

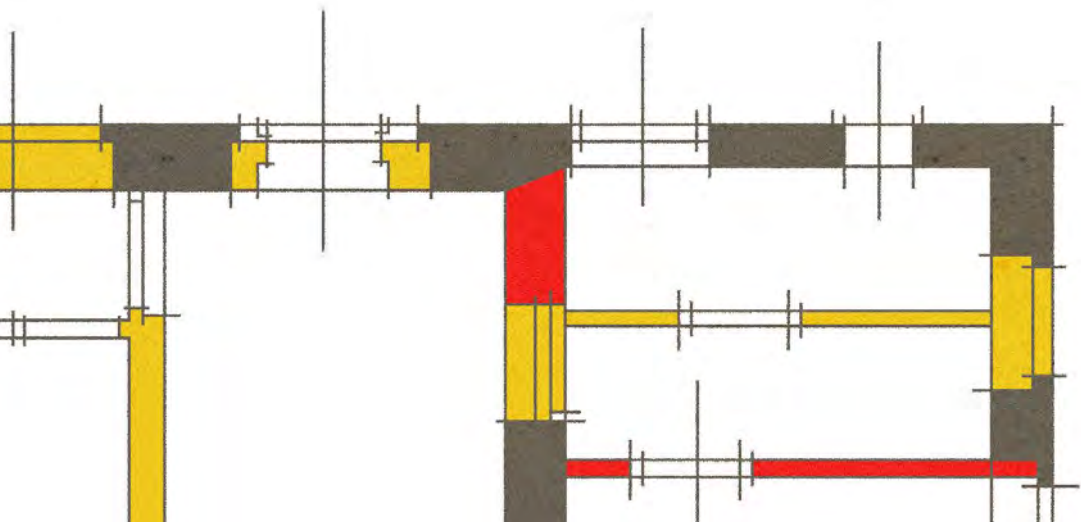
CONSERVATION



DEMOLITION

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Editors





**European Association for
Architectural Education**

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This book presents the papers written by 34 participants following the 7th Workshop on Conservation, organised by the Conservation Network of the European Association for Architectural Education in Prague, Czech Republic in 2019. All papers have been peer-reviewed. The Workshop was attended by 51 participants from the following countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom.

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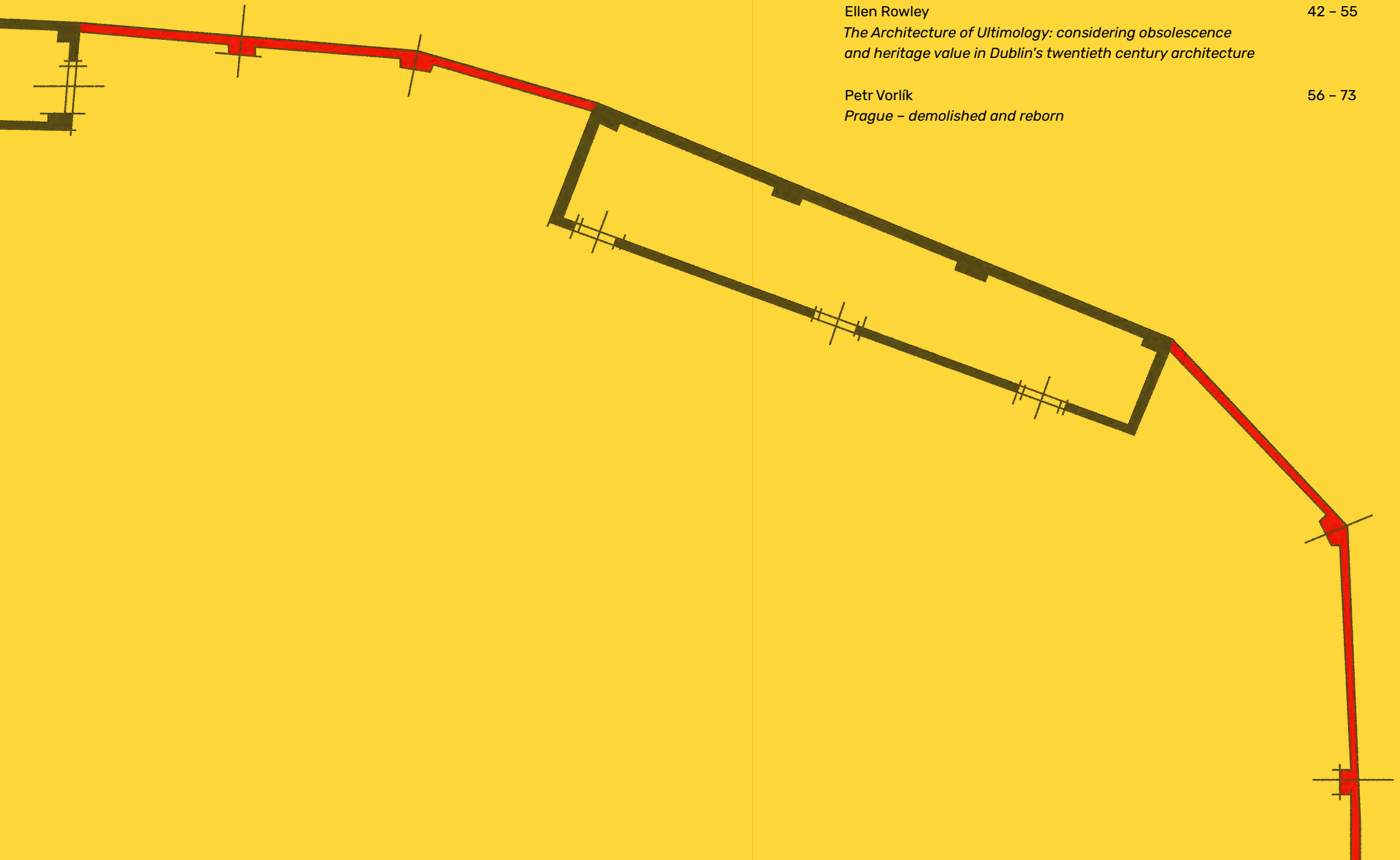
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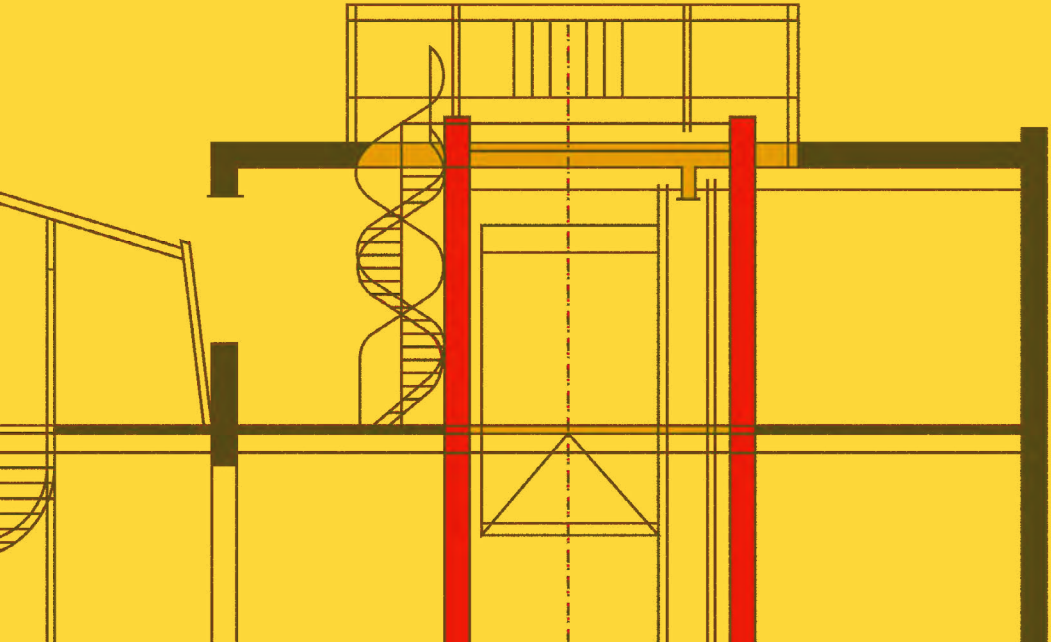
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Part 4 – The Scale of New Intervention Versus Memory



Beyond the demolition in conservation. DIY low-cost factory conversion as a phenomenon of *Bodenständigkeit*

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Can we accept demolition in the process of conservation?

To answer this question, primarily we should understand why and when demolition could be necessary. Analysing the Prague's urban planning, we could start asking if there is a link between abandonment and demolition.

In the Czech Republic, there are more than 47 thousand listed elements as cultural heritage, but only 65 from the postwar, socialist architecture (Vorlík et al. 2012). It could be relevant to quote that at this moment, there is a non-conservative approach towards this architecture.

Some of the places, there were mentioned in the EAAE workshop, like the Hotel Prague by J. Paroubek, A. Navrátil, R. Černý, J. Sedláček, demolished in 2014 or the Telephone Exchange by J. Malátek, J. Eisenreich, V. Aulický, J. Eismannová, 1975–1982, demolished in 2017, represent some of this attitude.

Also, it could be significant for the discussion, to observe that demolition could represent the final act of a process of abandonment that transforms urban places in relicts (Dal Borgo, Garda, Marini 2016). Although there are scientific studies that remark the economic sustainability of the adaptive reuse rather than demolition (Bulle, Love 2010: 9), it is relevant to consider if there is a cultural process that, beyond the economic ones, leads to demolition as a planning choice. Alternatively, if it could always be verifiable that «demolition is often selected when the life expectancy of an existing building is estimated to be less than a new alternative, despite any improvements that adaptive reuse may inject» (Bulle, Love 2010: 216).

Conflict emerges between the increase of “listed architectures” and sustainability of their conservation, although one of the preliminary goals for the conservation process is identifying and catalogue cultural heritage. This is particularly true after the economic crisis, the failure of the Welfare State model, and the simultaneous rise of abandoned and dismissed architectures (Zouen 2018: 17, 18).¹ Besides, if preservation actions occur in a public competence zone of the process of decision-making, adaptive reuse strategies often refer to Stakeholders that correspond to private actors (NARA +20 1994).²

A ambivalence exists between values that lead to a heritage designation (as a common cultural heritage) and values at the base of adaptive reuse strategies,³ that could be changed or, worse, destroyed in the process of realpolitik.

On the other hand, if adaptive reuse practices change or deprave values of heritage designation, economic values decreased too,⁴ and actions of preservation became a pure formality.

Vittorio Gregotti, in 1992, stated the urgency to create a «charter for demolition» as a planning tool for the city (Gregotti 1992).

The theoretical framework at the base is the existence of a «priority concerning demolition» (Gregotti 1992: 21) because, he says, that «a culture of destruction» implies a responsibility since it contains the value of the foresight, of the transformation, that is the planning activity at urban and landscape level.⁵ This preliminary frame, for the Author, means that in architectural reasoning, the conservation activities operate at the level of the *matter*, the culture of demolition act on the level of the *form*.

It could be argued that demolition is a necessity in the process of conservation since it defines a strategy for transmission, that is a design choice. In particular, the choice to address a cultural value and a heritage designation to preserve areas and architectures from urban development. The Nara +20 Charter highlights that communities are central actors in the process of acknowledgement of cultural heritage, but their awareness of a shared cultural value change in time, now very quickly, according to the relationship between identities and cultural heritage (sometimes in a very troubling way).⁶

This premise underlines the crucial role of “collective subject” since the process linked with the urban planning starts / insists “on” it, or we might say, “from” it. In particular, “new” methods to share cultural values overcome the traditional concept of “evaluation” for the cultural common good.

This social and cultural evolution change radically the idea that communities always acknowledge cultural heritage. While, on the contrary, a cultural good could become obsolete and detached from the public values; at the same time, an architecture considered meaningless in the present could be listed in the future. This condition generates a paradox: an action, like the preservation in the process of heritage designation, conceived as safeguarding policy, turns into an expression of contemporary values, that might be changed or lost in the future. This premise means that the link between the past and future is lost.

From this point of view, the collective process of acknowledgement of industrial heritage is significant (Douet ed. 2012), especially in the Czech Republic, place of numerous case of adaptive-reuse (Fragner, Valchářová 2014).

In the workshop experience, some of these case-studies were cited. In many of these emerge a close connection with a sense of communities and a contemporary attitude towards the industrial buildings as in the DEPO 2015, a Creative Zone in Pilsen, a former Bus Depot made in 1932–1934, reused in 2014–2015; La Fabrika, a former Richter Machine Works and Foundry established by A. Zázvorka in 1908 and reused as theatre and art space by T. Novotný, T. Zmek, L. Ježek in 2004–2012, or the Culture Hub Jatka 78, in the quartier of Holešovice, a former Abattoirs made in 1893–1895, redesigned around 1925–1929 and reused in 2014–2015.

In all these architectures, the adaptive-reuse claims a strong connection with communities and marks the evolution of society: the working class is overcome by new



Fig. 1) When and how the sight of torn things shifts into an aesthetic experience? Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 3) Un-finished condition as a reuse experience. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 2) Fragments as a "completed" artwork. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 4) Un-finished condition as a reuse experience. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 5) Ian Hemilton Finlay, Adorno's Hut, 1986–1987. Museum of contemporary and modern Art. Strasburg, France. (photo Emanuela Sorbo)



Fig. 7) Acknowledgement of the torn and degraded spaces, partly demolished, providing both aesthetic and "reuse" experience. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 6) "Ruin Value" through performance actions. Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 8) Acceptance of the un-finished as a "Being in Time". Vnitroblock, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)

cultural communities, spaces act as containers of experiences. Near this experimental approaches towards spaces we may focus a diverse universe of strategies of reuse strictly linked with the private or public stakeholders involved, like in the former Thun Brewery from 19th Century reused and adapted in 2012–2014 in the “Děčín Brewery Shopping Center”; or in the former Pfister & Wüstel Hops Storehouse and Packing Plant in 1898–1900, now “Temple of Hops and Beer”, in Žatec, reused in 2009–2011 with educational, entertaining uses; or the former Coal Mill for the Boiler House, now “The Coal Mill in Libčice”, reused as a multifunctional place in 2010–2012 with spaces for coworking and polyfunctional facilities related to Art, Architecture and Design. A universe of approaches to the strategy of reuse where the experimental part of the project involves more close reasoning on social changes and attitudes than a “thought” on the form of the project in itself, like, as a reference, the very well known case-study of Corso Karlín by Ricardo Bofill.

This list testifies an attitude in architecture towards the simplification of forms, at a tangible level, versus broader reasoning and complexity, at intangible level, related to uses and linked with different kind of communities.

This premise identifies a process of recognition and enhancement of collective memory of industrial past, from the late nineteenth century until the 1930s,⁷ and a tendency for the abandonment of places from the post-war period until socialist past.

The analysis of this planning strategy has two different meanings. From one hand, the process of heritage designation fosters the adaptive reuse by private stakeholders. From the other hand, the absence of post-war and socialist architectures from heritage list is a measurement of will to forget as a sort of prologue for their demolition.

A crucial issue is the process of “collective acknowledgement” by the communities since, quoting Nietzsche, «the unhistorical and the historical are necessary for equal measure for the health of an individual, of a people, and a culture» (Nietzsche 1966: 214).⁸

A conflict arises between the increase of heritage designations and the spread of abandoned places (Zouen 2018: 4) and some questions emerge.⁹ How and how many of places and architectures abandoned or no longer acknowledged by communities -- so many in Europe after the economic crisis including ones with symbolic value (Fiorani, Kealy, Musso 2017) – can be still considered a cultural heritage? How could an abandoned place become a heritage for communities? A starting point to answer those questions could be to overcome a materialistic vision of the abandonment and investigate cultural reasons.

Could we consider a process of abandonment a starting point for a process of demolition?

Gelassenheit is a book by Martin Heidegger written in 1959.¹⁰ *Gelassenheit* means, at the same time, abandonment of things and releasement (to indulge in things). The Author identifies the post-war phenomena of migrations as a loss in the contemporary human being of *Bodenständigkeit* (groundedness/autochthony). The absence of *Bodenständigkeit*, for Heidegger, is the essence of contemporaneity

(Heidegger 1959: 26). It pushes human-being towards the calculative thinking – *das rechnende Denken* – than to the meditative thinking – *das besinnliche Nachdenken* (Heidegger 1959: 15).

Heidegger starts his reasoning using the image of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima as a metaphor. The most potent image of demolition, destruction, during the twenty-century, alongside the debate for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. This opposition is the essence of a new era in contemporaneity: the atomic Hera. A historical period, connoted by the faith in Technology (*die Technik*), in the «calculative thinking», that defines a new prophetic way for the human-being to approach the world: the domain of *Technik* on humanity. (Heidegger 1959: 22, 23).

The domain of *Technik*, in Heidegger, means the supremacy of data, of Materialism on speculative thinking. Human-being loses the capacity of being deeply involved with/by things, and this originates, as a consequence, the release, the abandonment of them. He speaks of *die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen* or abandonment of things and to things.

The Heidegger «discourse on thinking» linked with the metaphor by Bernardo Secchi (the territory as a repository)¹¹ could help us to interpret the increase of abandoned areas, architectures, places, cities as a sort of *Zeitgeist*, where the *Gelassenheit*, the abandonment, the releasement from and towards the things, is the new *Bodenständigkeit* (groundedness/autochthony) for contemporaneity.

This detachment from things alongside calculative thinking generates awareness for architectural relicts as a contemporary phenomenon, or, we might say, towards the *unfinished as being in Time* (Dillon 2011).¹² This *unfinished time-being* could be interpreted as a state of contemporary *Bodenständigkeit*.¹³

From this point of view is quite significant to analyse the phenomenon of Vnitroblock, a Multifunctional Space, former Bendelmayer and Červenka Foundry built between 1885–1895, and now reused by L. Žďárský, J. Zajíc since 2016, with a DIY low-cost factory conversion.

DIY low-cost factory conversion as a phenomenon of *Bodenständigkeit*.

Vnitroblock is a phenomenon of bottom-up reused strategy. In this process stakeholders and communities unify in the same actor the figure of “heritage professionals”. Nevertheless, when and how the characteristics of an abandoned place turn from degradation into a value? When and how the sight of torn things shift into an aesthetic experience?¹⁴

We may argue that it is possible when the degradation process turns into a performance, so when there is preliminarily an acknowledgement of a value. (Fig. 1)

A very well-known experience from this point of view is the performance by Lawrence Weiner «a 36×36 removal to the lathing or support wall of plaster or wallboard from a wall» in 1968, where the author “perform” demolition of a square of plaster from a masonry. That area (36×36) become the expression of the “nude matter” that contains the “act” of demolition (Sorbo 2016). This performance converts demolition into a creative act.

In architecture, the milestone reference about the topic demolition/creation is the work by Gordon Matta-Clark. The “building cuts” reveal the deep relation between demolition as a performative act in the transformation of empty/abandoned/dismissed spaces. This performative aspect concerning demolition is related to the acceptance of degradation as a phenomenon linked with the creative action of Time as a “Mighty Sculptor”, quoting Marguerite Yourcenar (Yourcenar 1984).

For the same reason, one of the fascinating works on the topic demolition/creation is Antivilla by Arno Brandlhuber, the refurbished former German Democratic Republic lingerie factory “Ernst Lück” at the Krampnitzsee, southwest of Berlin, where the unfinished conditions of walls, surfaces, installations are clearly a design choice (Brandlhuber 2018).

At the same time, adopt the unfinished/damaged condition of a place as a reuse experience (beyond the aesthetical one) has a starting point in processes linked with the occupation of spaces, since it is the first step to acknowledge an abandoned place as a collective one. (Figg. 2, 3, 4)

Architectural Project turns into the search of the myth of the Vitruvian primitive hut: architectural stability, technical elements, light, heating, ventilation, roofing. (Fig. 5)

The recognition of a “ruin value” that allow the use of abandoned places through performance actions, linked with the idea of *Bodenständigkeit* exposed before.

In a similar path, the foundational step in Vnitroblock is the acknowledgement of the torn and degraded spaces, partly demolished, of both aesthetically and “reused” (not recycled) experience. (Figg. 6, 7)

In architecture one of the first experimental case-study for an open approach to design with active involvement by community is the Palais de Tokyo reused by Anne Lacaton e Jean-Philippe Vassal since 1999 (Ruby I&A., Steiner, Goulet 2002).

The interview with the authors reveals a meaningful idea of design as an «exploration of an architectural concept» (Petzet, Heilmeyer eds., 2012: 13–26). A framework for thinking rather than a Thought on construction: architectural spaces entirely focused on the idea of the experience within. Two levels coexist in this attitude: an intangible idea of the experience and tangible actions in design. The Palais is the expression of planning, where the starting point is to create a community. Space comes after. It is a vessel. Every sign is a trace of Time. The conservative approach is explained by the sentence, intentionally easy: «we left everything just as we found it».¹⁵

When construction reveals an aesthetic value (like frame behind paintings) even if we are considering a bottom-up strategy, like in Vnitroblock, the planning purpose starts from an acceptance of the unfinished/degraded condition of the spaces as an experience linked with “being in Time”. (Fig. 8) It could be an involuntary or spontaneous approach. Still, it starts from the conservation or transformation of an unfinished condition in a contemporary *Bodenständigkeit*. The layered plasters, the traces of installations, the fragments of flooring, represent the “new” experience of contemporary space. (Fig. 9) A new horizon to approach the surfaces experiencing the same ambiguity of contemporary art, where degradation, evaluated as a form, a draw, a print, a Time action, is an Art-work and so an image to conserve. In this randomness, there is the essence of the process of community DIY (acronym of *Do It by Yourself*).

Without authorial dimensions and control on design activities, present in the Palais of Tokyo by Lacaton & Vassall, all the fragmented elements (surfaces, implants, lights, flooring) become the Space. In this purity, architecture returns a *Hut*, “reused” and not “adapted”. Architecture loses characters of the Abandonment, to become “Releasement” (*Gelassenheit*), a contemporary expression of “Being in Time”. (Fig. 10)

Notes

1 «The situation we are confronted with today is rooted in two factors: one is the inflation of the welfare state followed by a recession caused by financial crises that started in 199726; the other is the transformation of what we call today “cultural heritage” and of the inflation in listing and protecting. Both the managers of the welfare state and the managers of the heritage goods thought they could continue unchecked. Hard facts have proven them wrong. The Welfare State and, by extension, the public funding of culture, are based on taxation. If the economy shrinks or people’s willingness or capacity to pay taxes fall, the Welfare State will lose the ability to cater for some societal needs» (Zouen 2018: 17,18).

2 «3. Involvement of multiple stakeholders. The Nara Document assigns responsibility for cultural heritage to specific communities that generated or cared for it. The experience of the last 20 years has demonstrated that cultural heritage may be significant in different ways to a broader range of communities and interest groups that now include virtual global communities that did not exist in 1994. This situation is further complicated by the recognition that individuals can be simultaneously members of more than one community and by the imbalance of power among stakeholders, often determined by heritage legislation, decision-making mechanisms, and economic interests. Those with authority to establish or recognize the significance, value, authenticity, treatment and use of heritage resources have the responsibility to involve all stakeholders in these processes, not forgetting those communities with little or no voice. Heritage professionals should engage in community matters that may affect heritage. Further work is needed on methodologies to identify the rights, responsibilities, representatives, and levels of involvement of communities.» (NARA +20 2014)

3 «Any type of reuse, even adaptive reuse contributes to the destruction of the object being used. Since a heritage good is always unique and cannot be replaced by another, attention must be paid to avoid consuming it. This brings strict limits of reuse and hence to returns from heritage.» (Zouen 2018: 13)

4 «Then, after a plateau phase, the economic value will go down and will bring the heritage values to a fall.» (Zouen 2018: 16)

5 «Soprattutto, la cultura della distruzione implica ancora maggiori responsabilità rispetto a quella della conservazione, perché in essa deve essere presente il valore della “previsione”, la promessa di assetti migliori (cioè più ordinati e proprio per questo più aperti e disponibili all’uso sociale) della città e del territorio. La cultura della distruzione non implica ovviamente il ritorno allo stato di natura, ma la messa a disposizione del suolo, per mezzo del progetto, alla immaginazione necessaria» (Above all, the culture of demolition implies even greater responsibilities that conservation, because it contains the value of prevision, a promise of a better arrangement (that is more planned and because of this open and available to social uses) of the city and territory. The culture of demolition doesn’t imply to go back to nature, but the use of soil, though, the project, with the necessary imagination.» (Gregotti 1997: 22)

6 «Implications of the evolution of cultural values The Nara Document acknowledges that cultural heritage undergoes a continuous process of evolution. In the last 20 years, recognition of this evolution has created challenges for heritage management and has led practitioners to question the validity of universal conservation principles. In addition, during this period, fruitful engagement by communities in heritage processes has given rise to the acceptance of new values that had previously gone unrecognized. These changes require that the identification of values and the determination of authenticity be based on periodic reviews that accommodate changes over time in perceptions and attitudes, rather than on a single assessment.» (NARA +20 2014)

7 «The delegates assembled for the 2003 TICCIH Congress in Russia wish therefore to assert that the buildings and structures built for industrial activities, the processes and tools used within them and the towns and landscapes in which they are located, along with all their other tangible and intangible manifestations, are of fundamental importance. They should be studied, their history should be taught, their meaning and significance should be probed and made clear for everyone, and the most significant and characteristic examples should be identified, protected and maintained, in accordance with the spirit of the Venice Charter, for the use and benefit of today and of the future»; «2. Values of

industrial heritage. I. The industrial heritage is the evidence of activities which had and continue to have profound historical consequences. The motives for protecting the industrial heritage are based on the universal value of this evidence, rather than on the singularity of unique sites.» (NIZHNY 2003)

8 « Without forgetting it is quite impossible to live at all.» (Nietzsche 1966: 210)

9 «In Europe – and here in Italy, the resources available to public spending have been stalling or diminishing while the recovery remains slow to come. Social welfare has suffered and the arts and cultural heritage as well: though this trend has been with us for some time, we continue to behave as if nothing has changed. More and more relics of our past are now unused, abandoned, or in dire need of restoration and have lost all utility to society and the economy while the lists of protected goods continues to grow.» (Zouen 2018: 4)

10 We referred to the term “abbandono” in Italian which is the translation of the Italian edition of *Gelassenheit*. (Heidegger 1983; *L’abbandono*, Genova) In English context the word has been translated with the word “releasement”. The book was translated in English with the title: «Discourse On Thinking».

11 «... il territorio è un deposito, magazzino di oggetti e di segni per il tramite della memoria e dell’immaginario:

testimone delle tecniche produttive, dei costumi, delle tendenze all’integrazione o al conflitto, delle forme del passato e del potere. (The territory is a repository, a depot of things and signs through memory and imagination: the witness of productive techniques, habits, inclinations to integration or to conflict, forms of past and power).» (Secchi 1989: 99)

12 «... ruins are part of the long history of the fragment, but the ruin is a fragment with a future.» (Dillon 2011: 11)

13 «In un corso di lezioni sulla *Fenomenologia dello Spirito* di Hegel nel 1931 afferma che il pensiero, se intende porsi e comprendersi come soggetto deve presupporre non-finito, in altri termini deve lasciar cadere in oblio la differenza tra l’Essere e l’Essente. (During lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1931 Hegel states that the Thing, if it wants to be and to understand itself as a subject it must be thought as unfinished, in other words, it needs to forget the difference between Being and Existence.)» (Angelino 1983: 20)

14 For an overview on the relationship between contemporary art and conservation see Fiorani 2018.

15 «We know that if you give it enough thought, if you examine the situation closely, if you understand it fully and then act in a way that is consistent – that is to say, if you work with the existing material, you can create a truly beautiful city.» (Petzet, Heilmeyer eds., 2012: 26)

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Fig. 9) The layered plasters, the traces of installations as a "new" experience of contemporary space. The new "Hut". Vnitroblok, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)



Fig. 10) Gelassenheit as Bodenständigkeit. Vnitroblok, Prague, Czech Republic. (photo Emanuela Sorbo 2019)

The workshop brings together a broad range of people, from art conservators to architects, engineers, and officials, to discuss the issues that have come to be of crucial importance in the management of European cultural heritage. Considering the roles that critical reflection and academic scholarship have played in developing conservation as a cultural practice, it will explore how the EAAE Conservation Network can enhance the contribution of these two basic pillars of architecture for the future of architectural heritage.

The workshop takes place in the heart of Europe: the City of Prague in the Czech Republic. It comprises academic presentations on the issues identified below as topic areas, small, intensive group discussions, and study trips to selected sites.

1. Towards the contemporary hybrid city and cultural complexity

Do contemporary cities need a blended mix of history and modernity? How does gentrification impact public or private spaces, their diversity, and the intricate web of relations in the city?

2. The force of everyday life

How can we strengthen the sustainability of the cultural value, ecology, economy, and prolonged life cycle of the built environment through necessary, responsible maintenance? Can we control or manage amateur alterations (adaptations) driven by consumption and commercial forces?

3. Contemporary versus traditional technologies and approaches

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

4. The scale of new intervention versus memory

Is it possible to accept and make meaningful use of small-scale historic heritage in a contemporary city? Or to benefit contemporary lifestyles? Using current development approaches and building processes? Can demolition be accepted as a legitimate option or strategy? Can we accept demolition in the process of conservation? Or conservation and restitution after demolition?

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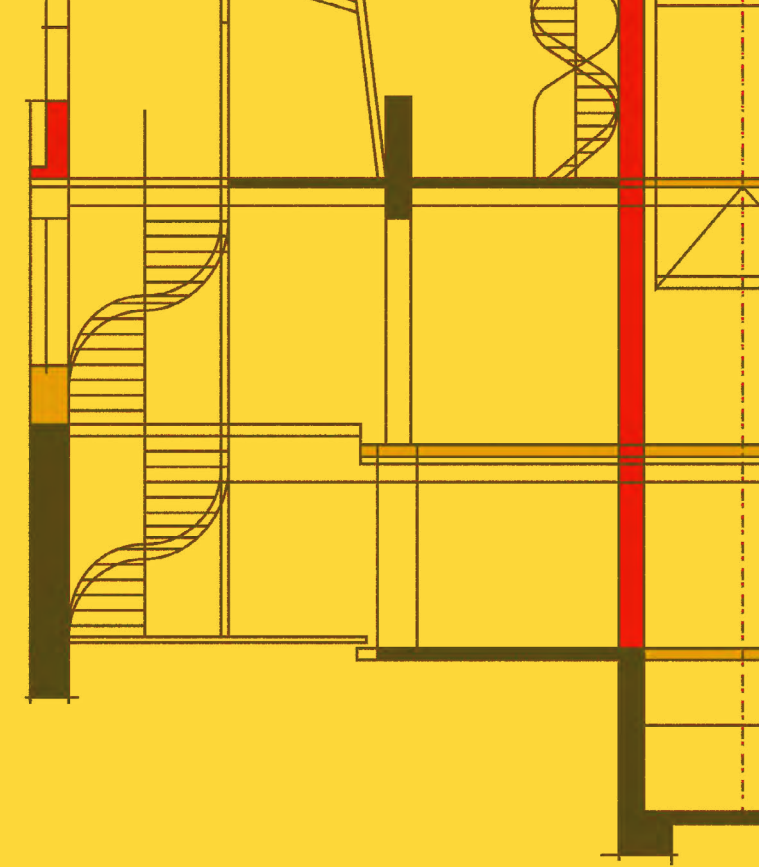
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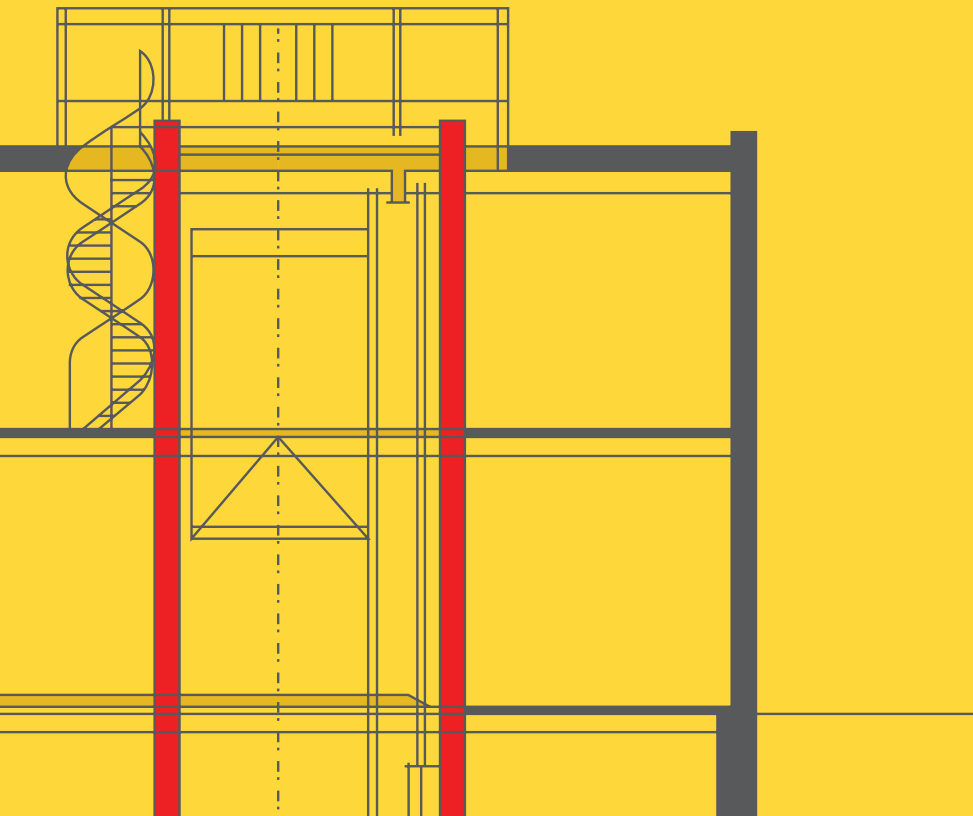
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