit the concept of “architectural substance” to building materials and the geometric volumes they engender and enclose. Just as the meaning of a sentence differs depending on who is speaking, to whom it is addressed, the time and place in which it is uttered, the infinitely complex interplay of will, desire, and systems of legitimation, as well as on these same conditions applied to the referents of each and every element of the sentence, so any proper understanding of architecture must also confront its character as an illocutionary event, or at the very least as an element inseparable from and in constant interface with the world of force, will, action, and history.’ (Kwinter 2001: 14)*

<sup>3</sup> Henri Bergson is describing a similarly illusive form of stability in the chapter on ‘Form and Becoming’ in ‘Creative Evolution’:

'But in reality the body is changing form at every moment; or rather, there is no form, since form is immobile and the reality is movement. What is real is the continual change of form: form is only a snapshot view of a transition. Therefore, here again, our perception manages to solidify into discontinuous images the fluid continuity of the real. When the successive images do not differ from each other too much, we consider them all as the waxing and waning of a single mean image, or as the deformation of this image in different directions. And to this mean we really allude when we speak of the essence of a thing, or of the thing itself.' (Bergson 1922: 302).

<sup>4</sup> In 2007 the Danish Architecture Centre DAC held an exhibition on the work of Frank O. Gehry and his use and development of 'Digital Project'. For a video clip from the exhibition featuring interviews with Gehry and his staff, and a brief insight into the potential of this tool, see: <http://www.arcspace.com/architects/gehry/dp/dp.html>.

<sup>5</sup> For concise descriptions of the meanings of *aion* and *chronos* and their usage in Greek literature, see Peters. These two aspects of temporality are also discussed by Gilles Deleuze in 'Logique du Sens', in which his concept of time as a 'labyrinth of the straight line' can perhaps be interpreted as an expression of the hybridity referred to by Varela (Deleuze 1969).

<sup>6</sup> This is the problem to which Rem Koolhaas was referring when he famously coined the term 'junk space'. For a corresponding interpretation, see Marc Augé.

<sup>7</sup> Paradoxically, the Venice Charter's distinctions between monuments, settings, works, sites and excavations (ICOMOS 1964) are themselves an expression of this object-oriented approach. Although these distinctions constitute attempts to actively address context by including more complex architectures (a line of thought particularly evident in the 'Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas' (UNESCO 1987), I find they are still considered in many ways as distinct 'works'.

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# Teaching Architectural Restoration through Reflection on Intervention Criteria

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The experiment presented here involves Architectural Restoration, which is taught as a compulsory subject in fifth year at the Superior Technical School of Architecture in Valencia. The discipline of architectural restoration is not common to all Spanish schools of architecture, but rather an exception. Where it does exist, it is usually an optional or free choice subject. However, at the Superior Technical School of Architecture in Valencia, this subject is obligatory, so students will have to take it before graduating.

Certainly not all the future architects who study at our school will dedicate themselves to architectural restoration as their specialisation in the future. But it is true that it is more and more difficult to go through one's professional career without receiving a commission that is somehow connected with refurbishment, conversion, restoration or with intervention to an existing building, be it monumental or residential, noble or modest, urban or rural, etc. At the European level, today's statistics show that at the present time, over 50 per cent of an architect's professional work involves interventions to built edifices. In Spain, at least before the appearance of the current recession, all the statistics leaned towards new buildings, but it is likely that in the near or medium future, the number of projects for intervention to existing buildings will outnumber the projects for new buildings.

For that reason, in the short span of forty-two academic hours in a quadrimester, it is necessary to teach basic restoration concepts that will permit future architects who are not going to specialise further to intervene on our built heritage. Taking into account that restoration materials, products and techniques change with great speed over the years, the authors believe that it is not so much a priority to teach these short-lived items as it is to impart basic criteria that will serve as a reference for any type of intervention (Earl 2003: 3-4).

The approach to teaching this subject involves a continuous reflection on the criteria that form the basis for architectural restoration works. The subject also includes the teaching of some rudiments of the history of the discipline of architectural restoration. It also involves a sometimes cyclical history of

the criteria and concepts applied to restoration over time, with examples of restoration according to each of the theories and trends. This serves to create open-minded reflection about the effects and concrete impacts they have on the constructed building.

Why insist on teaching basic criteria for the restoration of heritage buildings? The growing interest in heritage and the scarcity of work in other areas of the discipline are giving rise to a growing number of professionals dedicated entirely or sporadically to the world of restoration. Furthermore, the important technical development of the discipline of restoration has exponentially complicated the scenario for intervention on heritage, and has disconcerted those professionals who are unable to keep up with all the novelties in this field. Thus, the greater number of professionals working in restoration, even if they have been well-trained, nevertheless may be less well-prepared from a technical point of view, because it is very hard to cover all the knowledge involved. This makes it necessary to teach basic criteria that can make up for the deficiencies and lack of both the technical and conceptual knowledge and training.

There are some dangers involved in the discipline of restoration that can be mitigated, to a certain extent, by the teaching of some basic criteria. These dangers are the other side of the coin to those described above: the lack of information and often of experience on the part of technicians, the excess of trust or blind faith in technique and technology as main guidelines for restoration, as well as the insufficient theoretical reflection that accompanies many interventions today.

The solution proposed to solve all these problems is a more in-depth reflection on the basic restoration criteria, not as a useless, unfounded theoretical debate, but as a permanent dialogue with the building during the process of preparing the preliminary study, drawing up the project and executing the works, that will make it possible to find the most suitable solutions for its restoration (Mileto & Vegas 2005).

Concepts and criteria include: the authenticity of the historic document; the building's character and aura; compatibility in all the aspects of the intervention (material, structural, building, functional, etc.); sustainability as the basic principle of the intervention in residential, rural, non-monumental heritage edifices and in historic cities; reversibility of the intervention as a goal to be fought for; the 'distinguishability' of the contemporary additions and measured expressive modernity as regards the compatibility of its impact; capacity to transmit antiquity as an added value in a restoration intervention (Carbonara 1997: 450-451) – these constitute the core of the students' continual reflection, debate and practice.

The criterion of conservation of authenticity applies both to the material

document and to the character of the building to be restored. The historic building must be considered as a document that is to be conserved in all its authenticity, with its different parallel or layered histories as regards the project, its construction and transformations, its restoration architects, later restorations, prevalent customs, tastes, artistic and aesthetic intentions, etc. By conserving the material document as much as possible in the manifestation of its surfaces, its genuineness is conserved at the same time (Vegas & Mileto 2007: 7). On the contrary, trying to simplify the complex stratified history of the building to achieve a fictional unity often brings about not only a loss of authenticity, but an impoverishment of the built heritage reflected in the edifice. The reversibility of the intervention is a criterion that allows us to measure, to a large extent, the impact of our intervention on the building. It allows us to evaluate the real need for the intervention, as well as to consider different options for utilising materials and building methods, always providing for the possibility of reversing the intervention on the historic building. The reversibility of the intervention is desirable in order to ensure the conservation of the authentic document, since an incorrect intervention could thus be eliminated without damaging the pre-existing building (Pasetti 2003: 169-171). The best guarantee of complete reversibility is always to add rather than remove during the intervention. Indeed demolition is the least reversible action in an intervention. But an addition can also have a different effect and impact on the building, depending on what is added and how.

As with other concepts, the criterion of reversibility is illustrated to the students by means of actual examples. One of the most often referenced cases is the different restorations of Roman or Greek theatres carried out in the last few decades. The city of Valencia lies 24 km away from Sagunto, location of the Roman theatre that underwent a total, and in many ways irreversible, intervention by the architects Giorgio Grassi and Manuel Portaceli. Following legal proceedings instituted as the result of a private complaint, the court verdict concerning the works came out a year ago. It was unfavourable to the intervention carried out, precisely because its irreversible character went against the provisions of the Heritage Law of the Valencian Community. However, the verdict was paradoxical. It obliged the Administration to reverse the intervention, because its irreversibility constituted a breach of the law, although the institution responsible managed to avoid carrying out the onerous *de-restoration* contained in the verdict, precisely because of its patent irreversibility.

Other restorations of Roman theatres in Spain have been much more discreet and reversible, as is the case of Segóbriga and Mérida. The intervention in the Roman theatre in Cartagena by Rafael Moneo is far more invasive, although not to the same extent as in the case of the Roman theatre in Sagunto. Other

theatres from ancient times, situated in Italy, such as Siracusa, Taormina, Verona, etc., have been restored by means of completely reversible and provisional portable devices, so that they can be used in the summer, thus respecting the authenticity and genuineness of the ruins.

The criterion of reversibility is also presented to the students from the point of view of structural interventions, considering above all, the negative and difficult-to-reverse effect of many structural consolidation works with reinforced concrete on historic buildings in the twentieth century, especially from the 1920s onwards. The students learn to distinguish between a reversible and an irreversible structural intervention, also in relation to other factors such as the compatibility, visibility and innocuousness of the works.

On the other hand, it is always good to implement the minimum intervention necessary in order to conserve and guarantee the survival of the building, and to avoid unnecessary innovation and embellishment works that do not respect the authenticity and antiquity of the building. This criterion of minimum intervention must guarantee the material and structural conservation of the building, and restore its functionality and necessary decorum, even as regards the design of the new elements that are strictly necessary to achieve this end. In the same way, this criterion is illustrated with examples of restorations that feature consolidation of structures with few elements, selective re-bonding of materials, or improvement rather than total compliance with the standards required by regulations regarding structures, fireproofing, insulation, function, etc.

The students are also taught the criterion of distinguishability and expressive contemporaneity, according to which the intervention (especially if it involves the addition of matter) should be distinguishable in order to conserve the authenticity of the historic document. The new should be distinguishable from the old. However, this criterion gives rise to a large range of possible technical, physical, material, linguistic, etc. ways of achieving this distinction. This range of possibilities goes from those interventions where the addition of matter ends up being far too obvious to those that adopt a subsidiary role barely noticeable to a specialist in the subject. For that reason, the Gestalt theory is used to analyse the concepts of figure and background applied to the addition of matter in a historic building during restoration, so that the students can learn how to gauge the intervention.

At this point it is a good idea to review also the contemporaneity and wisdom of Camillo Boito's proposals for distinguishing the new from the old, ranging from the difference in style and material to the simplification of outlines and decoration, and not forgetting the practice of engraving dates and placing inscription tablets in a nineteenth-century context, where above all, the obsession was focused on linguistic issues.

The compatibility of the intervention is another fundamental criterion for students to follow. It should be pursued in order to best conserve the building in every aspect: material (physical, chemical...), structural, visual, aesthetical, spatial, functional, characterwise (Pasetti 2003)... This criterion is absolutely necessary in the profession of architect-restorer, not only from a material point of view, where we have seen a large number of restorations in the past in which the solution is worse than the problem (Esponda 2010), but also at a other levels: the functional level (if the programme exceeds the reasonable possibilities of the building); the structural level (when the structural operation of the building is completely changed, and the point of view of character, aesthetics and appearance (in particular when the new additions do away with the essence of the building), etc. (Doglioni 2008: 255-258).

The durability of the intervention is another concept that is studied and taken into account in the teaching of architectural restoration. Durability of the intervention helps conserve the building better. In this sense, the material and structural compatibility of the parts added to the existing building is deemed very important, as we explained in the point above, and also the durability of the new materials themselves. The idea is not only to make our intervention last longer, but to ensure it does not have a negative effect on the durability of the building being restored. This criterion is illustrated by means of unsuccessful examples, where inappropriate and apparently harmless interventions in buildings, hundreds and even thousands of years old, have involved a loss of durability and even endangered their survival.

In this subject, a specific theory or attitude is not presented in a dogmatic manner, but in the belief that comparing different ideas develops the students' critical capacity, so that they can later proceed in any situation according to their own judgement and not by indiscriminately copying rigid models. In this way, the classes become an interactive dialogue between students and lecturer and a continuous debate is established with ideas, opinions, criteria and enlightened remarks.

In the practical exercises, the students, in groups of about six, draw up a restoration project for a small building, which starts with a complete preliminary survey with its phases of historic study, metric-descriptive mapping, preparation of photoplans, material elevations and lists of building methods, a study of material pathologies, a study of structural pathologies, a stratigraphic study and files of the different materials, building methods and pathologies. Once they have completed the preliminary survey, the group must reflect on the restoration criteria to be applied in their restoration project, in view of the criteria debated in class, their knowledge of the building and their own personal view (Mileto, Vegas & Noguera 2008). After this long written reflection, they start the layout, function and computer simulation of

the restoration project, giving the results and major details. This project is evaluated, not so much according to their choice of one method or other, but with regard to the coherence between what they say in their report and what is demonstrated in their restoration project.

The same didactic method is also used in the teaching imparted in the official Postgraduate Course in Architectural Heritage Conservation, where each of the two authors teaches a subject of 40 hours, that is, similar in length to the undergraduate subject described above. Indeed, the basic criteria for architectural restoration are expounded and illustrated in a series of lessons where the students mull over what they are taught. At the same time the students are asked to choose a recent restoration in their town, or published and divulged in the usual media, and to carry out research into the criteria applied by the authors of the restoration project on that particular building. After doing this work, all the students report their conclusions to the teacher and the rest of the class and a debate – often quite heated – arises about the cases studied.

The experiment carried out by the two authors (professors of undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the Superior Technical School of Architecture in Valencia) demonstrates that teaching restoration criteria really makes its mark on the students, clarifies their ideas and prepares them to tackle the restoration of historic buildings, regardless of the degree of complexity and technical content. In addition, teaching the history and theory of restoration complements these studies, but is merely a parallel aspect of the subject, taught by means of dialogue and debate and consisting of considering and illustrating some basic restoration criteria.

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# Conversions at Borris House and Demesne, Co. Carlow, Ireland

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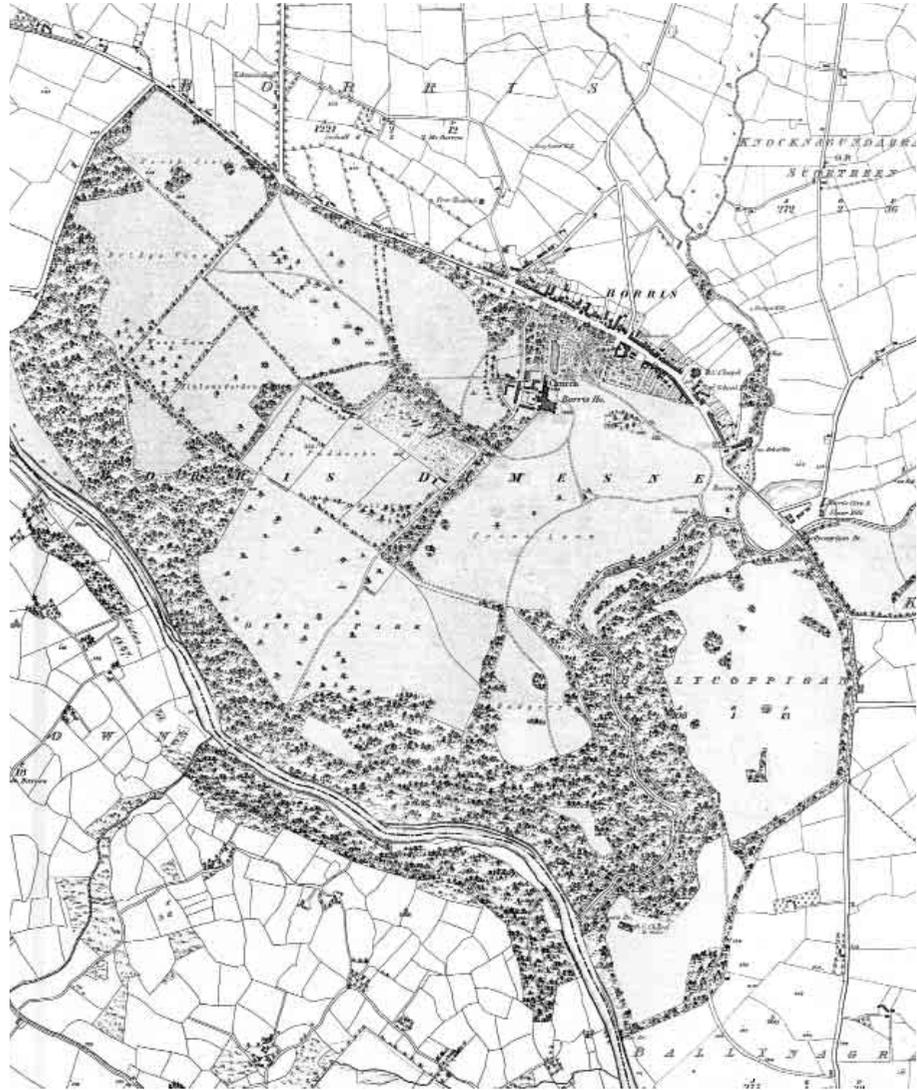
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Villa landscape in Ireland is generally considered to embody Protestant and Anglo-Irish heritage. While generally representing that tradition, many landed Irish families have possessed more ambiguous identities, seeking to flaunt or conceal native and Catholic Irish links at different periods of their history. Other families, more rarely, were descended from native Irish Catholic stock in the male line, managing by sleight of legal hand to retain their lands during the vulnerable period of the eighteenth century, when Catholics were prevented by law from inheriting land. One such family was the Kavanaghs of Borris, Co. Carlow, long-landed but never titled, in part no doubt because they remained Catholic until the early nineteenth century. The architectural, landscape and material culture of such hidden families is not well explored. Kevin Whelan writes that ‘the descendents of the old proprietors mutated into an underground gentry, the shadow lords of eighteenth-century Ireland’ (Whelan 1995: 8). Their houses, towns and landscapes offer ‘the tantalising theme as to how a non-colonised Ireland might have evolved’, and ‘these estates nurtured (as in Scotland) proliferating kin-based lineages, which controlled the strategic leaseholds’. Whelan uses Borris as a ‘symptomatic example’ of such an estate. Because it had ‘remained in Catholic hands’, Borris had ‘attracted no planters’, and ‘in the 1660 poll-tax, Borris is the only town in south Leinster with no New English presence’. On the Kavanaghs’ estates, ‘even more strikingly, the head-tenants on the estates remained catholic in toto’ (Whelan, 1995:11). Whelan also maintains that ‘in Ireland, a wider range of the social spectrum aspired to the status of “gentlefolk” than in England or France, and that spectrum had been broadened by the scale of the seventeenth-century upheavals, which had created this underground gentry milieu, blurring the social categories so readily apparent in England or France’ (Whelan 1995:16). Such a blurring also occurred in the design of Catholic landed landscape, where the imperative to remain concealed rendered the aesthetic language employed both muted and indistinct. The same hidden character inhibits the accurate identification and successful conservation of such sites today.

Churches and chapels have had a significant influence on the evolution of urban form throughout Europe, acting as foci for many urban developments. This urban history takes a markedly different turn in Ireland, where the minority religion became the religion of both state and landowner, but not that of the majority of the population. The new Protestant church, while forming a focus for the town's urban design, lacked in most cases the 'majority allegiance' to provide a focus for the urban community life, which thereby 'inhibited the village-generating ability of such centres'. (Whelan 1983: 3-4) As an estate town, Borris is notable for its divergence from this typical sequence of events. The main street has not been straightened; there is no geometric figure of a square, no tree-lined mall, no Protestant church, no charter school and no market building (*Fig. 1*). In the eighteenth century no potent symbols of Protestant control such as a barracks, courthouse nor constabulary were built. Borris became an anomaly from the general pattern of development, deriving its rare characteristics from the changing identity of the family that continues to inhabit it. As Catholic landlords in the eighteenth-century Protestant nation of Ireland, their landscape became a muted one, rejecting the strident geometric figure of a square for the well-worn street, and the omnipresent church spire for the chapel at the gate.

Kevin Whelan, when deriving the form of Catholic landed landscape, has generally had to rely on the larger sort of comfortable farmer. Describing the house of the Catholic landed family of Sweetman at Newbawn, Co. Wexford, Whelan considers it as 'a visual representation of this polyvalent world expressed in architectural terms', where the house 'embodied exactly the social position of the Sweetman family, partaking of both the gentry and common traditions'. The 'massive cobbled farmyard or bawn surrounded by an array of diverse farm buildings' retained its pre-eminence and 'the whole complex is located centrally in the townland approached by curving lanes', without the need for axial avenues, lodges, tree-belts and demesne walls, all markers for improved demesnes elsewhere. In the nineteenth century the Sweetmans' house and landscape became 'the hub around which Catholic society revolved, the solid backbone of the emerging Catholic nation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'. The family's 'presence in the local community' was 'reflected in the fact that the Catholic chapel of Newbawn was sited on their farm, a nucleus around which the chapel village of Newbawn subsequently developed' (Whelan 1995: 24-25).

While Borris House, demesne and town are of a different order of scale to that of Newbawn, deriving in part from the Kavanaghs' position as the largest landowners in County Carlow, such historic landscapes created by Catholic Irish landowners are rare. Those of the very few Catholic peers, such as the Earl



*Fig. 1*  
1st edition  
Ordnance  
Survey map  
of Borris, Co.  
Carlow

of Kenmare or the Earl of Fingall, lack any detailed study of their contribution to a distinctly Catholic architectural, landscape and material culture, if any such existed. The analysis of such landscapes is also complicated by absenteeism, as many Catholic Irish noblemen (particularly the Earls of Kenmare) spent much of their lives on the continent and communicated with their estates only through the medium of the agent, rendering the correct attribution of decisions difficult. In contrast, the apparatus of improvement created by Protestant landlords has been carefully studied in recent years (Barnard 2008). However, Borris House, town and demesne suggest that Catholic identity could play some role in the design of the eighteenth-century town and demesne.

## Family Conversion

The Kavanagh family supported the 1800 Act of Union, which made Ireland a constituent kingdom of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, forfeiting their seat in the Irish House of Commons in the process (Brown et al. 2003:180). 'The bulk of the Irish population opposed Union; but as Castlereagh pointed out, the bulk of Irish property, which dominated the political structures of the nation, supported it' (Mansergh 2000:97). Subsequent building work at Borris was probably funded by the substantial compensation payments received by the Kavanaghs in reparation for the loss of this seat. In the early nineteenth century Edward Wakefield visited Borris to prepare for his publication *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, writing: 'On the 14th of July I was at Borris, the seat of Walter Kavanagh, Esq. This gentleman was a Roman catholic. The title to his estates is derived from one of the ancient kings of that part of Ireland. The common people call him "the monarch" (Wakefield 1812: 598-599).' Wakefield was also at some pains to use the Kavanagh family in his analysis of the 'catholic aristocracy' of Ireland:

*In Carlow, the middling classes of catholic farmers are rapidly increasing in wealth, the divisions of land being much larger than in most of the other counties. This remark is of importance, as it shews that the personal property of the catholics must be considerable ... Mr. Cavanagh, already mentioned, has the most extensive property in the county. He has read his recantation; yet he is still considered by the catholics as belonging to their body. The protestants scarcely look upon "a convert" as a member of their church (Wakefield 1812: 598-599).*

The Catholic aristocracy, and by extension the Kavanagh family, are found by Wakefield to be an improvement on that which existed across the water in England, where wealth was 'considered as every thing, and the consequence arising from family worth or antiquity of lineage, is lost amidst the false splendour of riches' (Wakefield 1812: 543). The Irish Catholic aristocracy were 'not very numerous' and Wakefield 'found those that remain a most honourable class of men' who would 'differ very much from the general aristocracy of Ireland.' This was because they had 'mixed less with the world ... having been deprived of the advantages of education' so that they could 'exhibit in a striking manner the true spirit of aristocracy'. Unfortunately 'the Irish Protestants, and particularly those of the north, who are readiest in describing them to the public' were 'little acquainted with their real character or disposition' (Wakefield 1812: 542). Despite Wakefield's construction of Ireland's Catholic aristocracy as a benevolent, noble 'shadow lords', Whelan suggests that by the early nineteenth century it became more imperative for the landed classes to 'homogenise' in Ireland as 'already by the 1770s, it

was considered that those who had not disengaged themselves from popular culture were losing social caste' (Whelan 1995: 32). Some of such imperatives to homogenise may have led to established forms of improvement arriving at Borris, in particular the Morrisons' veneers, the renovation of the private chapel and the new curving drive from the new castellated gate lodge.

### Estate Conversion

The Morrisons' work to Borris is dated as c.1816 from J.P. Neale's assertion in his 1823 book that the house had 'undergone within the last seven years, a most material improvement' (Neale 1823). The Morrisons' decision to adopt the model of an 'English baronial mansion of the sixteenth century' was questioned by John Brewer in his 1826 book 'The Beauties of Ireland', where he judged that although the Morrisons had 'correctly perceived that a mansion of modern features would bear no affinity of character to the bold, august, and picturesque scenery of this demesne' he found it 'doubtful whether, considering the prevailing tone of the surrounding scenery, and the high antiquity of the family seated almost through countless generations on this demesne, a model of a date still more remote might not have been selected' (Brewer 1826:12). The Morrisons' design effectively reunited Borris House and demesne with the design tradition of the ascendancy class. Nowhere is this more clearly

*Fig. 2*  
NLI, William  
Lawrence photo  
of Borris main  
street with the  
national school  
spire in the  
distance





*Fig. 3*  
NLI, William  
Lawrence photo  
of the Roman  
Catholic chapel,  
Borris

expressed than in the sequence of approach routes they laid out to distance and separate demesne and town. New swinging carriage drives from new gates and lodges derived a typical nineteenth-century approach sequence (*Fig. 1*). The building's new castellated silhouette and garden viewing terrace overlooked the approaching driveway and contributed to a clear hierarchy of architectural event. The Morrises retained a certain reticence, however, in the positioning of the castellated entrance lodge. Unlike their redesign of Moore Abbey, Co. Kildare, the new entrance lodge was not positioned to call an entire town to the bugle-blast of the family aesthetic. Instead it steps back from the main street to leave a modicum of urban space and renounces any ambition to dominate the scene. In urban design terms it genuflects to the 'spire' of the new national school, which, in the absence of a Protestant church, became the town landmark (*Fig. 2*). Nowhere is the linguistic subversion of Borris more apparent than in the Lawrence photographs of the twin Catholic projects of the first half of the nineteenth century. The 'R.C. chapel' (*Fig. 3*) and the 'national school' (*Figure 2*), both funded by the Kavanagh family, reverse the subjugation of the Catholic church in Irish urban design, becoming the heart of the main street and the focus of its prospects.

John Preston Neale produced a view of Borris for his 1823 book *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland*, one of only seven for the country as a whole. This view is interesting because

*Fig. 4*  
J.P. Neale,  
Views of  
the Seats of  
Noblemen and  
Gentlemen in  
England, Wales,  
Scotland and  
Ireland, Vol. 2/2,  
London 1823:  
Borris House



on the right hand side it carefully depicts an imaginary church spire (*Fig. 4*). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, landscape painting was used to propose alterations and modifications to existing landscapes, townscape and the buildings within them. This process is particularly identifiable during the rise of landscape painting as a distinct art form in the eighteenth-century British Isles, when the production of landscape paintings and sketches became part of the design process for many complex sites. Landscape painting also established a general appreciation of landscape, and frequently set out to alter the public perception of particular places. By carefully including a Protestant church spire in his depiction of Borris, Neale seems to signal a Protestant identity for Borris House and demesne in 1823, while avoiding any comment on the religious heritage of the proprietor in the accompanying text. Ignoring both the private family chapel attached to the house itself and the Catholic chapel in the village, Neale chooses instead to depict the ideal Ireland of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, where the great house and the Protestant parish church were symbolically and physically linked.

### Church Conversion

The early maps of Borris are distinguished by having no church marked on them. Previous to the construction of the private church, the eighteenth-century demesne maps show that a chapel was located close to the original entrance

to the estate from the south. The word 'church' does not appear until it refers to the house chapel on the first edition of the O.S. map (*Fig. 1*). Borris may have had a private Roman Catholic chapel before the Morrisons' arrival, as Donald McCormick writes that 'the private Roman Catholic chapel in Borris House was converted into a Church of England (later Church of Ireland) chapel and eventually served as the [Protestant] parish church as well' (McCormick 1961: 27). Samuel Lewis also remarked on the 'very handsome private chapel, erected by the late Mr. Kavanagh' in 1837, which was 'attached to Borris House' 'and open to the inhabitants' of Borris town, then numbering some sixty-seven people (Lewis, 1837).

Evidently the family decided not to build a Protestant church in the village following their conversion. They allowed the main street to remain the province of the Catholic church, building a new 'R.C. chapel' at its historic location. The Protestant church, by contrast, in Borris becomes a 'private chapel', renouncing the public presence most Irish Protestant churches appropriated for themselves. Kevin Whelan notes that 'where the landlord was hostile, the chapel was consigned to the outer fringes of the estate, or to the very marginal back street locations in the town' (Whelan 1983:5), and this did not occur at Borris, where the memory of Catholic identity remained strong. The principal point structure in the town was the national school, lying immediately adjacent to the chapel and possessed of an unusual 'spire'. Other building types also followed in the train of the family's conversion, notably those of a courthouse, a chief constabulary police station and a barrack for the accommodation of about 30 men.

By maintaining a delicately reticent relationship between house, demesne and estate town throughout its evolution, Borris contains an important blueprint for the reconciliation of Ireland's past with its present. Containing the 'tantalising theme as to how a non-colonised Ireland might have evolved' (Whelan, 1995:11), the unimproved character of Borris town, the adjacency of great house to town, the chapel, the lack of a church and the extraordinary prominence and form of the national school form together an image of another Ireland, an Ireland which is all too faintly understood. Villa landscape in the modern context of the Irish republic remains contested ground. If defined as a private capitalist economic entity, which drove the regional economy in the past by communicating the ability of private endeavour and entrepreneurship to create a beautiful and holistic environment, how can that tradition be continued in the modern context? The significance of Borris lies in this delicate repositioning of house, landscape and town over time. Unlike many other countries with complex landowning histories, at Borris no separation of manor house, landscape and town has taken place. All accrue additional significance

from the fact that one family has continuously designed, modified and altered this house and landscape for some five hundred years. Many projects in Ireland do not convince the community that they represent anything but private material gain (hotels, golf courses, ill-considered housing developments), and they therefore receive little support from that wider community. It also makes it difficult for them to attract innovative sources of funding. Borris may find it more sustainable for town and great house, if the community's links with the family and the ancestral landscape are strengthened by projects which clearly also benefit the local community. Such projects would ideally communicate the value of inherited heritage to others and make that difficult transition (particularly in a country with a tragic history of landownership) from being someone else's inheritance to one which is also one's own.

'Land ownership functioned as a concrete indicator of the realities of Irish life in the eighteenth century, but it was also a resonant symbol'. The Irish Catholic landed landscape's 'existence set Ireland on a divergent trajectory from that of Wales, Scotland or England' because this 'prior landed order and its potent afterlife' suggested a 'potentially different order, a matrix of memory which encoded an available future enabled by the available past' (Whelan 1995:8). The imaginative reach of conservation thought lies in mediating between the perspectives of the past and those of the future, and in allowing memory to help reform places anew. Borris House, town and demesne continue to be a place where such a conservation education can take place.

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# Ruins and Design: Dialogues over Time

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In the world of conservation, ruins (what remains of a construction) have always been seen as objects of great historical and artistic value belonging to the past, and therefore, immutable (Carena 1981). This belief has not always ensured preservation of authentic physical traces, as many interventions carried out in the so-called archeological restoration field have shown. However, if a ruin is solely considered as an object belonging to the past, it is not possible to accept any idea of transformation while respecting its authentic traces of the past.

On the contrary, professionals in other disciplines such as poetry, philosophy and psychology, looking into the spiritual dimension of ruins, have shown that ruins can become part of the present (Tortora 2006a) only by accepting – similar to a process of recovering from a loss (Freud, Jensen 1961) – the sometimes painful traces that they hold.

The first point, looking at the complex relationship between conservation and transformation, deals with the real possibility of transferring these feelings from the field of human science to the architectural field, that is to say, to see if it is possible and correct to establish a creative relationship with ruins (Oteri 2009). There is a great difference, for instance, between the reconstruction of Mostar Bridge in Bosnia Herzegovina after the Civil War (with the same building materials and form as the original) (*Fig. 1*), and the new 'presentation' of Pont Trençat in Spain, partially destroyed in 1811 during the Napoleonic invasion (*Fig. 2*). We can state without doubt that in Mostar, the two sides of the river are now connected by a copy of the original bridge. The fact that it is a copy will probably mean that the dramatic events that caused its destruction will be forgotten (Pedretti 1997). The experience of Pont Trençat is completely different. At the request of the local community, which expressed the strong desire to re-use the old bridge, what remains of the ancient structure was connected to a new one. Ruins were scrupulously preserved and the reconstructed part of the bridge, built with innovative materials, has been simply leaned up against the old (Slessor 2006). Undoubtedly, our way of perceiving this ruin and its environment has changed, but by fully respecting



*Fig. 1*  
Mostar, Bosnia  
Erzegovina,  
bridge after the  
reconstruction

the ancient structure and its original building materials, and also by preserving the traces of its previous destruction, the bridge has been transformed, from a historic object fit only for contemplation to a structure with a specific role. We might wonder whether the ruined bridge should have been left in its original fragmented condition, as that condition had become part of the landscape. Of course, there is no unambiguous answer to this question, as shown by many examples, from the reconstruction of *Frauenkirche* in Dresden to the conservation of Cluny Abbey ruins.



*Fig. 2*  
Tordera, Spain,  
Pont Trençat  
after the integra-  
tion (2000-2004)

This uncertainty is more valid if we do not consider premature ruins but rather those created by the effects of time. In Ireland, for example, landscape is characterised by a significant presence of ruins which are the result of slow abandonment. For this reason they are usually associated with landscape, and we cannot imagine the Irish countryside without the presence of ruined ancient buildings (Fig. 3). Many of these ruins have been turned into important tourist sites, but a relevant part of these suggestive ancient structures have not been included yet in travellers' routes. In this sense, the case of Kells Augustinian Priory (Fig. 4) is particularly significant. Of course, if we want to preserve the romantic idea of the ruin, a sheltered place fully immersed in the green of the countryside (Fig. 5) and bordered by King's River, we must give up any idea of intervention and leave everything as it actually is. On the other hand, the local community has recently sought to develop the site. This means, in spite of every probable and understandable financial pressure, that



*Fig. 3*  
County Kilkenny,  
Ireland, Jerpoint  
Cistercian  
Abbey, view of  
the ruins



*Fig. 4*  
Kells, Ireland,  
Augustinian  
Priory, general  
views of the site

local people want to establish a new relationship with their past. It is the signal, as philosophers and psychologists often suggest, that we need to transfer the past and its physical traces to the present (Tortora 2006).

If we consider ruins as 'figures of life', we should refuse those interventions which try to confine them in a sort of 'place without time', increasing the distance between ruins and us (between past and present/future) and refusing any idea of re-using them. As Paul Ricoeur writes, this type of intervention attempts to immobilise the memory of the past (Ricoeur [1998], 2004).

It seems that, if we need to shift ruins from the past to the present, the only



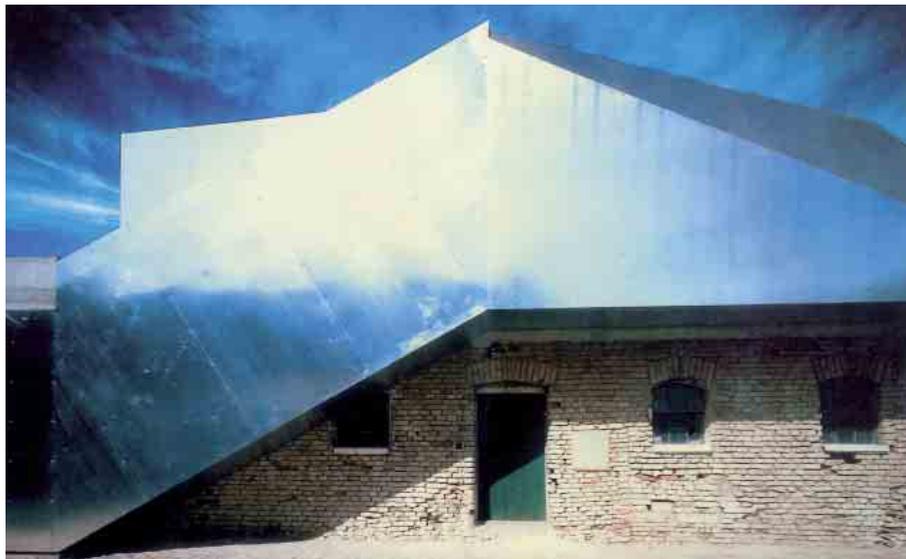
*Fig. 5*  
Kells, Ireland,  
Augustinian  
Priory, general  
views of the site.

*Fig. 6*  
Palermo, Italy,  
an art installation  
inside a ruined  
building, realized  
by re-using  
rubbish and  
discards



way to do it is to set up a dialogue with architects and designers. It means, concretely, putting ruins into the hands of a designer that can manage the transformation, fully respecting all traces of time. This involves many risks, and every intervention has to be carried out with this awareness: even a gangway which helps accessibility to a site, or an information panel that explains the site to visitors, can introduce a transformation. This is particularly true if we consider ruins which, created by the effects of time, transmit an image of inevitable decay. There are many examples, instead, which show that by re-using ruins, by giving them back a role, we can reduce the distance between

*Fig. 7*  
Raasford,  
Germany, project  
of re-use of an  
ancient shed  
( Studio Artec  
Architekten,  
2001).



the public and these ruined structures, 'what remains of a construction'. These experiences go beyond the contrast between 'the utopia of architect' and 'the utopia of conservator' (Ricci 2006). According to these two different points of view, a ruin is considered either a 'no-place', a neutral and rarefied place, where the architect puts his creativity into practice, or, on the contrary, it is considered to be a place so dense in memories as to be, in the end, 'impenetrable' (Ricci 2006).

In this new dimension, characterised by a contradictory and antithetical relationship between ruins and design, we can outline a possible future in which, by re-using and re-working the sediments of time we refuse the idea of caducity (Fig. 6). Instead, it is possible to affirm the idea of continuity in time. The elaboration of our memories (and of their physical signs as kept in ruins) helps us to construct the future. In this sense, it seems that the most interesting experiences, as human sciences have often shown, come to a head when architecture identifies, not an immutable limit to interventions but a starting point, an occasion to imagine a new project in ruins (Varagnoli 2005). This theory is confirmed by the fact that the most successful interventions into ruins – such as the improved accessibility to *Mercati di Traiano* in Rome or to *Sacra di S. Michele* in Val di Susa, Piemonte – are those which try to solve the problem of accessibility and usability. These experiences seem to confirm theories which find the instrument to go beyond the 'double illusion' in the 'value of use', as defined by Alois Riegl (Riegl [1903] 2003): on the one hand, there are those who want to strip ruins of their archaeological status, giving them back their presumed completeness, and those who, on the other hand, by dramatising the condition of the ruins, profess a deep, but also cold-blooded, respect for fragments (Dezzi Bardeschi 1998: p. 3).

Once our need to transfer a ruin to the present time has been established, the second question might be how to relate design to conservation. At the origin of this potentially difficult relationship, there is the general and complicated association of language and form, between past and present/future architecture (an association generally translated in the expression 'ancient-new'). A sort of agreement on the opportunity to link together past and present exists between architects and conservators, one which applies also in relation to ruined ancient constructions. So today, the discussion is only on *how* to carry it out. Conservators are worried about preservation of historic values embodied in these ancient buildings. They are aware of the impossibility of defining fixed and common rules to avoid those projects that ignore the material authenticity of ruined constructions, or the projects that do not accept their own 'diversity'. These latter interventions are characterised by a strongly blinkered approach, ignoring the past. The origin of the contradictory relationship between 'old and

new' is the incapacity to understand and accept the complexity of the existing constructions (Carbonara 2007).

In this sense, a lack of interest in searching for a relationship between ancient and new architecture, which might express a high-quality design, has recently been underlined (Varagnoli 2005). These interventions frequently let the image of the end-result prevail instead of the historic values of the existing structures (Fig. 7). In other cases, projects are characterised by an excessive minimalism due to architectural fashion phenomena by using, often in an uncritical way, high-tech building materials. In general, it seems that architects usually apply some unwritten rules that ensure, in a certain way, respect for building materials, such as the way of separating new insertions from old structures (by using glass, for example), or by appealing to the concept of reversibility (everything is correct on condition that it is reversible). In these experiences architects are not worried about the subject (ruin) and its own history and essence. In fact, when projects are presented in architectural periodicals, they rarely show the images of the conditions of the ruins before intervention. This is particularly true if we look at the interventions that have considered ruins as a sort of art exhibition venue, an empty and suggestive shell fit to give hospitality to new functions (Fig. 8). In spite of the appearance, in these experiences the real subject of intervention is the picturesque image (melancholic, dramatic, violent) that the ruin transmits to us, rather than the ruin itself and the ancient values that it contains. This new interest of architects and designers in ruins does not always involve their unconditional acceptance, nor even the full comprehension of the historic values which they are preserving. This is the reason why, in many cases, architects often erase important elements or signs, by enhancing, instead of restraining, the process of destruction (Davey 2004) (Fig. 9). These experiences are no more to be condemned than stylistic or neutral reconstructions often proposed in the so-called archeological restoration field (a sort of protected area where ancient ruins have been enclosed) but, at the same time, it is very difficult to find new relationships between ruins and design when we consider archaeological or ancient remains.

Ancient ruins always remind us of an inviolable past (although the concept of inviolability has not always corresponded with the full respect for the authenticity of ruins) that has rarely been violated by designers. Ruins have been excluded from usefulness and included among the objects for study and contemplation. In this way ruins have been confined to a 'world without time' (Starobinski 1974) or, as happens in cases of reconstruction, to an invented time, where it is important – as restorers and archaeologists recommend – to verify or to interpret historiographical theories, rather than to preserve the

authentic traces of the past (Fancelli 1997). On the other hand, the dialogue between premature ruins and design has not always been successful (Bevan 2006), and does not encourage similar experiences in the case of ancient ruins. Rarely is there a real dialogue between design and ancient buildings when we leave the field of conservation projects – rarely does design take account of ruins.

In this regard, another topic should be the real object of these dialogues. Some experiences, carried out in the so-called field of conservation, show that



*Fig. 8*  
Pfalz, Germany,  
The House in  
the Ruins ( FNP  
Architekten,  
2006)

it is possible to shift ancient ruins from the past to the present by considering, first of all, the full protection of 'what remains', without any great clamour. These experiences show that this is possible by using only few elements, a few words for a new dialogue. These experiences just try to explain, instead of attenuating or emphasising, the contradictions that ruins embody in every historical stratification (Dezzi Bardeschi 2005). This is in harmony with the present-day culture of conservation. In these cases the 'value of the ancient, as defined by Riegl (Riegl [1903] 2003), is the principal focus, even if with



*Fig. 9*  
Rio de Janeiro,  
Brazil, *Parque  
de la Ruinas*  
(Ernani Freire,  
Sonia Lopez,  
1994). The ruins  
of a 19th century  
house have been  
transformed  
into a space  
of connection  
inside the park  
by demolishing  
the existing  
floors



*Fig. 10*  
Modena, Italy,  
Project of  
conservation  
and improved  
accessibility  
to the ground  
floor of *Palazzo  
comunale*  
(Marco Dezzi  
Bardeschi, 2003)

less sensational results, as the first goal is the preservation of the ruin, its building materials and its historic signs (*Fig. 10*). From this new point of view, the relationship between ancient ruins and design is based on a few elements that can connect the old and the new. The new insertions, in these cases, are not sensational architecture, but only useful elements of connection. They are minimal elements (which should express high quality in the use of building materials and in architectonic solutions) that help architects to tie together the fragmented history of the site, sometimes also with poetical suggestions (*Fig. 11*): a gangway, a new pavement, a lift which can help accessibility to the ancient site, but also a particular way to illuminate ruins, or to present them to the public. Sometimes, the integration of a part which has been destroyed, distinguishably but also in harmony with the existing part, can become an



*Fig. 11*  
Civitavecchia,  
Italy, the so-  
called *Magazzini  
romani*, inside  
the harbour,  
have been  
transformed into  
a shop by using  
only a few new  
elements (Enza  
Evangelista,  
2004)

occasion to create new spaces where old, forgotten or new functions can be located (Crespi 2009) (*Fig. 12, 13*). In this sense, if we come back to the example of the Augustinian Priory, we can affirm that the new bridge which the local community wants to build to connect the evocative site with the small village of Kells (*Fig. 14*), and a rational system of gangways to facilitate accessibility inside the ruins and its environs, might be the only necessary interventions to shift the ruined Priory to the present. These are interventions which – by adhering to the past – respect and maintain the authenticity and suggestion of the site (Ricoeur [1998], 2004).

The last consideration concerns the kind of re-use that might be appropriate for ancient ruins. Since the birth of archeological restoration, ancient ruins have been included among the so-called ‘dead monuments’, that is to say, objects out of our time, just for contemplation, and for this reason not eligible for re-use (Bellini 1984). (The expression is strictly connected to the opposite of ‘live monuments’, which includes ancient buildings that are not ruined, hence re-usable).

On the contrary, human sciences have shown us that when ruins are re-discovered, they inevitably change and, as a psychological integration, they become part of the present (Carotenuto 1978). For this reason, ancient ruins have to be re-used. Recently, this awareness also seems to be diffused among architects and conservators. Of course, they have to be aware of the fragility of these old structures. Ruins can be re-used if their protection and authenticity are not threatened.

If, for instance, the new function includes partial or complete reconstructions that threaten the authenticity of the site, it means that this new planned function is not right. In spite of common belief, the re-use of ruins has to satisfy some fundamental principles: minimum intervention, reversibility, and high quality of new insertions by fully respecting the original building materials. So, at the beginning of every intervention, there must be a correct idea of the new role. In many cases it is possible to connect past and present in ruins by associating their historical role with some activities. If we come back to the case of Kells Priory, which can be considered emblematic, it could become a sort of suburban park, which would allow the community to enjoy the pleasantness of the site and, at the same time, to benefit from other events such as cultural events, concerts, art exhibitions (*Fig. 15*) or other functions connected to escapist pleasures.

The relationship between transformation and conservation in ruined buildings is difficult but possible. It involves a different, unusual way of looking at a ruin, not as a metaphor of the end, but on the contrary, as a symbol of life. In this sense, it should be up to us to demonstrate that, in this new dimension,



*Fig. 12,13*  
Granada, Spain,  
a lacuna in  
the *Muraglia*  
*Nazari* has  
been integrated  
by using a  
stonework  
structure leaned  
up against  
the old wall.  
A suggestive  
passage, from  
which it is  
possible to look  
at the historic  
centre, has been  
realized inside  
the thickness  
of the new wall  
(Antonio Jiménez  
Torrecillaz,  
2002-2006)

*Fig. 14*  
Kells, Ireland,  
Augustinian  
Priory, a  
temporary  
wooden bridge  
connects the  
ancient site to  
the village of  
Kells



*Fig. 15*  
*Roccelletta*  
*di Borgia*,  
Catanzaro,  
Italy, the  
archaeological  
site often gives  
hospitality to  
cultural events.  
In this way the  
traces of the past  
and the signs  
of the present  
coexist in the site



we can create a new future in which, by re-using the traces of the past, it is possible to keep the idea of persistence of time as against inevitable decay (Roth 1997).

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# Wide Accessibility and Conservation of Architectural Heritage in Italy: problems and methodological guidelines

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In Italy, the first debates on accessibility date back to the mid 1960s: the 1965 Conference held in Stresa entitled '*Barriere architettoniche*' ('Architectural barriers') underlined the urgent need to take appropriate measures in order to make new buildings also accessible to persons with reduced mobility<sup>1</sup>. However, it was only in the 1990s that accessibility became directly associated with the field of architectural restoration, and that the need to reconcile conservation of architectural heritage with wider public accessibility was finally taken into consideration. This issue was addressed for the first time in 1998 when, in the journal 'TeMa', it was clearly stated that an asset can be considered such only when it is accessible to users<sup>2</sup>. The same idea had already been expressed a few decades earlier by Cesare Brandi, who maintained that the recognition of a work of art is an individual experience which necessarily involves full awareness on the part of the user<sup>3</sup>.

Since then, the debate on the removal of architectural barriers from historical buildings and sites of historical interest has widened in Italy. In 2007 the Italian Ministry for Cultural Assets and Activities set up a Committee to address problems related to disabilities in relation to cultural heritage and activities. This resulted in the publication in 2008 of the '*Guidelines for the elimination of architectural barriers from places of cultural interest*', which became an updated methodological framework of reference in the field of accessibility in Italy<sup>4</sup>.

These guidelines, implemented in 2008 by means of a ministerial decree, represent the completion of a long legislative process in the sector: the legal framework on accessibility underwent some radical changes during the eighties and the nineties, leading to the establishment of a legal framework aimed at meeting, with a more flexible approach, the needs of the users in terms of removal of architectural barriers. The solutions and parameters provided for in this framework, which is still in force today, are no longer established a

*priori* but can be tailored to a variety of needs, suggesting possible alternative solutions for the removal of architectural barriers<sup>5</sup>. The guidelines can therefore be conceived as an instrument ‘to encourage debate on a complex and often underestimated topic (it is sufficient to think, for instance, of the so-called perceptive barriers, which are often neglected) [...] and to highlight the fact that issues related to accessibility lie at the core of planning and restoration’<sup>6</sup>. In this respect, particularly relevant is the concept of *universal* design, defined in 1997 as the possibility given to a wider public to enjoy the use of objects and spaces – in this case artefacts and historical sites.

Since the 1990s, as indicated above, the issue of accessibility has involved both the fields of conservation and of restoration. In this respect, the legislative framework has offered designers/restorers further possibilities to take the needs of disabled people into consideration when working on historical buildings, both as ‘definitive’ and ‘provisional’ works. These most recent initiatives on accessibility have taken into consideration not only people with reduced mobility, but also people with permanent or temporal sensory disabilities. This has widened the margin of manoeuvre when works of adaptation were carried out, encouraging interventions based on the combination of light, reversible and therefore removable manufactured items, which were structurally and functionally detached from the historical building, and which generally improved its usability, comfort and accessibility, both vertically (e.g. by means of lifts, lifting platforms with or without cabins, stair-lifts, ramps) and horizontally (footbridges, new premises for lavatories, information centres, bookshops, restaurants and cafeterias). General usability was also enhanced through orientation systems with tactilely perceptible maps and flooring.

Thus, from a methodological perspective, an architect/restorer has to fully respect the guidelines and guarantee the best architectural quality of the interventions, considered a crucial factor for the positive outcome of the restoration work, while avoiding banal solutions which, although they may preserve the integrity of the work of art, leave a questionable legacy of our time. In Italy today there are several high-quality interventions which move in this positive direction and involve numerous places of historic interest: the adaptation of the archaeological complex of Trajan’s Marketplace, of the ancient Via Biberatica and of the excavation area opposite the *Porticus Octaviae*, all in Rome; the arrangement dealing with the drop between the garden and Tivoli’s Villa D’Este; the ramp built around the Sacello degli Augustali in the Archaeological museum in Rome; the lifts available at the Altare della Patria, also in Rome. This is only to mention a few of the most significant interventions, some of which have also been referred to as relevant

case studies in the *Guidelines*.

However, not all interventions are satisfactory in terms of quality. Some works have been carried out using inappropriate materials, with poor durability and leaving much to be desired as far as planning is concerned. Some may even be damaging, due to the incompatibility between, for instance, ancient stone manufacture and more perishable materials. These interventions often lack some proper planning and could not be described as being within the wider project of restoration. In short, reversibility, which is still a legitimate requisite in the restoration process, has not always been interpreted as that absence of conflict between the barrier removal device and the historical asset. On the contrary, reversibility has often led to precarious and temporary solutions, resulting in a general disengagement of the suggested proposals.

Conversely, when the aim of removing architectural barriers is integrated and framed within the macro restoration project, it represents a stimulating opportunity to connect 'old' and 'new' in the uniqueness of our cultural heritage. By doing so, enhancing accessibility becomes simply one of the numerous issues to be dealt with during architectural restoration. However, this requires a certain degree of awareness and sensibility on the part of the designer/restorer vis-à-vis the accessibility of a historical building/site. It is therefore crucial that, ever since university years, elimination of barriers is included in restoration projects so that architects start conceiving accessibility as one of the key components of the restoration project, on the same footing as structural and facility-related issues.

In the light of the above considerations, it is clear that the elimination of architectural barriers in Italy is to be included in a wider architectural restoration project. As a matter of fact, the presence of multiple aspects of a restoration process (cultural, structural, technological and related to facilities and materials) implies the need to involve experts accustomed to a complex type of approach. This of course does not mean one has to be an expert on everything, but rather to be aware of the problems to be faced, to be ready to learn from experts and to show conciseness and sense of responsibility. An architect/restorer can therefore be compared to a general practitioner. As Salvatore Boscarino stated, before being an expert in a specific field, he/she should be ready to establish a dialogic relation with experts from other disciplines<sup>7</sup>.

It is therefore crucial that universities provide students of architecture with the right approach from the outset, and teach them that the elimination of architectural barriers from historical buildings and sites is simply one of the several aspects to be taken into consideration in the framework of a restoration project. The latter implies constraints that are even tighter than

the ones imposed for the construction of new buildings: cultural constraints (which tend to lay stress on permanence); technological and performance-related constraints; constraints linked to the compatibility of old materials with new ones; restrictions related to the development of cultural heritage and its use/accessibility. Thus, reconciling the conservation of architectural heritage with increased public accessibility is only one of the aspects to be considered in the restoration process, on the same footing as compliance with existing legislation and the improvement of structures and facilities.

The accessibility issue already emerges in the preliminary and early stages of restoration, when it is necessary to identify the uneven surfaces and the possible architectural barriers. Removing the latter without undermining conservation will be one of the most crucial points of the project. In this regard, it is important to highlight the establishment of the Degree Prize '*Muoversi nell'Immibile*', promoted by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities. This initiative offers an interesting overview of the efforts undertaken by numerous Italian universities, with a view to making students of architecture aware of the fact that accessibility is a fully-fledged requirement to be met in the overall restoration process.

It is necessary to look for a balance between the conservation of architectural heritage and its accessibility to the public. The latter does not represent the final goal of restoration, but a means for the conservation of architectural heritage. Priority cannot in fact be given to use, but to the architectural asset in its multiple aspects and values. Accessibility to the largest number of people remains, however, necessary. In that case, a good solution should not overlook the psychological and sociological dimensions related to the removal of architectural barriers; the restoration project should thus avoid solutions specifically addressed to some categories of users, which could trigger social marginalisation. On the contrary, it should be desirable to pursue the aim of changing and improving the relationship between disabled people and the space where they move and live.

Sometimes we take for granted that our heritage is not amenable to the removal of architectural barriers; on the contrary, spaces in historical buildings and places tend to be wider and more accommodating. Abrupt changes in level, monumental great staircases, architectural barriers are of course present, but they often coexist with spaces which allow the designer a great *adaptability*. This can be achieved through the use of manufactured items which can be considered supplementary to what is already there. As a matter of fact, the best projects for the removal of physical barriers in the field of restoration are those based on the idea of 'addition' rather than 'removal', so that nothing is lost.

It is in the light of this approach that some connections can be found with what emerged during the Kilkenny workshop in September 2009. One of the items on the agenda was indeed urban accessibility of the Irish town of Kilkenny. From a comparison with some Medieval Italian historic centres in terms of accessibility, it came out that the ancient complex of Kilkenny allows a good level of wide *accessibility*, due to its *spindle* structure crossed by the main street which links up the hubs of the *civitas*, the castle and the cathedral. The achievement of wider accessibility, from the perspective of 'soft mobility' planning at urban level, shows the need to 'improve' mobility rather than imposing constraints on the historic town to pursue total accessibility. It is, however, also important to point out that the elimination of the architectural barriers in Kilkenny was achieved through solutions that, though positive in terms of their functionality, present some disputable architectural proposals (e.g. the flight of stairs leading to the cathedral). Therefore, rethinking *soft mobility* criteria and methods is a good opportunity for the town to change, reconciling conservation of traditional aspects with contemporary architectural solutions (e.g. the new Courthouse building on the fringe of the historical town). The historic centre of Venice in Italy symbolises this approach. In spite of its unique morphology, and thanks to the support of its local authority, 70 per cent of the public areas in Venice were made completely accessible in a few years<sup>8</sup>. This result was achieved through solutions whose methodological framework can also be applied to the historical centre of Kilkenny.

A first step would be the employment of a system of signs indicating paths and routes with different levels of accessibility, which would lead to important sites within the urban area (e.g. the castle and the cathedral). Furthermore, it would be desirable to associate this initiative with a plan of urban design: starting from ground coverings, and following the principles of *universal design*, the use of facilities would be generally improved for every user. These projects could in the end make up an integrated system if promoted by information campaigns aimed at raising citizens' awareness. Of course, it is also important to focus on the quality and the *durability* of these solutions. *Durability* is an issue that applies to both the choice of the materials and their maintenance. Maintenance can be guaranteed if the use remains constant in time, and if general solutions are made available to everyone (this latter condition also helps to avoid solutions that might be seen as discriminating).

To conclude, the constraints imposed by the legal framework on the elimination of architectural barriers in restoration projects imply a critical attitude towards the various solutions available; this condition has to be considered as a stimulating opportunity when drafting a project proposal, where each sign represents an act of creation which greatly affects the quality of the

interventions. Thus, a restoration project must be conceived as an experience which brings together cultural and social needs, a process which combines the search for solutions with the community's need to share and give voice to its history and heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pane, A. (2004) *L'accessibilità nel progetto di restauro*, in R. Picone, *Conservazione e accessibilità, Il superamento delle barriere architettoniche negli edifici e nei siti storici*, Napoli, Arte Tipografica ed. 59-76.

<sup>2</sup> Bellini, A. (1998) *La pura contemplazione non appartiene all'architettura*, in 'TeMa', 1998, no. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Picone, R. (2004) *Conservazione e accessibilità* cit., pp. 9-20.

<sup>4</sup> Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Direzione Generale per i Beni Architettonici, Storico-Artistici ed Etnoantropologici. *Linee guida per il superamento delle barriere architettoniche nei luoghi di interesse culturale*, Roma 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Vitagliano, G. (2007) *Edifici storici e superamento delle barriere architettoniche: il quadro normativo vigente in Italia*, in 'L'architetto italiano', no. 18, febbraio-marzo, 24-29.

<sup>6</sup> *Linee guida per il superamento delle barriere architettoniche* cit., 19.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Picone, R. (2009) *Gli esiti del premio: un bilancio e un'opportunità per il futuro*, in *Muoversi nell'immobile. Superamento delle barriere architettoniche nei luoghi di interesse culturale*, Premio per tesi di laurea in Architettura ed Ingegneria, a cura Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, Direzione Generale per i Beni Architettonici, Storico-Artistici ed Etnoantropologici, Roma, 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Linee guida per il superamento delle barriere architettoniche* cit., 128-129.

# ‘Cross the border - Close the gap’. Suggestions for ‘pop conservation’.

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*‘But it is not credible that mass culture, with its ephemeral and brittle character, will not produce, through necessary repercussions, a culture which is both defense and reflection. We can all collaborate in this future. But man’s life is short and the life of the world can be almost infinitely long.’*

*(Montale 1976)*

The topic of transformation in conservation design highlights principally theoretical matters. A conservation/transformation design, even if carried out according to low-impact measures, inevitably influences the user’s understanding of the object of interest. From this point of view, the case of Kells Priory may offer the chance to think about design, as a conservation of its *status* of ruin, as a transformation of *tout-court* sense, or as ‘adding’ meaning to the site. In particular, ‘adding’ is an operation that gives a new semantic field to the object, not erasing the traces of time, but giving it, at the same time, a new role in contemporary society and an actual social purpose. The choice to add additional value to the object of study is a matter of interest if linked to the term ‘valorisation’, frequently used in the field of cultural heritage, and especially if inserted in the context of globalisation.

The issue of preservation of traditions in a consumer society is a moot point for contemporary culture. It is widely held that mass culture transposes every form into a mass-produced picture, by lowering the level of information and making it as undifferentiated as possible. Obviously, this concerns architectural heritage too. This is because, of late, many initiatives regarding cultural heritage have confused marketing and valorisation. At the same time, the will to stem mass culture processes has generated negative results for the popularisation and democratisation of culture, and has brought about people’s disaffection with and indifference towards cultural heritage. The present age has a strong need for easy access to culture, and to share information that is not easily available to the general public, but it also has a strong need for roots, discovery of the past, nature and handcrafts (Dei 2007). Developing the very positive side of globalisation, like mass education and pluralism, is as important as preserving the past and popular traditions.

Conservation is generally considered a cultural endurance factor able to

constrain the rapid advance of globalisation processes, which remove every trace of memory. But this approach does not consider how interest in the past is generated by subjective aesthetic values or by its 'high' historical value alone. Other endurance factors of buildings and sites include commercial and symbolic reasons. Buildings remained where they were adaptable and/or where they did not represent an obstacle to commerce, or because they were located in uncomfortable and inaccessible sites. In many cases, we cannot ignore the true significance of those buildings, or their symbolic, mythical, religious and national values as underpinning reasons for their conservation. In confirmation of this, we can observe how most architectural heritage includes churches and monasteries, buildings that represent local or national unity, and sites that commemorate the greatness of the past. So we should state that the main reasons for architectural heritage conservation are not only due to highbrow culture, in the sense of a restricted intellectual interest, but that they are also generated by culture understood in an anthropological way, including habits, rituals and the myths of ordinary people. The industrial revolution weakened this strong link between the past and popular culture, through the creation of assembly-line work and undifferentiated knowledge. It is now desirable to create a new relationship between cultural heritage and popular culture, bringing contemporary needs closer to the conservation field, which is often far from widespread understanding and interest. But it is necessary to leave behind some prejudices for this type of conciliation.

The distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture is rooted in history: in literature, the scope of tragedy and epic dealt with higher-echelon topics, such as power, wars and love affairs; comedy was reserved instead for bourgeois and peasants' everyday life. It was in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, with the consolidation of mercantile capitalism, that the contrast became more tangible and the high/low dichotomy took on its contemporary meaning. According to Huyssen (1986), this dichotomy 'became politically charged in decisive ways when new class conflicts erupted in the mid-nineteenth century and the quickening pace of the industrial devolution required new cultural orientations for mass populace'. This cultural transformation was supported, in the last century, by critical sociology that had the merit of understanding the importance of mass culture in capitalistic systems and making it a subject of study. The School of Frankfurt focused on the opposition between the Culture Industry and real culture, analysing the contents of mass products. However, this approach does not include analysis of the way to use these products and the activities that developed around them. In the 1970s, in reaction to the arrival of TV and the consequent crisis of the traditional ways of socialising, learning and communicating, spaces for grassroots cultural production were

drastically cut – working-class culture practically became mass culture. This fact generated a contradiction: on the one hand, in the sociological interpretation by the School of Frankfurt, the term ‘popular’ marked a well defined social class, and the Culture Industry should have been accepted as the new working-class culture; on the other hand, the Culture Industry was considered as an expression of an overpowering ideology, forced onto the working class by the ruling class. The result of that latter interpretation was to set folk culture against mass culture. It was no longer produced *by* ordinary people, but *for* ordinary people, and it was politically regressive. Instead, folk culture was seen as authentic, produced by the pre-industrial lower classes. This association between culture and classes perhaps does not consider the complexity of relationships between social classes in the post-industrial age, no longer to be attributed to a dualistic opposition. This misunderstanding has generated a separation between cultural levels, one which did not exist in the pre-industrial age. Therefore, over the years, a misinterpretation matched the term ‘mass culture’ with products and not with social changes, forgetting the original meaning, which referred to mass media (Jenkins 2006).

In the last years of the twentieth century, new theoretical approaches were developed on this point that contest the scientific value of the differentiation of cultures. In 1962, the French philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin re-evaluated mass culture in his work ‘L’Esprit du Temps’. He did not propose to exalt it, but he suggested re-dimensioning the role of highbrow culture, in contrast to the haughtiness of the School of Frankfurt. Morin raised some questions about the Culture Industry, but he pointed out how it was the only place of communication between different social and cultural classes, and the first example of global culture in history. In 1964, Umberto Eco in ‘Apocalypse Postponed’ considered comics as a field for scientific study for the first time. The academic response to this theory was sceptical and snobbish, showing that highbrow culture was still not ready to accept and analyse new pop-culture and mass-market artistic forms (Eco 1964). Another essay entitled ‘Cross the border – Close the Gap’ by Leslie Fiedler, published provocatively in the soft porn magazine ‘Playboy’ in 1969, criticised the elitism of academic literary knowledge. The American critic used the term ‘postmodern’ for the first time to describe the new cultural atmosphere in those years, and advised against arguing for the distinction between high and mass art. According to Fiedler, art must be ‘pop’, also dealing seriously with thrillers and comics (Cesarani 1997).

Other approaches criticise, instead, the stigmatisation of tradition as being something steady and immutable. Tradition is, in a sense, a concept created by the present, and one that comes from a conscious view of modernity

(Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992). Conservation design, to become 'pop', should refer to a framework that includes past and present and, consequently, tradition and mass culture.

Architectural cultural developments, according to several researchers (Harvey 1990, Huyssen 1986), have undergone the same progression, with mutual influences in other cultural fields. Buildings and sites possess a strong tangible factor, and they do not have a true cultural market in which to circulate. However, they can be compared to other cultural products for two main reasons: they may have a strong symbolic purpose and they may interact with the users' emotional state. In spite of this, few interesting results regarding conservation have been generated in the wide debate about post-modern architecture. Thus, the field of restoration has remained a restricted, intellectual position. Nowadays 'transformation' in conservation design means essentially how to insert new architecture into old contexts. It rarely means giving a new sense to a structure, or including in it all the activities, as Bauman said, connected to 'social demand to give sense to our life through creation of links to a meaningful past' (Harvey 1990).

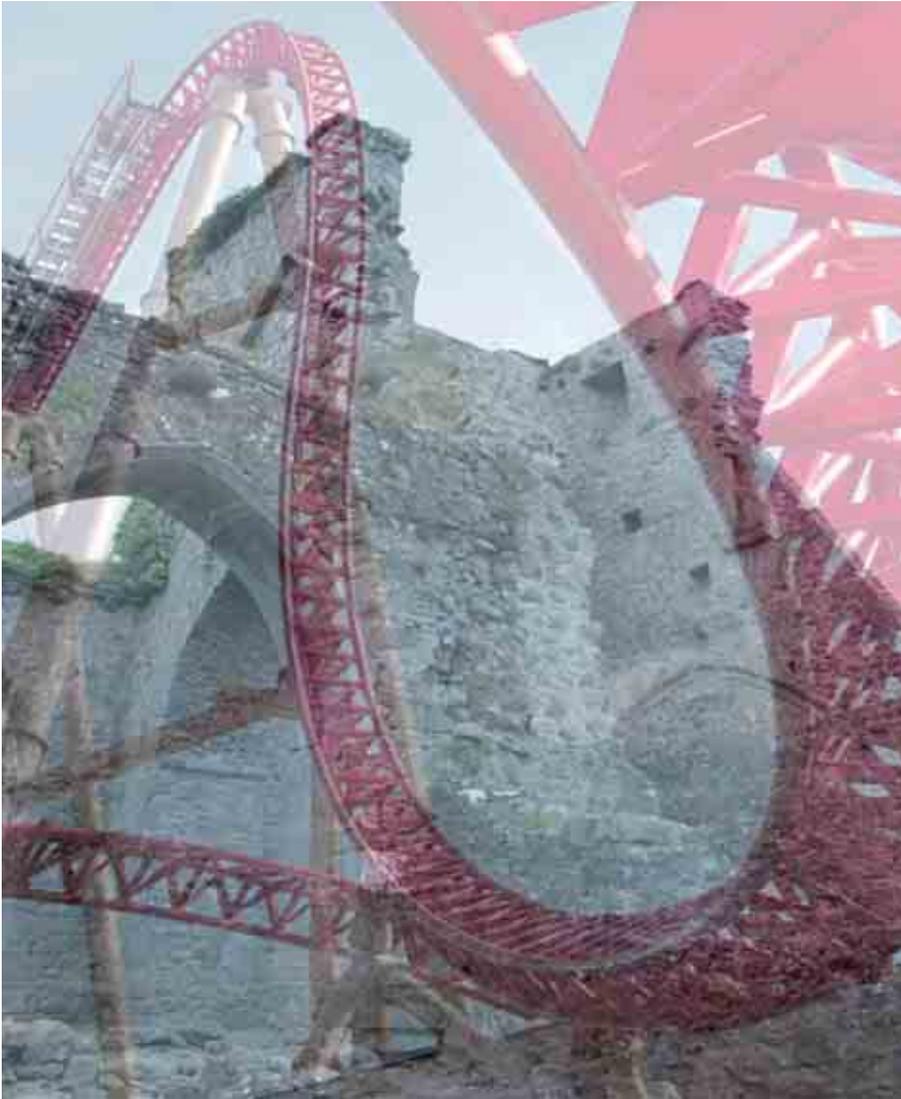
It is possible to find a point of convergence between conservation culture and mass culture in the approach taken by the School of Birmingham. Its '*Cultural Studies*' shifts attention from the production to the consumption of mass-culture products, and from the analysis of contents to the analysis of social practices connected to use. From this point of view, 'popular' is not the mass product, but the way people use it. Historical buildings often 'house' highbrow events or functions far from the community's needs. Indeed, new uses, even if selected carefully, may 'violate' a building's nobility. This approach has certainly some beneficial effects with regard to material authenticity. However, it ignores the opportunity to insert the building into the process of human activities. This risks relegating it to oblivion and the indifference of ordinary people. Instead, a new use of a building or a site may set up a link between the past and mass culture.

From this point of view, the case of Alton Towers seems to be emblematic. It is a park located in Staffordshire (UK), to the north of the village of Alton. It is made up of a naturalistic garden, a Gothic-style castle and other historical buildings. Its foundation goes back to the eighth century and it has an extremely interesting history. But what sets it apart is that the garden has been opened to the public since 1860, and during the twentieth century, the entire site was transformed into a fun fair, including roller coasters, Ferris wheel, carousels and other attractions. It is visited by 2.5 million tourists every year. However, it is clearly an extreme case and we cannot consider transforming every site into a Disneyland theme park (Augé 1999) (*Fig. 1*).

Having said that, we should consider recreational factors and entertainment as features of contemporary structures. The presence of historical buildings in areas assigned to those purposes may be an 'antidote' to the levelling of places. After all, we have witnessed in recent times a rediscovery of traditions and myths from a recreational point of view. In the past, myths, legends, tradition and storytellers were all considered to be common elements, often connected to local settings. It is worth noting how those elements still exist in present times, albeit spread through new media. At the end of the fifties, Tolkien revised and introduced folk content into mass culture in the saga '*The Lord of the Rings*'. Nowadays, cultural phenomena such as '*Harry Potter*' or '*The Chronicles of Narnia*' although children's literature, show how people desire stories based on myths, legends and fairytales, and the entertainment industry has amply exploited this trend in movies, merchandising and leisure activities. The vast Irish folk heritage may be an interesting element, capable of leading a transformational design aimed at explaining Kells Priory ruins through local legend and fairytales (Fig. 2).

Sometimes contemporary art and culture have connected with the past through installation art. Installation art is a way for the languages of archaeological and historical sites to interact with contemporary language. It emphasizes the 'coming' of history and projects archaeology into the present time, but such works are not easy to understand. So they are addressed to highbrow culture and to an inner circle of users. Pop culture, instead, represents an easy access to contemporary art, mainly through radio, cinema, TV, music and video clips. Pop language seems to comprise a collective myth, by a continuous transfer between audio and video, shapes and motions (Jenkins 2006). It is important to note how pop music has 'crossed the border' into historical sites, such as old towns, arena theatres and amphitheatres, with concerts, festivals and popular events, with significant results regarding 'contact' between the past and the contemporary. The Arena theatre of Verona (Italy) is an example of an old context housing diverse pop events. This building was founded for gladiator games in the first half of the first century B.C., between the reigns of Augustus and Claudius, and was the scene of jousts in the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, the site was re-used as an opera theatre. In 1970 it was used for the TV programme 'Games without frontiers', for the final stage of the very popular sports event *Giro d'Italia* in 1984, and for pop music festivals since the 1960s. Users benefit from old buildings through their original functions, having the opportunity to steep themselves in their history (Fig. 3).

From this point of view, the plan for the Archaeological Park of Alesia, France, drawn up by Bernard Tschumi (2004-2008) is an extremely interesting



*Fig. 1*  
Kells Priory,  
Co. Kilkenny  
- Ireland, 'Fun  
fair' impression  
(photo and  
processing by  
author)

reference. The particular idea of the French architect is to reconstruct the battle of 52 B.C. between Gallic tribes led by Vercingetorix and the Roman army led by Julius Caesar. This intention comes from a theoretical background: in the quest to transform the site into a place involving users, it proposes recreational and educational areas aimed at documenting the history of the site. The plan by Tschumi tries to keep a balance between the archaeologist's requests to avoid special effects and to plan for low impact intervention, and the demand to make facilities easily identifiable by users (Costanzo 2009). We can consider this operation a 'Conservation/Transformation' design, because it incorporates a process which transforms the object being examined from a 'simple' ruin, to an understandable testimony of the past. Paradoxically, one



*Fig. 2*  
Kells Priory,  
Co. Kilkenny -  
Ireland, 'Folk'  
impression  
(photo and  
processing by  
author.

of the most significant aspects of cultural tourism has been the identification of a progressive loss of the importance of the real understanding of a site, in favour of a type of cultural fetishism (Simonicca 1997) (*Fig. 4*). Today's tourist is looking, above all, for an emotional involvement, disregarding the authenticity of the site. This often leads to a 'false' or even virtual reconstruction of the site, which can give a unique emotional experience, much better than the actual object conserved. From the pop-culture point of view, the 'Conservation/Transformation' design of Kells Priory, according to the examples/impressions described, should unite contemporary use – based on senses, recreational demands and easy access – with scientific needs and rational order which can provide the essence to protect cultural heritage.



*Fig. 3*  
Kells Priory,  
co. Kilkenny  
- Ireland,  
'Pop music'  
impression  
(photo and  
processing by  
author)



*Fig. 4*  
Kells Priory,  
Co. Kilkenny  
- Ireland,  
'Historical  
reconstruction'  
impression  
(photo and  
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# Natural and cultural resources

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One of the major goals for our generation is that of reaching a sustainable economy in respect to the regeneration and assimilation capabilities of natural systems and based on principles of social equity. To manage the route towards sustainability, as Chambers, Simmons and Wackernagel have indicated (Wackernagel and Rees 2008), we should pass from 'attributing value to what we can measure, to being able to measure what we value'. To control the progress towards sustainable development, it is necessary to be able not only to define but also to 'measure' the different aspects of sustainability – the carrying capacity of our environment, the impact of our actions, and the 'quality of life'. Certainly, measurability is neither the only problem nor the most important, though it often the case that certain phenomena are understood and enter the collective consciousness only after their quantification. I believe that Gianfranco Bologna is right when he observes that the progress towards measurability could help the progress towards sustainability (Bologna 2005). Between the 1980s and 1990s, William Rees (University of British Columbia) developed the model of the 'ecological footprint'. The ecological footprint has been defined as the total area of terrestrial and water ecosystems that a human population of a given size, represented by few or several individuals, consumes in order to produce the resources necessary for its life and to assimilate the waste produced by the same population. Quantifications of the ecological footprints are based on the possibility of estimating, with reasonable accuracy, the resources that we consume and the waste we produce, and on the possibility that these flows of resources and waste could be converted into an equivalent biologically productive area, necessary to guarantee those functions.

We can also attempt to introduce a similar method in the field of conservation to allow the assessment of the environmental impact of our choices, always taking into account that when we intervene in our cultural heritage we have a double duty: to preserve natural resources and to transmit cultural heritage as a legacy – and a resource – to future generations. I believe that in teaching, too, we should include the element of quantification of the risks that our work may carry for our environment and our heritage, and that, in spite of the limits that this quantification may impose, this could increase consciousness of

theoretical and technical choices.

The experience of the workshop could allow for a comparative study on real buildings for which different intervention choices would be proposed. These would become the basis of an attempt to introduce some criteria for quantification of the consumption of resources (natural and cultural) implied within any architectural intervention.

Reading the abstract, written in June 2009 for the present paper, it is clear that while waiting for the Dublin workshop I intended to focus attention on a specific aspect of sustainability: the importance of succeeding in quantifying the impact of theoretical choices and techniques employed in actions on the building heritage. The need for quantification characterises our age and is more and more important in the achievement of collective awareness for analysing and verifying the present state of affairs. This is concretised in massive and precise use of mathematical and statistical tools for the quantification of data and the formalisation of theories and models, and it is also perceivable in the widespread use of opinion polls. Data and statistics draw attention to, and sensitise public opinion towards, real problems, and so the quantification element can be an important starting point for reflections on the sustainability of design and technical choices.

However, participation in the workshop and discussion with others has convinced me that the transfer of the concept of sustainability from the world of the ecologist to that of restoration is still far from mature, and requires further reflection before carrying my observations further. In this connection, in the discussion of the working group on Kilkenny city the meaning of the term 'sustainability' did not seem so clear when applied to the building heritage, and one of the first doubts shared by everyone was precisely: 'What does 'sustainability' mean when we talk about the city? What is to be sustained? The buildings or the uses?' I therefore decided to try to note down some reflections, starting from the meaning of the adjective 'sustainable', and blending them with what emerged in the extemporaneous discussions of the workshop.

In the dictionary, under 'sustainable' we read 'susceptible of being maintained with promptness and commitment', an adjective deriving from 'sustain', meaning 'to maintain in a raised position, offering adequate support to the weight' (Devoto and Oli 1995). The term 'sustainable' thus refers to the capacity, possibility and will to sustain, to support and bear, to maintain in time, without undermining what is sustained.

Defining a process, a project or a choice as 'sustainable', therefore means directly linking it to the bearing capacity proper to the system or systems that are at the basis of every human activity. This implies awareness that a close

relationship of dependence exists between human activities and the three principal systems that guide man's life and choices: the environmental, social and economic systems.

It was only possible to take this conceptual pathway starting from the 1980s, since at that time came the recognition of the energy-environment problem. However, for a long time the energy system had shown its intrinsic weakness,<sup>1</sup> as the biologist Edward Wilson maintains, man having 'a natural propensity to ignore every distant eventuality that does not require urgent examination' (Wilson 2004), and so until the end of the eighties<sup>2</sup> the problem was substantially neglected. Only then, and for the first time, was the existence of the three fundamental dimensions of development recognised: environment, society and economy (Goodland and Daly 1996). Ahead of being called on to protect the fragile system, research concentrated on the identification of the limits of each sphere of interest (environmental, social and economic), in the awareness that over-reaching these limits would have meant heading towards the collapse of the whole system. There followed the recognition of environmental sustainability, which identifies and defines the limits of the 'environment system' (though it is endowed with many regenerative potentialities), establishing its capacities for recuperation in relation to human activities, that is to say, the possibility of continuing to furnish resources, receive wastes and be a direct source of utility for man.

In the case of Kilkenny, the proposal by some participants to equip the town with 'soft mobilities' can be seen as moving precisely in the direction of environmental sustainability. The policy of so-called 'sustainable mobility', which integrates themes linked to energy saving with the liveability of town centres and reduction in environmental pollution, is nowadays part of territorial planning. In the last few years the European Union has financed various research programmes and the sharing of 'good practice' (also including European Mobility Management Actions) for the purpose of identifying good models, in which it is possible to combine the necessary values of freedom of movement and accessibility with lower pollution and lower consumption of energy. Within a territorial system, environmental sustainability also means the capacity to valorise the environment as a 'distinctive element' of the territory, at the same time to ensure protection and renewal of natural resources and the heritage.

For Kilkenny City, this mirrors the idea of the recovery of the meaning of the river Nore for the city. The river crosses the town longitudinally. It should no longer be perceived as an obstacle that divides the city in two – a perception that we read in all cartographies from the seventeenth century down to the present day – territorial union being entrusted to the connecting bridge.

Today, most of the population of Kilkenny does not live in the historical city but in the neighbouring areas, between the city and the country, beyond the river, and close connection with the city centre appears even more necessary as it continues to be a workplace and meeting-place. It is not only a matter of a practical demand – though this is not to be underestimated – but also of a real psychological need to affirm that people belong to the historical city, and to make them recognise themselves in it. A new reading of the city which emerged in the workshop could identify precisely the river as the natural connecting element between the two urban areas, and constituting an alternative pathway for mobility with a lower impact on the environment (*Fig. 1, 2*).

However, economic sustainability also exists, defining the limits of the 'economic system' and recognising that it cannot generate the perpetual growth of economic indicators. Within a territorial system, economic sustainability means the capacity to produce and maintain the maximum added value in the territory, effectively combining resources in order to valorise the specificity of the products and services.

The need thus arises to protect the capacity to generate income and work for the population. In the case of Kilkenny, one of the questions that the working group asked the administration of the city was precisely 'What economic activities are going to sustain the city for the next 100 years?' Linked to environmental and economic sustainability, and no less important, is social sustainability, which has an evident goal in the possibility of guaranteeing conditions of human wellbeing (safety, health, education) fairly distributed by class and kind. The different subjects involved have to find the capacity to intervene together effectively, with the same project objectives, encouraged by agreement among the various institutional levels.

Environmental, economic and social sustainability (but we could say the very concept of sustainability in general) have from the start been associated with the idea of growth, of development,<sup>3</sup> reflecting a markedly anthropocentric vision of the theme. At the centre of the issue is not so much the ecosystem, and therefore the survival and wellbeing of all living species, but human generations.

In the course of time, manifold definitions have been coined in order to endeavour to bridle the concept of sustainable development.<sup>4</sup> Limiting ourselves to accepting the most widespread definitions, we could say that sustainable development (of an environment, of an economy, of a society) has to enable the lasting satisfaction of human needs, and guarantee an improvement in the quality of life,<sup>5</sup> without jeopardising the capacity to satisfy the needs of future generations.<sup>6</sup> It also has to guarantee equitable access to resources by every generation, thus preventing the reduction of



Fig. 1  
Part of 'The liberties of the city of Kilkenny', c. 1655, Down Survey (National Archives of Ireland)

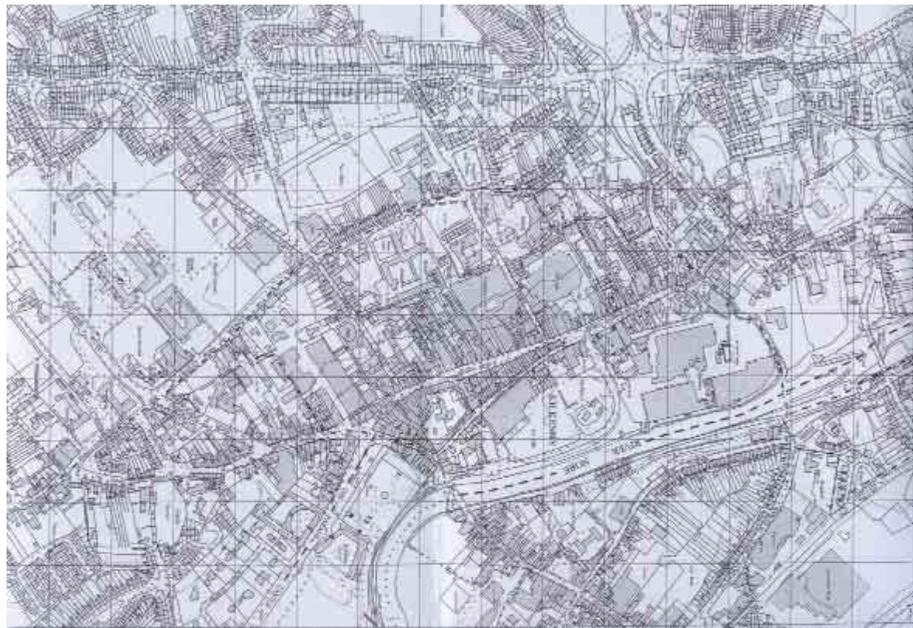


Fig. 2  
Kilkenny, Ordnance Survey Ireland, 1999, in Irish Historic Towns Atlas.

real incomes in the future. In short, the concept of sustainable development is substantiated in an ethical and political principle that implies that the economic and social dynamics of the administrations should be compatible both with an improvement in conditions of life and with the capacity of natural resources to be reproduced indefinitely. Hence, recognising the principle of sustainability implies the sharing of a commitment, oriented towards reducing the use of non-renewable resources, and towards monitoring the employment of critical resources. The analysis then shifts to enunciation of what can be considered as a resource, and as such must be preserved absolutely, not only because it is necessary for the good of humanity, but also because it represents an economic value for humanity.

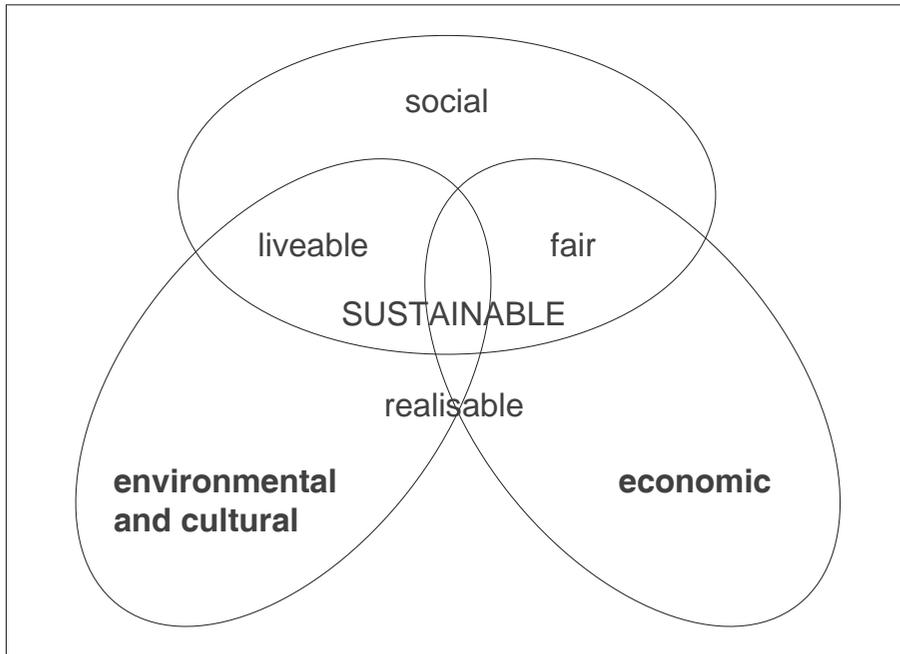
The resources on which attention has long been concentrated are natural ones (renewable and non-renewable<sup>7</sup>), which as such, are not produced by man. These are closely linked to the economic structure, and if in an agricultural economy fields and grazing lands are considered resources, in an industrial economy we have mining resources at the basis of production processes, capable of being turned into raw materials or energy. Today the reference to natural resources also gives great consideration to the environmental ones constituted by 'uncontaminated nature', which responds to a precise human need. A study by Bossel (1999) further develops the statement by Goodland and Daly, breaking up the three components of the global system into the human system, the support system (economic and infrastructural) and the natural systems, in which alongside resources, the environment is introduced. The concept of sustainability can thus be worked out in many ways. Every time that a relationship of dependency exists between resources and human activity, in a progression subtending development, there must also be sustainability of every activity in relation to the basis for resources. The concatenation of resources and activities has to take place according to a growth model that maintains human societies, without undermining the environmental and social bases on which the very capacity for development is founded. But it is now clear that a conception of sustainable development that claims to be founded only on the concept of continual growth, material and quantitative, is impracticable, and so into the concept of development it is necessary to introduce another element – improvement in the conditions and quality of life,<sup>8</sup> not seen as an increase in consumption, but as listening to the person's psychophysical needs. This has led to the rise of psycho-economy, a tool to address the problems of the environment in harmony with human demands and the choices of economic policy, bearing in mind the bond existing between the economy and the person's psychophysical needs as a natural demand of human civilisation.

In 2001, UNESCO broadened the concept of sustainable development, pointing out that 'cultural difference is as necessary for humanity as biodiversity is for nature... cultural difference is one of the roots of development, seen not only as economic growth but also as a means to lead a more satisfactory existence on the intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual plane' (Articles 1 and 3, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, UNESCO, 2001). In this vision, alongside the environment, the economy and society, culture thus becomes the fourth pillar of sustainable development (Fig. 3).

The new concept of sustainable development proposed by UNESCO has helped to generate a new category of resources to be protected, because they are recognised as being necessary for humanity; namely, cultural goods and services. As bearers of identity and values, these contribute to the psychophysical wellbeing of man. Cultural goods are considered to be *merit goods*, that is, ones pertaining to the satisfaction of social needs of identity, training and cultural elevation, an expression of preferences that are not individual, but belong to the community. This means that a common feeling exists on the need for these goods, which, regardless of personal tastes and preferences, everyone recognises as fundamental to the cultural enrichment not only of present generations, but also of future ones. The direct consequence of these observations is the need to protect and maintain cultural goods, whether they are buildings or folk traditions.

It is also interesting to stress the parallel, which emerged during the discussions of the workshop, between the concept of 'sustainability' and that of 'continuity', and also the subsequent transition between 'continuity' and 'conservation'. Both in the case of Kilkenny city and in the case of Borris House, the element of material continuity, historical and familial, appeared to be a distinctive and emerging one. A sustainable approach to the planning of the city and the estate cannot avoid going through the identification of the people – whether the population of Kilkenny city or the Kavanagh family – with the town and its historical buildings (Fig. 4, 5).

Together with the land itself, the historical heritage belongs in the category of unique environmental resources whose entity cannot be increased. It is a capital to be preserved, since it represents the values and traditions of a given territory and its inhabitants. Hence, it is also necessary to study the economic aspect of the cultural heritage, that is to say, its ability to produce income and to create development. We are talking about development which must be sustainable, and which is therefore not attained at the cost of sacrificing the heritage itself, and which must be subjected to careful vigilance, because it cannot be treated as a mere commodity or simply appraised in economic terms.



*Fig. 3*  
Schematisation  
of the links  
between  
sustainable  
development and  
the base system

Culture, and more generally the sphere of cultural goods and services, is to all intents and purposes a productive sector, whose importance grows above all in periods in which economic growth slows down, as at present. However, it is necessary, to watch over the equity of conservation that does not allocate economic resources exclusively, or above all else, to those goods that have an enormous consumption demand, being particularly attractive. In the case of Kilkenny, it will be important to preserve the historical city as a whole, and not only the single monuments that sum up its history: St Canice's Cathedral, the Anglo-Norman Castle, the Courthouse and the Hole in the Wall. Preserving, valorising and lastly, visiting the single monuments in a city is like reading just a few chapters of a book, skipping the content of the others. In this way one is unlikely to understand the meaning of the text (*Fig. 6, 7, 8*).

*Fig. 4*  
a Kilkenny street

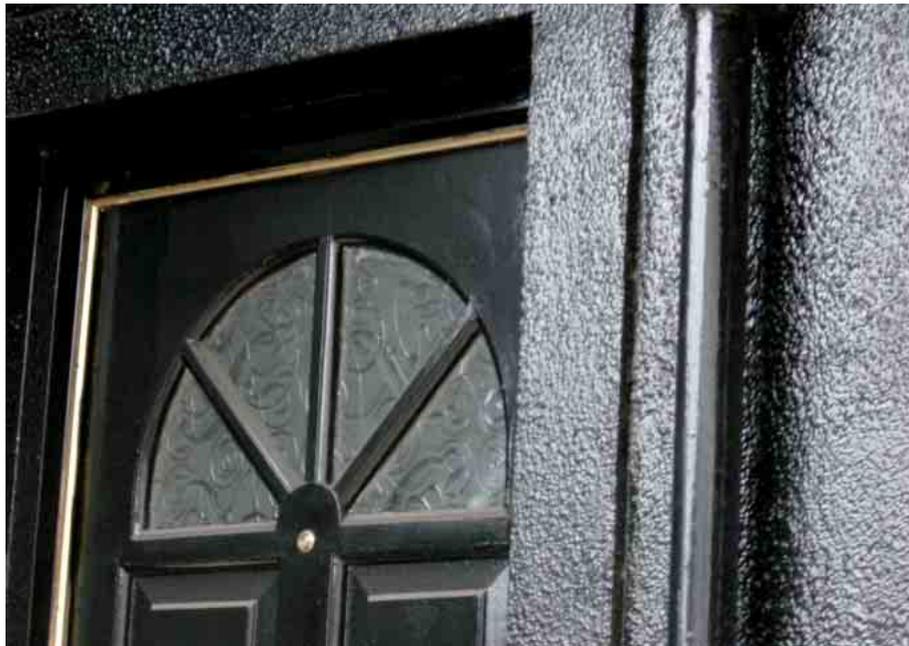




*Fig. 5*  
Kilkenny castle,  
restored in  
successive  
phases from  
1969 to 1999



*Fig. 6*  
Frequent  
'maintenance'  
actions risk  
jeopardising  
the reading of  
the historical  
town. One of  
the questions  
discussed at  
the workshop  
was precisely  
whether  
'Conservation'  
is certainly  
something quite  
different from  
'Transformation'.



*Figg. 7, 8*  
Widespread superficial finishes of the ground floor and other floors, extraneous to the historical context

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The first energy crisis, due to the conflict between Israel, Egypt and Syria, was in 1973, and the second in 1978.

<sup>2</sup> The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development dates from 1987.

<sup>3</sup> However, there are people who think that the concepts of 'development' and 'sustainability' are not compatible and that the only solution for humanity is 'reduction of growth', thus in fact rejecting the definition of 'sustainable development' (Latouche 2007).

<sup>4</sup> On the concept of sustainable development it seems that today there are more than 300 definitions, proposed by researchers and national and international bodies (Prof. A. Merlini, communication to the Sixth National Statistics Conference held in Rome in November 2002).

<sup>5</sup> From the definition of 'sustainable development' contained in *Opportunities for Change, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions*, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> From the definition of 'sustainable development' contained in the 1987 Brundtland report – which has inspired some important United Nations conferences and economic planning and national documents and international legislations – echoed by the World Commission on the Environment and Development of the UN (World Commission on Environment & Development – WCED).

<sup>7</sup> Natural resources are divided into renewable and non-renewable resources. The former are renewed through a brief biological cycle, while the latter are present in predetermined quantities and are only formed after long geological cycles.

<sup>8</sup> This appears among the objectives that the European Union has already set itself in the Maastricht Treaty.

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# Computer Simulation of the Impact of Restoration on the Building as a Method of Communication

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Even if restoration is carried out very conservatively to respect the building's integrity, the restoration of an old building always involves a transformation that has a greater or lesser impact on its materiality, character, authenticity and traces of the past. The installation of new electrical wiring or plumbing, the possible substitution of damaged parts, the repair of the lesions found, the filling-in of gaps in the cladding, the re-bonding of the masonry, new coats of paint on the walls, etc., inevitably affect not only the built substance of the building but people's perception of it also.

This impact is unavoidable, but can be controlled so as to be coherent with the expectations and criteria of the restoration project. It is distressing when the restoration of a building has been carried out, to later hear the author of the restoration express his grief about the transformation the building has undergone against his will, and despite the control he has exerted during the works. Even the most detailed project can neglect some issues regarding the impact of the intervention on the building being restored.

Today, informatics makes it possible to simulate efficiently the effects of interventions: the cleaning and conservation of materials (Torsello 1999: 253-259); the insertion of new functional elements or furniture; the filling-in of gaps or the addition of materials, and so forth. The idea is to draw up projects in the awareness of the transformation one is willing to accept, to gauge and assess it, and control it before beginning the works by means of computer simulations. These are very useful tools at the decision-making stage of the intervention, because they help predict the final impact on the building after restoration (Torsello 2005: 15-17).

At the same time, informatics has become an instrument for communication concerning the restoration project, not only with the technicians, architects, builders or bricklayers, but also with the owners or the man in the street, especially in the case of monuments or buildings that form part of the heritage of the inhabitants of a region or country. The restoration project is no longer

expressed only by means of floor plans, elevations, sections and building details, technical reports or budgets, addressed almost exclusively to the world of construction professionals and specialists, but can also be manifested by means of computer simulations that show the building in a way that is very close to the way it will look when the restoration works have been completed. Informatics provides not only two-dimensional means, for example, with photoplans of the façades, sections, floor surfaces, etc., that is to say, a whole world of pixels (Torsello 2003), which can be manipulated to prepare proposals before and after restoration by gauging the impact of the intervention, and also produce virtual, three-dimensional images of the spaces after restoration (Fig. 1) and predetermined visual tours that provide a dynamic image of the visual perception of the final result.

Informatics continues to develop very powerful tools that can be used to communicate the restoration project to the people who will be working on it and to the owners before the intervention. Virtual tours and even enhanced reality not only provide an in-depth knowledge of the final result of the restoration and its impact on the building, but make it possible to discuss the details of the execution process and coordinate the tasks of the different craftsmen participating in the restoration works, even before the works actually begin.

For this purpose, the first step is to prepare photoplans of the external and internal façades of the building, that is, rectified photographs reproduced to a scale that has a metric value. A photoplan contains a great deal more information than a simple elevational drawing. In fact, a photoplan not only reflects the geometry of lines, edges, cornices, ridges, fascias, bays, changes of plane, etc., but also the texture, colour, tone, surface gradation, treatment, shadows, etc. The photoplan does not substitute for the metric survey, which, by selecting the information to be drawn in a critical manner, makes it possible to discover details that might not be visible to the naked eye, but complements it and serves as a basis, for example, for a possible manipulation of the photograph afterwards, to make tests or simulations of the results of the restoration, as in the case we are dealing with here.

Even if it is made in great detail and with care taken to imitate materiality, virtual computer simulation is usually much cruder than the reality of what is later executed, but it provides an excellent approximation that makes it possible to detect beforehand any problems in the process and the result, or any possible incongruence of a spatial, material, chromatic, textural and other nature. In other words, the computer simulation of the result of restoration works is not only a useful way to present them to outsiders or communicate with the promoters or those performing the restoration, but in the first place and above all, it is useful for technicians to test and verify on a computer



*Fig. 1*  
Antechamber  
of the Mexuar  
in the Alhambra  
(Granada,  
Spain). Three-  
dimensional  
computer  
simulation of  
the previewed  
result both of  
the restoration  
of the historical  
surfaces and the  
insertion of new  
floors

the possible result of the criteria, techniques and execution modalities they propose in their restoration project.

It is a way of consciously planning the transformation one wishes to make; to measure, gauge and manage it before starting the works by means of computer simulations. The authors of this text have carried out this type of study on several occasions: in the restoration of the antechamber of the Mexuar in the Alhambra in Granada (Spain) (Mileto & Vegas 2008/1); the restoration of the pavement of the bridge in Pobla de Ballestar in Castellón (Spain) (Mileto & Vegas 2008); the treatment of the external surfaces of the Cáliz Tower in Castellón (Spain) (Mileto & Vegas 2007). The simulations made, in each case, compare different project options based on diverse criteria and with a view to weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of each possibility, and the different degrees of impact it would have on the building. In this way, the option chosen was the one that best adapted to the criteria defined in the project.

In the case of the restoration of the surfaces of the antechamber of the Mexuar in the Alhambra, not even the client knew exactly what treatment should be applied to walls that during the detailed stratigraphic study had revealed important information about the construction of the Nasrid complex. In this way, the client was offered considered explanations of six options for the most

realistic manner of restoring it (Fig. 2). The advantages and disadvantages of each of the six possibilities were expounded, in view of the results of the computer simulation and the degree of difficulty involved. After setting forth all this reasoning, the authors of this paper chose one of the options and proposed it to the Foundation of the Alhambra and the Generalife as the most suitable for this case. Once this option had been approved, the works began and their execution could be controlled down to the slightest detail, thanks to the existence of this preliminary computer document. Afterwards it was possible to examine not only its 'before' and 'after' states, but also the computer simulations with the actual results in order to compare them (Fig. 3a, 3b, 3c). The client followed, participated in, and judged the progressive results of the works with the computer simulations prepared as a reference manual to obtain the results of the project. In this case as in others, the computer simulation was not an objective that had to be achieved above and beyond any other consideration. The decisions taken while drawing up the project were reviewed throughout the works, according to the discoveries made in the course of the restoration, so that some changes in the initial computer simulation of the project were made.

The restoration project for the pavement of the bridge in Poble de Ballestar in Castellón required that the many gaps in the pebble pavement were to be filled in. It was a medieval bridge, in surroundings dating from the same period, and had suffered very little transformation over the years, so any restoration intervention could have affected the perception and materiality of this site which had remained intact for several centuries. Several computer simulations were made to test the impact of the different ways of filling in the gaps in the pavement, from stone with different rendering to brick, and from lime to rammed earth (Figs. 4, 5). These computer simulations were checked and studied with the client, who was delighted to be able to participate in the decision-making process regarding the restoration of a bridge that is a symbol for the inhabitants of the whole region.

Cálig Tower in its present form was first built in the sixteenth century. Most of the today's façade surface dates from the same period and is the building's original lime mortar rendering. This rendering has a characteristic texture and patina caused by exposure to the sun, rain, wind and elements over all these years. Naturally, some of the rendering had come loose and left gaps that revealed the masonry fabric underneath. Besides, in an inadequate recent intervention, the original profile and the hipped roof at the top of the tower had been replaced with naked brick battlements in a postmodern style, and a flat roof.

This intervention, which had a great impact on the town, had stirred up a

great deal of indignation among the local people; so much so, that one of the first things they wanted the authors of this text to do in the second restoration phase of the tower was to demolish the battlements and eliminate the previous restoration works. Although we felt the same as the townspeople, the responsibility of using the money provided to restore and consolidate a



*Fig. 2*  
Antechamber  
of the Mexuar  
in the Alhambra  
(Granada,  
Spain). General  
view of the six  
options offered  
to the client to  
help to decide  
which one was  
most appropriate

building to remove the traces of recent restoration works by an architect who had died between the first and second phase and, on the other hand, the patent impossibility of *unrestoring* the building and leaving it as it had been before, as we were asked to do, encouraged us to seek alternative constructive rather than destructive solutions. So several computer simulations were made with a view to making a well thought-out decision on what to do with the top of the tower, and to finding suitable justification for each option.

Around twenty possibilities were considered (*Fig. 6*), which ranged from completely eliminating the crenellations, leaving a simple parapet to partial demolition



*Fig. 3a*  
Antechamber  
of the Mexuar  
in the Alhambra  
(Granada,  
Spain).  
Photoplan  
of elevation  
no.1 prior to  
restoration



*Fig. 3b*  
Antechamber  
of the Mexuar  
in the Alhambra  
(Granada,  
Spain).  
Computer  
simulation of  
photoplan of  
elevation no.1  
after restoration



*Fig. 3c*  
Antechamber  
of the Mexuar  
in the Alhambra  
(Granada,  
Spain).  
Photoplan of  
elevation no.1  
after restoration

of the postmodern pinnacles on the battlements, or even refashioning these battlements to achieve a proportion that would have greater historic credibility. Within each of these options, several suggestions were made to integrate the contrasting naked brick fabric used to build the battlements in postmodern style, using a coat of coloured lime mortar to achieve acceptable chromatic integration.

All these possibilities afforded by the virtual simulation of restoration that are used in the decision-making process in real projects, both internally to the project and externally as a means of communication with the outside world, can be applied equally to the teaching of architectural restoration. Both the authors of this paper are lecturers at the Higher School of Architecture of the Polytechnic University of Valencia, where they teach architectural restoration to undergraduates and graduates, including seminars, master and doctorate degrees. At all these levels of education, computer simulation is an extremely useful didactic tool to explain to the students each of the projects presented, with their different options for intervention and their respective advantages and disadvantages, the perceptive effect on the building, the impact on the materiality and the historic design of the building.

Undergraduate students do a practical group exercise that consists of preparing

*Fig. 4*  
Medieval bridge in Pobla de Ballestar in Castellón (Spain). Several computer options done to test the impact of different ways to substitute the remains of the pavement



*Fig. 5*  
Medieval bridge in Pobla de Ballestar in Castellón (Spain). Several computer options done to test the impact of different ways of filling in the gaps in the pavement

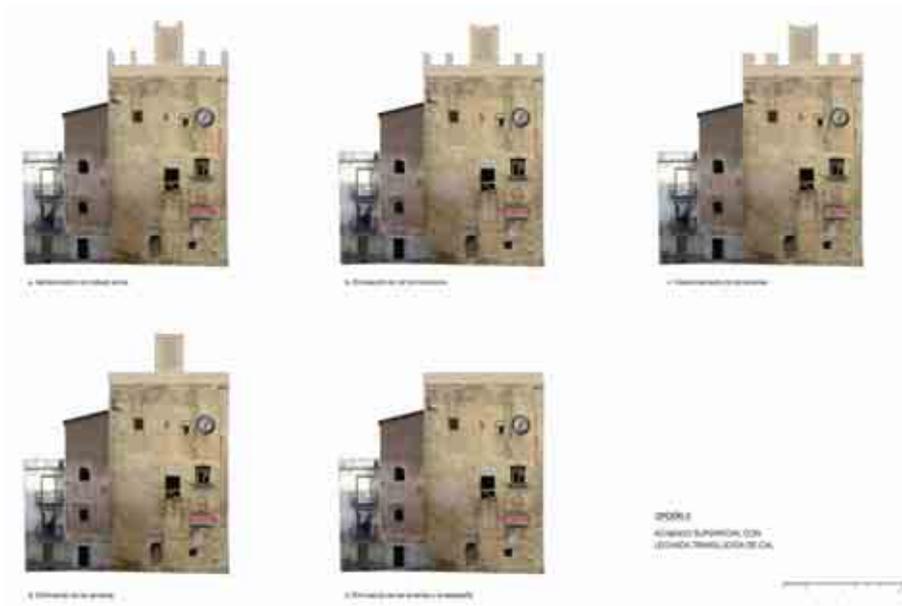


a restoration project in as realistic a way as possible. Before presenting a proposal for a project, the study undertaken comprises detailed maps and a preliminary survey that includes: a historic study; material mapping; a structural study; the presentation of a hypothesis of the mechanisms that can cause lesions and deformations; the study of material pathologies; a stratigraphic study and more (Mileto, Vegas, Noguera 2008). With all this information gleaned, and with the aid of virtual computer simulation (*Fig. 7*), the students make several virtual restoration proposals, and explain their reasons for each, weighing up their advantages and disadvantages from every possible standpoint.

Finally, computer simulation in the world of architectural restoration is very helpful because of its didactic power in the promotion and appreciation of monuments. Indeed, virtual simulation not only shows what the building will look like after restoration, but can also simulate its state at earlier historic phases since its creation, showing the successive transformations that it has undergone until its final state prior to restoration works. In recent times, this type of virtual computer simulation has also permitted restorers to avoid demolishing parts that have been added on to the building, in the first place by detecting possible incongruities, and in the second place by showing the desired effect in virtual reality, without having to demolish parts of the building that are sometimes important and that conceal other, older building phases.

On the one hand, this type of exercise permits a realistic evaluation of the possible impact before performing the works, and on the other hand, the evaluation of different restoration options by direct comparison of their effects on the building. In this way, the option chosen will be the one that best complies with the criteria defined in the project. This method, by means of the presentation of real cases, is set before the students, who have to draw up a minor restoration project during the year. It is a process of self-evaluation and analysis of the success of one's intervention in order to encourage critical capacity and develop greater coherence between the theoretical objectives proposed and the actual restoration works in the projects drawn up.

*Fig. 6*  
 Medieval tower at Cáliz (Castellón, Spain). An example of the multiple possible options for the treatment of the external surfaces of the battlements built in postmodern style of the former restoration



*Fig. 7*  
 Practical exercise done by undergraduate students with virtual computer simulation in order to test the impact and appropriateness of the chosen option for restoration.



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# Built Heritage at risk through climate change

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Recent experiences of the Building Conservation and Sustainability Group in the School of Architecture, Design and the Environment at the University of Plymouth have shown that the alarming headline used as the title for this paper could prove to be true, unless construction industries are prepared for the proposed interventions into our historic and traditional building stock under the banner of climate change. This paper will outline the problem with reference to examples in England and Ireland, and suggest how the construction industry, including those with an educational and training role, might be prepared to avoid the predicted risk.

Substantial reduction in carbon dioxide emission from buildings and the construction industry, to help protect against climate change, save non-renewable resources and avoid fuel poverty, has become a major concern in the United Kingdom. Legislation, especially the UK Building Regulations, not only requires that new buildings perform extremely well thermally, but also that, as existing buildings undergo changes which require Building Regulation Approval, they too must have their fabric upgraded to perform better. The British Government is recommending an 80 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from existing buildings. At the moment buildings protected by the legislation – that is, Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments and buildings in Conservation Areas – are exempt from these requirements. It is estimated that these represent approximately 5 per cent of the country's building stock. This exemption may be temporary, and in any case owners and occupiers of these protected buildings may nevertheless wish to improve the thermal performance of their property for reasons of conscience, cost savings or the fear of fuel poverty. So there is every likelihood that protected buildings could be put at risk through ill-conceived interventions to improve thermal performance.

In addition some 20 per cent of Britain's total building stock predates 1919, so the majority of these have no protection under the conservation legislation. It is very likely that most of these buildings will have significance, particularly in their contribution to local identity, their embodied energy and the financial investment tied up in their fabric. These buildings are also vulnerable and

could suffer as a consequence of climate change intervention.

The point to be made is that there is in Britain a high number of historic and traditional buildings which will need to be upgraded thermally. It is probably the same across Europe. This presents an enormous problem at the moment because the easiest solutions, including external wall insulation, will have a dramatic impact on these buildings. Whilst it could be argued that the very special buildings should continue to be exempt through legislation, where buildings are in continuing use, users would welcome improvement. The major group of buildings under threat is likely to be the basic building blocks of our settlements. For instance, they may be the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century terraces of dwellings that exist in urban centres such as Kilkenny, Dublin, Plymouth or London.

A recent project which involved Plymouth's Building Conservation and Sustainability Group was to consider the thermal upgrading of two terraced dwellings within Conservation Areas. This project has proved to be an excellent learning exercise for all those involved – identifying the different perceptions and principles of the team and the risk to the appearance of the buildings and their historic fabric. One dwelling was selected as part of Plymouth's mid-nineteenth century urban building stock (fig. 1) and the second was in Buckfastleigh, an early industrial town within the Dartmoor National Park (fig. 2). Although their appearances were different, they were both typical of the basic buildings in their respective Conservation Areas and each made a contribution to the identities of these areas.

Developing solutions to upgrade the fabric of these dwellings formed part of a countrywide project called Retro-fitting for the Future. Organised by the Technology Strategy Board (TSB), which is part of the Government's Department of Trade and Industry, this campaign at last recognised that upgrading (also called retro-fitting) needed to be 'kickstarted'. The first wave of the campaign, launched in early summer 2009, invited teams to apply for funding to retro-fit existing single- and two-storey dwellings in single-family occupation that belonged to social landlords. Thus, the two examples introduced above were chosen as they were in the ownership of social landlords, one being the Sovereign Housing Association and the second the Devon and Cornwall Housing Association. This was a requirement for eligibility for access to funding to undertake the project. This fund allowed a consortium of practitioners to be established, to work with the University of Plymouth's Building Conservation and Sustainability Group. The practitioners consisted of architects GHK International; engineers WARM Low Energy Practice; and quantity surveyors and project managers Taylor Lewis.

Although the consortium all agreed at the outset that the goal of the proposed

project was an 80 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emission from each of the case study properties, their perception of the value of the historic fabric varied. For instance, the removal of historic finishes and the addition of insulation and replica new finishes was considered acceptable by some members of the consortium. This emphasised the need to develop a systematic approach to the project, based on the guidance given in international charters such as the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter. So an emphasis was placed upon establishing statements of cultural significance for both properties.

The statement of cultural significance included the expected historic and architectural values, but also included the contribution each property made to the terraces and Conservation Areas in which they were located, and in one of the cases, the National Park. Values which the Housing Associations held as owners, and their tenants held as occupants, could also be included in the statement. Several other values could be included if the proposals were realised. These would include iconic value as there would be a great deal of interest in the success of the changes. In addition there would be educational values, particularly when the properties were monitored in use.

This statement informed subsequent discussions with both the members of the consortium and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) Conservation Officers and Building Inspectors. It was important that conservation principles informed the design of the changes, and it became vital to establish those principles that were appropriate to the projects across the consortium. Those outlined by English Heritage (2004) provided the starting point. It became clear that authenticity was a key issue for all. In the case of the Plymouth terraced house, to remove the decorative external stucco and to replace it by 200mm of external insulation and a new replica render was unacceptable, particularly to the LPA Conservation Officer. This would not only mean loss of authenticity, but the new face of the render would project 200mm beyond the face of the remaining buildings in the terrace. It would reduce the depth of the wide overhanging eaves and would probably not be of the decorative quality of the original finish. However, adding wall insulation as part of the energy saving measures was unavoidable, so a hard decision had to be made as to whether it was more appropriate to sacrifice the internal finishes than those of the exterior. Solid walls meant that cavity insulation, possible in twentieth-century property, was not an option. This decision was made easier by reference to the statement of cultural significance, which recognised the exterior as adding more to the value of the buildings overall than the interior. So, a scheme has been proposed with internal insulation and new interior finishes. The windows were also of concern. Although they were energy-saving upvc double-glazed replacements, the question arose as to whether they should

they be replaced by replicas of the original windows, but with a better thermal performance. The latter was selected in order to respect the appearance of the terrace. These difficult decisions were just two of many such, upon which the consortium had to agree regarding the Plymouth property. These were all assisted by the existence of an agreed statement of cultural significance and shared conservation principles. Thus, a reliable procedure was emerging which should have application elsewhere. Whilst this procedure is not new, the innovation lies in that it has been tested on a retro-fitting project.

The second property posed less difficulty during the design decision-making process. This was because its envelope was of solid wall construction, featuring fair-faced local stone with brick dressings. Adding an external render was completely out of the question, as the property would no longer be in keeping with the remaining buildings in the terrace. In addition, original timber sash windows survived, and will be upgraded with internal secondary glazing. When discussing the proposal with the LPA Conservation Officer, his concerns related to the lack of appropriate skills in the local construction industry. This is very valid as, for instance, poorly installed insulation is ineffective and can create problems with cold bridging and condensation.

The lessons that have been learned indicate that the existing buildings could be put at risk when 'future proofing for climate change'. The problems include loss of either original external or internal finishes and decoration, which will have an impact on cultural significance, and could have a negative impact on the appearance of existing settlements. Equally problematic is the risk of condensation, damp and rotting of hidden timbers.

The implications for educators and trainers are equally significant. Fortunately, funding has been obtained to organise a regional workshop to enable educators and trainers from both higher education and further education to meet practitioners, professionals and legislators, to themselves be updated on the learning experience from the retro-fitting projects, and to discuss and develop a regional strategy to up-skill the southwest of England's construction industry. This will take place in January 2010.

It is possible to consider how the British Government's current campaign to retro-fit the existing stock will impact on the education of architects. Whilst some architects will consider this activity not to be part of their remit, others will be easily persuaded by the predicted value of this activity to the industry and the economy. If the British Government is committed to the recommended 80 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050, approximately five million pre-1919 buildings will need to be retro-fitted at an estimated cost of £20,000 each. This would cost £1,000 million per annum. A strong case should also be put for retro-fitting to be considered a design activity requiring

critical analysis, informed judgement and well-considered detailed design, to ensure that the upgrading does not put the historic fabric at risk and, where possible, enhances the existing characteristics of the building.

In the UK, education for architects occurs at a number of different levels.

Continued Professional Development (CPD): this is a mandatory activity for architects to maintain their professional registration. Conferences have already been run by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) to alert professionals to the issues generated by retro-fitting. As the knowledge base increases through undertaking and monitoring projects, these will form new case studies from which up to updated teaching material will emerge.

Masters-level courses, such as the MA in Architectural Conservation and MSc. In Sustainable Construction, are already integrating material on retro-fitting into existing taught modules. Retro-fitting was successfully included in ARCH527X, the Techniques of Conservation, a mandatory module of the MA in Arch. Conservation at Plymouth University. Here environmental engineers with experience of retro-fits looked in detail at Thermal Insulation of Historic Buildings, Cold Bridging and Condensation Risks; Energy Surveys and Energy Saving Measures; and Airtightness and Air Pressure Testing. Students were then invited to consider the means of improving the thermal performance of an historic school building as coursework.

In undergraduate programmes such as the BA in Architecture and MArch, while these courses do not formally embrace retro-fitting, they can provide opportunities for the study of retro-fitting, for example, when students choose a research topic for dissertations and essays. However at Plymouth University, the existence of the MA in Arch. Conservation, means there is staff expertise to ensure that all students studying architecture and other building-related disciplines have an understanding of the principles of conservation. Currently, emphasis is being put on developing teaching material and studio projects to ensure students understand how to evaluate cultural significance, and how that understanding is vital to determining appropriate interventions. Undertaking the retro-fitting projects mentioned earlier has reinforced the need to both understand cultural significance, and to share that understanding with the entire design team. This is necessary to ensure that this value of the building fabric is not put at risk through interventions to save the planet.

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# Epilogue

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At the end, we ask ourselves - did the concept for the 2009 Workshop work? The papers submitted after the meetings in Ireland show that most of the contributors addressed the themes of the Workshop, while a substantial number of papers considered issues raised by the study sites. At the same time, several others wrote about Conservation/ Transformation, most often using situations from their own experience at home, rather than the places experienced in the Workshop in Ireland.

“Transformation” in itself is not a goal of conservation. Choosing it as the Workshop theme, we suggested that the idea of it being an inevitable consequence should be examined. It might be worthwhile to reflect for a moment on this thought because it cuts to the heart of the idea of conservation. It has been an integral part of the ideology of conservation that intervention today is on behalf of tomorrow – that it arises out of a sense of obligation towards future generations and that we are guardians rather than possessors of our patrimony. The questions that the workshop theme posed were – in what way does conservation philosophy deal with the fact that intervention creates change in what is conserved? Does the fact that intervention is minimised mean that the object is somehow essentially unchanged and that its authenticity is not affected? If, on the other hand, it is accepted that change is inevitable, what are we transmitting to the next generation and do we re-define it with reference to the changes we have induced? We realise, of course, that what we are transmitting is the acted-upon object, in which our conservation actions have become embedded. Does the principle of reversibility suggest that the object can be once again what it was before we acted on it in the first place? Of course not – its history as well as its being now includes the intervention. Is there is a suggestion that authenticity is calculable, so that a marginal reduction is permissible? Or is authenticity something holistic, inseparable at any given time from the physical being of the object and the values attributed to it, and so, inevitably changed by the fact of conservation? Somehow, in considering the issues raised by the ruined Priory at Kells, Borris House and its demesne and the living city of Kilkenny, these questions

lay behind many of the conversations that took place, and found their way into some of the written contributions published in this book. In the cases of Kells (a discretely worked-on ruin in a landscape where ruins abound) and Borris (where the occupancy of the family forms an essential ingredient of its authenticity), it was perhaps more difficult to establish the theoretical ground, because the precise nature of the endowment was difficult to describe. Where historic towns and urban areas are concerned, conservation and revitalisation go hand in hand and the international charters embrace the fact that change is inevitable. The role of conservation is ideally integrated with regeneration, so that the values of the historic environment are enshrined in actions to ensure the health of urban life and culture. It is notable that those papers dealing with issues of historic urban areas reflected this reality.

It is not unique to our time that cultural heritage is regarded as something to be transmitted in its full authenticity and integrity. But it has rarely before now achieved the force of moral imperative that it has for conservation practitioners today. We may ask why this might be so – why we assume such an awesome responsibility. Perhaps conservation of the built environment occupies the same space as the creation of architecture in the deeper consciousness of our times: Karsten Harries, writing about architecture describes it as “a deep defense against the terror of time”<sup>1</sup>. Is that truly the underlying imperative – that the purpose of conservation is to provide existential support, to ensure that “we” continue into the future? The concept of “embodiment” offers a way of seeing the world that legitimises our perceptions of value by ascribing them to the physical object rather than belonging to us alone.

In setting “conservation” and “transformation” side by side, we articulated an essential paradox – of a type that the social sciences recognised a long time ago. As actors who try to be conscious of the origins and effects of our actions (who embrace the idea of ethics in action), we encounter the conceptual dilemmas of the participant/observer: action and reflection are often distinguished from one another for the purposes of understanding/description, while in itself the activity is a holistic amalgam. The paradox of conservation/transformation can be seen as part of the process of describing the inter-penetration of action and thought. As with life generally, the effort to define and describe with precision brings with it a tendency to create polarities – perhaps essential but insufficient tools for thought – but leaving us still with the responsibility for action within the lived experience.

Acceptance of responsibility for conservation and change/transformation is ours by choice. The knowledge that we have limited control over what understandings are transmitted to the future through the artefacts we conserve helps to keep our efforts in perspective. The acted-upon object endures, how

it will be received is beyond our reach. So we can only look to the quality of the present action and to that part of the future on which the shadow of the present falls. Shadows do not reach very far in the full light of day – they are longer in the evening when there is less light and imagination can master memory. Benson points out that at the core of our consciousness is the metaphor of *time* as a *space* where events can be located, giving rise to “ways of constructing and thinking about the past, present and future”<sup>2</sup>. So we try to focus our responsibility on the present moment as a point in a continuum. Our actions define us – it is our responsibility to ensure that our actions do not define the artefacts that are the subject of our actions. And we must again try to explain our idea about the future.

### **And finally**

It is proposed that the next theme for exploration by the Conservation network should be the contribution that conservation/restoration disciplines can offer to the urban life of the future. The context for the next workshop will be the modernist boroughs of Bucharest.

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