

European Urban Cultural Heritage Management after War

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Abstract: The management of cultural urban heritage monuments in European cities after war is a matter that presents some interesting variations over time. It usually underlines a dual political manifestation, either as an attempt to reverse history, through a form of cultural "recovery" of monuments and encouraging a pre-war statement, either as an attempt to perpetuate the dark memory of the "atrocities" of the enemies through the preservation of the monument in form of a ruin, or in some cases as a kind of "purism" by removing cultural symbols and monuments attributed to war opponents in a process of symbolic reconstruction to support a new political narrative. Cultural properties, as described by UNESCO since 1954, represent a valuable urban asset that despite any political intentions are at serious threat during war times. Almost eight decades since World War II, the war in Ukraine raises forgotten issues for the European Region. The historic centre of the city of Lviv and the Saint Sophia Cathedral of Kyiv, among others, are world heritage sites, registered in the list of UNESCO, all of which various international organisations have expressed serious concerns about their state of survival. This paper aims to demonstrate from past examples the importance of safekeeping-built heritage, from any side of conflict parts, and in this respect highlighting the significance of culture over politics. Analysing thus monuments in recent European history that had suffered serious damage during military operations, as well as demonstrating various means of management that followed, in relation to the political expediency from which these options were dictated, considered in their historical context, while, at the same time, cross-referencing similar practices applied in Ukraine.

Key words: Cultural management, built heritage, monuments, war, urban restoration, nation-building.

1. Introduction

In post-war Europe after World War II with large parts of historic city centers being demolished, architects supported the concept to rebuild functional cities based on the modernist ideal of the functionalist city. This scope aimed to avoid "fakes" of reconstructions, which would threaten the "authentic" testimonies of the cities' past (Athens Charter, C.I.A.M., 1933, 'The Historic Heritage of Cities', position 70). However, this idea failed to convince local administrations, but also the public opinion, since, in general, the demand to recover pre-war image was significant. The practise of extensive reconstruction, where major disasters occurred, was also criticised, as an opposite objective supported the preservation of the monument in a state of ruins and the

transformation into a green area. The perspective that finally prevailed was the reconstruction "where and as it was" [1], based on old testimonies (postcards, engravings, etc.) rather than preserving ruins, although some cases were interesting examples of this. The extensive reconstructions of historic centers, in Warsaw, Budapest, Munich, Dresden, Rimini, London, etc., were characterized as "recovery" operations of symbolic value, linked to national sentiment, nonetheless accused of a representation of pre-war image of cities as a "detriment of authenticity" [2], as the authentic remnants of the past heritage was mixed with modern mimics and imitations, degraded and discredited, making it difficult to distinguish them from the rest urban landscape.

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2. Management of Monuments and Political Expediencies

Every society is called upon to manage remnants of the past according to the criteria of their respective historical, cultural, artistic value, value of use, and cultural symbolism. The preservation of a “monument” contributes to the continuation of collective memory, while the opposite reflects an act of forgetting. An interesting point is that the choice of management of the built heritage is not decided only on the basis only of the above-mentioned criteria but also on given political expediencies.

Historically manipulating process of collective memory or forgetting, that is practically, how and what to remember, is a very important social aspect that represents “the oblivions, the silences of history” [3]. As Panagiotis Tournikiotis states, “memory is built on forgetting” [3], it seems that “deletions” are related more than “preservations” of the constructed present and the desired past of every society in time.

Thus, the management of cultural heritage monuments, after war, presents an interesting differentiation examined over time, manifested as:

- an attempt to reverse history, through the “recovery” of a monument and its inclusion in the representation of the pre-war image of the city,
- an attempt to perpetuate the memory of the “atrocities” of the enemy at war, through the preservation of a monument in the form of a ruin, i.e., in the center of a city, and in cases of new or recovered territories after the war as:
- an operation of “purism” by removing cultural symbols of the enemy, during the process of reconstructing monuments,
- or a campaign of cultural alteration with the reconstruction or change of use of mainly religious or other monuments of strong symbolism, in some cases with forced settlement, aiming at supporting the political narrative of an “invented tradition” and a “new past” sometimes embedded in a wider context of processes of

consolidating a new identity or nation building.

Particularly in the case of decolonization or the creation of new nations, independence dictates processes of self-preservation to ethnic minorities that have recently “awakened from their ethnological slumber” and to cultural groups that until now “possessed reserves of memory but little or no historical capital” [4]. A process like this, with clear characteristics of recovery or even invention, is, historically, the case of Mobutu's “Authenticité” (also “Zairianisation”), in the former Republic of Congo-Leopoldville, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when it was renamed as Zaire. It represented a campaign to consciously clear itself of the remnants of colonialism, and to establish an “invented tradition”, with a set of practices sought to instill values and norms of behavior through repetition, in order to construct a continuity with a decided, under rediscovery and appropriation, historical past [5].

A European example can be the case of Gdansk, a city initially detached from the defeated Germany in WWI in order for Poland to gain access to a large port as the semi-autonomous “Free City of Gdańsk” in 1920 (with the Treaty of Versailles), later rejoined in Germany in 1939 (after the German invasion of Poland), and officially assigned to Poland in 1945 (with the Potsdam Agreement). In the period immediately after the WWII, when many surviving Germans were expelled to West or East Germany, and members of the pre-war Polish ethnic minority began to return together with new Polish settlers, Polish Gdańsk experienced a large-scale and intensive campaign to dispossess its significant building stock of the city from the cultural characteristics of the German Danzig.

In recent European history, practices of cultural alteration and colonization, in violation of international and European law, have been applied, “in a systematic and methodical way”, by Turkey, in the illegally occupied territories of Northern Cyprus (approximately 37% of the Cypriot territory), after the its invasion of the island in July 1974 [6].

3. Urban Monuments in Recent European History

Typical cases of monuments in recent European history that had suffered serious damage during military operations are analyzed, as well as the options managing them, within a context of historical and political expediencies. These examples are selected from typical periods of managing postwar disasters and nation-building processes, namely, right after the WWII, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. These examples are cross-referenced with similar practices applied in the case of the Ukraine war.

3.1 Examples after World War II

The desire to reverse history through the recovery of pre-war image of a city, after World War II, especially for German cities, lasted around six decades. An example of this is the case of the extensive historic center of Dresden, where the restoration of its monuments continued until 2005, in addition the Römerberg square in Frankfurt am Main, where the reconstruction of the medieval buildings of its eastern front demolished during Allied bombings, in May 1945, commenced in the 1980s based on a postcard from 1900 (Figs. 1-3).

The case of Dresden is, perhaps, the most characteristic of the drive to reverse history, through the recovery of the pre-war image of the city, both on an urban and architectural scale. In 1948 the proposal of the modernist architect-urban planner and founding member of CIAM, Mart Stam, suggested its reconstruction in a new urban landscape with priority on transport and open spaces and was rejected by the city's Municipal Council. Four years later, after a competition for the design of the city center, it was decided to proceed with Herbert Concert's plan for extensive reconstructions to recover a broader historical physiognomy [7]. Nowadays, the city of Dresden presents an impressive historic center, completely reconstructed according to its pre-war image, characterized by a high degree of



Fig. 1 Postcard of Römerberg Square, Frankfurt am Main, circa 1900.

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Roemerberg_Nikolaikirche_Frankfurt_1900.jpg.



Fig. 2 Aerial photograph of May 1945, with the buildings except the cathedral bombed.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Frankfurt_am_Main_in_World_War_II#/media/File:Frankfurt_Am_Main-Altstadt-Zerstörung-Luftbild_1944.jpg.



Fig. 3 Reconstructed (1981-1984) the eastern front of the square.

<https://www.europolitis.eu/2020/06/14/frankfoyrty-merika-apo-ta-kalytera-meri-gia-na-episkefteite/>.

architectural unity and aesthetic quality, nonetheless raising questions about its authenticity. This concern of authenticity, after all, deprives it from a potential inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage list. An exception, within this elaborate scene of representations of pre-war Dresden, was until 1994, the church of the Frauenkirche that was preserved in a form of ruin like a time capsule of the Allied bombing of February 1945.

The management of Frauenkirche in Dresden, within these years, is indicative of the difference in perceptions and political expediencies, before and after 1989, a significant date of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of West and East Germany, as well as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which followed two years later. Particularly, for the communist regime, the original form of the bombed monument as a pile of ruins was a protected asset, as it served the purpose of preserving the memory of the "atrocities" of the allies. The recovery of the monument with the reconstruction of the church (1994-2005), which was considered as a successful of the original building [8], well adapted to the surrounding historical fabric city, was part of the desire to reverse history and claim a dominant role for a united Germany in the European Union [9], while at the same time constituted a step in the nation-building process after the reunification of West and East Germany.



Fig. 4 The development plan of Dresden, by Herbert Conert, decided on January 5, 1946 by the City Council, with extensive reconstructions to recover the pre-war image of the city.

<https://www.das-neue-dresden.de/images/conertplan-1945-dresden.jpg>.



Fig. 5 Commemoration, in front of the ruins of the Frauenkirche, in 1984.

<https://www.dw.com/en/the-history-of-dresdens-frauenkirche/a-37525301>.



Fig. 6 The Frauenkirche today, after its complete reconstruction (1994-2005).

https://www.dresden.de/de/leben/stadtportrait/stadtgeschichte/orste/frauenkirche.php?pk_campaign=Shortcut&pk_kwd=Frauenkirche.

The case of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, in Berlin, is worth mentioning, as it is one of the remarkable exceptions of a monument preserved in the form of a ruin located in the center of the city. The church is located on Breitscheidplatz, the large square in the center of Berlin which, together with the Kurfürstendamm boulevard was marking the center of the former West Berlin, today's City West. The building suffered an extensive damage in an Allied air raid on the night of 23 November 1943, while only a remnant of the bell tower and a large part of the entrance hall, as well as the altar and the baptistery, were saved. The winner of the 1956 architectural competition, Egon Eiermann, initially proposed to demolish the old spire, which caused a public outcry as it was described as the "heart of Berlin". The architect revised the design to

retain the spire, in an interesting juxtaposition with his modern new church [10].

3.2 After the Collapse of the Soviet Union

The dissolution of the Soviet Union (around 1991) is a milestone in recent European history, important also in this context, in terms of building new nations processes, and above all, in terms of the management of material cultural heritage in the countries of the former East of Europe, also former members of the Warsaw Pact, with full political, military and economic dependence on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new nations, the former Soviet Republics, engaged in the destruction of the common communist past and the communist collective memory, as a condition for building a new memory, and the countries of the former Eastern Europe, after their political transformation in repudiation of elements of intangible and material "communist heritage", sometimes with exaggerated zeal.

In addition to overtly communist symbols, such as Lenin statues, which were torn down in former Soviet Republics, even until 2014 (in Kharkiv, 8.5-meter-high statue, from the 60s, the largest in Ukraine), buildings in countries of the former Eastern Europe, such as the

Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw or the Monument to the Revolutionary Act in Rzeszów, were sacrificed as "unwanted heritage" [11], like with other controversial monuments that were also considered as collateral damage in countries of the former Eastern Europe.

The case of the Polish Monument to the Bravery of the Insurgents on the mountain of Saint Anne is indicative, since 2016, when the initiative of the Polish right-wing government resulted in a decree that prohibited the promotion of communism and supported the removal from public spaces of monuments that were honoring "figures, organizations, events or dates" considered as symbols of communism. Nonetheless, the legal status of this monument along with strong local reactions, not merely from the academic community, prevented its destruction [11].

What is interesting with this monument is that in reality it is not a communist symbol, but is considered as a "communist heritage" as on one of its pillars the sculptor Dunikowski carved, at a later time, a figural depiction of soldiers of the Red Soviet and Polish Army with a hammer and sickle, the symbol of the "proletarian dictatorship". On the contrary, the monument is a typical example of timeless political exploitation of



Fig. 7 Berlin, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, around 1900 (a), in 1950 (b) and today (c).

Sources:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser_Wilhelm_Memorial_Church#/media/File:Emperor_Wilhelm's_Memorial_Church_\(Berlin,_Germany\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser_Wilhelm_Memorial_Church#/media/File:Emperor_Wilhelm's_Memorial_Church_(Berlin,_Germany).jpg), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser_Wilhelm_Memorial_Church#/media/File:Kaiser-Wilhelm-Ged%C3%A4chtniskirche_in_the_1950s.jpg and <https://www.amusingplanet.com/2016/03/kaiser-wilhelm-memorial-church-berlin.html>.



Fig. 8 Activists toppling the largest statue of Lenin in Kharkiv's central square, 2014.

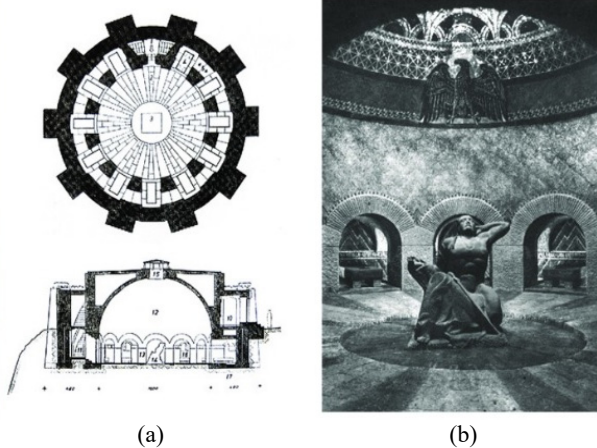


Fig. 9 (a) Plan/Section and interior view of the Monument to the Bravery of the Insurgents; (b) Mausoleum of fallen German soldiers, on the mountain of Saint Anne.



Fig. 10 Section of the Berlin Wall, today.

<https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/785921/gkremisan-agalma-toy-lenin-stin-oykrania/>,

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Saint-Anne-Mountain-monument-mausoleum-of-the-fallen-German-soldiers-from-the-Volunteers_fig3_349714052 and <http://ichlieberlin.gr/berlin-for-free/>.

cultural heritage. It was built in 1937-38 as the Mausoleum of Fallen German Soldiers and it was modified by veterans of the Silesian Uprisings in the spring of 1945, when the Polish administration removed the ashes of German soldiers to replace them with the remains of fallen Polish insurgents, while the period of complete political and economic dependence on the Soviet Union, the celebration of the insurgents became part of the demonstration of support for socialism organized by the working class. After 1989, when state support was channeled to ecclesiastical institutions, the Franciscans greatly expanded the pilgrimage to St. Anne. Today the Monument to the Bravery of the Insurgents is threatened with demolition.

Regarding the most famous European symbol of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall, almost absent today from the city's memory, with its trace lost in the dynamically forming new urban landscape, critics address this constructed nature of collective identities seeking the benefits of the emergence of a diverse and decentralized landscape of memory, involving a large number and a wide variety of stakeholder groups, in a general context of political priorities, tourism industry and controversies between East and West (Saunders: 9).

3.3 After the Fall of the Former Yugoslavia

The preservation of architectural heritage is a European priority declared throughout time. Its "priceless cultural value... and the consciousness of their common history and common future that gives to her peoples make its preservation a matter of vital importance", stated in the Declaration of Amsterdam (1975: para. a'). In this sense, monuments of material cultural heritage are expected to contribute, depending on the formation of a supranational European identity, also to the building of nations, as unifying points of cultural reference of the various ethnic groups. However, in strongly divided societies, with a recent civil war past, monuments may easily function positively, instead they may entrench divisions and even prefigure future conflicts. It has been argued [12]

that in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, monuments and particularly war memorials, commemorative plaques dedicated to military and civilian victims of the last war of 1992-95, at sites of atrocities and burial grounds etc., reinforce the nationalist mutually exclusive war narratives of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, but also the newly created or revived nationalist myths.

In such a context, it is expected that pre-war monuments with a clear unifying symbolism or that at least do not refer to divisive memories of the three communities, to which new interpretations can be attributed, in the direction of strengthening a single Bosnian identity, against the existence of the three distinct nationalist identities, and restoration of the multi-ethnic character of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was one of the main objectives of the Dayton Peace Accords.

One more distinctive example is the case of Mostar and the Old Bridge (Stari Most), which was destroyed during the Bosnian war in 1993, was rebuilt based on the original plan in 2004 and, since 2005, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It followed the Criteria for Selection in order to be included on the World Heritage List [13], precisely:

- the third criterion of "authenticity test" referring to

"bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared",

- the fourth to "be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history", is the most commonly used criterion for 'groups of buildings', such as historic cities, sites and cultural landscapes, since it can refer to a type of construction that has become a model, or a structure considers as the most representative example of a particular typology,

- the fifth to "be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change", a historical value and only

- the sixth in the symbolic value of a place, because after the destruction of the Old Bridge in the 16th century, the original pedestals were preserved in place, but the arch of the bridge was completely reconstructed, while the historic center of the city also suffered significant destruction and has been largely rebuilt, considering that much of the original bridge and buildings were destroyed.



Fig. 11 (a) Mostar's Old Bridge (Stari Most), 1993 and 2004; (b) Mostar, 2004.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-herzegovina-politics-war/25160035.html> and <https://www.travelstyle.gr/mostar-gnorizate-ton-krymme-no-paradeiso-tis-vosnias/>.

It is somewhat clear that this site has certainly lost some of its authenticity and that the monument could hardly successfully pass the UNESCO authenticity test. Jukka Jokilehto [14], referring to the case of Mostar, observes that the Old Bridge of the 16th century, whose importance for the place can be seen even in the name of the location, since *most* means bridge, was destroyed as a political act, while now was rebuilt with the support of UNESCO in its original location, it was included in the World Heritage List of the site based on criterion six, as the World Heritage Committee underlines the importance of the site as "a symbol of reconciliation, international cooperation and coexistence of different cultural, ethnic and religious communities". The author considers that the place still maintains its importance as an archaeological testimony of its history, while it is also associated with a strong symbolic value.

Despite this lack of authenticity by definition, the monument can perform, to a satisfactory degree, its educational role, as long as it is of course combined with provision of on-site information about its history (either in material form, with a relevant inscription, or in an intangible form, utilizing modern technologies and widespread applications of smart mobile phones, via QR code), so that there is no possibility of misleading the visitor, regarding the time of its reconstruction. This is in fact a case that was destroyed in the past "as a political act" and was later chosen to be included in the World Heritage list, also "as a political act", exclusively on the basis of criterion six despite the provision that "the committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria".

3.4 In the War of Ukraine

The losses of the material cultural heritage in Ukraine during the recent war, which is still in progress, mainly due to military operations, but also acts of revenge as an object of propaganda in monuments of

Russian-Ukrainian friendship. Like the giant Ukrainian and Russian worker monument in Kiev, designed in 1982, which was demolished in April 2022 while another symbolic monument of red granite figures for the unity of the two nations is also scheduled to be demolished with only one part of it, a huge rainbow of titanium is to be preserved after being renamed "arch of freedom of the Ukrainian people". In addition, sixty more monuments, reliefs and plaques connected to the Soviet Union or Russia will also be removed in the next period (<https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/561831379/kievo-i-katedafisi-toy-mnimeioy-filias-rosias-oykrantias-vinteo/>). On the other side of this conflict, a statue of Lenin was erected the same month in Russian-held region of Henichesk on the Sea of Azov, north of the Crimean border, seven years after a similar statue was removed [15]. It is interesting that the figure of the legendary Soviet leader is still considered as the most symbolic to identify with modern, fully "decommunized" Russia, and yet, justifiably, the most suitable for confrontation with the right-wing government of Ukraine and the neo-Nazi "fighters of the Order of Azov".

In any case, the war in Ukraine cannot be interpreted without knowledge of the recent history of the two nations, and not without reference to the precedent of Crimea conflict, in 2013-14, when Russia, through hybrid warfare, mainly with propaganda and information warfare, managed to annex the Crimean Peninsula, without launching a military attack. Suppressed memories from that period, in a more general anti-communist, now anti-Russian climate, fueled distress that was theoretically legitimized on the other hand today, in the context of the right of defense, while with the military invasion of Ukraine, Russia is currently more broadly opposed to the West, the EU, NATO, the USA.

Regarding the destruction and damage to the cultural heritage from military operations, the Minister of Culture of Ukraine Oleksandr Tkachenko, in an interview at a



Fig. 12 (a) The Ukrainian and Russian worker monument in Kyiv, which was demolished last April; (b) Church with severe damage in Lukasifka; (c) Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary and the damage inflicted during war in the village of Peremoha.

<https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/561831379/kievo-i-katedafisi-toy-mnimeioy-filias-rosias-oykranias-vinteo/> and <https://www.rferl.org/a/cultural-destruction-ukraine/31821373.html>.

Greek TV channel at the end of May 2022 in a question stated that “there are more than 350 items that were damaged or destroyed... and we are trying together with experts from all over the world to estimate their cost” [16], without making any specific reference to damage to world heritage monuments, such as the historic center of the city of Lviv and the Cathedral of Saint Sophia of Kyiv, for which the international organization had expressed serious concerns. The Ministry of Culture of Ukraine had recorded, until the end of May 2022, serious damage to 29 museums, 133 churches, 66 theaters and libraries and a Jewish cemetery. UNESCO in coordination with the Ukrainian authorities indicated a series of monuments with the emblem of the Hague Convention of 1954 in an attempt to protect the cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict, like important historical monuments and locations [17]. In addition, a smart app invites Ukrainian citizens to scan important monuments and landmarks, as well as other historical buildings, on their phones, allowing the app's software to create a 3D model of them and produce a digital form of their existence in case they are destructed or damaged during war [18].

4. Conclusion

The management of cultural heritage monuments of

European cities that suffered during military operations, presents an interesting case variation, examined over time. The decisions and practices applied to them and the management of their cultural heritage were not, in any period of recent European history, devoid of political expediency.

The management of European cultural heritage monuments, after war, as presented in recent history in most of the cases can be categorized in the following two types:

- as an attempt to reverse history, through the “recovery” of the monument and its inclusion in the representation of the pre-war image of the city,
- as an attempt to perpetuate the memory of the “atrocities” of the enemy at war, through the preservation of the monument in the form of a ruin in the centre of the modern city.

While for cases of new or recovered territories after the war in the following two types:

- as an operation of “purism” by removing cultural symbols of the enemy, during the process of reconstructing monuments,
- or a campaign of cultural alteration with the reconstruction or change of use of mainly religious or other monuments of strong symbolism, with parallel settlement processes.

Today, almost eight decades since the end of the

Second World War and three decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the war between states and political entities territorially defined with governments that have a monopoly on the public power to legitimately use of violence unfortunately reappears again in Europe. The cultural heritage, the safe-keeper of collective memory, which by its preservation or erasure constitutes, in time of peace, the constructed past, present and future of societies, is now vulnerable in war conditions while its management after war is subjected to political expediencies that exceed the international institutional framework of its protection. The existence of different perceptions regarding the management of European cultural heritage monuments, which may be evolving and changing, is vital for both of the present and the future. However, the preservation of cultural resources with the preservation of the authentic material evidence of the past, is a condition for the possibility of different interpretations in the future as well. Beyond its humanitarian dimension, the tragic actuality of the war in Ukraine raises a justified concern to the international community.

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