

NOTE ȘI DISCUȚII / NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE. ARCHITECTURE AND IDENTITY

Stefano D'Avino*

Keywords: earthquake, architectural heritage, Italy, damage, reconstruction, identity.

Abstract: A destructive earthquake can determine a massive damage of the architectural heritage, going as far as irreversible loss. Italy faced several disastrous earthquakes in the second half of the twentieth century, followed by the last major one in 2016, whose large magnitude and the extent of damages have challenged specialists in heritage protection to reflect upon the much debated issues of conservation, reintegration or reconstruction. This article proposes an overview of the experience gained in Italy when facing the need to reconstruct villages, historical urban centers, and valuable architectural monuments, while reflecting upon the issues of the identity of communities affected by the trauma of a destructive earthquake.

Rezumat: Un cutremur de magnitudine mare poate determina grave deteriorări ale patrimoniului arhitectural până la distrugerea sa definitivă. Italia a trecut printr-o serie de astfel de cutremure în a doua jumătate a secolului al XX-lea, urmate de ultimul mare cutremur din 2016, a cărui magnitudine și amploare a distrugerilor materiale a determinat mobilizarea specialiștilor în protecția patrimoniului să reflecteze la mult dezbătutele probleme ale conservării, reintegrării și reconstrucțiilor. Prezentul articol propune o privire de ansamblu a experienței italiene în urma acestor cataclisme, nevoită să facă față unor situații în care era necesară fie reconstruirea unor așezări rurale, a unor centre urbane sau a unor monumente arhitecturale importante. Identitatea comunităților afectate de trauma unui cutremur este una dintre provocările cele mai importante în cazul intervențiilor arhitecturale.

Before the event in the summer of 2016, the Italian territory had been affected by other disastrous earthquakes in the second half of the twentieth century: Belice (1968), Friuli (1976), Valnerina (1979), Irpinia and Basilicata (1980), Umbria and Marche (1997), Abruzzo (2009), Emilia (2012). The interventions carried out as a result of these events have not been homogeneous; on the contrary, they followed different directions due to the technical-normative aspects, the local geological characteristics and the directions dictated to technicians: from the stylistic exercise conducted in Gibellina (where architects and artists were experienced, from Purini to Consagra, to Burri), to the meticulous reconstruction of the Friulian historical centers of Gemona, Artegna and Venzone.



Fig. 1. View of the village of Campi, near Norcia (Perugia).

Compared to previous experiences, the recent seismic event however represents an exception, due to the magnitude of the territory concerned, the extent of the damage found, the typological characteristics of its historical centers, and their close relationship between architecture and context. This determined us to return to reflecting on issues (conservation, reintegration, reconstruction) long debated in the last century, some of which were even considered 'exhausted'.

A particularly significant element is the evident integration in the landscape dimension of these small villages (Fig. 1). It seems undoubted that such historical building heritage, like all smaller urban contexts, suffers from its own fragility due to a lack of propensity to recognize its 'monumental' character; a failing that puts at risk the preservation of a heritage that represents both identity and memory, even before historical and architectural features. Therefore it becomes necessary, as a first step, to document all the construction techniques and the seismic prevention criteria employed over the centuries. This will allow to appreciate the resistance capacity of the materials as well as a higher or lower 'adaptability' of the structural mechanism to the seismic event.

Over time the attention has moved from the material to the action of building: the experience has favoured the identification of the most appropriate ways to improve the resistance qualities of the structures and, more generally, of those anti-seismic devices that we can recognize even in the more ancient architectures; anti-seismic defences, such as chains, connections and tensions between walls have thus become integral elements of the building rules (Fig.2).

Since the behaviour of a historical structure in case of a seismic event depends largely on its construction

* Department of Architecture University "G. d'Annunzio", Italy, e-mail: sdavino@unich.it