

Space-making and aesthetics: Adaptive restoration, new functions and their experience in architecture*

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Abstract

In this study I investigate several questions related to adaptive restoration, i.e. when a functioning piece of architecture operates with a different purpose to its original one, as well as the role of aesthetics in re-purposing, and the importance of the special forms of experience such a conversion provides. The questions connected to these architectural projects are not only theoretically inspiring, leading to diverse and broad fields of research in architecture, art and aesthetics, but are also crucial on a practical level, and hence require caution and precise consideration, given the impact the final results of such projects may have, as well as in terms of the effect and efficiency of the new space. Creative and adaptive re-purpose, modification or complete change of function can have wonderful potential, as well as, obviously, presenting serious hazards to avoid. What is equally important, however, is that this will also contribute to a strengthening of awareness of architecture and its aesthetic qualities, hence further promoting the idea of safeguarding and care of edifices and of tangible heritage.

Keywords: aesthetics of architecture; creative re-purpose; adaptive re-purpose; aesthetic experience; change of function; ruins; restoration; reconstruction

Resum. *Creació d'espais i estètica: la restauració adaptativa, les noves funcions i la seva experiència en l'arquitectura*

En aquest estudi s'investiguen diverses qüestions relacionades amb la restauració adaptativa, és a dir, quan una peça arquitectònica en funcionament funciona amb una finalitat diferent de l'original, així com el paper de l'estètica en la reutilització i la importància de les formes especials d'experiència que proporciona aquesta conversió. Les qüestions relacionades amb aquests projectes arquitectònics no són només inspiradores des del punt de vista teòric, ja que donen lloc a diversos i amplis camps de recerca en arquitectura, art i estètica, sinó que també són crucials en el pla pràctic i, per tant, exigeixen cautela i una consideració precisa, atès l'impacte que poden tenir els resultats finals de tals projectes tant en termes d'efecte com d'eficàcia del nou espai. La reconversió creativa i adaptativa, la

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modificació o el canvi complet de funció poden tenir un potencial meravellós, a més de presentar, òbviament, greus perills que cal evitar. Tanmateix, el que és igualment important és que això també contribuirà a reforçar la consciència de l'arquitectura i les seves qualitats estètiques, amb la qual cosa es fomentarà la idea de salvaguardar i cuidar els edificis i el patrimoni tangible.

Paraules clau: estètica de l'arquitectura; reutilització creativa; reutilització adaptativa; experiència estètica; canvi de funció; ruïnes; restauració; reconstrucció

Summary

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1. A night in the cells – Experience and re-purpose

Would you object to staying in a hotel room that used to be a prison cell, like the one recently opened in Bodmin in Cornwall, UK? (Usborne, 2021). Or, let's go further: would you be prepared to make extra efforts, e.g. to make a longer detour or extend your journey time, so that you could experience staying in a hotel room that used to be a prison cell? In the latter case, would you concentrate on the building's history and new purpose, looking for traces of its former use and the way it had been adapted to its new use? Would this unusual re-adaptation of the edifice make you focus on some of the architectural characteristics of the building, or on the particular qualities and solutions of the design more than you normally do when observing a construction? Would you consider the experience provided by such a location as an important added value that may make you ruminate on questions related to, for example, aesthetics, the philosophy of architecture, the transience of human efforts and duties of preservation; or would you judge such an architectural project as merely a tourist-luring attraction, with doubtful “intentions” and questionable results? Already these few questions can lead us to the main topics of the present study: a functioning element of architecture that operates with a different purpose to its original one, the role of aesthetics – as well as artistic, architectural and design solutions – in its re-purposing, and the importance of the special forms of experience such a conversion provides.

The questions connected to these architectural projects are not only theoretically inspiring, leading to diverse and broad fields of research of art and aesthetics, but are also crucial on a practical level, and hence require caution and precise consideration, given the impact the final results of such projects may have. Architectural heritage is a thorny issue. To illustrate this, it is sufficient to think of the most basic but at the same time most difficult questions

that heritage management may raise: Should we keep everything as it is? Or, if it is not as it used to be, should we return it to its previous state? Should we preserve, maintain at any cost or allow forms of transformation and re-purposing? Answers to such questions have several and severe consequences not merely for the architectural features of the edifice in question, but also for its aesthetic qualities and “effect”. At a higher level, they may influence the building’s chances of being or becoming an iconic piece of architecture, and thus may have an impact on questions of urbanism, policies of regeneration and development, strategies of community and collective identity building, the establishment of connections to the location, etc. At an even higher level, certain cases of particular importance – or, that trigger particularly impassioned discussions – because they are examples of either positive results or results that arouse controversies and polemics, can even become precedents for future heritage management practices, either as a method to follow, or an approach to avoid.

Despite the many curious aspects and severe consequences on a broad range of fields and disciplines, the issue of the management of architectural heritage and its eventual adaptive re-purposing has not yet been examined in terms of all of its possible connections with aesthetics. Nor has it been fully surveyed in connection with general, theoretical analyses of what aesthetics as a discipline can add to such discussions, or in the form of aesthetic analyses and evaluations of actual solutions and issues regarding such projects. There is active and fruitful research around, among other aspects, conservation (Lamarque, 2016; Lamarque and Walter, 2019; Giombini, 2021), authenticity (Korsmeyer, 2019; Giombini, 2020a; Andrzejewski, 2017), care (Saito, 2020; Lehtinen, 2020), the aesthetic qualities of industrial sites (Edensor, 2005 and 2007), the effects of tourism (Ryynänen, 2018), urban atmospheres (Andrzejewski and Salwa, 2020), ruins (Somhegyi, 2020) and some of the many theoretical approaches combined with interesting analyses of case studies (Bloszies, 2012; Bollack, 2013) that naturally all encompass aesthetics; but we are a long way from being able to claim that aesthetics has exhausted all its possibilities for efficiently contributing to the discussion of architectural re-use. A complex perspective that encompasses aesthetics is also fruitful for the identification and further survey of the possibilities and limits of uses *of* and *in* the new spaces.

Mutually beneficial inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches are also welcome because of the multi-faceted nature of the essential questions mentioned above. These questions of heritage management, the discourses of the afterlife of a building – whether a (historically) significant building or a less distinctive one, whether larger scale or more modest in size, whether decaying or still in good shape, etc. – can become just as convoluted as a (still) functioning edifice’s spatial qualities or a (no-longer) functioning building’s complex issues of decaying materiality. This complexity of the issue shall not intimidate us, however; it should rather incentivise us to strive for the identification of the best possible solutions. Thus constructions trigger constructive discourses.

At the same time, however, given the complexity of the topic, in the present paper it would be impossible to provide an overall survey of each and every aspect; instead, this paper will focus on several important points in which the considerations of aesthetics, i.e. research into the manifestations of the aesthetic, can help those interested and engaged in re-purposing.

Addressing such questions is also inevitable because there is a constant necessity to “do something” with pieces of architecture. In fact, this requirement is as old as architecture itself; practically as soon as a construction – however grand or modest, public or private, beautiful or average, etc. – is ready, it requires safeguarding and regular maintenance, or various forms of rebuilding, upgrading and re-purposing, or even, in certain cases, decommissioning or tearing down. Naturally all this also implies that many forms and actions of “heritage management” are significantly older than the (modern) concept of heritage itself. As is well known, the historical development of an appreciation of the past (including its physical remnants) and the conscious care for buildings did not necessarily and always overlap. An often quoted example of this is the “use” of the Roman Coliseum as a stone quarry, even in the 15th century, well into the period of the re-discovery and enthusiastic survey of Antiquity by the Humanist scholars and architects. (Woodward, 2008; Syndram, 1988). At the same time, however, as a counter-example, fortunately, there are also more creative ways of re-using old Roman materials, both in Antiquity itself and in later periods, as Philip Jacks (2008) has shown.

This age-old but still pressing requirement to manage pieces of architecture – which, as we have seen above, may often lead us to the moment of decision whether to keep the building as it is or to re-purpose it – has fascinating intersections with the thrill of gaining particular, new forms of experiences, which continues to grow exponentially in our times. Very often we seem to be missing something when it is “just the usual”, and hence we welcome new solutions that add surprising features to a well-known phenomenon or service. The popularity of nicely designed private accommodations with a personal touch, of stylish boutique hotels, and of theme park-cum-resort combos show that both average and well-known hotel chains are getting less thrilling. Naturally their global standard quality provides some sense of comfort, solace and reassurance for much-travelling professionals, but not necessarily for tourists looking for more stimulation, or for bold travellers aiming at experiencing something more unusual, and at gaining something already from the overnight stay itself.

Turning back to our main investigation, however, into architectural re-purposing and its aesthetic consequences, some may naturally raise critical concerns about all this. For example when a former industrial building is being converted into a public cultural venue or community space, especially if purist ideas on architecture and its role and limitations are being followed, any such attempts may be rejected and are instead labelled as mistreatment of the building, or as putting it in the service of the aesthetically shallow though mass-scale experience industry that sometimes characterises or even dominates the second

life of traditional architectural heritage and its “consumption”. In many cases, these concerns may be valid, especially when defenders of traditional values and the role of architecture in general, and of the purpose of an actual building in particular, detect attempts not of creative re-use but of conscious and pre-meditated *abuse* of an edifice or of a building complex. Often they are right. Protectors of the historical and aesthetic values of architecture can easily be correct in their worries, as constructions, monuments, buildings of historic importance or even an entire, organically connected dwelling area are unfortunately often sacrificed for short-sighted economic reasons, dubious political agendas or the pursuit of extreme religious fanaticism.

Despite these very real threats, I would nevertheless suggest taking a more detailed approach, and not overlooking the counter-examples, i.e. such solutions that turn out to be successful and forward-looking both in terms of aesthetics and architecture. The whole issue requires further research, also because, as we will see, the case is not as simple and straightforward as it may have seemed in the beginning, among other reasons due to the fact that the main concepts connected to the phenomenon itself (heritage, re-use, experience) are complex and multiform issues themselves. Therefore, in the next part of my paper, instead of merely condemning any and all forms of the re-purposing and re-creation of spaces – which is also motivated by the desire to create new experiences for visitors – I would like to examine some consequences – mainly (but not only) aesthetic – of such projects. Analysis of the aspects and role of aesthetics in such projects is also important, because it will be the basis for the new *experiments with experiences*, i.e. when certain aspects of the space, place, construction or location are given a particular focus, and highlighted and used in a way that can become beneficial for both the building and its (new) users.

2. Relevance of re-purpose

What adds further nuance to an analysis of the above mentioned complexity of these projects is that they are increasingly relevant. Restored and re-purposed – and sometimes formerly ruinous – spaces are not an irrelevant or “niche-segment” aspect of contemporary architectural (and urbanistic) culture; they are becoming a more and more common practice, for various reasons. Let's look at some of these reasons and their relevance:

(1) The “products” or final results of these interventions can be popular venues, curious locations or spectacular sights for both visitors and permanent inhabitants of the area. This can easily turn such commissions into a great inspiration for architects and designers, even if, at first, the opposite may appear to be the case. One would perhaps think that creative minds prefer to have the opportunity to design a completely new project, without the burdens of an already-existing (or perhaps partially existing) former building. As it turns out, however, the former structure, with its architectural features, long history and curious spaces, may not necessarily be an obstacle to overcome or an annoying form of limiting force, but may serve more as a kind of stimulus

to incentivise further creativity. This is precisely because a creator who has been commissioned to re-design the space ideally needs to find satisfactory solutions for a two-fold task: adding the special features, particular solutions and “signature style” of his/her own, but also, up to a certain degree, respecting the original construction and its characteristics. This maintaining of the original may naturally vary. Occasionally it is very little that is left or that needs to stay from the original remains, just some minor “tangible references”. A few columns or a short segment of a wall allows the visitor to somehow retain the possibility of reaching out to the remains of the former construction. In other cases, the architect is required to maintain much of the former edifice’s appearance, at least in its exterior. Just think, for example, (even though, of course, it was not a “ruined” building at all) of how Tadao Ando re-designed the interior of the Palazzo Grassi and Punta della Dogana, without modifying the historical exterior, which was protected by the rightly strict heritage regulations in Venice.

(2) Another reason for the relevance of such projects is that they can be primary examples of sustainability that in itself is more crucial than ever among the catastrophic climate issues we are facing in our world today. The cost of building has never been low, but the cruel impact on the natural environment caused by producing the building material, mining, deforestation, removing sand (for example for the building of beaches and artificial islands) and the transportation of construction materials are really massive. Therefore, it is not just simply pricy any more, but an activity that causes significant harm to the global environment and contributes to our ecological crisis. Fighting this has inspired developers, architects and designers to find eco-friendly ways of building, thus re-discovering solutions in traditional and vernacular architecture that can be put to the service of sustainable building today. As Sanna Lehtinen also notes: “Some current building trends, such as preference for adaptability and modular building, are informed by the prevailing knowledge about sustainability.” (Lehtinen, 2020: 225). Aside from these new constructions with an utmost focus on sustainability, however, in the case of re-purposing already-existing examples of architecture built decades or centuries ago, any attempts not to destroy or discard them but to save, re-purpose and re-utilise them is welcome. It is especially so if it is done in such a way, as we have seen, that is beneficial not only to the building itself but to its user community too, i.e. for the aesthetic culture of those who encounter it, either for a brief visit or on a regular basis. In this way, practical advantages can easily combine with both commitments to sustainability and the identification and highlighting of new aesthetic visions, such as in the work of the 2021 Pritzker Architectural prize winners Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, who were praised by the jury as follows:

Through their ideas, approach to the profession, and the resulting buildings, they have proven that a commitment to a restorative architecture that is at once technological, innovative, and ecologically responsive can be pursued

without nostalgia. [...] The modernist hopes and dreams to improve the lives of many are reinvigorated through their work that responds to the climatic and ecological emergencies of our time, as well as social urgencies, particularly in the realm of urban housing. They accomplish this through a powerful sense of space and materials that creates architecture as strong in its forms as in its convictions, as transparent in its aesthetic as in its ethics. At once beautiful and pragmatic, they refuse any opposition between architectural quality, environmental responsibility, and the quest for an ethical society. (The Pritzker Architectural Prize website)

(3) From the above we can see that the creative re-purposing, innovative re-design and inspiring re-use of decaying pieces of architecture can have significant financial relevance too. On the one hand, it is *saving*, in both senses of the word: saving the building itself physically from demolition (which would, by the way, also have its own costs), and also saving in the costs of construction. On the other hand, we can count the positive financial effects such a project may have on tourism, city marketing and urban development through regeneration and the revitalising of certain locations that had formerly been less used or even disused, hence occasionally developing entire districts. We may however add that this is not without challenges in itself, and here I obviously refer to the danger caused by the infamous concept of gentrification, which connects these concerns back to the discussion of possible abuses of architectural heritage, i.e. when it is saved and “revamped” with the clear and sole intention of obtaining quick financial gains. Nevertheless, if such dangers are avoided, and when developments of this type are consciously planned and successfully executed, they can have really positive results, with significant consequences on cultural urban development and tourism, among other aspects, through the special aesthetic features they display. These represent, for example, artistic values that can occasionally be brought to a significantly larger number of people than are actively interested in and follow theoretical discourses in architecture, cutting-edge exhibitions or design biennials.

Therefore the successful solution of such design projects, generating fascinating forms of re-purpose and adaptive re-use, can have a major impact on several levels. With often environmentally-friendly and cost-efficient solutions, such projects can even fight the abundance of “junkspace”, as Rem Koolhaas famously described it in his text – or what we could perhaps even label a “manifesto” – in 2002: “Junkspace is the sum total of our current achievement; we have built more than did all previous generations put together, but somehow we do not register on the same scales. We do not leave pyramids.” (Koolhaas, 2002: 175) However, this desire to leave some “pyramid”, i.e. a construction of monumental importance, should not, or not necessarily, depend on the size or scale of the new construction. Just the contrary, a modest but well-functioning re-adaptation can also become exceptional and successful, setting the trend for many other examples to follow. Hence, in some ways, finding efficient modes of re-purposing already existing constructions, and to re-adapt them for current needs, can become of monumental importance.

Having summarised some of the more general features and relevance of such projects, we can now turn our attention to the questions more directly connected to the theoretical aspects of architecture and aesthetics itself.

3. Function and change of function

First of all, much depends on the issues regarding functionality, changes of function and re-attributing function. With regards to this, we can differentiate between three, relatively clearly distinguishable cases:

(1) Let's start with a simple case, when an edifice was built with an actual, certain purpose and is still used for the same function, and has only been upgraded, partly re-designed or restored (but remained in use with the same aims, in the same function). This can be considered to be the normal life of the building, with regular maintenance and minor conservation and improvement processes. In most cases, such intervention has some effect on its aesthetic features, but since there is no major functional change, the aesthetic characteristics usually remain in the same range.

(2) Compared to this simple and common situation, there is a second type of case when the building is and remains in active use but its function has changed. In this situation the construction continuously serves a function, except for the few brief months or years of re-purposing and transformation, which is, even if years, a relatively minor period in the entire life-span of a building. Despite practically continuous use, the change of function will nevertheless significantly influence the functioning of aesthetic properties and values – for example, obviously, by adding new ones. Just think of a space where the original function did not necessarily require noteworthy aesthetic features being converted into one where these features play a more important role, such as an industrial space turned into a cultural venue. Needless to say, I do not want to state that no industrial building can have any aesthetic quality. There are many great examples of 19th or 20th century factories that have architecturally innovative and aesthetically pleasing features – just think of such a classical and often-quoted example as Peter Behrens' AEG Turbine Factory from 1908-1909. I just claim that in most cases their aesthetic effect was considered at least secondary compared to other features such as functionality, efficiency in production and workflow management. The situation is however again not as simple and direct as it may at first seem. In this case it is not merely "adding" some decoration so that the building which formerly had less aesthetic value "acquires" more – for example, with a few paintings here and there. Such a solution may easily result in the artworks being downgraded to superficial and ephemeral pseudo-ornaments just to quickly "aestheticise" the place (i.e. making it "aesthetically upgraded"), which instead causes aesthetic dichotomies rather than beneficial results. On the other hand, it can be much more interesting when the original sterile functionality is (partly) maintained, for example with refined and minimalist architectural and interior design interventions, and then creatively and actively contrasted

with the new function of the space. In this latter and more positive attempt the aforementioned “experiment with the experiences” will be more complex. It will become an experience that juxtaposes diverse types of spaces, one that is (partially) still present, reminding the visitor of the original function, and the perception of the new function that defines the current use. From such an interaction, very good results, particular experiences and bold spaces can be born, where the adaptation allows authentic forms of uses.

Still connected to this case are further sub-questions related to the use of the modified space, and to finding adequate activities that ideally do not merely take into consideration but even highlight some of the former features that are still relevant in the new use. As an example for this we can quote the re-adaptation of the Tennis Palace of Helsinki that is now the home of Helsinki Art Museum (HAM). Built in 1937 by Helge Lundström for the Olympic Games (postponed to 1952), it also served for a while as a car showroom (Tanninen-Mattila, 2021: 5). The upper floor, with high ceilings originally designed for tennis, volleyball and basketball games, creates a curious space for hosting art shows. Many of them really fit in there. What’s more, the shows often – at least, implicitly – reflect on the particularities of the space, e.g. a recent (summer-autumn 2021) exhibition by Katherina Grosse, whose large-size installations not only require great heights, but, being site-specific and created on the spot, incentivise an active dialogue between the artwork, the space and the visitor.

(3) After these two situations (continuous use with regular maintenance or minor upgrades, and close-to-continuous use with change of function) let’s turn our attention to a more complicated one: the case of ruins and former edifices in an advanced phase of ruination, as well as their potential re-use. In the description of this case we need to emphasise the expression “advanced phase of ruination”, in order to clarify that this is not the same as the previous category, because here the function has really stopped, either forever or at least for a significant amount of time. In the previous case, the function(ing), the purposeful use of the building, was either continuous or only temporarily stopped while the upgrade or reconstruction and repurposing took place. In this third case, with regards to ruins, it is different. Ruins are defined by their lack of function and the loss of their original practical purpose without acquiring a new one. Edifices are always constructed with a certain purpose in mind. This may, of course, change, but they are never built “just to be there”, without any function. If, however, an edifice is not in use anymore, for whatever reason, it enters into its phase of dereliction; and, in fact, this dereliction can become irreversible surprisingly quickly. A human dwelling, big or small, may become depopulated due to war, migration, natural catastrophes, epidemics, economic reasons etc. As soon as a building lacks continuous maintenance – which had been regularly carried out as long as it was inhabited or in use – Nature starts to take over. It is the most classical form of ruination, the temporary results of which we often enjoy aesthetically at classical archaeological and heritage sites, such as Graeco-Roman temples, Medi-

aveal monasteries and churches, etc. Two more important clarifications are needed here, however, regarding the aesthetic effect of diverse forms and manifestations of ruins. First is that, as mentioned, these are only “temporary results”: unless the edifices are preserved in their current, ruinous state, they will continue to be ruined by Nature, until the point when there is practically nothing left of the original. The second important point to add – again, with important consequences for re-using and possible re-purposing – is that this describes the “natural” ruination that results in a site becoming aesthetically pleasing to look at. But buildings can get ruined also for less “natural”, and more forced reasons too, e.g. due to human aggression, wars, explosion, terrorist attacks etc. These will then not really become subject to aesthetic appraisal, mostly due to the fact that their destruction has happened in an instant, compared to the long decay of “classical” ruins in the above case of “natural” ruination. In other words, in the case of dereliction caused by war or natural catastrophe, we cannot really talk of aesthetically valuable ruins, where we are fascinated by the sublime amount of time required by Nature to “shape” the building picturesquely into a pleasing ruin; instead, it is simply un-aesthetic debris and rubble (Somhegyi, 2020: Chapter 1).

What we can thus see is that in both forms of “ruins” (aesthetically pleasing and those without such appeal) we have a former building’s physical remnants that are functionless – and, in certain ways and in many cases almost completely unusable for practical purposes. Nevertheless their possible afterlife includes a very broad range of possibilities. Let’s therefore look at the consequence of this distinction with regards to possible forms of re-purposing. According to the differentiation summarised by Nigel Walter, there are three terms strongly related to historic building conservation:

Restoration is an emotive term; in the nineteenth century it was used to describe the conjectural reinvention of old buildings in a historic idiom. The reaction to this, *preservation*, aims to retain a building in its current state, with minimal intervention. (...) *Conservation* positions itself in the middle ground between these two terms, and in contemporary usage is often defined as the management of change. (Lamarque and Walter, 2019: 5 – italics in the original)

Still very useful for us are two further terms that Walter adds and uses in the article, and that are also relevant to my present survey: “Other key notions in contemporary conservation include *significance* (understood to comprise discrete values attached by people to historic buildings under four classes – evidential, historical, aesthetic, and communal) and *character*.” (Lamarque and Walter, 2019: 5 – italics in the original.) As a matter of fact, these are the “notions”, as Walter calls them, that are attempted to be saved in care and “life-saving” conservation practices, such as the “Ambulance for Monuments” project in Romania, which focuses on endangered historical monuments that would otherwise soon collapse. (McGrath, 2021) The importance of the “significance”, highlighted by Walter above, becomes even more clear

when we remember Lisa Giombini's distinction between place and heritage, which is how the significance of a place can grow into becoming heritage:

While a *place* is seen as the background of human action, the setting where social and personal dynamics take place, *heritage* reflects the societal perception of such dynamics, acting as both the producer and the product of collective and individual identity. Within this perspective, everyday significance and attachment are considered key elements on which to base effective reconstruction programs. (Giombini, 2020b, no page numbers – italics in the original)

This will then, as Giombini argues in a more recent paper, also signify that meaning is not an automatically given property, but will be constituted by the community (small, local or larger, or the whole of humanity) for which it is important:

[...] a historical site is never meaningful *in* or *by* itself. Its meaning derives, instead, from the role the object plays in 'constituting' something that is of value, that is, people's attachment to a particular place and culture. Meaning, thus, is not wholly inherent to the object but rather depends on the surrounding social context [...]. (Giombini, 2021: 6. – italics in the original)

Although the above distinction by Walter refers to the options of what to do with historic and, in many cases also, aesthetically significant buildings and/or their remains, it can also be helpful in seeing the opposing options of afterlife of various forms of ruins. If a building's dereliction lacks a particular aesthetics, e.g. because its ruination happened in an instant due to natural catastrophes or human aggression, but it still seems (partly) saveable, we tend to restore it, rebuild it, or at least use the surviving parts as the base of a new construction. In this case, it is immaterial whether the new construction will have the same function as it used to have before or not. On the other hand, if the edifice has undergone the long process of "natural" decay, resulting in a picturesque or even sublime ruin (in the classical or "romantic" sense of the word "ruin") then we are more reluctant to restore it, and very often prefer (or would prefer) to preserve it. In this latter case, however, the edifice will not be (come) useable, it will not be functional. Better to say, it will not become functional, despite preservation or conservation, in the same way as an active, "functioning" edifice that serves a practical purpose is functional. It may of course become a site of historical importance, in the sense of having a "function" as a monument or memorial. However these are rather symbolic functions, and not active ones like, let's say, being a school or an airport. This also makes it clear why we can agree with Peter Lamarque's statement regarding the ruin's value in itself:

A key point is that the aesthetic appreciation of a ruin focuses on the ruin *as a ruin*. In effect, a ruin has become a new kind of object inviting a new kind of response, different from the response that the original building might have

elicited. To appreciate a ruin aesthetically is not a weakened form of an aesthetic response to the original, even if part of the appreciation might involve imagining what the building must have looked like. It is an appreciation of an object in its own right. It is conceivable that a ruin might give more aesthetic pleasure than the original. (Lamarque, 2016: 297 – italics in the original)

Naturally, this argument can also be put in parallel with the study of the diverse values in heritage management established by Alois Riegl in his seminal work of 1903 titled *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin*, especially his introduction of the category of “age-value”, the appreciation of which is largely influenced by whether or not we can perceive the passing of time and the ruination of the building by Nature’s eroding forces. (Riegl, 1982).

Based on all the above, we can claim that in general – naturally allowing the opportunity for several other forms in the level of individual cases – classical, aesthetic ruins are better to be left as ruins, perhaps only with minimal intervention to make them safe to visit and to avoid further damage and dereliction, in order to let them exude their maximum charm. On the other hand with intentionally and partly or (almost) fully destroyed edifices or ones that became quickly derelict by catastrophe, it is better to either clean them away (if they are unsalvageable) or, whenever possible, try to restore and even re-purpose them, also because perhaps their re-adaptation and successful modifications may offer survivors of the catastrophe some hope, and may help heal the wounds caused by the catastrophe itself.

4. The “old” and the “new”

After this analysis of the function and modification of buildings undergoing re-purposing, we arrive at another set of aesthetic-related questions of equal interest. These concern the physical and ontological relationship between the “old” and the “new” building, as well as the role and importance of this relationship which will, of course, also be connected to the above examinations of conservation and preservation. I have added quotation marks around “old” and “new” because it is precisely the ambiguity of these two words that accounts for the difficulty in the question. After such modifications, often including the gradual change of a large part of the material of the building, and after functional changes, architectural reconstruction and creative re-purpose, all with effects on the general aesthetic features of the space, is it still the same building? Can it be the same and can it be considered to be the same? Or, in other words, after how much modification is it the same edifice, or when will it be interpreted as a new one? Is there a hierarchy of “importance” or “relevance” between the parts of the construction when establishing a relationship between the old and the new? For example if only the façade is kept in its original form, is it more relevant for the creation of a proper reference and connection to the past of the building, compared to when only other,

visually less dominant parts are kept? All these questions may sound at first overly scrutinising or “hair-splitting”, and of little practical relevance. That is not entirely the case, however, since they may easily include several further important aspects for the efficient analysis of the aesthetic qualities of the edifice, and for the examination of how successfully the space is functioning in its new purpose.

It may not come as a surprise that in analyses of these questions an analogy with Theseus’ ship comes up, as was recently discussed by Carolyn Korsmeyer (2019: 170-174). In the example, originating in classical philosophy, the ship’s individual pieces are replaced one by one, until none of them is the original any more. The philosophical question is obviously whether it is still the same ship or not, given that none of its parts is genuine? We can say that – *cum grano salis* – we have a sort of similar situation with buildings too. During their life, which may possibly span several centuries, and during the multiple instances of restoration, reconstruction and re-adaptation, they may undergo significant changes in their material substance. It may thus easily make one wonder on a theoretical level whether it is the same building, and, from a practical point of view, what the best approach of reconstruction or restoration would be? Here the modes of restoration differ. When investigating the neighbouring area of art restoration, we can remember Mark Sagoff’s distinction between integral and purist restoration practices:

An integral restoration puts new pieces in the place of original fragments which have been lost; a purist restoration limits itself to cleaning works of art and to reattaching original pieces that may have fallen. Purists contend that nothing inauthentic – nothing not produced by the original artist – may be shown. If damage obscures the style of the original, a purist may allow a few substitutions, but only in outline or in another color, to avoid any pretense of authenticity. (Sagoff, 1978: 457)

Rafael De Clercq, when analysing various questions of the metaphysics of art restoration, also quotes the above distinction by Mark Sagoff, and later in his paper reminds us of the consequences of all this when we are faced with the dilemma of conservation practices:

[...] artistic and historical value may pull in different directions. On the one hand, the object’s artistic value may call for *restoration*, since restoration may make the artistic value of the work apparent again. On the other hand, the object’s historical value may call for *preservation*, keeping the object in its present condition, since this can reveal more about its past, for example about past restorations or the conditions in which it was kept. In some cases (archaeological object, for example), one of the two values clearly dominates, but in other cases, they present a dilemma. (De Clercq, 2013: 274-275 – italics in the original)

While it is not our task here to survey the various aspects of the debate on art restoration in detail, it is worth observing how some of these questions can

be related not only to fine arts, but, *mutatis mutandis*, are adaptable for the analysis of architecture too, as they can point to similar dilemmas regarding both architectural heritage in general and our present interest in this section of my paper, i.e. the connection between the “old” and the “new” in particular. And this will then concern actual aesthetic questions, e.g. the grade and “invasiveness” of restoration, an aspect also highlighted by Carolyn Korsmeyer in another text:

To have age value, an object has to be old. Appearing old is not sufficient. But how old is old enough? How restored is too restored? How much of the original construction of an artifact must be retained in order for age value to remain?” (Korsmeyer, 2008: 122)

When assessing these questions, De Clercq proposes the following: “A work is too restored if the purpose of restoration could have been achieved in a less invasive way, in particular, by preserving more of the (original) parts of the work and by adding fewer new ‘parts’.” (De Clercq, 2013: 273) Another, strongly connected aspect is the visible authenticity of the piece, to illustrate which we can remember Carolyn Korsmeyer’s survey in her book *Things. In Touch with the Past*, quoted above. Here she discusses several elements in the reconstruction and replication of parts of Darwin Martin House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built in 1903-1905, which has a peculiar case that indicates complex theoretical issues: the retaining of a small part of the original asbestos insulation, and its display behind a transparent panel. As she argues:

If we decide to leave the old materials in place, we not only violate improved safety regulations, but we also do not acknowledge that it is in the nature of buildings to be repaired and updated from time to time. We treat them as a kind of thing that they are not. On the other hand, if we decide that the innards don’t matter because they are hidden, then we might be implying that only “surface” appearance matters, which overlooks the real tangible thing and does not differentiate the values of replica and original. (Korsmeyer, 2019: 149)

Such a dilemma easily connects the challenges of the restoration of fine art works and pieces of architecture.

From the above summary of some aspects of the discussion regarding art restoration and of similar issues in architectural restoration and reconstruction, we can see that in addition to the previously analysed concerns around change of function, a change (or substitution or reconstruction) of the material of an edifice can also have significant impact on the evaluation and aesthetic effect of the new construction. Hence the extent of these consequences reaches not only to include issues concerning the building’s integrity and authenticity, but naturally also to options for its reconstruction and restoration.

This will again emphasise the relevance of the above questions, since they are all connected to the perception, and what’s more, the appreciation, of the building. The question is thus whether we shall judge the edifice as a new one,

or consider its relationship to the original as something substantial, and this backward connection and reference as so defining that it seems better to evaluate the building in terms of its original state. Or, formulating the question differently, what are the roles and importance of the original and new (e.g. added or modified and restored) aesthetic qualities in the overall effect of the new building? The difficult – and sometimes rather dubious or ambiguous – concept of “effect” will play a key role here, and actually this is how we arrive back at the example of the prison-turned-hotel with which I started my paper. How important can the effect of such a modified space be? – taking “effect” naturally in its broadest sense, which includes the actual effect on the spot while experiencing the building, as well as the luring strength of anticipation, for example when imagining how it would feel to stay in such a place, based on which we decide whether it is worth making a trip there. However, the strength of effect, and hence the conscious analysis of the particular qualities that influence us while perceiving the building, also includes rumination on the connection of the new to the original – which may sometimes be more direct, tangible and authentic, while in other cases rather “spiritual” or referential only, and which will then contribute to the overall “atmosphere” of the space. Knowing the history of a current building can be essential in its effect – see the lure of curiosity that the prison-hotel can provide for many of its guests – while sometimes it seems less essential or even close to irrelevant. In other words, there are cases when the “former life” of the building not only has “perceivable” relevance to the new function and its evaluation but we are also aware that it is important and hence take it into maximum consideration, while in other cases we do not really pay too much attention to it. Just two examples for this. In Ravenna, Italy, a few years ago the *Mercato Coperto* (covered marketplace) was reborn. Although the origins of commercial activity on this spot date back to the 13th century, after several modifications and extensions, the current edifice acquired its shape at the beginning of the 20th century. (*Mercato Coperto* website). Between 2017 and 2019 it was modified and modernised, turning it into an elegant gastro-centre that nevertheless remains accessible for “general” grocery shopping too. Observing the details of the refined design, with large, generous spaces between the shops and bars, one inevitably compares (or imagines) the new place with a traditional, busy, dense and loud market of the 19th-20th century – or from even earlier.

In Classe, a few minutes’ drive from Ravenna, and close to the renowned church of Sant’Apollinare in Classe, with its world-famous mosaics, a new museum of the archaeological and artistic history of the area was inaugurated recently, in a re-purposed industrial building, a former sugar factory (*Museo della Città e del Territorio*, website). The space has again been nicely restored in its conversion from an unused industrial building into a museum. Nevertheless one is somehow less inspired to ruminate on the detailed comparison between the former function of the edifice and its relationship to the new one, compared to my previous example of the marketplace. During the reconstruc-

tion, a small room dedicated to the “industrial archaeological” history of the building itself was added, and one can say that, as a certain form of self-reference, it fits well into the concept of a museum that aims to show the history of the area: although focusing on archaeological history, it may be interpreted that recent constructions are (or will be) also the subject of archaeology in the future. However, despite this addition of the mini-exhibition directly referring to the original function, the rest of the building, with its ample spaces, is aiming to fully concentrate and satisfy the new function of a museum. In this sense the building is thus focusing more on its future perspectives than on the connection to past, for which we may recall Barbara Camocini and Oxana Nosova’s considerations on conversion:

The best-known type of intervention, on which literature has focused more in the past, is the *change of use*, or *conversion* process. This approach does not necessarily require preserving traces of previous functions, but its main objective is to reintroduce the rehabilitated space into the economy cycle. This process often involves the creating of efficient and profitable new functions, which frequently leads to giving the place a new identity. (Camocini and Nosova, 2017: S1559 – italics in the original)

5. Conclusion

With these considerations and examples from different countries, we can see that in architectural re-purposing, the proper and careful analysis of aesthetic effects, of questions relating to the atmosphere that the new building will exude, and of its relationship to the original construction and to its function are not only useful but even inevitable. Hanna Katharina Göbel’s observations regarding the case of “urban ruins” can actually be extended to the evaluation of many examples of re-construction and alteration of function, as well as the creative and adaptive re-purposing of earlier buildings:

Urban ruins in re-use [...] therefore, act as aesthetic objects in the modern city. They are involved in an ongoing atmospheric translation of their cultural memory. [...] Their cultural past is their key aesthetic feature, which generates logics of its own cultural and economic value making. This acts according to aesthetics of urban ruins, which are specifically designed and fabricated, and not *naturally* given as it is often assumed. Thus, to think of contemporary re-used urban ruins as undesigned leftovers would be a very naive point of view. (Göbel, 2015: 2 – italics in the original)

From the analyses and examples discussed in this article it becomes clear that these are not merely questions of theoretical interest, but have tangible results and thus have actual consequences on the effect and efficiency of the space. Creative and adaptive re-purpose, modification or complete change of function can have wonderful potentials, as well as, obviously, serious hazards to avoid. In most cases we can see that instead of tearing down a

building, it is much better to save it, even at the cost of assigning it another purpose, completely different to the original. What's more, having looked at some curious examples, we can claim that in many cases such re-adaptation can be valuable – and can provide the visitor with new aesthetic experiences of architecture, of design and of the perception of the space; hence it can be worthwhile, even if re-purposing costs more than cleaning up and building a brand new edifice from scratch. What we can also see with regards to such projects is that the actual, new and physical solutions in re-purposing will almost automatically guide the user or visitor of the building to ruminate on its former function and history; hence these processes can also incentivise and strengthen the awareness of architecture and its qualities. This reflective attitude definitely contributes to the further valorisation of built heritage, which is the most important step towards establishing a sense of our collective responsibility and promoting the idea of duty and care of safeguarding it.

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