

The new requests for protection, conservation and valorisation of Cultural Heritage

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Résumé. Stefano Francesco Musso est professeur titulaire de restauration architecturale à l'Université de Gênes, Président de SIRA (Société scientifique italienne pour la Restauration de l'Architecture) et membre du Comité Scientifique de l'Architecture et du Paysage du Ministère du Patrimoine et des Activités Culturelles et Touristiques. Il a été directeur de l'École d'études supérieures du Patrimoine Architectural et Paysager (anciennement l'École de spécialisation en restauration des monuments), Doyen de la Faculté d'Architecture de Gênes, Président de l'AEAA - Association Européenne pour l'Education Architecturale et il est coordinateur du son Réseau Thématique sur la Conservation. Sur la base de sa longue expérience, au niveau national et international, accumulée sur les thèmes en question qui sont aussi le sujet de cette conférence, il va proposer dans son introduction quelques réflexions critiques sur les termes spécifiques de la restauration, de la préservation, de l'entretien, de l'amélioration et sur d'éventuelles situations critiques qui peuvent découler de leur Entrelacement continu dans le monde contemporain. L'objectif du rapport sera également mis sur la nécessité, plus urgente, pour commencer une « Pédagogie de la Conservation, une Formation en matière de Conservation » véritable à tous les niveaux d'enseignement et dans toutes les zones géographiques, les pays de nos droits sociaux et culturels. « Une Pédagogie de la Conservation est, en fait, la seule chance réelle d'assurer la protection future active et significative de notre patrimoine historique et artistique, et du paysage, c'est-à-dire « notre patrimoine culturel ». On fera ça au profit d'un avenir véritablement durable, non seulement socialement, économiquement et pour l'environnement, mais aussi culturellement.

Mots-clés: patrimoine, droits sociaux, Pédagogie de la Conservation.

An initial tale

Let me start this short contribution, in form of public reflection and not as an academic lecture, with two sentences that I always found very interesting and challenging for all those who work in the field of Conservation of our Cultural - and especially built - Heritage.

The first one is a citation from the book "Ruins" written by the French sociologist Marc Augé and it throws a strong ray of light upon the

complex relationship between ruins and history. Augé in particular affirms that:

*"History in the future will not create anymore ruins but only rubbles. It will not have time enough..."*¹.

I think this sentence suggests a very good reason that everyone can immediately understand for the protection of the ruins already existing in our present world as the remains of more ancient civilizations but not only of them. It also invites us to the protection of many others existing buildings and sites that we consider for different reasons important for our culture right to prevent the risk that they could simply disappear in the near future, reduced not in ruins but in mere rubbles, rubbish or wastages without any memory, value and meaning.

The second sentence according to some scholars' opinion is by Gustav Mahler. He was a great musician and composer deeply involved in the renovation of the classic and symphonic music between Nineteenth and Twenty centuries. In this perspective, he worked to renovate the legacy of the past not certainly forgetting or erasing it but also knowing that any productive relationship with the tradition implies the awareness that:

"It is not about to contemplate and adore the ashes, but to keep alive the fire"

The two sentences I quoted can thus help us in facing the new challenges the contemporary world poses us for the protection, conservation/restoration and even enhancement of our Cultural Heritage in an "informal" and in some way heretic - or non-orthodox - way. This can allow us to avoid the risk to repeat some ritual (liturgical) discourses that are very common/usual among ourselves but that are sometimes incomprehensible for all the others peoples potentially involved in the issues of the destiny of our Cultural Heritage.

Let me add also another little provocation! I inserted in the text the picture I showed during the conference and I am sure that everyone will again say ok! I recognize it. It is the interior of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City with the famous fresco cycles by Michelangelo Buonarroti and others (fig.

¹ Marc Augé, *Rovine e macerie. Il senso del tempo*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2004, pp. 75-76 (tit. orig., *Le temps en ruine*, Edition Galilée, Paris 2003).

01). This place is on the other hand a real shrine of the Italian Renaissance, very well known all over the world.



Fig. 01 : Sistine chapel (replica)

Now, if this image is really that of the Sistine Chapel and if we imagine going out that space and climbing up on S.t Peter's dome, we would have the view of the exteriors of the chapel, with the chimney from which a smoke's emission usually announces the election of a new Pope of the Catholic Church (fig.02). Let us imagine now to go back again inside the Chapel portrayed in the first picture and immediately after to exit from it. In reality, a third picture (fig.03) records what we would see in this case. It is not at all the exterior of the Sistine Chapel in Rome (fig. 02)², as everyone can immediately appreciate by seeing that it shows a provisional structure of metal scaffolds with black curtains closing its volume.

² The image 02 is from the web site: <https://www.easyviaggio.com/vaticano/la-cappella-sistina-3514> (l.a.: 03/09/2019 n.d.r.).



Fig. 02 : Sistine chapel exterior (real)

The third image, in fact, is what anyone could have had seen in recent times in Mexico City – aside the Monument of the Revolution - where Gabriel e Antonio Barumen, movie directors and producers, realised a perfect copy (clone, replica, reproduction ...) of the interiors of the real Sistine Chapel in Rome³. It has been possible thanks to the use of millions of pictures (reproductions of the chapel's frescoes of the highest possible resolution nowadays) together with the faithful copies of all the others furniture and architectural elements of the chapel (fig.04).

³ The images 01 and 03 are from the web site:
http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2016/08/05/foto/messico_cappella_sistina-145397848/1/#1 (l.a.: 03/09/2019 n.d.r.).



Fig. 03 : Sistine replica



Fig. 04 : Sistine replica fournitures

It is, even more, a multi-sensorial 'replica' completed by all the smells, flavours, sounds and lights that could be experimented while visiting the

“true” (original, authentic, unique, irreplaceable) Sistine Chapel in Rome (22 m. x 67 m. x 22 m. for 510 m², that are the exact dimensions of the “original” that thus remembers those of the Jerusalem’s Temple).

This astonishing and improving capacity to create faithful copies of ancient artefacts inevitably bring at this point our attention to the fundamental (and somehow incredibly prophetic) book published by Walter Benjamin in the Thirties of the last century, not for sure imagining these kind of developments of his thoughts: «*The work of art in the age of its technical reproducibility*».⁴

Possible consequences of re-production.

Of course, no confusion or misunderstanding are possible in this case: everyone entering inside that provisional structure is aware of being in Mexico City, far from Rome, and that what is going to live/experiment is something completely different, even if amazing or exciting, from being into the real Sistine Chapel. One could also argue that this is a very good and effective way to enlarge the knowledge and appreciation of the world's Cultural Heritage. That provisional installation (that already many Countries asked to host in the future) gives in fact the possibility to a multitude of people, who never will have the chance to go to Rome, to see and to discover this masterpiece of art. This can really offer to many an incredible, unique and irreplaceable witness of the human history and creativity, not simply by looking at some books, but through an immersive journey inside it even if real but somehow virtual - being very well aware of this condition. Furthermore, the realization of this “installation” implied deep knowledge, many competences and skills with the work of many experts and workers in many fields and all this is in any case important for the life and the future of our Cultural Heritage.

Nevertheless, in many other cases, this capacity can create “disasters” or at least deep confusion in the eyes and minds of those who can meet for

⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, in: *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1936 (trad. it. *Il culto moderno dei monumenti. Il suo carattere e i suoi inizi*, in Sandro Scarrocchia (a c. di).

example a copy of the Eiffel Tower in China (fig.05)⁵, a “new Coliseum” in Thailand (fig.06)⁶ or a collection of replicas of fragments from many world’s monuments in Dubai (fig.07)⁷.



Fig. 05 : Eiffel tower replica in China

⁵ We refer to the copy of the Eiffel Tower in the Tianducheng development, Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province – See: <http://www.technocrazed.com/chinese-replica-of-city-of-paris-with-its-eiffel-tower-photo-gallery> (l.a.: 03/09/2019 n.d.r.).

⁶ The image 6 is from: <https://www.coastalrealestatepattaya.com/en-gb/articles/2016/3/7/part2-do-you-live-in-pattaya> (l.a.: 03/09/2019 n.d.r.).

⁷ The images 7 is from: <https://gulfnnews.com/multimedia/framed/leisure/big-ben-coloseo-taj-mahal-replicas-at-dubai-s-global-village-1.1612673>(l.a.: 03/09/2019 n.d.r.).



Fig. 06 : Colosseum replica in Thailand



Fig. 07 : Replicas in Dubai

What could we thus say, thinking to these examples, about the concepts/ideas of "material – immaterial" or "tangible - intangible" heritage, as well about terms like authenticity, integrity, originality or identity/roots and even about reversibility, compatibility, change management, tradition, innovation, minimum intervention and similar. All these are words, concepts, requirements that we usually consider as universally accepted and clear within the world of conservation/restoration. But perhaps is not exactly like this and we should interrogate again ourselves about their real meanings today in front of the astonishing examples of the physical partial re-construction of the Sistine Chapel and of many others similar/different cases around the world.

A crucial question would thus inevitably arise. Are we ready to inheriting what we call "Cultural Heritage" (or "Inheritance" or "Legacy")? Are we able to really taking care of this impressive mine of knowledge, specificities and of cultural richness? We must in fact carefully consider as a crucial value its uniqueness, overpassing the illusion that everything can be faithfully re-produced and that this chance makes now less important or even unnecessary the protection of what we define as cultural Heritage.

The reasons for conservation/restoration of Cultural Heritage nowadays.

After two centuries of debates and of interventions on the pre-existing artefacts that we define as Cultural Heritage, deeply aroused in the Western European World, we perhaps need to once more inquiry the real meaning of those terms. After the permanent opposition between the extreme polarities of the pure (but never possible) "conservation" and "restoration", we still have to take position about them. Following the progressive processes of expansion (for "kind, age of formation, quantity and quality") of our Heritage(s) we must once again clarify what we really intend with these definitions. We now have in fact to look towards wider horizons of meanings, working perhaps to realize new goals in this complex and unexhausted field of human sensitivity, of intellectual elaboration and of pragmatic actions.

We perfectly remember and know what happened in the past and we can at least recall, in extreme synthesis, that:

- Alois Riegl in his book "*The modern cult of ancient monuments*"⁸ already in 1903 deeply analysed in innovative ways what he identified as a "religious attitude" of his times never existed before towards the traces of previous ages still surviving in his world.
- The Nineteenth century's ideas of "Monument" as a "glory for the Country", a witness of the past and the successive conception of "Patrimoine"⁹, not exactly corresponding to Heritage, are furthermore quite recent and continuously changing in times and space.
- New values and requirements are now on the fore in this field (social benefits and community engagement, universal accessibility, sustainability and so on).
- We now consider as important and valuable not only some single "masterpieces of art" as isolated and unique objects with outstanding aesthetical and/or historical values.
- We perfectly know at this point of the long historical, ideal and practical processes that brought us to the present situation that a monument or a site, considered as "cultural goods", have also outstanding social and economic values.
- We are also aware that we have now to deal with complex and wider "systems" of cultural goods and of built cultural landscapes more than, or aside, with their single and separate elements.

After at least two centuries of cultural and disciplinary debates and of practical interventions, we are also aware that:

- Cultural Heritage is made of material traces (buildings/sites/structures - still used, partly or completely abandoned - remains, relics of different origins, age and consistency).
- Through these material traces of the several pasts that preceded the present times many immaterial ("intangible") memories, meanings and values (emotions, stories, knowledge, abilities...) that belonged to our ancestors still survive – embedded in their material bodies - even if sometimes they are forgotten and ignored.
- The cultural goods on the other hand do not certainly belong to the past.

⁸ Tit. or. Alois Riegl, *Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung*, Wien-Leipzig, 1903.

⁹ Françoise Choay, *L'Allégorie du patrimoine*, Paris, Éd. du Seuil, 1992.

- Past is not anymore here and will never come back as it was (and we will never know how it really have had been in its wholeness).
- Those goods (artefacts, structures, buildings, sites, places) belong to our present and should arrive to the future generations as much "intact" as it will be possible, eventually enriched by new "layers" (formal, material, of meanings) instead of deprived of the existing ones.
- They can in fact improve the quality of the environment and of our present life and they could do the same for our descendants in the future, if we consciously and rigorously take care of them.

Nevertheless, a crucial problem is that it is sometimes difficult to explain why an old or ancient artefact is important and should be protected, conserved and restored. It is difficult also considering all the problems and contradictions that any intervention brings with itself as consequence of the different theories, methods, attitudes that affected for at least two centuries and still characterize this field of ideal confrontation and of practical experimentation.

Very often, people do not know and appreciate those objects/artefacts and thus they do not understand why we should spend time and money to "save" instead of simply demolishing and substituting them with new and more efficient, safe, polite, clean or beautiful things, or even leaving the space they now occupy "free" and empty for other purposes and uses.

It is thus normally difficult to explain and motivate why we (supposed experts) consider those "things" important but, let us for a moment change our perspective and leave someone else, not at all an expert in conservation or restoration, suggest another way for looking at those same "poor or apparently banal and ruined" things from another point of view.

In a very interesting short essay dedicated to some "visionary artists", the French philosopher and art's critic Henry Focillon dedicates some pages to Leonardo da Vinci noticing that:

"Looking at a piece of ruined wall, destroyed by many winters, dirty because the dump, engraved by plants and biological agents, Leonardo

follows the enigmatic path of the fissures, like they were the sign of a drawing and so he discovers in these traces marvellous forms and shapes [...]. This phenomenon is not pure: there is observation, reconstruction, but also, [...] there is evocation and images matched together".¹⁰

So, we should first of all look with different eyes and mind at what everyone looks at but that probably does not really "see" and understand, as Leonardo did thus discovering what anybody else never saw or will never see in that fragment of an ancient and ruined wall. On the other hand, as Wolfgang Goethe wrote in his "Journey in Italy", *it is not true that we know what we see but rather we only see what we already know!* We could even argue, to highlight the possible consequences of these statements, that *if we know (and understand) what we are in front of, perhaps we will then love and respect it.*

Furthermore, we should never forget that we are only provisional heirs of the legacy we now call Heritage because *those goods still partly belong to those who created them and should as well belong to those who will arrive after us* (J. Ruskin, W. Morris). Those artefacts should be therefore protected, preserved and conserved. For this aim, a constant care and a programmed conservation are necessary but it is also possible realizing, if necessary, a cultivated and prudent restoration looking as well for a compatible re-use of the existing building or even a well ruled upgrading intervention on it.

The problem is that sometimes these activities end with the production of strange and unnecessary "simulacra" (fake clones) of the lost appearance of the buildings or sites we are working on. In other cases the interventions transform those artefacts in a way that they are not anymore recognizable and, in order to obtain these results, we always use the same techniques and tools thus complicating even more the problem. Conservation has thus to do with all the matters and all the techniques, of "ideation" and "realization" (traditional, innovative, ancient, modern, ...) but Restoration is not - and will never be - a simple or a mere technical problem or action. We cannot reduce it to the simple technical choices that of course we will in any case assume. The real sense and the meanings of our interventions, in fact, will always derive

¹⁰ Henri Focillon, *Estetica dei visionari*, Abscondita, Milano 2006, pp.17-18 (translation by the author).

from the project (design) that firstly regards the people and only afterwards the things and their destiny.

For these reasons:

- any desire for conserving/restoring a material good/asset should be carefully explained, motivated and communicated to the social involved communities;
- only in this way, we can hope that this effort will be really culturally "sustainable" (not only socially, economically or environmentally), for our present communities and for our descendants;
- conservation and management of our Heritage(s) or "Inheritance(s)" will be thus considered and felt as a chance, rather than as a mere and uncomfortable load or difficult problem, for our present and for the future.

Innovation in Conservation

We also need in any case to innovate and to continue developing our ideas and instruments in this complex and sometimes really contradictory and conflicting field. We still do need to be able to realize:

- rigorous architectural surveys, supported by adequate technological devices and clearly based on methodological geometrical basis;
- serious historical inquiries, based on the indirect archive sources, compared with the archaeological analysis of the artifacts, considered as the first and direct sources of their history;
- meticulous analytical and diagnostic non-destructive tests and studies, of empirical and/or scientific nature (laboratory tests) about the materials employed and their state of conservation or the decay phenomena affecting them;
- analysis and interpretation of the constructive techniques, throughout the "history of material culture";
- basic or sophisticated structural analysis using specific interpretative numeric 3D models and non-destructive tests;
- refined and reliable "virtual simulations" of the designed interventions, regarding the built materials and elements, the spaces and the layout of the ancient buildings;

- accurate and dynamic systems for monitoring (in situ or in remote) the microclimatic conditions of our monuments, in relation with the surrounding environment.

We need as well more and more accurate models and methods for virtual analysis and simulation about:

- the structural behavior of the ancient buildings and structures (also facing the earthquakes' actions or other structural and natural or humanly provoked disasters – fires, floods, landslides);
- the physical, energetic and functional behavior of the ancient buildings within the environment of which they are part never pretending they match the requirements for new buildings (also regarding the indoor comfort).

New challenges for our Heritage

Finally, it is necessary at least a synthetic reference to the new challenges that our present and quickly changing world poses to ourselves and to all those involved in the care of our Cultural and Built Heritage. We must in fact take into the due account the over helping processes of a distorted globalization that can provoke:

- the sudden and progressive disappearance of the local specificities and differences, within a destructive homogenization of our cultural values and environments;
- the opposed but not less destructive search for the improvement of "fake local identities".

Not forgetting other emerging and already quoted needs for:

- a true environmental, energetic, social and, even more, cultural sustainability of our interventions on the built Heritage and environments;
- a real universal accessibility of our monuments and sites;
- their effective defence against the risks of fire, earthquakes, floods (or other natural or "provoked by men" disasters).

We can thus conclude this short reflection saying that there still is space and need to work in this field, with open minds and hearts and with new competences and abilities that the education and training systems should ensure in each Country.

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