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# Heritage and Aesthetic Displeasure:

The Value of Aesthetic Discomfort exemplified

through Three Case Studies

**b.tu**

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## **Heritage and Aesthetic Displeasure:**

The Value of Aesthetic Discomfort Exemplified through Three Case Studies

## **Kulturerbe und ästhetisches Missfallen:**

Der Wert des ästhetischen Unbehagens, veranschaulicht durch drei Fallstudien

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
World Heritage Studies at the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	15
<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	17
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</b> .....	19
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	23
OBJECTIVES .....	25
METHODOLOGY.....	26
<b>CHAPTER 1 – PRELUDE</b> .....	31
ON HERITAGE.....	33
ON CONSERVATION.....	38
<b>CHAPTER 2 – DISSONANCE IN AESTHETICS</b> .....	47
AESTHETICS.....	49
FORM AND FUNCTION.....	52
DISPLEASURE AND DISCOMFORT .....	56
<b>CHAPTER 3 –AESTHETIC DISPLEASURE</b> .....	63
THE THREE CASE STUDIES.....	67
Waiting for the Collective - Bus Stops from the former Soviet Union .....	70
<i>It Must Be Beautiful</i> .....	73
<i>Soviet Bus Stops</i> .....	74
A trip to the other side – European Border Checkpoints .....	79
<i>After Schengen: European Borders</i> .....	82
<i>übergang</i> .....	84
Preparing for the enemy that never came – Bunkers in Albania .....	88
<i>Concrete Mushrooms</i> .....	94
<i>Concresco</i> .....	95
THE THREE AXES.....	100
Displeasure of the Type .....	101
Displeasure of the Intervened .....	104
Displeasure of the Dilapidated .....	106
<b>CHAPTER 4 – DISPLEASING HERITAGE</b> .....	125
<b>CODA</b> .....	137
<b>ANNEXES</b> .....	143
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	181

## TABLE OF IMAGES

<b>Fig. 1.</b> ©Yanis Diaz, 2015. Beelitz Heilstätten. Beelitz, Germany.....	<b>1</b>
<b>Fig. 2.</b> Bernard Tschumi. Villa Savoye – Advertisements for Architecture.....	<b>65</b>
<b>Fig. 3.</b> ©Rene Burri, 1959. The Villa Savoye (1928-1931) .....	<b>66</b>
<b>Fig. 4.</b> ©Rene Burri, 1959. The Villa Savoye (1928-1931) .....	<b>66</b>
<b>Fig. 5.</b> ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. imb_05.....	<b>75</b>
<b>Fig. 6.</b> ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. imb_01.....	<b>75</b>
<b>Fig. 7.</b> ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. Disputed_region_of_Abkhazia_Gagra .....	<b>76</b>
<b>Fig. 8.</b> ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. Belarus_Čórnaje .....	<b>76</b>
<b>Fig. 9.</b> ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. 17_ignacioevangelista15 .....	<b>85</b>
<b>Fig. 10.</b> ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. 17_ignacioevangelista2 .....	<b>85</b>
<b>Fig. 11.</b> ©Josef Schulz, 2007. Transition_145.....	<b>86</b>
<b>Fig. 12.</b> ©Josef Schulz, 2007. Transition_205.....	<b>86</b>
<b>Fig. 13.</b> ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. Concrete_Mushrooms_Alicja_Dobrucka_12 .....	<b>97</b>
<b>Fig. 14.</b> ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. Concrete_Mushrooms_Alicja_Dobrucka_6 .....	<b>97</b>
<b>Fig. 15.</b> ©David Galjaard, 2008. Conresco_David_Galjaard_10 .....	<b>98</b>
<b>Fig. 16.</b> ©David Galjaard, 2008. Conresco_David_Galjaard_05 .....	<b>98</b>
<b>Fig. 17.</b> ©Matthew Carbone for Architect Magazine, 2015. Orange County Government Center .....	<b>109</b>
<b>Fig. 18.</b> ©Gregory Varnum, 2007. J. Edgar Hoover Building.....	<b>109</b>
<b>Fig. 19.</b> ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. Armenia_Saratak .....	<b>110</b>
<b>Fig. 20.</b> ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. imb_08.....	<b>110</b>
<b>Fig. 21.</b> ©Josef Schulz, 2007. Transition_225.....	<b>111</b>
<b>Fig. 22.</b> ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. 17_ignacioevangelista8 .....	<b>111</b>
<b>Fig. 23.</b> ©David Galjaard, 2008. Conresco_David_Galjaard_17 .....	<b>112</b>
<b>Fig. 24.</b> ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. Concrete_Mushrooms_Alicja_Dobrucka_11 ....	<b>112</b>
<b>Fig. 25.</b> ©Klaus Frahm, 2001. Kesselhaus, Hamburg .....	<b>113</b>
<b>Fig. 26.</b> ©Michel Denancé, 2010. Le Parlement .....	<b>113</b>
<b>Fig. 27.</b> ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. imb_18.....	<b>114</b>
<b>Fig. 28.</b> ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. Disputed_region_of_Abkhazia_Pitsunda_2	<b>114</b>
<b>Fig. 29.</b> ©Josef Schulz, 2007. Transition_5.....	<b>115</b>
<b>Fig. 30.</b> ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. 17_ignacioevangelista16 .....	<b>115</b>
<b>Fig. 31.</b> ©David Galjaard, 2008. Conresco_David_Galjaard_11 .....	<b>116</b>
<b>Fig. 32.</b> ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. Concrete_Mushrooms_Alicja_Dobrucka_3 .....	<b>116</b>
<b>Fig. 33.</b> ©Concrete Mushrooms. Concrete Mushrooms – The Book, pages 118-119 .....	<b>117</b>
<b>Fig. 34.</b> ©Concrete Mushrooms. Concrete Mushrooms – The Book, pages 132-133 .....	<b>117</b>
<b>Fig. 35.</b> ©Bed&Bunker. Construction Period .....	<b>118</b>
<b>Fig. 36.</b> ©Bed&Bunker. The Bed and Bunker .....	<b>118</b>
<b>Fig. 37.</b> ©Tomas Zrna, 2010. Ghost town of Pyramiden.....	<b>119</b>
<b>Fig. 38.</b> ©Bob Watterson, 2015. Calvin and Hobbes: It’s a Magical World.....	<b>119</b>
<b>Fig. 39.</b> ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. Kazakhstan_Shymkent.....	<b>120</b>
<b>Fig. 40.</b> ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. imb_09.....	<b>120</b>

<b>Fig. 41.</b> ©Josef Schulz, 2007. Transition_275 .....	<b>121</b>
<b>Fig. 42.</b> ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. 17_ignacioevangelista8.....	<b>121</b>
<b>Fig. 43.</b> ©David Galjaard, 2008. Conresco_David_Galjaard_17.....	<b>122</b>
<b>Fig. 44.</b> ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. Concrete_Mushrooms_Alicja_Dobrucka_2.....	<b>122</b>
<b>Fig. 45.</b> ©Max Avdeev, 2015. Belyayevo. Source: archdaily (Snopek, 2015) .....	<b>131</b>
<b>Fig. 46.</b> Rem Koolhaas and his proposed approach of UNESCO conservation. 15.09.14 Rem Koolhaas "Russia for Beginners" ENG .....	<b>131</b>
<b>Fig. 47.</b> ©John Mason, 2014. Birmingham Central Library .....	<b>132</b>
<b>Fig. 48.</b> ©Stephen Millership. Birmingham Central Library .....	<b>132</b>







## SUMMARY

The World Heritage List, created in 1972 by the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage*, exhibits few cultural sites younger than the signing of the convention, as well as everyday structures which comprise the contemporary urban life. This idea of heritage as something related to the ancient not only is manifested in the international sphere but has also permeated national views, weakening awareness for discreet heritage, which compete with designs from famous architects or monumental structures, giving the impression that grandeur and looks are highly coveted. This does not only discard relevant events of the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century attached to smaller constructions that had impacts on different cultures, but also integral components of urban fabric. Furthermore, these approaches towards heritage relevance resonate within the local populations, who, taking as examples how heritage is treated and approached in an international context, tend to overlook structures that are considered aesthetically displeasing because they do not adhere to this traditional scheme seen in the heritage field.

From here extends the idea of analyzing case studies that fall within overlooked heritage from a new angle: one of valuating aesthetic displeasure. The thesis will focus on individual and serial constructions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century commonly seen as displeasing due to their typologies and styles but also due to their formal characteristics, redirecting the attention from those considered aesthetically pleasing and grandiose towards otherwise ignored built heritage. Additionally, it will address the perceptions of such structures in the context of the international heritage and conservation spheres, to present how these structures are currently not fully appreciated within the traditional idea of heritage due to their looks and commonality. This approach does in fact overlook, and even relegate, those buildings that do not fit into the preconceived idea of aesthetics, denying the opportunity to explore and find their potential for heritage value.





## **GLOSSARY**

**DOCOMOMO** – International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement.

**ICCROM** – International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

**ICOMOS** – International Council for Monuments and Sites

**ISC20C** – ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on 20th Century Heritage

**IUCN** – International Union for Conservation of Nature

**OUV** – Outstanding Universal Value

**State Party** – Country which has ratified to the World Heritage Convention

**UNESCO** – United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization

**WH** – World Heritage

**WHC** – World Heritage Centre

**WHL** – World Heritage List

**WHCom** – World Heritage Committee

**WW1** – World War 1

**WW2** – World War 2



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## INTRODUCTION

A year ago, I participated in an international competition called *120 Hours*, which started in 2010 in Norway as a platform to introduce students of architecture to the working field (120 Hours, 2015). The topic for 2015 was “Experimental Preservation”, and the objective was to present a new approach for preserving the site of Pyramiden, located in the Svalbard archipelago. Pyramiden is a mining settlement established by Sweden in 1910 and later sold to the Soviet Union in 1927, officially closed in 1998 and to this day is mostly abandoned (Nuwer, 2014). The competition itself was a great exercise of thought and research on the significance and values of the site. The place itself is beautiful in an eerie way, having various structures crumbling down and falling apart, conveying fear to walk into them and explore; an atmosphere that would simply be robbed of its essence if the site was to be fully restored or plagued with tourists. Through conversations and discussions with my friend and colleague Pablo Arboleda – from whom I could say I got to the idea of researching about fringe aesthetics – about how such a place can be truly enhanced, the final idea materialized. In the end, my proposal had the title *APRESERVATION*, of which the “A” works as a play on words, serving both as a prefix but also as a full sentence: “Apreservation” and “A preservation”. The objective of my entry was to suggest that the most experimental preservation for a site is no preservation at all, it will simply remain as it is and faithfully reflect its innate values: the history of this place is one of comings and goings, ephemerality and transience. People came looking for work and experiences, but in the end they all left. With this in mind, what could be better for reflecting these emotions of awe, discovery, and excitement – that emerge when we leave our comfort zones – than letting the place remain untouched, at the mercy of time, to continue the legacy of fleeting nature? I could not stop thinking about this after reading the ending of Rachel Nuwer’s article on Pyramiden: “ ‘Pyramiden has its

particular spirit,' Prudnikov says. 'I don't think it will ever be restored, and neither should it be.' " (ibid)

I discussed my entry to this contest with colleagues, and some of the reactions could be summarized by: "Why do you want to let things die?" and "That would not look nice!", stretching towards the economic-urbanistic pros and cons: "That plot of land could be reused. In this day and age, where housing and public space are missing, what is the use of a withered building?". Ironically, when I showed them some of photographs I took in the abandoned hospital of *Beelitz-Heilstätten* in Germany, they were fascinated by them (Fig. 1). This prompted discussions on what is pleasant to people, where the line is drawn, what the fate of displeasing structures should be and who should decide upon it, especially when it comes to buildings or places which trigger negative opinions in a rather visceral way. "Brutalism? Ugh, how I hate that style.", muttered a colleague of mine, leading me to ask why. The answer "I don't know. It's heavy, cold, bulky. I just don't like it." struck me rather odd and made me wonder how many sites have been given the final chop because whoever had to take the decision to address them had a negative bias on the grounds of "I don't know". This exact thought prompted the whole idea of this thesis: could one find preservation, heritage or cultural value in buildings that are not aesthetically pleasant?

Despite *ugliness* and *ugly* being widespread terms throughout texts relating to philosophy and art, since this thesis is directed towards the heritage field and cultural values, it seems appropriate to use another terminology. As this thesis includes ideas and historic developments of aesthetics, the terms *ugly* and *ugliness* will appear, but mostly as seen or borrowed from other fields. From this point onward, the words "displeasure" or "discomfort" – and its derivations – will be used in order to differentiate it from the words "unpleasant" or "uncomfortable". The latter are used primarily to address topics of intangible heritage, including emotionally charged aspects, or specific types of sites which embody difficult matters, such as heritage related to war, genocides, dictatorships, human suffering, etc. This differentiation will be expanded on Chapter 2, and as it will be mentioned there, the reason for proposing these terms is mainly to avoid confusion. When the terms "discomfort" and "displeasure" are used, it would be prudent to avoid relating them to the "uncomfortable" or "unpleasant" since there is already a whole field of research dedicated to the latter ones and the difficult connotations which they imply are not central to the former ones. It is



important to add though, that emphasizing on this differentiation does not denote that displeasure and discomfort have no intangible components or that they are completely separated from those related to difficult heritage.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The thesis revolves around two basic objectives which can be seen as two sides of a same coin. The first one is to provide a platform to discuss conservation approaches when dealing with displeasing heritage (for this thesis the focus will be on displeasing aesthetics, but it is hoped that it will spill over to conservation approaches of every kind). When it comes to seemingly “boring”, “unattractive”, “ugly” structures there seems to be an easier time to decide upon their fate, in many cases harshly deciding between extremes: full restorations of damaged fabric or total demolition of the structure; sometimes freezing them in time seems like an acceptable option as well, although this tends to happen more often in older sites. Options and opinions of course vary, and brainstorming solutions is vital, which should include the consultation and discussion with the involved community – as those directly engaged with the site. Nevertheless, one should exert caution regarding how influenced is the community by the international heritage discourse, so that their actions are not a simple compliance matter to traditional views of what heritage is or should be for the sake of fitting in.

The second objective is to present the actual situation of underrepresented built cultural heritage in terms of typologies, and how, through current judging and evaluating procedures when addressing heritage, sites of significant value could be dismissed due to their forms and appearance. This underrepresentation was demonstrated and dealt with on higher (not in terms of quality but of discourse, i.e. international) levels of heritage approaches, presented in documents and initiatives such as the *UNESCO Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List* (from here on, *Global Strategy*) or the *ICOMOS The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future* (from here on, *Gap Analysis*); information on these and other documents and initiatives will be explored further. The significance of this ob-

jective, is that heritage evaluation and judging done at local and national levels usually follows – strictly or loosely – the tenets of international heritage discourse. This does not simply present accepted ideas of what is traditionally understood as aesthetically pleasing but it also influences how built heritage is perceived and acted upon, since, if it does not fit this traditional view, it can be ignored or disregarded, leading to its demise.

With this twofold objective the overall intention of this work is to engage in the discussion of what role aesthetics might have in heritage and why displeasing built heritage should be addressed for the sake of displeasure and discomfort itself, even if it does not coincide with a romantic view of aesthetics. The important thing to consider here is that discussions and debates are necessary, and by presenting a wider palette of reasons as to why something is pleasing, aesthetically and even historically acceptable, the goal is that it will evolve towards a reflection on the community's heritage values, seeking the relevance of their past by its innate importance, unhindered by traditional aesthetic conventions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Since even before choosing a topic, the idea was to combine theoretical aspects (mainly through academic research) and practical action (exploring case studies). Once the topic and the examples which lead to it were defined, the thesis took a turn involving a heavy amount of case studies that were geographically, but also academically, distant from my location. This led to searching alternative ways to still extract valuable information and experiences from the selected places. The main force to engage with this thesis lies on a combination of theoretical research, case studies and interviews, where a synergetic relationship began: the case studies were discovered through photographic projects that had been circulating on the internet, and while trying to get a hold on official information from the sites (blueprints, projects, official statements, etc.) it became clear that such information was lacking, mostly due to the marginality and discreet nature of the case studies. Thus, the idea to actively and directly engage with the photographers through interviews became one of the major foci in order to obtain as much second-hand information as possible, but

more importantly to delve into the interactions that had happened, either between the photographers and the projects, between the public and the photographers, or between the projects and the public.

The thesis includes academic research on the role of aesthetics in both heritage and architecture. To present a pragmatic view of the theory, three case studies were selected and divided in three axes to better exemplify the research. These case studies were enriched by the interviews with photographers and conservation experts, and whose comments and criticism were included in the theoretical segment, molding the final work. The thesis is structured into five sections. *Chapter 1 – Prelude*, will present background information that places aesthetics in the context of heritage with an overview on heritage conventions, charters and documents. In addition, a general look on matters of conservation and protection will be presented, particularly focused on how aesthetics has become an intrinsic aspect for heritage value judgement and its relevance in the activities of conservation. *Chapter 2 – Dissonance in Aesthetics* engages with the theoretical information that will build the case for discomfiting and displeasing aesthetics, delving into aspects of architectural form and function, aesthetics, and finally displeasure and discomfort. *Chapter 3 – Aesthetic Displeasure*, will act as the main section, presenting the case studies that exemplify the aim of this thesis, as well as the three axes of study which offer a broader view to the spectrum of aesthetics, in a way of dividing or proposing displeasing aesthetics. Finally, *Chapter 4 – Displeasing Heritage*, will act as a conclusion discussing the linkage between heritage and displeasing aesthetics based on the previous chapters, converging the three case studies and the axes of displeasing aesthetics. The *Coda* will serve as an afterthought for the thesis, while the *Annex* section is reserved for the full transcriptions of the interviews with the photographers Christopher Herwig, Ignacio Evangelista, Josef Schulz and David Galjaard, with Lejla Hadžić from the organization *Cultural Heritage Without Borders*, in Albania, and with former ICCROM staff member Jukka Jokilehto.







## CHAPTER 1 – PRELUDE

*Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.*

– The Burra Charter-The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013,  
Art.1.2

Central to a thesis that includes words like “heritage” and “values” in its title are the various dialogues and tools that address and discuss such topics. Among these, UNESCO and *The 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (from here on, World Heritage Convention) are without doubt the most prominent and known instruments worldwide that deal and engage with the aspects of heritage, culture, and their related values (Labadi, 2013, p.1). From here many entities and definitions have come forth to expand the discourse between experts and States Parties to take on matters regarding the protection and conservation of humanity’s heritage, such as ICOMOS, IUCN, ICCROM, and the notion of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). International agreements, charters, and conventions have been guiding instruments in the field of heritage and conservation for many years and for many people, some of them being tighter, more conservative than others. There have been – and for many, still are – indications that these international instruments for many years have influenced the ways heritage and conservation have been treated, even if a State Party or individual does not follow any of previously mentioned instruments (Smith, 2006, p.11; *ibid*, pp.127-132).

This influence has been deemed by many as westernized, viewing heritage and aspects of authenticity and value from a perspective of the materiality and tangibility of heritage, focusing on the fabric over intangible values that are dear to many cultures, as well as relying on experts – seen as an elitist, restrictive and external inherence

(Burman, 2001, p.14; Smith, 2006, pp.28, 54-57, 106-113; UNESCO, 2003a, pp.1-2). Laurajane Smith uses the term “Authorized Heritage Discourse” to describe these positions and actions that have been established by Western societies to define terms as heritage, intangible, tangible, and culture (Smith, 2006, p.4). Responding to such claims, the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (from here on, Intangible Convention of 2003) was adopted in 2003 and it was no surprise that its proposal and first signatories, as well as the first inscriptions, came from non-Western States Parties in an attempt to create a balance with the high number of tangible culture elements inscribed by Western States Parties on the World Heritage List (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016a). It is important to mention that there have been innovations on how cultural heritage is understood and discussed. One important concept is that of “human creativity”, which, as explained by Jukka Jokilehto has found great acceptance in World Heritage spheres:

At the beginning of the World Heritage Convention it was thought that we were to identify some of the big masterpieces, the most important ones. But especially from the 1990s it has broadened to cultural landscapes, to vernacular architecture, industrial heritage, and so on, which cannot create big works of art, but they are still human creative productions. Therefore UNESCO has adopted this cultural expressions concept, which I think is a very interesting concept, because it actually puts in a slightly different position, with the philosophy of Henri Bergson who talked about human creativity – which was from the first years of the 1900s – and also Nietzsche talked about it. With human creativity this work of art has slowly been broadened and now we can talk about that anything can be of the human creativity. (J. Jokilehto, 2016, pers. comm., 19 January)

Additionally, with the inclusion of cultural landscapes as a category for evaluation and inscription of sites in the WHL, more intangible elements are being considered, and sometimes even expected from recent nominations. Intangible components, although still not fully embraced, have become relevant for both nominating States Parties and the international discourse, with steady inscriptions in the past years (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016b). But as Sophia Labadi (2013, p.128) mentions, there is still an overwhelming adherence to the traditional approach towards cultural heritage, specifically carried out by States Parties, and what seems to



be like a separation between the tangible and intangible conventions, despite the existence of documents such as the *Nara Document of Authenticity* (from here on, Nara Document) or conventions such as the Intangible Convention of 2003 (ibid, p.130). As extension of the intangible components and authenticity values, aesthetics is an important part of these heritage components, specifically in the area of values, and by relegating them to secondary places, the understanding of other forms and aesthetics that do not fall within the traditional ideas of beauty or art also runs the risk of being neglected.

Besides discussing values, the tangible and the intangible, and the role that aesthetics play in heritage and conservation matters, it is important to look back and acknowledge their relationship with the relevance, judgment and evaluation that revolve around aesthetics. Therefore, an overview is needed on how heritage and conservation have been, and are, linked with aesthetics in the official documents, charters and conventions. This chapter will provide a quick view on two major aspects of how heritage has engaged with aesthetics. The first aspect will address heritage itself from the point of view of international documents concerning entities such as UNESCO and its World Heritage Convention, and ICOMOS, as the advisory body to the WHC for matters of cultural heritage. The second aspect will engage with conservation, specifically, from the international heritage sphere. It will also provide a quick overview of historic approaches to conservation and their evolution, as well as addressing the conservation components from the documents previously mentioned. The idea is to place aesthetics in the context of heritage and conservation, and to have a view on how it has been approached and dealt with through these major institutions and documents, which in one way or the other have influenced the discourse of conservation and presentation of cultural heritage in the past years.

## **ON HERITAGE**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, UNESCO and its World Heritage Convention constitute the most renowned and important instruments for the protection and conservation of heritage. Following UNESCO's mindset, other institutions, tools, and

even further developed ideas have influenced and directed the path of heritage discussion for the past 44 years. This protagonist position has also determined the direction which ideas and practices for the safeguarding of heritage properties have taken, by influencing States Parties directly or indirectly. This influence keeps increasing by the year – 1031 properties on the WHL as of February 2016 (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2016a) – as more and more States Parties seek to inscribe properties for either genuine protection and awareness purposes or simply for demonstrating international relevance.

Due to the expertise and coordination established by these instruments, it becomes imperative to see how the practices presented by the World Heritage Convention have influenced how States Parties engage in nominating sites (Burman, 2001, p.14). By extrapolating the concepts and procedures from the international sphere into their national inventories, States Parties have adjusted and formulated (or reformulated) their laws for the protection of heritage, following somehow the same principles internationally outlined, as well as the way practices related to heritage are undertaken (ICOMOS, 2008, pp.7-8). Furthermore, inscription of heritage sites on the WHL – a relevant point of reference for engaging with heritage – requires a comparative analysis which does not necessarily compare quality, but does ask to look at other sites as examples, furthering the idea of homogeneity among sites (Labadi, 2013, p.70-73). This of course, has been a work in progress which started with the establishment of the World Heritage Convention in 1972, evolving throughout the years until now. But in this evolution developments in the wording and attention to the topic of aesthetics – slowly shifting towards the theme of this thesis – become relevant. A quick overview of important articles, documents and charters will clarify this evolution.

Core to the World Heritage Convention is the idea of OUV, found on its Article 1 (UNESCO, 1972, p.2) when considering what “cultural heritage” can mean:

monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

This OUV is defined in the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (from here on, Operational Guidelines) as “cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2015, p.11, no. 49), and makes use of ten criteria established by the WHCom to determine the nature and qualities of this OUV for a property. Of the ten criteria, the first six refer to the cultural heritage while the other four are used for natural heritage, and for the purposes of this work will only be addressing the cultural ones, although IUCN has some insight towards beauty but from the point of view of nature (IUCN, 2013, pp.42-53)<sup>1</sup>.

As Jukka Jokilehto (ICOMOS, 2008, pp.12-14) presents in the document *What is OUV?*, there has been an evolution of the wording of the six criterion since their first writing in 1976 in the *Operational Guidelines*. This evolution has taken place in order to adapt to new understandings, new properties and new terms that have surfaced throughout the years, and which would allow for a better and proper description and evaluation of heritage and site inscription (see page 32). This evolution has seen specific words like “unique”, “aesthetic” and “artistic” taken out from the criteria wording, as can be observed in the 1976 description of the criterion (i) – a criterion that will be taken as point of reference and study from here onwards – which states: “Properties which represent a unique artistic achievement, including the masterpieces of internationally renowned architects and builders.” (ibid, 2008, p.12), which in 1980 read as: “Represent a unique artistic or aesthetic achievement, a masterpiece

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<sup>1</sup> IUCN, who deals with the four natural criteria, developed a study on the application of criterion (vii), on exceptional natural beauty, which has been equated to criterion (i) of the cultural ones, which in turn deals with aesthetics in works of art and culture. Furthermore, since this thesis focuses on the cultural criterion, future references to criteria should be understood as those for cultural heritage.

of human creative genius;" (ibid), and in 2005: "Represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;" (ibid). This was explained by Jokilehto himself:

So for 1976 it says that "properties that represent a unique artistic achievement, including masterpieces", etc. This concept of "unique" has become a problematic issue because everything is unique if you like, and so it is not a very good definition. And then "artistic" is more for works of art, so it is already broadening in 1978. And then you have like "unique artistic achievement or masterpiece of human creative genius"; it is only in 1976 it became a "masterpiece of human creative genius". (J. Jokilehto, 2016, pers. comm., 19 January)

The wording evolution is in fact welcomed and bound to happen, but what can be seen here is that the more sites are inscribed, cultural components are included, and even time passes, the more difficult it becomes to understand values and leaving room for relativistic approaches, such as is the case with aesthetics (ICOMOS, 2008, p.14). Following the example of criterion (i), while specific words such as "aesthetics" and "artistic" have slowly been taken out, they remain latent and have been diluted, so to say, throughout the wording of this and the other five criteria, basically retaining the same ideas (ibid, pp.9, 18, 22, 27, 32). In this attempt to better understand OUV for sites, the WHC launched in 1994 the Global Strategy as an initiative "to ensure that the List reflects the world's cultural and natural diversity of outstanding universal value." (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2016b), which was followed by the ICOMOS Gap Analysis in 2005, a document that was "seen as a contribution to the further development of the Global Strategy" (ICOMOS, 2005, p.7). This study presented cultural sites inscribed in both the World Heritage and the Tentative Lists divided, but not self-exclusive, through three frameworks (typological, chronological, and thematic), with the purpose of finding gaps of underrepresented categories of properties, which could later on point into a direction to encourage future nominations from States Parties. One of these gaps – which we will take as a quick analysis example – is the Industrial Heritage, part of the typological framework of the Agricultural, Industrial and Technological category (ibid, p.33).

In the past years, the rise of Industrial Heritage has prompted the filling of a certain gap that had raised a flag in matters of underrepresentation in WH, diverting the focus

on inscription and protection of more traditional sites such as Baroque castles and Gothic churches in national and international heritage lists, towards industrial complexes (ICOMOS, 2005, pp.33, 38, 47). This trend, though highly welcomed in terms of opening a new door to view the achievements of mankind, the historic relevance of the Industrial Revolution, and the advent of technological milestones, became something similar to a cornered creature: States Parties discouraged to engage in its comforting practice of inscribing sites they were accustomed to for so long (ibid, pp.20-21), desperately looked elsewhere to find relevant properties that could maintain the aforementioned States Parties in a position of relevance, leading to the surge of interest, marketing and promotion of industrial sites. Suddenly, entire settlements, sites of industrial breakthroughs, and places where machinery stood became areas of interest and revitalization, predominantly in Europe (coincidentally, where the Industrial Revolution began). Now, developed nations who made great strides in industrial terms had a whole new palette of sites to develop and work with (ibid).

Industrial Heritage, while falling outside of the aesthetic zones of the Baroque and Renaissance (for purposes of this thesis), was able to instill an interest in the population as a closer connection not only in time but also in terms of social spheres. Palaces and castles, churches and fortresses, now part of a nation's heritage were at one point off-limits to the majority of a nation, the lower classes were excluded from participating in the history and development of these places – except for the occasion in which they had to build them, of course (Markus & Cameron, 2002, p.123). Enter Industrial Heritage, where the stories of the lower classes (the majority of the population, opposed to the elite class), their working conditions, and the contribution of ordinary people to the future of a nation became the cornerstone for the relevance of such sites. It is easy to find a connection to the interest and quick acceptance of such heritage despite its far detour from the traditionally aesthetically pleasing and good, since we are talking about massive, ash-stained, burnt brick buildings, whose main concern was function and efficiency of space (cramped) over the aesthetics and image (ibid).

Echoing Jokilehto's comments: "When you have new sites, they might have some problems because they do not correspond exactly to what was the initial intention, so the WHCom makes a change; they can make a change at any time if they would

like to.” (J. Jokilehto, 2016, pers. comm., 19 January). Sites such as those from Industrial or Modern Heritage, become of interest and since there were no precedents on how to address them, initiatives are formed such as the *UNESCO World Heritage and Aerospace History initiative*, which focuses on establishing a link between science and culture for an awareness of sites that are related to astronomy and air flight, using the sky as “our common and universal heritage” (UNESCO, 2003b). This shows us that yes, there is an evolution and an intention to widen the angles with which we look and appreciate properties, but how these sites are treated in terms of conservation and protection still requires discussion and work.

## **ON CONSERVATION**

Seeing they lie at the core of this thesis, conservation practices will also be addressed from this perspective, focusing solely on documents and instruments which relate to heritage protection. Yet understanding where aesthetics fall within the conservation discourse requires a view on the history of conservation and protection practices. The historic developments have been recalled many times, and thus delving too deep into them would seem as a repetition. The basics will be laid out for one main reason: to see how thoughts, ideas, and agreements have evolved. It is this evolution of thinking which has led us to where we currently stand in terms of understanding better each day the complexities woven into the heritage and conservation practices, as well as the meaning and consequences of decisions – not only for the global community, but especially for the local engaged community. In order to visualize the approaches towards conservation in the context of heritage, documents from ICOMOS will be addressed, but before this it is necessary to look at the ideas that became the basis for these instruments.

One of the core ideas for the established conservation discourse comes from the writings of English art critic John Ruskin, who in 1849 wrote *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* setting the field for the preservation of buildings. Here, the main thought that has transcended and permeated into modern – traditional – conservation dis-

course is that of leaving the authentic fabric intact, almost demonizing any intervention, even if it included restoration to its previous state. In his “Lamp of Memory” (something akin to a category or characteristic), Ruskin says:

Neither by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word restoration understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered; a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. (1849, p.161)

This approach called for leaving things as found, since restoration is a mask that could never compete with the spirit and memory infused in the making of the original building, and although he explains that restoration is made with cheap materials, methods, and “coldness”, his overall thought towards restoration in the end, is that it still remains a “Lie”, capital letter and all (ibid, pp.161-163). This came from his interest for romantic memory and how it relates to heightening heroic and nostalgic sentiments, which could inspire rising nations and those who searched for identity (ibid, pp.146-148). These ideas of retaining the original fabric found echo in future conservation thinking, and were taken as valid and laudable approaches in the Western-influenced conservation and preservation practices (Burman, 2001, p.14; Smith, 2006, pp.19-24; Labadi, 2013, p.14). Opposite to Ruskin, and as one of the first preservationist architects, contemporary French architect Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc proposed a different, more radical approach towards the historic fabric.

In 1863, Viollet-le-Duc published his *Entretiens sur l'architecture*, translated into English in 1875 as the *Discourses in Architecture*. His idea was that everything had already been created at some point, and true merit comes from the power of imagination and memory interacting (Viollet-le-Duc, 1875, pp.171-173). Although fond of Gothic Revival, he proposed that human imagination combined with memory from the past opened the door to experiment with restoration approaches that would alter the existing fabric, to a point of modifying it so that it would take a form which had never been considered during the original construction (ibid, pp.311-312). This of

course, saw a disregard of originality towards the authentic form of a building, resulting in restorations unaligned in time, such as the World Heritage Site of the Historic City of Carcassonne in France. Originally a fortified city from Late Antiquity, it was restored by Viollet-le-Duc in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in a Gothic Revival style, and inscribed not because of the Antiquity part but as an example “of exceptional importance by virtue of the restoration work carried out in the second half of the 19th century by Viollet-le-Duc, which had a profound influence on subsequent developments in conservation principles and practice” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2016d).

True, perhaps Viollet-le-Duc was not much of a “lover” of the past, but he did encourage studying and learning from it, with a focus on how to make a better present from the lessons of our predecessors without necessarily reviving the past:

Yet I am not among these who despair of the present while gazing regretfully at the past. The past is irrevocable; but it becomes us to study it with care and sincerity, to cherish it, not that we may revive, but that we may understand and be made wise by it for the fulfilling of our own duties. I cannot admit the propriety of imposing upon our own age any reproduction of antique or mediaeval forms of art, or those of the academies of Louis XIV., precisely because those forms were the exponents of the times to which they belonged, and because the manners and customs and requirements of this nineteenth century do not resemble those either of the Greeks, the Romans, the feudal epochs, or the seventeenth century; but the principles which guided the art of the past are true, and the same for all time, and will never change so long as men are made of the same clay. Let us, then, endeavor to submit ourselves anew to them; let us examine how our predecessors translated these principles by forms with which were the true art expression of their respective eras, and then, with the best wisdom of experience, let us proceed freely and unimpeded by narrow prejudice in what we may justly call the path of progress. Since, in the midst of the modern chaos, reason has not deserted us, let us use this divine faculty to guide and control our practice in art. (Viollet-le-Duc, 1875, p.25)

It was perhaps due to this very opposing stance on how to approach restoration and old buildings that Viollet-le-Duc's principles were overshadowed by those of Ruskin, since they allow for invasive actions towards the untouchable historic fabric defended by Ruskin. Ruskin's utmost respect and advocacy for the romantic view of the past



could have very well been the reason why this approach was considered as the basis for the future of conservation as is seen in the documents that clearly have been influenced by his theories and ideas.

Based on the *Athens Charter of 1931*, the *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964)* (from here on, Venice Charter) became the foundation for the ethics and practices of conservation, aiming for the care and management of heritage sites, more specifically towards the place and material fabric (Smith, 2006, pp.27-28), and here we start seeing the official discourse related towards the aesthetic components of sites. Article 9 of the Venice Charter lays out the actions of restoration in for aesthetic and historic values:

The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument. (ICOMOS, 1964)

There is no further explanation of such values, other than mentioning at the beginning of the charter that actions should be carried out within the cultural framework of the location, yet it becomes paradoxical when later restorations – recent layers of history – are discouraged (ibid, Art. 11). This shows the Ruskian or Western approach which has been presented previously here, and which carries not only conservative approaches of heritage and restoration, but also perceptions towards the aesthetic component, one that, as presented in the Venice Charter, should adhere to authenticity and historicity (Burman, 2001, p.14; Smith, 2006, pp.88-94; Labadi 2013, p.14).

In 1994 a new document was devised, one that would propose and define authenticity as a dynamic element, somehow echoing what Viollet-le-Duc proposed over a 100 years before. The *Nara Document of Authenticity* (from here on, Nara Document), while building upon the Venice Charter, presents both the tangible and intangible components of heritage in a more balanced way by suggesting that authenticity is a

cultural construct and not something that is frozen in time and dismissive of those layers of history – especially in terms of interventions – that came after the ones considered historically more significant (ICOMOS, 1994, Art.9-13; Labadi, 2013, pp.113-126). The Nara Document introduces the idea of cultural diversity to strengthen this flexibility towards an otherwise rigid approach regarding authenticity, as in Art. 6:

Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space, and demands respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems. In cases where cultural values appear to be in conflict, respect for cultural diversity demands acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties. (ICOMOS, 1994)

This brings a renewed view for addressing heritage, specifically for those sites where restorations have been carried out in different times and by different societies. It presents a point of view in which all layers of action upon fabric are equally relevant, indistinctive from aesthetics and originality. Respect must exist, but now it is spread towards all components, and it is through engaging and incorporating all voices that discussions can happen. Finally, we look at the last of the documents considered relevant to this work, which also makes the case for including intangible components for addressing heritage sites and their conservation, as well as a source to understand the position aesthetics holds. *The Burra Charter-The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* (from here on, Burra Charter) was conceived as a document that would rework the Venice Charter for the Australian context, with an emphasis on multiculturalism and plurality (Smith, 2006, p.23).

The Burra Charter establishes “place” and “cultural significance” as its main points, building upon both the Venice Charter and the Nara Document. Both place and cultural significance enrich peoples’ lives, connecting them towards their heritage and establishing identity among themselves (Australia ICOMOS, 1999, p.1). It differentiates between “conservation”, “maintenance”, “restoration”, and “preservation” and presents aspects such as “adaption”, “use”, and “setting” to further the reaches towards the conservation of cultural heritage (ibid, pp.2-3). Conservation, and thus change if we consider intervention in fabric an external action, establishes certain

principles which focus on the retention of the cultural significance of the place, doing as much as necessary but changing as little as possible (ibid, pp.1, 3-8).

## **Article 2. Conservation and management**

2.1 *Places of cultural significance* should be conserved.

2.2 The aim of *conservation* is to retain the *cultural significance* of a *place*.

2.3 *Conservation* is an integral part of good management of *places of cultural significance*.

2.4 *Places of cultural significance* should be safeguarded and not put at risk or left in a vulnerable state.

## **Article 3. Cautious approach**

3.1 *Conservation* is based on a respect for the existing *fabric, use, associations and meanings*. It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.

3.2 Changes to a *place* should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.

The charter mentions aesthetics only in the context of values and not much other information is given, which still leaves us with an open interpretation. However, information is provided in the *Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Cultural Significance*, which is in itself a separate document and could be easily overseen as a side note. Here, for the first time, the aesthetic value is explained offering an understanding of what is meant with this concept; yet the fact that it also mentions that criteria “can and should be stated”, relativizes the matter, leaving it rather open-ended:

Aesthetic value includes aspects of sensory perception for which criteria can and should be stated. Such criteria may include consideration of the form, scale, colour, texture and material of the fabric; the smells and sounds associated with the place and its use. (Australia ICOMOS, 1998, p.12)

In addition, its emphasis on place – as holder of cultural significance – and its relation to fabric could lead to misinterpretations by giving relevance to man-made structures that represent a specific type, as presented by Laurajane Smith (2006, p.103). Furthermore, Smith points out a crucial problem with the Burra Charter, though perhaps not a problem with the charter itself but more with how it is used: The charter was envisioned as an Australian response to the Venice Charter's universalism, written with the local context in mind. Now the Burra Charter is being applied to other contexts, like Europe or the Americas, places which it was obviously not designed for. So in the end, it becomes the harbinger of what it was originally meant to break: homogeneity (ibid, pp.23-24). And this of course, is related to the topic of aesthetics, which is only mentioned in this charter in the context of values, and these values are defined and reproduced through a fixation on place and fabric.

With this very quick view on conservation development, we direct our attention towards the theoretical core of this thesis: aesthetics and form. The expedite nature of this chapter has without doubt left some information devoid of deep analysis, but as it was presented at the beginning, much of the information regarding the evolution, legal frameworks, and instruments of heritage and conservation, have already been elaborated on. To avoid repetition, specific points were addressed that could lead towards the main topic of this work. There is no doubt that with many initiatives, charters, and critics towards the established situation of conservation and to heritage, issues remain latent. Accomplishments such as the Nara Document and the Burra Charter, or DOCOMOMO and the ISC20C – who engage with modern and technological/scientific sites, respectively – are pivotal to understand and address in better and more inclusive ways matters of culture, be it tangible or intangible, under representative or representative. Sophia Labadi (2013, pp.128) and Laurajane Smith (2006, p.23-24) have presented downsides of dominant ideas of authenticity and expertise, but despite these critical approaches in the spheres of heritage and conservation, attachments to more traditional practices still remain, and these need to be addressed in order to have a more cohesive and inclusive understanding of heritage.





## CHAPTER 2 – DISSONANCE IN AESTHETICS

*The irrationality of a thing is no argument against its existence, rather a condition of it.*

– Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, 1878 (p.182)

When it comes to dealing with matters of looks and appearances, people and entities tend to tip-toe and proceed with caution. Shielded behind saying “beauty lies in the eye of the beholder”, people try to wiggle themselves out of discussions and debates regarding aesthetics and perceptions. But as William Saunders (2007a, p.vii) mentions at the preface of *Judging Architectural Value*, this is the lazy and shallow way out. The opposite, an answer claiming to know, Saunders continues, is arrogant. But avoiding any answer because of lack of arguments does not lead anywhere, thus the necessity to engage in discussions about such topics. One answer that is rarely given is: “I believe this is to be true. I cannot be certain, but I can explain why I believe.” (ibid) The fact that one cannot explain something is no reason to brush it under the rug; it is in fact a reason to talk about it. Yet, many still insist – though still espousing the mantra of subjectivity – that judgement *can* be passed on and that criticism *can* be exerted upon various objects, to the point of creating procedures or criteria as to what can be considered valuable and what not. But this serves only as a momentary cover, as a mask that will eventually fall and require our engagement. When something does not comply with our views or standards, it does not mean it can be dismissed; that is exactly why we engage with it, just as Nietzsche mentions above.

Criticism and judgements are necessary, but in order for them to be fruitful, there must be an open engagement, exchanging as many ideas and knowledge as possible in order to arrive to an understanding as to why specific decisions have been taken. This is especially the case for the topic of this thesis, that of built heritage,

which is constantly under the spotlight of judgement by various sectors of society; some even ascribing to themselves the authority to do so. The necessity to criticize or pass judgement comes from our innate need to discuss, give our opinions and have a conversation, and this act of criticizing is as social as it can be: since our medium to communicate is language – a social element – architecture transcends into the social plane. While this might seem like an obvious thing to point out – how one uses language to discuss something – it becomes more relevant in that acknowledging such a fact brings the material fabric, the built heritage, to a level where it opens up the door to interweaving discussion topics other than purely aesthetic or technical. Now we begin taking into consideration social critique, power relations, behavior of its occupants and its influence, interrelations between social actors (such as activities and social participation within the building's premises), and so on (Markus & Cameron, 2002, pp.3-4). And this brings us to the topic of pleasure and displeasure, as manifested in architecture. As a teacher from my bachelor studies once said, when referring to displeasing buildings: “A doctor buries his mistakes. An architect leaves them for everyone to see.” This led me to think about how something must truly be perceived as unacceptable for it to be equated with death. To understand such a comment, further information on displeasure and discomfort is required.

This chapter will present the main theoretical basis of the thesis, that of Displeasure and Discomfort, through the fields of aesthetics (since the thesis deals with cultural values), and of architecture (since our topic is built cultural heritage). First, aesthetics as the field that deals with beauty, will lay the ground for how we address these topics by providing a quick overview of its history and to explore its interaction in contemporary times. Second, architecture will be engaged through its visual components, form and function, with a quick overview on style evolution, how it has been addressed and considered in the history of the field. Finally, having presented both the aesthetic (cultural values) and the architectural (built cultural heritage) components, the case for displeasing and discomforting aesthetics will be presented, focusing on how these perceptions are manifested upon material fabric, allowing for its visualization through the case studies in the next chapter.



## **AESTHETICS**

This first part will present a short historical overview of aesthetics, followed by how it is perceived and has been engaged by society in the recent years, and in various fields. Much information in the philosophical, artistic, psychological and even neurological areas exists, but for purposes of this thesis this section will remain short and concise, providing a very brief summary directed towards displeasure and discomfort. The main reason for this is research scope, but also to show that in fact, and this is what should be apprehended from this thesis, much coordination between various fields is needed to fully understand the effects and influence of aesthetics in heritage before judgement is passed. As the aesthetic value is one of the values that appears and is presented in heritage and conservation documents, a better understanding of the complexities it entails provides a more complete perspective as to how it affects the heritage field.

A quick historic overview presents two general perceptions of aesthetics and beauty: the one before and the one after the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first developments of what could be equated to aesthetics – thoughts and studies of beauty and art – can be seen from Ancient Greece until the Enlightenment. Plato considered beauty to reside in *Forms* (something akin to ideas) rather than in the physical object, and everything done in the material world was a poor approximation of the perfect Form, including art – seen as a dangerous imitator of Forms. Aristotle on the other hand, refers to beauty through terms of order and symmetry as products of knowledge and which could be manifested in art. Both thinkers related beauty with good and purposefulness, giving it a moral component. In the Middle Ages, Thomas de Aquinas followed the Aristotelian thought of wholeness and proportion, but added that beauty is divinely anointed (Kristeller, 1951, pp.499-500, 509-510; Sartwell, 2014). The Renaissance brought the rediscovery of Vitruvio's treatise on architecture according to which mathematics and order are paramount to beauty. The Enlightenment followed with thinkers like David Hume, who called for a separation of ethics and aesthetics but placed beauty not in the object but on the minds of those that interact with it, based on the background and knowledge of the observer – somehow recalling Plato and Aristotle (Kristeller, 1952, pp.28-29; Sartwell, 2014).

The second stage of aesthetics takes place from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and its philosophical origins are found with the German thinkers (Hammermeister, 2002, p.x). Alexander Baumgarten not only coined the word *Aesthetica* but is also considered the one who began the discipline of philosophical aesthetics, though focused in sensual cognition rather than art (ibid, pp.4-10). Overshadowing Baumgarten and influenced by Hume, Immanuel Kant is perhaps the most renowned contributor to aesthetics with his *Critique of Judgement*, dividing the aesthetic experience in “the agreeable”, “the good”, “the beautiful” and “the sublime”. Known for the idea of subjectivity – something is beautiful for one person but not for another – Kant establishes that objects themselves cannot be beautiful, only their judgement, but this judgement must be devoid of emotions as it “deprives it of impartiality” (Kant, 1790, p.68; ibid, p.26). The highest expression of aesthetics, the sublime, was reserved to nature, since nature has both quality and quantity, beyond comparison, unlike the beautiful, which can be found in art (Kant is the reason why aesthetics has the modern meaning, deviating from Baumgarten’s one) and which is only high in quality (ibid, 1790, p.98-100; 2002, pp.31-33). Opposing Kant, Georg Hegel displaces nature as the apex of beauty and replaces it with art. Hegel sees nature as incomplete, and the only agent capable of offering completion is art, as a product of the highest stage of the human spirit, making philosophy the study of beautiful art. Furthermore, Hegel locates architecture within the arts, more specifically as a symbolic art which materializes human history (Hammermeister, 2002, pp.89-93, 99-100). Karl Rosenkranz, student of Hegel, presents the first philosophical writing on ugliness, a topic highly despised by his mentor. In *The Aesthetics of Ugliness* Rosenkranz elaborates on ugliness without deviating much from his mentor, by giving ugliness a relevant position within art but stating that the ugly is no more than the privation of beauty – though later on, he will consider ugliness as a separate entity. Where beauty ceases to exist, ugliness takes its place, similar to Nietzsche’s *Apollo and Dionysius* duality – chaos and order (ibid, pp.105-108). Rosenkranz states that one of the greatest characteristics of beauty is unity and the boundaries that hold together this unity. Ugliness is what breaks – or what is broken – and becomes hard to discern, amorphous, asymmetric and disharmonious (Rosenkranz, 1853, pp. 101-105, 108-110).

Trying to be succinct in aesthetics shows that even then, much is written and even more is left out, but what has been presented here was done in order to make case

and set the discussion platform towards the displeasing and to show how aesthetics as a study has evolved. Through history, despite – or because – the discussions and changes of perceptions and attitudes towards the ugly, art has always had a niche for the discomforting. In Ancient Greece it was the tragedies and comedies, where suffering and the grotesque were lauded. The Middle Ages brought its *Ars Moriendi*, *Danse Macabre* and *Memento Mori* themes, having death as a universal bond: rich or poor, noble or peasant, death indistinctly unites. The Enlightenment, with its upholding of reason saw the emergence of *Vanitas*, representing the transience of life, the ephemerality of things, the idea that everything has its fate sealed. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century *Still Life*, seen as an evolution of *Vanitas*, while depicting everyday life, also recurred to themes of transience and passing. And in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Dadaism appears as an art style that pokes fun at the observer, such as with Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* in 1917, and even the postmodern idea of *anti-aesthetics*, a reaction serving as “a critique which destructures the order of representations in order to reinscribe them” (Foster, 1983, p. xv). Picking up Rosenkranz's writing on ugliness in his essays *The Ugly*, Mark Cousins (1994; 1995a; 1995b) proposes to fully separate ugliness from beauty, because for him, the problem lies in defining ugly as the negative or opposite aspect of beauty. Cousins suggests that although separate, ugliness in fact not only completes beauty but it enhances it (Cousins, 1994, pp.61-62). He goes deeper to say that an object is ugly because it is in the wrong place, it is incomplete, and it is what cannot be controlled (ibid, pp.63-64). Things that should be there but are missing, or that should not be there and are, constitute the ugly, and by approaching ugliness through a positive prism, one can better understand the relations between subject and object (Cousins, 1995a, pp.4-5; 1995b, p.68).

The effects of aesthetics on the everyday life are not to be dismissed, and the power they can exert on judgement is noteworthy. In the economic and judicial spheres, the effects of looks and aesthetics on job acquisition and salaries have been studied, showing that people considered attractive earn better salaries or have better positions (Tucker, 2012; Lechtenberg, 2014). Additionally, studies have shown that good looking criminals are given lesser sentences or punished less severely than others (Lowerly, 2010; Mocan & Tekin, 2010). Psychology, as the field related to the mind, emotions, and behavior, has seen studies on how specific architectural designs affect the behavior of its occupants, such as the study by Edward and Mildred Hall in

1975 on the employees and customers of the John Deere Headquarters designed by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto (Hall, M. R. & Hall, E. T., 1975), or the subsequent research on preferences on colors, designs, and textures (UC Berkeley, 2010). A rather recent field of study is that of neuroaesthetics, concerned with the neurological components that dominate emotions and focusing on the locus for emotional origin, where studies point towards the insular cortex as the receptor of both pain and pleasure, happiness and disgust, stating that pleasure and displeasure are basically the same (Leknes S., & Tracey, I., 2008; Kringelbach, M. L. & Berridge, K. C., 2009). Even in design, pleasure and aesthetics are relevant, as presented by Don Norman showing the reasons why we like things: because they are fun and they makes us happy, and to understand this he proposes three levels for a good design: visceral (immediate perception reaction), behavioral (pleasure and usefulness), and reflective (rationalization and intellectualization) (TED, 2003).

We see something interesting with ugliness through history: displeasing aesthetics is something that has been present. In many cases it has tried to be denied or minimized, but there is something alluring about that that attracts us. Either if it is because it shows us the ugly truth of things, or because it challenges our ideas and codes, there is still a compelling interest towards that of the displeasing and discomforting. While trying to avoid being a victim of my own criticism, this quick synopsis of aesthetics – and the following two sections – has clearly taken a Western approach, but this is intentional. The way aesthetics is perceived in heritage is indeed a Western one, and it serves it right to try explore and understand its evolution through the eyes and history of the Western philosophy and art perceptions.

## **FORM AND FUNCTION**

The rediscovery of Vitruvio's treatise *De Architectura* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century had an immense impact for the future of architecture. Originally from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, it prompted a revival of Classical Architecture, and is perhaps the first document in

which the basic elements of architecture were established. According to this treatise, every work of architecture should fulfill three characteristics: durability, making sure it stands strong; utility, meaning functional and useful; and beauty, being pleasing and according to good taste. We see here then, that since ancient times, form (beauty) and function (utility) have been a cornerstone for architecture, surviving until this day and transcending into common day language, demanding of it a sense of beauty and a purpose (Tschumi, 1999, p.108).

Architecture is unique due to its duality of art and science. Through centuries it has been categorized in these two realms due to its artistic and technical qualities, but what truly gives it its uniqueness is the fact that it can be pleasant and practical, used not only as a decoration but actually to live and work in it (Aldama & Lindenberger, 2016, p. 62). These technical and artistic characteristics would be manifested in the way in which architecture is conceived. Usually, when building from scratch, purpose precedes the formal design, influencing not only the shape but also the materials. Only by knowing what the building will house within its walls, one can mold it accordingly to the best formal answer: industrial buildings require big working areas, residential buildings ask for privacy, and office spaces seek efficiency and communication. This trend of thought was materialized in one of modern architecture's greatest dictum, "form ever follows function" by American architect Louis Sullivan in 1896 (p. 408), and which would become the spearhead of future architectural thinking.

Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple-blossom, the toiling work-horse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, form ever follows function, and this is the law. Where function does not change, form does not change. The granite rocks, the ever-brooding hills, remain for ages; the lightning lives, comes into shape, and dies, in a twinkling.

It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form ever follows function. This is the law. (Sullivan, 1896, p.408)

Such statement relegated form to a secondary plane, submissive to function. As a constant duality, form and function have been part of the architectural theory since the Renaissance, but gained a particular conflictive tone by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through Sullivan's dictum. Picked up by the Modernist Movement, "form follows function" became its maxim for championing rationality and functionality above ornamentation and useless excesses in design (Moussavi, 2009, pp.7-8). Different views of what should drive design continued, with various architectural styles appearing as reactions to these lines. Regarding architectural styles, the discussion can be extensive due to their amount and will not be covered here, but it is important to note that these styles are a categorization established through years, by different people, in order to study and present the thousands of existing structures. Every architect designs in her or his own style and is later ascribed to one style by critics or historians. In a way, it becomes necessary for an organized study and discussion to categorize those structures that share common elements, such as forms, materials and chronology in different styles. The emergence of new styles usually leads to reactions, sometimes expressed in visceral manners, not only by critics, but also the general public, manifested by what is first perceived in a style: form.

But does form truly follow function? Frei Otto, awarded the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2015, was of another opinion. Famous for his tensile structures, like the 1972 Munich Olympic Stadium, Otto supported the idea that architecture should not only protect mankind from the forces of nature, but it should coexist harmoniously with it. His thought was that architecture can find the perfect forms derived from nature, a "form follows nature", if you will. Moreover, he was conscious of technological and cultural advancement and thus to him stagnation was nonsensical. As a survivor of WW2, he saw the potential of harmoniously relating architecture and nature with reconstruction and adaptive reuses. Also, he perceived innovation as timeless, and beauty neither good nor bad, but in fact interchangeable:

Something that is beautiful is not necessarily ethical too. Beauty is not equal to goodness. Beauty can be cruel, and ugliness can be good. And sometimes the beautiful grows ugly over time, while the ugly grows beautiful. In art, beauty is always original and new; it is an invention and an innovation. A work becomes a work of art through a wealth of inventiveness. (Otto, 2005, pp.126-127)

Following Otto's idea on innovation, we yet again come across the form-function discussion. As mentioned by Otto in his speech about the ruins of WW2, adaptive reuse can actually be seen as a type of inversion to this dictum, a sort of "function follows form" if we consider that in such a case the shape of certain existing buildings make way to adequately host some functions. Old industrial complexes, for example, tend to be more suited towards cultural institutions like museums or art galleries, though the possibility of having a residential function in an industrial setting is possible. What should truly be internalized from this possibility, as imperfect or unstable as it may be, is potentiality – the myriad of options awaiting to be selected – which drives the innovative process to attach the most adequate or harmonious function to an existing fabric or form. And this is what Otto refers to when he says aesthetic innovation is timeless, relating it to creation (ibid, p.127). Here we can find a link to UNESCO's World Heritage criterion (i) from Chapter 1, that of the masterpiece of creative genius.

Architectural theorists such as Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas are of a stronger stance, especially in terms of architecture production of form. Tschumi echoes the idea of innovation to produce architecture, by expressing that society expects certain forms from architecture that it (society) can identify, and only by negating such expectations can architecture "survive": It is a cultural statement, a safe one. Comfort of formal expectations is true architectural stagnation (Tschumi, 1999, pp.46, 72-73, 177). Koolhaas on the other hand refers more directly to preservation – and adaptive reuse – as the bane of architecture, by stating that "Preservation creates relevance without new forms." (Koolhaas & Otero-Pailos, 2014, pp.89-92) and "Preservation is architecture's formless substitution." (ibid, pp.93-98) And somehow echoing Plato's *mimesis* (imitation) quality of art, many solutions for adaptive reuse are accomplished by masking their works through the prism of preservation because historic context would not allow for the change of buildings seen as more culturally significant. As Tschumi mentioned, society could not cope with something they did not recognize or feel familiar with, thus stalling architectural innovation in terms of form (ibid, pp. 21, 88, 91). This difficulty to relate and cope with things that are outside of our comfort zones and our understanding is what displeasure and discomfort refer to when addressing built cultural heritage.

Form and function, beauty and purpose, design and use, are and will be locked in this duality, but it should not be seen as a battle, something of belligerent nature. If anything it should be seen as an opportunity to exchange and discuss possibilities, and achieve harmonious solutions. By exploring how they interact, and even the function of form itself, can lead to more sensible, inclusive and holistic solutions, culturally and architecturally significant.

## **DISPLEASURE AND DISCOMFORT**

As mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis, the necessity to differentiate between the terms “displeasure” and “discomfort”, from “unpleasant” and “uncomfortable” lies strictly in the need to avoid confusion and to create common grounds for discussion purposes within this thesis: the former pairs refer strictly to the aesthetic and visual aspects that are alien or difficult to understand, while the latter refers to the intangible and ‘dark’ aspects that convey a difficulty of coping and dealing with events that are connected to a site or practice. This differentiation can still be proposed for usage in future research with the purpose of conveying a more specific idea of fringe aesthetics and to avoid misunderstandings. It is of vital importance to understand that this differentiation does not mean that the intangible or difficult aspects of heritage are blatantly ignored or minimized in any form. If anything, it becomes an attempt to better understand how our approach to the valorization of heritage can be generalized and misinterpreted when judgement is passed based on misunderstandings. Something as simple as a prefix can change it all.

One of the reasons to discuss these terms, displeasure and discomfort, comes from the *Aesthetics of Discomfort: Conversations on Disquieting Art* by Frederick Aldama and Herbert Lindenberg. Laid out in the form of conversations between both professors, the basis for a possible theory on the Aesthetics of Discomfort is presented, engaging in arts, philosophy and architecture that directly aim to provoke feelings of discomfort and displeasure, not those that happen as a side product but that are actually intended to do so (Aldama & Lindenberg, 2016, pp. xi-xiv). In their first Chapter, the authors engage in the evolution and history of discomforting aesthetics, drawing from what previous philosophers have pitched in in matters of displeasure,



but also exploring aspects like nature and contemporary art. One of the main arguments of their theory is that there is in fact a sense of pleasure that can be drawn from discomfort. Assisted by Kant and Descartes, only by leaving the comfort zone of our emotions – understood here as exploring new styles of art, traveling to different places, even engaging in extreme activities – can one achieve a unique type of pleasure and excitement, one that might never have emerged otherwise (Aldamer & Lindenberger, 2016, pp.16-20). Although Kant had mentioned this excitement and pleasure, specifically drawn from fear, he makes another important point for that matter, that of a safe place:

Yet the sight of them becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place. And we like to call these objects sublime because they raise the soul's fortitude above its usual middle range and allow us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of a quite different kind, and which gives us the courage [to believe] that we could be a match for nature's seeming omnipotence. (Kant, 1790, p.120)

Fear, and its subsequent pleasure, is something that drives people, provided there is a secure place – comfort zone – from where it can be experienced. There is a reason why so many people enjoy having spiders or snakes as pets, even though we know they are dangerous, or why some people like to bungee jump or go shark diving, seeing how such activities confront us with deadly situations: it brings excitement, and thus pleasure. Of course, spiders and snakes are kept in a glass box, the jumper is strapped to a rope, and the diver is in a metal cage. As Aldamer and Lindenberger continue, aesthetics are capable of triggering a wider set of emotions from the whole spectrum – from sublime to repulsion – in part due to the advances in neuroscience, as mentioned previously in this thesis (ibid, pp. 24-25). They end this chapter with remarks on how discomfiting aesthetics eventually end up being something we are used to, even to the point of enjoying horror films and once misunderstood art movements. In addition, a generational component is mentioned, establishing the fact that, with artists constantly pushing the limits, recent generations are somehow overexposed and hardly cringe at the sight of displeasing and discomfiting scenarios (ibid, pp. 27-32).

In order to relate the discomforting aesthetics to architecture, the chapter “Awkward Spaces” addresses places that carry the theme of displeasure. Architecture is given an important treatment, since unlike any other art form, it includes both form and function, and is meant to be used by people, whether working or living in it (see page 53). Special emphasis is placed on the intended use for which a building is designed, such as cemeteries, which truly have no function of inhabiting, or prisons, which in some cases are meant to dehumanize its occupiers. Both examples are largely distinctive, yet still carry an eerie component: death and captivity (ibid, pp.59, 65, 68). These situations, similar to art, can make way to emotions and feelings of pleasure through amazement, wonder and exploration by visiting places that were once designed or conceived for the discomfort, such as specific themed museums, memorials, or once off-limit places now open to public.

Correlating with these feelings of discovery towards visiting the displeasing and discomforting, the theme of ruins, and more specifically those modern or contemporary ruins, comes into play. In fact, defining ruins is not easy, as Elizabeth Scarbrough explains: “Foremost, it is not clear when a structure sufficiently decays to become a ruin or when a ruin sufficiently decays to become a pile of rocks and ceases being a ruin, [...]” (2014, p.445). She expresses that a main difference between old and new ruins is age itself, while the old romantic ruins bring pleasure through the patina of age, modern ruins are too close to us, surfacing our sense of mortality. Furthermore, ruins allow for the imaginative powers to take over, trying to reconstruct a specific place (ibid, p. 446). For some reason, there is a preference for the old over the new: perhaps the old age has taken a bigger toll on fabric so our imaginative process is more challenging, transporting us to a time we have never experienced before, or perhaps the reconstruction of modern ruins becomes so easy and the result is so close in time and space, that it makes us aware that the fate of vanishing is near. But another perspective can be devised here, one that upholds modern ruins.

Modern ruins are about transgression, about defying borders, about wilderness, allowing us to explore and experience awe and discovery. The difference between modern and old ruins in terms of true exploration, is that the old tend to be already appropriated and the experience is controlled, such as visiting the Colosseum or the Parthenon, while modern ones are unattached of guided restrains, opening the possibility of awe through unofficial means. Old ruins are within a comfort zone, with

touristic signs indicating where to go, when to stop, and even how to look. It is domesticated (Trigg, 2006, xxv). In such a controlled scenario, pleasure was sought somewhere else and found through Urban Exploration, an activity which had been practiced from earlier years, but gained special notoriety by the end of the 1990s, with the emergence of the widespread use of the internet (Nestor, 2007). Bradley Garret describes urban exploration as “the discovery and exploration of unseen parts of the built environment, usually with a focus on derelict places.” (2011, p.1048) and goes deeper into the intrinsic elements of this practice, by explaining the final goal: encounters with past and present, experiencing “ghosts of lives lived”, and creating emotions of excitement, fear, wonder and discovery, by traversing derelict places (ibid, pp. 1049-1050).

Urban exploration experiences pasts in what might be unexpected way. As I have shown, the practice is interested in small stories and local, immaterial, fantastic, and whimsical histories. It does not exclude dark and does not (usually) shy away from destruction and loss from the places that these stories are found in. (ibid, p.1065)

Engaging with illegality provides drive and excitement as well, but also confronting things that we consider rare or do not quite understand. Doing what is not allowed brings the thrill of experiencing liberty or defiance towards an established order, which extends beyond authority, to include our capabilities as adventurous and free individuals. It is defiance against control and order which is one of the most compelling elements of ruins, contemporary ones in particular, presented as the rebellion of the structure to its original function. Built for a specific purpose, once a building ceases to work and is left dilapidated, there is a feeling of irrelevance to the original purpose or function for which a structure was raised in the first place, a type of rebellion against established order. Urban exploration brings out and reinforces all of these feelings by venturing into the allure of contemporary ruins, without judging, without differentiating, without hierarchizing: every place has a story waiting to be discovered.

While the information presented here is but a mere scratch on the surface of wider fields and opportunities for research, the hope is that a better understanding of the bigger picture of aesthetics, specifically displeasing aesthetics, has been provided. As mentioned earlier in this document, the aim was never to prove that beauty or ugliness were good or bad, but to present a broader view towards a topic that is usually seen in a narrower angle, that of aesthetics in a traditional, romantic, safe and controlled sense. Having introduced the concepts of displeasure and discomfort in the frames of architecture and aesthetics, it is now possible to arrive to the case studies selected for this thesis. Slowly revealing the elements – an analogy to Hildebrand's "withholding" and "enticing" (Hildebrand, 1999, pp.51-56) – can support and ease the understanding of why these cases were selected, as well as the prism through which they are to be addressed in the following chapter.





## CHAPTER 3 –AESTHETIC DISPLEASURE

*The most architectural thing about this building is the state of decay in which it is.*

– Bernard Tschumi in *Advertisements for Architecture*, 1975, referring to Le Corbusier's Ville Savoye

With such a visually charged topic where the discussion is about perceptions and aesthetics, it can prove difficult to grasp the greater picture when it is left unattached to its very own visual component. Hence, there is a need to exemplify the previous theoretical aspects. To further emphasize his position on ruins and decay, Bernard Tschumi makes use of an iconic building, the Ville Savoye, through a photograph from 1965 when it was in a neglected state. Tschumi (1999, pp.72-77) presents the building in his *Advertisements for Architecture* in the form of a postcard-sized image with the quote shown above, followed by "Architecture only survives where it negates the form that society expects of it. Where it negates itself by transgressing the limits that history has set for it" (ibid, p.75). The image (Fig. 2) does not only strike our minds for the fact that in the architecture community, it is a building that is known in its pristine condition, but also because it represents one of the greatest works of renowned architect Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, also known as Le Corbusier. In this same year it was inscribed as a French national monument and some years later the building went under restoration for 12 years (ibid). Now it is part of the serial nomination spearheaded by France *L'Œuvre Architecturale de Le Corbusier, Une contribution au Mouvement Moderne*, which includes 17 properties by the architect, spread through seven nations over three continents, and which will be presented to the World Heritage Committee (WHCom) on its 40<sup>th</sup> meeting for inscription to the WHL in 2016. Taking all of this into consideration and thinking back on the neglected state that such an iconic building had at some point, the question arises: is the shock of

seeing this building in such a terrible shape because we had never thought of it this way, or simply because we cannot imagine somebody letting such an icon of Modernist Architecture, from an iconic architect such as Le Corbusier, crumble and wither? (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

Engaging with the idea of the colliding views that touch matters of displeasure and exploring a better way to exemplify the theoretical section, considering that we are discussing architecture, structures, monuments and/or buildings, a more tangible approach is required. This chapter will present three case studies that offer a better view to three proposed angles deemed “Axes of Displeasure”. All case studies offer in one way or another a displeasing or discomfoting view; some have been re-adapted, others have crumbled and withered, but as the development of the thesis goes on, the stories of the examples shown will provide a better understanding for each case. The objective of presenting a series of case studies resides not in the need to strip them apart with extensive analyses and uphold them as perfect examples to reevaluate aesthetic value judgement or as beacons of conservation procedures, but to visualize the wide palette of opportunities that perceptions and looks can offer for similar cases, lying outside of the traditional aesthetic comfort zone.

Additionally, since the whole discussion throughout the thesis is on matters of visualizing and imaging, all three case studies are products of projects that have been carried out by various photographers who directly engaged with these structures. Most of the photographers were interviewed, casting light on their projects and their opinions – personal and professional – over their projects, the case studies themselves, and specifically on their take on the role and influence of aesthetics<sup>2</sup>. This chapter includes a brief description of the structures (such as history and characteristics), followed by an overview of the photography projects, interwoven with pieces of theory and segments of the interviews.

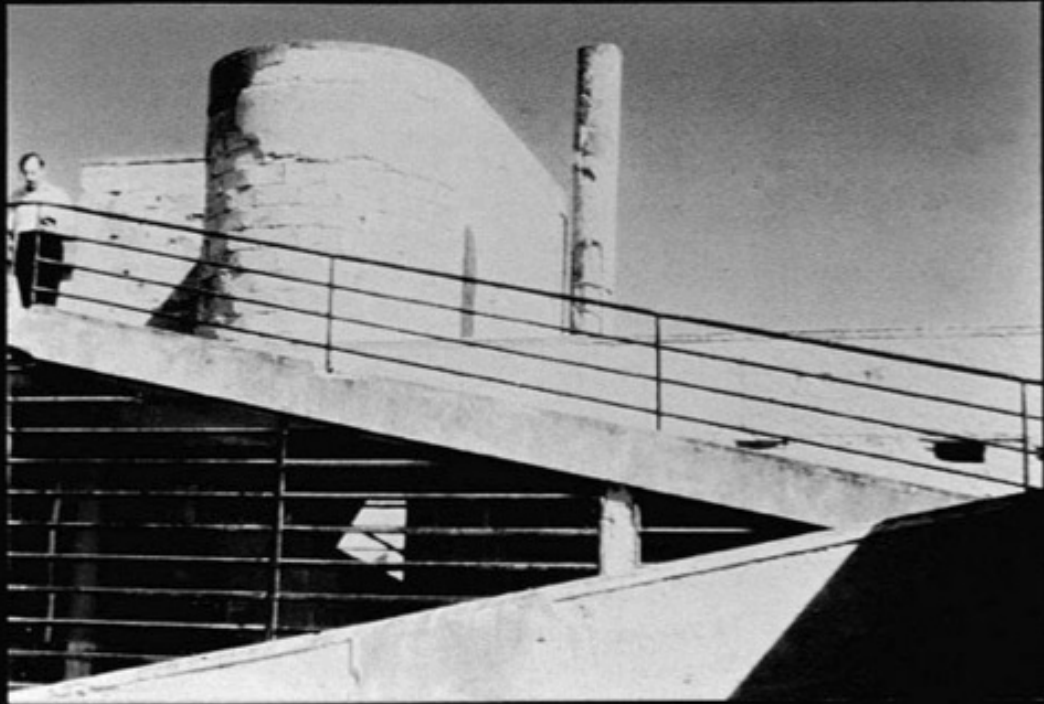
Due to the architectural typological nature – strongly connected to the form – of the case studies, a paradox arises when a case study that is intended to be presented as discreet or common as the ones following is analyzed: all of the sudden it is in the spotlight, it becomes relevant in a way we might not have seen it before.

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<sup>2</sup> For the complete interviews, refer to the Annex section



The most architectural thing  
about this building is  
the state of decay in which it is.



Architecture only survives  
where it negates the form that  
society expects of it.  
Where it negates itself by  
transgressing the limits that  
history has set for it.

Fig. 2. Bernard Tschumi. *Villa Savoye – Advertisements for Architecture*. Source: *Architecture and Disjunction* (Tschumi, 1999)



Fig. 3. ©Rene Burri, 1959. *The Villa Savoye (1928-1931)*. Source: Magnum Photos (Burri, 1959)



Fig. 4. ©Rene Burri, 1959. *The Villa Savoye (1928-1931)*. Source: Magnum Photos (Burri, 1959)

Analogous to Schrödinger's Cat<sup>3</sup>, by focusing our attention on such structures, interest arises and, of course, we start viewing them in a different light. The words "bus stop" do not resonate in us particularly special: a random bus stop, one which we might simply pass by without even flinching in another occasion, when required from us to look with care, now becomes our center of attention and we start to look at it in more detail, scanning it with excitement of the unknown, what we can discover. Immediately, our mind knows what to seek and even how to look at it. Thus the present chapter requires as much as possible an objective approach to avoid being biased, influenced by the captivating allure that artistic photography could provide to a shot, especially in full-color images against a black and white document.

### **THE THREE CASE STUDIES**

The selection of the three case studies originally included a higher number and a wider scope of structures, typologies and states of conservation, but such range proved not only excessive but also incongruent. From six cases that included re-adapted buildings, abandoned settlements and neglected bus stops, the list was narrowed to the final three case studies which are bus stops built in the former Soviet Union, border checkpoints in European countries, and bunkers in Albania. The reasoning behind this limitation is in part due to the constraints of time, but more importantly in order to achieve common denominators that would unite across the board all case studies. Additionally, anonymity of authorship for the selected case studies is an important aspect, since considering that famous architects can cloud the objectivity with which a case can be addressed, such as Tschumi's example of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The selection process thus resulted in three main variables or aspects, which are considered important to be presented.

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<sup>3</sup> In 1935, Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger presented a thought experiment to explain the paradox of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, which simply states that two opposing results can be true. In his example, a cat and a vial of poison, which would break at any time, are placed inside a box. Since there is no way to see inside the box, the cat can be considered both dead and alive, only to be known when the box is opened. In our case, the thought of the case studies remains uncertain, it is until we see the images of the sites (or visit them in person) that we establish our reaction: until revealed, the stops, checkpoints and bunkers are both interesting and not.

The first aspect refers to the individuality of the structures. The individual nature becomes heightened as these case studies are not accompanied by any auxiliary or extended buildings, but are self-standing structures surrounded by little to nothing, making them obviously different from an ensemble. This view overlooks certain elements such as the fact that some Albanian bunkers by design and strategy were built together, or that some European checkpoints include both the actual structure on the road and an office building nearby, or that some bus stops have a small shop next to them. This oversight is purposely done to differentiate the cases from typologies such as settlements, and to emphasize the relatively small space that these selected structures cover by themselves. This differentiation was considered of great importance because studying a series of bus stops, an old factory readapted into an exhibition hall, and an abandoned settlement with somewhat equal approaches made it a complicated task, since no true common denominators were among them.

The second aspect considered was the serial nature of a case. Here a quality of repetition – not necessarily exact copies are required – becomes the driving factor for selection: we are talking about a structure that is not isolated but its strength resides in that it is not one single structure that is being analyzed but a group all together. Individually, the structure does not convey much weight, but when dozens, hundreds, even thousands are thrown into the mixture its meaning changes. This is exemplified in all three selected cases, where European checkpoints dot the numerous border crossings of Europe; bus stops in former Soviet countries appear isolated in the landscape but are in fact part of a greater, (former) nationwide network; and the Albanian bunkers become the literal manifestation of multitudes, with somewhere around 750,000 of them in existence. Discussing dozens or hundreds of structures against one single readapted building becomes problematic since the strength in the selected case studies resides partially in numbers.

Finally, the third aspect refers to its landscape coverage. While seemingly a redundancy of the previous points, it actually becomes important to set them apart from settlements or ensembles by emphasizing that the covered area is big. So, except for the Albanian bunkers which only include one nation (still, an area of over 28,700 km<sup>2</sup>), all the structures cover areas spreading across nations. This coverage also echoes a connectivity, not only physical with roads and paths, but also administrative and political, through a centralized entity that governs – or governed – over them. The

effects of one single building or a settlement are felt stronger in that particular location, but visualizing the impact of many structures covering vast areas gives a different feeling, one of omnipresence that at the same time reinforces and challenges the influence between condensed and spread out.

As a last comment before engaging with the cases studies, among the three of them the Albanian Bunkers present a higher amount of information and research for this thesis. This is in part due to having secured more sources related to the bunkers (photographers and locals), as well as a raise in adaptive reuse projects. Although all case studies are state-related structures, perhaps the military nature of the bunkers, and being related to such an uncomfortable period in Albanian history, has created more active reactions towards them (as we will see further down this chapter, this can be disputed), especially from the international sphere. As photographer David Galjaard mentions in an interview, the fact that he did not know much about Albania was one of the reasons that prompted him to explore the country (D. Galjaard, 2015, pers. comm., 7 December). This by no means tries to minimize the other case studies, but in fact it can serve as a platform to show how well exposed some cases are or become, and how there is still need to raise awareness for others; the bus stops on the other hand present the opposite in terms of coverage and information. But other than that, information on the bunkers remains scarce mainly because of the mere size of the area where they are located. Two photographers involved in projects with the bunkers gave their permission to use their photographs in this thesis and one agreed to provide additional information in an interview. Finally, with the checkpoints, although also spanning over many nations as the bus stops, photographic and narrative material was obtained by conducting interviews with both photographers. Still, technical and official information remains scarce mainly because their administrative nature complicates acquiring data (floorplans, archives, quantity), but also seeing how many of these structures have become – and as the Schengen Area expands, continue becoming – abandoned during the past 20 years.

## **Waiting for the Collective - Bus Stops from the former Soviet Union**

And I think that what it was a little bit about it, was that it was made during the Soviet Union and that there was this sort of outlet of creativity in this relatively minor architectural form. - (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November)

In the discussion between form and function, bus stops represent a unique type of architecture. Their functional purpose determines in a very straightforward way the architectural program for their conception and design: areas to sit, a roof to cover, and optional walls to protect from weather conditions. Their limited size and high amounts to be spread through a city exert a certain need of economic attention but also regularity in form, as to be easily identifiable by commuters. These characteristics generate an important element that distinguishes them from other structures, and that is their commonality. Seeing them over and over, in different areas of a city, without any other function than being bus stops makes them easy victims of overlook, usually of some relevance when weather and exhaustion affect us and we mumble under our breath for more seats, a better roof and proper walling.

It is important to establish that we are discussing the individual small bus stops, and not the bus stations which due to their innate architectural program require bigger and additional spaces. Bus stations, due to the service of urban and interurban activities, truly become network hubs representing a city's transportation system. As such, they also serve as a welcome to travelers, and their appearance and state of care are more overseen – though we all have been to some that could render this statement void. Bus stations can provide impressive designs, depending on their location and capacity, which can even become touristic destinations. On the other hand, bus stops are standing structures which can remain ignored by many. Indeed, research on bus stops might result in some simple dictionary definitions, such as: “a place on a bus route, usually marked by a sign, at which buses stop for passengers to alight and board” (Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary, 2015).

Dating back from the 1820s, buses were already a component of public transport, and with the arrival of motorized buses in the 1890s (Daimler AG, 2008) solutions for mass transportation both in and outside cities, such as bus stops, became a more common architectural feature. Bus stops would mark specific places to know when

and where to expect the arrival and departure of buses. With the increase of urban populations, thus extending the public transportation networks, bus stops became more numerous. Now, those stops require an easy identification, such as the famous green 'H' over a yellow circle to mark bus and tram stops in Germany, but they do not necessarily require an accompanying structure for shelter. Of course, it can be a matter of money to not have shelters everywhere, but it also depends on the urban setting. If there is no space or transit is not high enough, it does not seem necessary to build a shelter. But those stops that do get a shelter tend to be standardized due to economic and identification reasons: the same design is used repeatedly. This leads to an everyday interaction with bus stops, that their presence becomes so familiar to the point of people not paying much attention to them.

These actions and approaches towards bus stops are magnified when talking about those that are located in the rural areas, those designed for inter-urban, inter-rural, and rural-urban transportation. Standing there, alone in the middle of the landscape, these bus stops entertain the occasional passerby, either commuter or driver. That is only when the bus is scheduled to arrive though. What happens meanwhile, when nobody is there? Mostly far away from settlements, these bus stops face a true problem which is reflected in their physical state. Paint falling off, entire pieces destroyed or collapsed, even used as dumpsters or toilettes, some of these bus stops wait for rather long periods of time to be noticed and attended to. Others simply do not get any attention at all, only being visited when their remains are scattered on the ground. It seems as if these bus stops would have been placed there and forgotten by the changes of time – or left there to be forgotten.

One concrete case where these aspects become manifested is in the surviving bus stops that were built during the time of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR). Originally part of a vast network controlled by Moscow, the bus stops were clear reminders of the sociopolitical system in place. Bus stops represented collectivism in a great way, by elevating its importance and value for the social cause through mass transportation between urban and rural areas, over the individualism that was promoted by individual and private methods of transportation. Not only did these bus stops serve the main purpose of being transportation hubs, but they also reinforced that the eyes and arms of Moscow reached well into the remote Soviet landscapes.

Although the state in fact owned and took care of these bus stops, their isolation was actually a unique feature which gave them a certain amount of autonomy and freedom, in terms of design. Answering to local cultural expressions and imaginative ideas from artists and architects, the bus stops broke with the state-enforced architectural style – mostly reflective of brutalist, or the so-called “socialist” architecture – with mass-produced, unemotional and equally looking buildings (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November; Soldatova, 2015). The designs did not come in any “cookie-cutter” fashion, there truly was no official statement as to what a bus stop should have in terms of function (walls, roofs, seats) nor in design (colors, materials, motifs). Depending on the region, the design of the bus stops responded with local themes and elements: the Baltic States provided many stops built with wood, due to the wooden areas in this region; the “-stan” countries (such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, etc.) showed birds, hats and yurts; while the Black Sea area included mosaics and bright colors (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November).

With the fall of the USSR and decentralization, the advent of private transportation signaled the decline of the bus stops. Once used to move people from the rural to the urban and vice-versa, the stops lost their importance due to the severing of ties between split nations, but also because of the acquisition of private means of transportation. With people not having to travel towards Moscow and now having vehicles of their own, the use of coach buses seemed less necessary; although in some cases it still remains used. This in turn was reflected in the care and conservation of the bus stops: with struggling economies of many countries, there was not much attention dedicated to these structures. Paint and pieces started to fall off, sometimes the process being accelerated on purpose, and in some cases the stops were not even replaced with new prefabricated ones; people were just not using them anymore (ibid). Nowadays, many of these stops remain silent, visited and used by few, slowly decaying in some areas due to lack of money or pure disinterest.

Attention is now directed towards two photographers that exemplify these bus stops from the former USSR through the projects *It Must Be Beautiful* by Alexandra Soldatova, and *Soviet Bus Stops* by Christopher Herwig. Both projects, while addressing the same type of structures have intrinsic and visual differences: while Herwig's project includes structures in any state and from various countries from the former USSR,



Soldatova's project focuses on intervened bus stops from her native country, Belarus. This by no means implies that one is better than the other, but the approaches and scopes to each one should be noted.

There is no official number on how many of these bus stops exist. Considering the vastness of the former USSR (even today Russia alone remains an immense country) and its different types of landscapes, the amount of cities, villages and towns – and their sizes and characteristics – are indeed big. Tracking down each existing bus stop becomes a difficult task. To add to this difficulty, the fact that it was state-operated means that maps and floorplans once in the hands of the authority are hard to come by, whether because of state secrecy or due to how the administrations changed after the collapse of the USSR. Perhaps with the projects of both Soldatova and Herwig this can change, but there is no doubt for both of them that the main concern is time. As mentioned by Herwig, there were many cases in which searching for these bus stops with the aid of old maps and tips from architects and designers involved with them, would end with him arriving to an empty plot. Sometimes, he would find a stop that was clearly about to fall, or one that had already been replaced with a new prefabricated one (ibid). In the case of Soldatova, it was the stopping of what had become some sort of tradition: the bus stops were being painted less and less with the passing of years (Mallonee, 2015). Truly, there is no way to know how long they will remain.

### ***It Must Be Beautiful***

Belorussian photographer Alexandra Soldatova tries to imprint the tradition from her country on having things “neat, clean and beautiful” through her project *It Must Be Beautiful*. The project takes into consideration a series of bus stops from her native country that have been intervened by painting on their walls (Fig. 5). Although her project ran from 2012 until 2015, the paintings and interventions on bus stops had started from well back into the 1980s where local anonymous artists were commissioned by officials to treat these structures with the sole purpose to “beautify empty landscape” (Mallonee, 2015; Soldatova, 2015). Her project connects these interventions with what she considers cultural practices of the country, painting and having

things neat and beautiful, trying to understand the origin of this interest for the Belorussian aesthetics that the locals have.

In Belarus, my home country, people love when everything looks neat, clean and beautiful. I decided to search for origins of this fact. So I researched the environment where people normally live and I was looking for rather outstanding and at the same time very common things which could influence the esthetic feeling of a person. (Soldatova, 2015).

The details and themes for each stop vary from region to region, but they all fall within a certain national aesthetic identity (which as mentioned before refers to clean and beautiful images), one that she wishes to show to the world through her work. Furthermore her project is one about remembrance and raising awareness (Fig. 6). She fears that this practice of painting landscapes and beautiful motifs on bus stops will soon disappear, as it is a practice no longer supported by the government, turning instead to prefabricated stops of metal, plastic and glass. The goal is to, if not being able to preserve the physicality of these stops, at least to have her work serve as a documentation, a memory of places and practices that might not last forever, seeing how quickly and suddenly things can change in Belarus (Mallonee, 2015).

This project is about decorating reality. All these paintings on the bus stops are made through local authorities by unknown 'artists', with the only purpose to beautify empty landscape. Their intention is to create an etalon, a perfect beauty. Without knowing it, they create a 'window' to a fictional, idealistic space, which sometimes looks like a dream. (Zubek, 2016)

### ***Soviet Bus Stops***

Christopher Herwig is a Canadian photographer and author of the project *Soviet Bus Stops* which he started some 13 years ago. Traveling from London to St. Petersburg, he decided to make a game for himself in which he would take a photograph every hour. With this game he wanted to change the way he took photographs, opening his eyes to common things. After entering Lithuania, he noticed that bus stops started popping up here and there, and decided to keep his eyes open for more.



Fig. 5. ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. *imb\_05*. Source: Alexandra Soldatova (Soldatova, 2015)



Fig. 6. ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. *imb\_01*. Source: Alexandra Soldatova (Soldatova, 2015)



Fig. 7. ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. *Disputed\_region\_of\_Abkhazia\_Gagra*. Source: Christopher Herwig (Herwig, 2015b)



Fig. 8. ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. *Belarus\_Čornaje*. Source: Christopher Herwig (Herwig, 2015b)

After this he moved to Kazakhstan to continue with other projects, and while driving around he found more bus stops. That was when he understood that there was potential here, and after showing the pictures around he realized how it was appreciated by people and magazines, which prompted him to look for even more stops around the neighboring countries (Herwig, 2015b).

Once I started showing this series I started realizing it was actually quite appreciated as well by people who didn't really realize that this existed, so then it was published in several magazines all around the world and I thought I was done with it. And a couple of years later I thought that if I have found them [bus stops] in those eight countries I bet the other countries have some as well. Then I started organizing trips specifically to find the bus stops and that's where it really took shape. (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November)

In September 2015, the book *Soviet Bus Stops* was published with great reception (Herwig, 2015a). Before the release of the book, many blogs, online magazines and newspapers had already been writing about it and showing some of the photographs, so there were lots of expectations. In the end, a collection of photographs from Belarus, Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Estonia, Lithuania, Tajikistan and so on (14 countries from the former USSR<sup>4</sup>), make up the repertoire of over 100 bus stops he encountered (Herwig, 2015b; 2016). Herwig mentions that what truly makes up the entire series is the fact that there are so many of them and they are so diverse, "if it were just one picture I think it would be a little interesting but no one would really get the full appreciation of what was going on." (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November). The part that captivated him the most was the evidence of an explosion of artistic and cultural expressions created in the Soviet Union, a regime most commonly perceived as having oppressed creative freedom (Fig. 7):

... in editing them [photographs] I started noticing that there was trend: in the Ukraine there was a lot more based on decorating the bus stops with mosaics and paintings, while in Armenia there is a lot more of this brutalist, heavy concrete, but still trying to be quite

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<sup>4</sup> One of the regions visited by Herwig is the disputed region of Abkhazia, a post-Soviet "frozen conflict" area. Both this thesis and Herwig address this zone purely for the bus stops but as his photographs show in their naming, they always present this wording.

playful with big rings and sweeping arches. And in the Black Sea region, the region of Abkhazia, those were really more “sculpture-esque”, almost like Gaudi-inspired; more like art pieces. In Estonia you get a lot of wood so they used wood, and in Kyrgyzstan it was more much conceptual and visual like hats, birds and yurts, actual regional items that meant something to them; not necessarily very Soviet but very Kyrgyz or local. So definitely you see some trends. (ibid)

By engaging in this project he discovered that even the normal, common things, represented here through simple bus stops, can be deposits of surprises and curiosity, with their own stories and experiences, if one can look past the “boringness” and the “ugliness” that is normally attached to them (Fig. 8); a “good exercise to just start opening up my eyes to things that you would normally just pass by” (ibid). Some of the locals he encountered were confused about his project, others even thought he was doing a mockery of their villages or countries by photographing dirty, abandoned bus stops. The state of many of these bus stops was – in some cases still is – terrible and in many cases people felt embarrassed or ashamed of having these structures still standing. Herwig would approach the people and try to explain that it was in fact the opposite of shame and ugliness:

A couple of times I would try explain to them [locals] and show them many more pictures and say “this is part of a bigger thing and yes, there’s garbage but let’s try and look beyond that and see that what we’re looking at is quite cool”. (ibid)

While some of the bus stops he encountered were in a rather good condition, Herwig mentions that many were in terrible shape, others had already been demolished and replaced by prefabricated ones, or, in some cases, not even replaced. He thinks that many stops will soon be gone, but that spreading the word of these places could actually create interest and raise awareness for them. He even launched a small campaign through his Facebook page, in which he is giving away free copies of his book to randomly chosen people who submit photographs of bus stops in Russia – since he has not been there, prompting him and catching his attention to expand his project to include Russian bus stops (Herwig, 2016). Although he doubts that many of them

will be preserved, the fact that some of them are being saved – with appropriate care and cleaning being done – is due to their unique nature, different from what people have become accustomed to see nowadays:

I don't know if these will ever be preserved, but I think they should be. I think that there are a lot of good reasons why they should be, not only for the world to see and appreciate them, but one of the primary reasons why these were built in the first place was a way for the artist to express themselves and to show a little bit of pride in their neighborhood. (ibid)

### **A trip to the other side – European Border Checkpoints**

Border crossings have a function of geographical boundaries, but also a coercive role, since they prevent the free passage of people between one and another state. So, they are places that, along with a cartographic dimension, are provided with historical, economic and political reminiscences. (Evangelista, 2014)

If we think about it, transit is as old as humanity itself. From ancient times and with the prevailing sociopolitical system in place, mankind's history has been determined by migrations. Whether it was for exploration, colonization or commercial purposes, the movement of people is at the center of communities. With the emergence of political powers, this movement called for control measures in order to perpetuate this dominance. Commercialization of goods required documentation to be allowed and approved, and since these were transported by people they also required certain controls. The first official passports started appearing around the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the United Kingdom, and from then on there has been a long history on the development of migration control. Fast forward some centuries, the emergence of rail travel, mixed with remnants of the colonial past, prompted massive migration movements through Europe and towards the United States of America. Although passports have existed, all these previously mentioned elements made control rather difficult, resulting in a temporary dismissing of such documentation. Movement throughout Europe was free and easy. This changed before the outbreak of WW1, which demanded safer and tighter restrictions to the movement of people between countries – one could

never know who was crossing and for what reasons (Benedictus, 2006; Carr, 2013). It is during the inter-war years that border checkpoints and controls were established, having passports resurfaced and movements of people became increasingly restricted.

In 1985, the European Economic Community (which would later become the European Community, and be absorbed by the European Union in 1993) signed a treaty between five of its member nations (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany) which had the intention of a gradual abolishment of border checks for citizens and residents of the signatory countries, called the Schengen Agreement (after the town of Schengen in Luxembourg, near from where it was signed). The agreement establishes a loosening of the mobilization controls between nations by establishing a common visa policy, thus suspending the formalities that are common for areas of documentation checking, such as airports and border checkpoints (Euro-Lex, 2000). The agreement would gradually be signed by those nations entering the European Community as a requirement to become a member, expanding what is known as the Schengen Area. In addition, police and security cooperation will be extended between nations when it is needed, and the free transit of commercial goods will be ensured (ibid).

At the moment, all European Union members participate in the Schengen Area with the exception of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Romania, since they joined recently or have had internal issues to apply it, although they are required by law to do so. Ireland and the United Kingdom act as opt-outs, meaning they decided not to implement it, despite being part of the EU. Additionally, there are countries that are not part of the EU but are part of the Schengen Area, namely Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland (European Commission, 2015). With the Schengen Area in effect, the tightness of controls at internal borders has become more of a formality in certain areas, while in others it might not even be carried out at all. There has been a relaxation on the procedures to check on people and vehicles, as well as a change in the frequency of checks and in the behavior of border officers, who are asked to reflect the welcoming atmosphere between the member states (Euro-Lex, 2006). There are certain circumstances when the conditions of the Schengen Agreement can be suspended by one or several members of the area. This has been more noticeable in the recent events regarding the refugee crisis of 2015 and the terrorist attacks in Paris



on 13 November of 2015, where several nations decided to temporarily suspend the agreement in order to activate strict controls of people moving through their territories (European Commission, 2016).

Despite some special events, with the advent and expansion of the Schengen Area, there is a common denominator affecting the border controls between nations: checkpoints throughout Europe are slowly being abandoned because they have lost their function. Since the agreement was officially implemented in March of 1995, these structures have been deserted for one main reason: their design is directly linked to their functionality, its administrative nature. The buildings tend to be small, with an architectural program for paper work, small offices, sometimes a canopy to cover the vehicles, and many of them are in the middle of nowhere. Located next to transnational highways, there are very few settlements next to them; some are close, but rarely right next to them. This leads to the fact that their abandonment is rather easy in terms of administrative consequences: other than the building itself, independent from anything else, there is not much left to abandon. Although state-owned, their integrity is slowly giving in to disuse and the passage of time, though not even 30 years have passed for many of them.

Through the projects of two photographers, Ignacio Evangelista with *After Schengen: European Borders* and Josef Schulz with *übergang*, engagement will ensue with the remnants of these structures that have seemingly lost their meaning in a time where borders stopped being physical. Both photographers are fascinated with the intricacies behind border checkpoints and borders themselves, having marked their lives in one way or another, as they mention in the interviews. Their projects cover basically the same areas of Europe – interestingly enough, none of their photographs have captured the same checkpoint – and are a product of their personal interest, something that has resonated in them through their lives. Most of the checkpoints lie completely abandoned, but as it will be presented in each project, some have been re-adapted, others are completely gone. And although these structures do not function anymore, for both photographers they still have an aura of control and restriction for people that pass through, especially for those who know what they once stood for. Their future remains uncertain, as they are dependent on the sociopolitical developments of the European nations.

### *After Schengen: European Borders*

Recalling his years as a child and his school years, Ignacio Evangelista brings to life his personal view on borders through his project *After Schengen: European Borders*. Through this personal project, Evangelista shows his ever-present interest for things that defy time and space. He is interested in places that are not quite right, that are somehow wrongfully located, not only in a geographical sense, but also in a chronological aspect. In order to materialize this idea, Evangelista has photographed a series of abandoned checkpoints in inner European borders, as a way to exemplify this “space-time limbo” as he likes to call it (Evangelista, 2014). The checkpoints, once places where waiting and controlling was mandatory, are neither here nor there, outside of a time and place for which they were conceived. They are no longer necessary, considering the erasing of political and administrative borders, but serve only as historic remnants of a time in which free movement was hindered (ibid).

In these personal projects there are always that interest me, where the natural and the artificial appear together and in a way conflicting. But also there are some instances where something doesn't seem to be on the right place, in time or space. A series of photographs I have includes off-season ski station; during summer. You can see all the chairlifts there but no snow: they are physically in the right place but not in the right temporal place. (I. Evangelista, 2015, pers. comm., 21 November)

As a kid, Evangelista was extremely interested in cartography, constantly looking at maps and wondering about the complexities of borders: “I don't really remember how the project started, but I do remember as a kid I was very interested in maps: when looking at a European map I would notice that the borders were all crooked, whereas for example in Africa they were all straight. As a kid I thought that this idea of having straight lines was very clever and practical, and that Europeans liked to be complicated – obviously I had no clue about geography, history or colonialism.” (ibid). This, mixed with his thoughts of crossing borders on his first trip as a teenager and the cultural exchange, at some point met and became his project. *After Schengen: European Borders* started with the borders that were closest to him and later expanded towards Eastern Europe because they had been the most recent countries that joined the Schengen Agreement, spanning from 2011 until 2014.

I started with the borders of Spain, so Spain-Portugal and Spain-France – due to closeness – and later on I shifted towards Eastern Europe: Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland, because these were the countries that had joined the Schengen Agreement most recently, and there might be more abandoned checkpoints there. (ibid)

One of the biggest discoveries for Evangelista was the whole political and cultural history behind not only the checkpoints but the areas around the borders as well, especially around the Eastern Bloc. There he found actually two borders, the official one between two nations, and the sociopolitical one between East and West. This last one was also an ideological one, Evangelista says (ibid), being problematic in general and where no one would truly want to go unless it was absolutely necessary, it was a place where the authority – and by extension the state and state control – was located (Fig. 9). He mentions that he found a specific cultural mindset with the people living near the checkpoints, especially older residents that in some cases did not even know where the border was; later on, he would discover that it had been barely 10 kilometers away.

I came to the conclusion that because of this double-border that I mentioned previously, people simply learned not to look into that direction, similar to Finisterra – a place in the Galician coast that had the idea of being the end of the world. I was just surprised that a 60-70 year old man wouldn't know where the border was. (ibid)

The checkpoints that Evangelista has engaged with have been subject to different fates. Some of them had been readapted to bars, restaurants, small museums and even souvenir shops. Between France and Spain he found checkpoints selling “sangria” on one side and “pâté” on the other, with merchandise in the shape of bulls or flamenco dancers. Small museums with Cold War paraphernalia appeared in the Eastern European area, with newspapers, uniforms and old weapons. Many others have been demolished or rebuilt. The very first checkpoint he photographed no longer appears as in his picture, since the customs building was replaced by a cultural center (Fig. 10). They have also prompted different reactions: once his project started being spread through printed and digital media, he was contacted by the

daughter of a customs officer who had worked at one of the checkpoints Evangelista photographed. There are also many recent contacts due to the refugee crisis of 2015. He does not know if the checkpoints he photographed had been put back in use, but he has been contacted to exhibit his project where discussions on the future of Schengen emerge, such as in 2015 at the University of Bordeaux (ibid). The future of these checkpoints remains uncertain, but he sees them as bearers of important European history, especially for those born after Schengen was signed.

Well, now what happens with all the matter of the refugees, I think that it would be good that some of them remained up, especially for those that have been born with Schengen and have lived without borders, so that they could see that it wasn't always like this and that it could go back at any time. For example France and Sweden have temporarily annulled the Agreement. It would be great for those that have been born with these ideas, to leave some sort of "monument" or "remains" which showed that 20, 30 years ago this was a place where people had to stop, and where you could be allowed or not to cross. (ibid)

### *übergang*

As a traveler himself, Polish-born Josef Schulz engages through his project *übergang* (transition) on the topic of European border crossings. Stemming from one of his previous projects – documenting the Dreilinden Checkpoint, which marked the border between West Berlin and East Germany – he became particularly interested in the idea of borders not only as physical and visual elements, but those in the mental and cultural plane (J. Schulz, 2015, pers. comm., 23 November). As places of both waiting and expectations, the borders convey an idea of goal or destination carrying along feelings of wonder and excitement, but also of anxiousness and mystery as to what will be on the other side and if the passage will be safe and successful. In an intentional and metaphorical move, the background of his photographs has been altered giving them a sense of fog or etherealness in order to emphasize the checkpoints, making them the protagonists of the frame. This manipulation is done not only to attract the view immediately to the structures, but also to decontextualize them from the surroundings making recognition of the landscape difficult – if not impossible – and creating a vanishing aura to each photograph (Schulz, 2007; 2008a; 2008b).



Fig. 9. ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. 17\_ignacioevangelista15. Source: Ignacio Evangelista (Evangelista, 2014)



Fig. 10. ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. 17\_ignacioevangelista2. Source: Ignacio Evangelista (Evangelista, 2014)



Fig. 11. ©Josef Schulz, 2007. *Transition\_145*. Source: Josef Schulz (Schulz, 2008a)



Fig. 12. ©Josef Schulz, 2007. *Transition\_205*. Source: Josef Schulz (Schulz, 2008a)

For me it was more important to create the moment on the picture where you feel that you are crossing from one point to another, from one society to another, therefore that's the reason why the background is a little faded but still visible, so that means something that is visible but not that clear. That's linked to the visual language of the project. (J. Schulz, 2015, pers. comm., 23 November)

Additionally, Schulz is interested in the evolution of European borders. Recalling his years living in Poland, every time he traveled, he had to stop at a border control, waiting for his documents to be checked (ibid). Now with Schengen, borders might be physically erased but they remain in the minds of many, especially in terms of cultural attitudes but not necessarily with a negative connotation (Schulz, 2008a). And even after Schulz finished his project, more countries have joined the European Union and signed the Schengen Agreement, there is an emphasis on the permanence of borders – at least in the psyche of people – which he tries to materialize with the silent control guardians that are now these abandoned checkpoints. The meaning of crossing a border has truly become void to him (ibid; Schulz, 2007; 2008b).

It is by combining the actual act of crossing the borders and the developments of the geopolitical actions, reinforced by the fogging of the backgrounds of his photographs, where Schulz demonstrates the transition, *übergang*. By placing the checkpoints at the center of the image but also of the narrative for his project, their former spotlight becomes clear. Nowadays the checkpoints stand still, abandoned by the authorities that no longer consider them necessary, faded by the events of the recent past, the present, and possibly the future (Fig. 11). Occasional controls appear here and there, but overall, as explained by Schulz, he was the only person around them. Few to no passersby were encountered, and the only people that could provide some sense of human interaction were a couple of officers, and the cafes or restaurants that had been built near the checkpoints when waiting was an actual activity (ibid).

Nobody would really stop by, though. What I discovered is that when you would cross this border, maybe the same village but divided: on one side you have a building, on the other side some bar and there is always a change of attitude and a different ambience. There is no security border anymore, but there is still a border: a cultural one. This was something that gave me lots of thoughts, everyone is sticking to their own culture, crossing the border

but just for a quick shopping and then back. I never expected that, it was so strict and this stuck on me. (J. Schulz, 2015, pers. comm., 23 November)

The checkpoints now lie, for the most of them, in a neglected state since they are no longer necessary. Schulz mentions that in some cases the idea of tearing them down never materializes, mainly because of funds. In response to this, it seems as if they have been purposely left to wither and crumble as to aid in the removal process. Some still operate, but there is no way to know which has been the fate of the checkpoints he photographed (Fig. 12). Schulz says he has not gone back to the checkpoints, mostly because of personal and artistic reasons, so there is no evidence if the border crossings have survived. Silent reminders of an activity that involved waiting, these checkpoints are now the ones waiting for their fate to unfold.

Usually they belong to the government, but as I have seen there were never attempts of taking care of them, they just closed the doors and left them. I have never seen any restoration or taking care of them, they were just there; maybe there is only a sign to clarify that you are crossing a border. Now, I have the feeling that some of these countries, like the Netherlands, teared down a lot of them because maybe they didn't want to care about them, but I never asked or questioned why they did not care for them. (ibid)

### **Preparing for the enemy that never came – Bunkers in Albania**

Looking at the past with the eyes of the present, I think it is impossible. What now seems incomprehensible and absurd, was something that took place back then. – from the short film *Mushrooms of Concrete* (Payens, 2010)

A quick internet search for the word “bunker” will usually show results – first and foremost – from Wikipedia, followed by links on the First, Second, and Cold wars, some touristic destinations, and images of massive structures against various landscapes. Indeed, one of the first thoughts when we hear the word “bunker” recall the *Atlantikwall* built by Nazi Germany during WW2 as a defensive system against an



Allied invasion of the German-held North Atlantic coast (proven useless in the 1944 Allied landings, amongst other incursions) (Zaloga, 2012, pp.4-10, 57-58). Or the *Ligne Maginot* built by France after the WW1 to repel any possible invasion from Germany (again proven useless as the German Army circumvented it in 1940 through Belgium) (Kaufmann, Kaufmann & Lang, 2011, pp.3-8, 116-135). These truly impressive structures make us think of massive, impenetrable (despite the historic outcomes, of course) structures, located above ground in strategic border areas, and from which resistance and suppressive fire can be held.

Many bunkers still remain in their original locations, proving their worth as tough structures difficult to demolish, and conservation and preservation of such elements proves difficult, both from a physical and psychological/historical perspective: not only does it require immense amounts of energy (demolition charges or machinery) to destroy or remove them and a lot of money to refurbish, but the general public's perception also defines them as unwanted reminders of a not-so-nice past, carrying along difficult memories. And so some of them end up being reused as art galleries, museums, or party destinations, where the vast spaces, difficult heritage, and unkempt structure provide the perfect settings for the aforementioned activities, such as the Boros Bunker in Berlin (Sammlung Boros, 2016). Unique from the structures previously mentioned, individual bunkers stand out. As can be seen in many important battlefields this day, personal bunkers were used mostly for defending advancing positions of a strategic area. They were still small and isolated, part of a rather small network. Once the conflict was over, if they posed a hindrance to the area, they were demolished (it still took some effort), and if they were in inaccessible areas, they were just left there, undisturbed and not worthy of dealing with them (Virilo, 1975, pp.17-35, pp.49-53; Kaufmann & Donnell, 2004, pp.219-222). However, when these small structures invade larger, more active areas and in big numbers, the story is quite different. Which leads to the final case study, the Albanian bunkers.

Before the outbreak of WW2, Italian forces invaded Albania and merged it into Benito Mussolini's Italian Empire. In 1940 Italy opened the Balkan Campaign by attacking Greece from its bases in Albania. Greek resistance halted this attack, forcing the Italians to ask for assistance from Germany, which was granted and capitalized the fall of both Greece and Yugoslavia in 1941. From here until the expulsion of the Ger-

man Army in 1944, Albania offered a constant resistance through its partisan movement. It was during this resistance that Enver Hoxha came to power within the Communist Party of Albania (O'Donnell, 1999, pp.7-14, 193-218; Coppa, 2006, pp.118-119). After the liberation of Albania, Hoxha became the *de facto* leader of the country, immediately declaring it a communist state and ruling from 1944 until his death in 1985. At first aligned with the USSR's socialist system, and a grand admirer of Joseph Stalin, upon his death Hoxha criticized the paths taken by the rest of the socialist nations and severed ties with all its former allies to a point that Albania had been secluded from the world, believing that every nation wanted to destroy the communist state. This marked the origin of the paranoid project of "bunkerization" of Albania.

To address the topic of the bunkers in Albania, a series of sources were consulted. First, some general information on the bunkers is addressed through three main means. Lejla Hadžić, an architectural conservator working in Albania at *Cultural Heritage without Borders*<sup>5</sup>, through an interview offers a deeper view of how the bunkers are perceived by Albanians in general. Although Hadžić works mostly with conservation of medieval structures in sites such as Gjirokastër and Krujë, her input on the attitudes from Albanians towards the bunkers proves to be of great help and interest. Additionally, an adaptive reuse project by Elian Stefa and Gylar Mydyti called *Concrete Mushrooms* gives a glimpse of the history of the bunkers and Albania, and proposes a project that stemmed from their graduate studies, which offers a solution on treating these elements of the Albanian landscape. Furthermore, a short film from Martijn Puyens called *Mushrooms of Concrete* provides images and interviews with locals on their thoughts and experiences with the bunkers. The combination of all these sources will help to understand what lies beneath and around the bunkers. Second, the photography projects provide the visual component for the bunkers. Alicja Dobrucka, through her project *Concrete Mushrooms*, addresses the interaction of the Albanians and the bunkers, especially in terms of adaptive reuse. Through the photographic work of David Galjaard title *Concresco*, the Albanian Bunkers are explored from both their visual but also intangible aspects. Through an interview,

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<sup>5</sup> From the Strategic Plan section of the website: "Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) is dedicated to rescuing and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage affected by conflict, neglect or human and natural disasters. We see our work as a vital contribution to building democracy and supporting human rights". More information at: <http://chwb.org/albania/who-we-are/>

Galjaard himself says that his project is not one about bunkers, but about a nation heading towards the future.

Numbers vary from different sources – since it was a matter of national security no official records have been made public – but estimates place the amount of bunkers built by Enver Hoxha between 600,000 and 750,000. Scattered through the whole nation, these mushroom-shaped bunkers had the sole purpose of defending Albania when the invaders came. The idea was that every person able to fight in any way, could, at the sound of the alarm, rush into these bunkers and repel the attacking forces. Bunkers were located everywhere: in the coastlines, through the cities, up in the hills and mountains. Some were in the grazing fields, others next to farms and close to villages, so that each and every single citizen, no matter where they were or what activities they were carrying out, could quickly access the bunkers (Mydyti & Stefa, 2009).

Why they were built, that was... he was fighting in his own head. Enver Hoxha, he assumed enemies would attack us and we had to protect us. Instead of buildings he built bunkers for an imaginary war. – from the short film *Mushrooms of Concrete* (Payens, 2010)

Albanian bunkers came in three basic designs: small, medium and large, all made from concrete and steel. Small bunkers were designed to host a single individual, medium ones were for around four people, while the large ones could host up to ten people. To this classification must be added their location in the Albanian landscape: the coast on the Adriatic has a higher amount of small bunkers, lowlands which include most arable land, highlands with difficult mountainous terrain, and urban centers have all three types of bunkers in strategic locations. Additionally, depending on the military strategy, the bunkers were also divided: triple series for the coastal defense, which included groupings of small bunkers interconnected by tunnels; strategic points, located mainly at the borders with other countries; and linear positions, dotting the landscape in linear arrays and comprised of medium and large in their majority, but also some small bunkers (Mydyti & Stefa, 2009).

From 1967 to 1986 between 600,000 and 750,000 bunkers were built in Albanian territory. Great amounts of resources – economic and human – were poured into this

campaign of “bunkerization”, resulting in around 25 bunkers per square kilometer, and one bunker per every 4 people (ibid). The struggling economy of Albania suffered from a high percentage of its total being directed towards defense and as much as 2% of its whole budget was destined for the construction of the bunkers (O’Donnell, 1999, p.216; Galaty, Stocker & Watkinson, 2009, p.177). Compared to a structure previously mentioned, it cost over twice as much as the *Ligne Maginot*, adjusted to 2006 value, and the amount of concrete could serve to build over 2000 kilometers of roads (Mydyti & Stefa, 2009). A lot was poured into reinforcing this idea of security, defense, and basically plain paranoia that permeated Enver Hoxha, draining Albania for almost 20 years, for an invasion that never came.

It was madness, looking at how poor the country was back in those days. The result was that we were only getting poorer” – from the short film *Mushrooms of Concrete* (Payens, 2010)

Extracting from Albania’s history of being subject to foreign occupation, Enver Hoxha envisioned a self-reliable nation, capable of repelling any military action from foreign occupiers, and was certain that such action would come. The bunkers were Hoxha’s mean to deeply engrain in his people this psychological feeling of order and discipline, but mostly oppression, actually creating a “siege mentality” which had Albanians thinking that they were in fact at the brink of invasion (Galaty, Stocker & Watkinson, 2009, p.177). Now bunkers lie throughout Albania with an unclear future. A quick look at photographs or videos (Payens, 2010; Mydyti & Stefa, 2012) gives us a glimpse on how they are truly everywhere. And in general, people do not seem to be bothered too much by them, either not caring about them, or practically ignoring the bunkers. They only come into play when they are in the middle of a field or where construction needs to be built. As Lejla Hadžić mentions in an interview, although the bunkers are technically state-owned, there is a more complex matter to them. After the fall of the regime, previous land owners could request their former land back. This would include everything that was on the land at the moment of the request. If there happened to be a bunker on the land, it would become property of the owner, who had to deal with it (L. Hadžić, 2015, pers. comm., 9 December). In many cases, as Galjaard explains, if the land is arable but there is a bunker in the way, the farmer has

to find out how to interact with it, which in turn leads to adaptive reuses of such structures (D. Galjaard, 2015, pers. comm., 7 December).

Albanians coexist with the bunkers, in some cases having on the surface an attitude as if they do not exist. It is not in the everyday conversations, it does not stop the urban life from continuing and developing (L. Hadžić, 2015, pers. comm., 9 December). This echoes comments from Galjaard and Dobrucka regarding how the bunkers are perceived, verging on carelessness. But this does not take them away from the collective mind, as is explained by Albanian filmmaker Kujtim Çashku in an interview for the documentary *The Concrete Mushrooms Documentary* by Gyler Mydyti and Elian Stefa. Director of the film *Kolonel Bunker*, based on the “bunkerization” program, echoing the statement by Galaty, Stocker and Watkinson (2009, pp.177-178), Çashku explains that the bunkers go beyond the political and economic aspects, permeating deeply into the Albanian psyche:

Furthermore I started to consider not only the political or economic factors, but also the psychological factors related to mentality. Also, I've defined the bunker as a unique symbol of totalitarianism in comparison with all other totalitarian countries. And if we are able to narrow the meaning of the bunker more semantically, it would be the exact expression of Albanian totalitarianism. Psychologically, it was influencing and elaborating people's attitudes, telling them that the bunker was for their protection, but at the same time the bunker became a symbol of the Albanian's self-isolation. – from the short film *The Concrete Mushroom Documentary* (Mydyti & Stefa, 2012)

Expanding on the previous comment, Hadžić adds her personal experience that sometimes people are not aware of these emotions being there. During work done in the Spaç Prison, an abandoned prison from the time of Enver Hoxha's dictatorship, she and other colleagues read the book *Second Sentence* by Fatos Lubonja, one of the leading intellectuals of today's Albania. The book tells the story of his imprisonment, the judicial system and his fears during detention, and presents the craziness of the system in place. The day before our interview, Hadžić says that there was a public protest against the government in Tirana and a bunker was vandalized. This was a special bunker: it stood at the entrance of the Ministry of Transportation and had recently been built to mark the entrance to a series of underground tunnels built

during Enver Hoxha's regime to provide evacuation channels for high officials in case of an attack (Koleka, 2015; Rifai, 2015). Hadžić mentions that her personal reaction (and of many Albanians, though she was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina) was that of incomprehension and even anger, regarding the decision to build a bunker in the first place, seeing how it directly represents the time of oppression that happened 30 years ago. The rise of emotions was not due the opening of the underground tunnels for touristic purposes, but because of the selection of the bunker to signal the entrance (L. Hadžić, 2015, pers. comm., 9 December).

### ***Concrete Mushrooms***

Being in Albania due to another project, Alicja Dobrucka first came into contact with the bunkers on the Adriatic coast. Through a series of conversations and discussions with Gylar Mydyti and Elian Stefa from the *Concrete Mushrooms* adaptive reuse project, Dobrucka engaged with her own project: to trace and document as many bunkers as possible, because during her stay in Albania and after visiting a few of them, she realized that they were being destroyed rather rapidly, either by effects of nature or by the people. So far many still survive, either being reused through curious adaptations or simply lying around, abandoned and decaying (Fig. 13). It was the ones that were readapted which caught her attention, transforming her project into one that presents the interaction between Albanians and the bunkers through their transformation and adaptive reuse (Dobrucka, 2011; Sacchetti, 2012).

But the bunkers are now disappearing on a mass scale. The government has recently approved a law that encourages their destruction. So as we set off, we tried to shoot the same bunkers that CM had already identified, but they are disappearing rapidly. Many were not there a year on from when CM first photographed them in 2010. It seems people are getting rid of the bunkers from the beach and coast towns first. (Sacchetti, 2012)

One aspect that Dobrucka noticed was the attitude from Albanians towards the bunkers. Perhaps the overexposure and familiarity have the people not care much about them, although in many cases they have been intervened or have simply become meeting points for everyday activities, as if they were truly part of the land. Particular

interest is placed by Dobrucka on the innate shape of the bunkers, different from the ones she has seen in Western Europe, additionally to their omnipresence. The mushroom-like shape against the later constructions added (interventions) or even the Albanian landscape, be it mountains, cities or beaches, creates a unique contrast adding to the alien and mysterious nature of the bunkers (Fig. 14). Added to that, many of them simply appear in unexpected places, areas difficult to reach but still visible, creating an even more unique aspect for her project.

They are quite haunting and unusual looking as a design structure, their shape is different from the bunkers I know from Western Europe, they are not square and blocky, but instead look like mushrooms, with this eye that peeks at you. This, for me, creates a mystery about them, one that makes you wonder what are they used for, if they are not used for the reason they were created. (ibid)

### *Concresco*

Stemming from his interest in underground Cold War shelters, in 2008 the Albanian bunkers came to the attention of David Galjaard. For two years and with two visits to Albania in 2009, Galjaard set his project *Concresco* in motion. Through a series of photographs, interviews and much research, this project took shape with the intention of telling the consequences of the “bunkerization” of Albania. The name of his project combines the Latin words “cum” and “crescere” roughly translating into “taking shape”, a reflection of Albania, its past, present and future, its landscape and the bunkers (Thijssen, 2012). Galjaard’s main interest is actually the future of Albania and how a difficult past forges this new dawn. His project is about the consequences of such structures in the landscape of a country that many people, him included, do not know much of. After reading *The Pillbox Effect* by Slavenka Drakulić, a short essay regarding the bunkers a few years after the fall of the regime, it became clearer for Galjaard to engage with this project, both as a photography project and as a book.

This project started with the bunkers, but in the end it was a book about Albania; I just used the bunkers as a metaphor. Still a lot of people didn’t read it well and think that it still is about the bunkers and I get a lot of questions just about them, and for me in the end it

was just a way to get a grip of a country that I myself didn't understand that well, sort of this inside glance from the outside into a country that's not that well known in Western Europe. (D. Galjaard, 2015, pers. comm., 7 December)

During his research, Galjaard came across with some difficulties, especially regarding documentation on the bunkers. Since the bunkers were a matter of national security, not many public documents were available. In his book *Concresco* appears a map on the inside cover, which is one of the few things he managed to obtain. Surprisingly enough, it was provided by a military man. Yet Galjaard believes that more information must exist, but it could be just that the archives are not updated or organized (ibid). Another difficulty encountered was the general attitude of Albanians towards the bunkers. During his visits, conversations and interviews, the general idea he got was that of disinterest in the topic of the bunkers and leaning more towards the future of Albania, not minding much about them, although the fate of the bunkers does not truly reflect a collective idea (Fig. 15). Some people are more focused on preserving them – some military men were still interested for the defensive purposes; just in case – while others were more into demolishing them, and yet others are keen on adaptive reuse.

What I really felt in Albania was that the old people that I talked to about the bunkers were really wondering why I was so interested, because they are really focused on the future; they don't focus much on the past. Which can also be a problem for the bunkers if you see them as monuments because people will break them down, since they are not really interested in their history, they want to look forward, be part of the West, economic growth. (ibid)

Personally speaking, Galjaard considers that it should be important to conserve some of the bunkers for their relevance as historic elements. He uses as an example the Berlin Wall, stating that at the moment it came down, people were very eager to get rid of it and now, years later, authorities and experts have realized that maybe fully erasing displeasing and uncomfortable structures robs bits and pieces of history.





Fig. 13. ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. *Concrete\_Mushrooms\_Alicja\_Dobrucka\_12*. Source: Alicja Dobrucka (Dobrucka, 2011)



Fig. 14. ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. *Concrete\_Mushrooms\_Alicja\_Dobrucka\_6*. Source: Alicja Dobrucka (Dobrucka, 2011)



Fig. 15. ©David Galjaard, 2008. *Concresco\_David\_Galjaard\_10*. Source: David Galjaard (Galjaard, 2008)



Fig. 16. ©David Galjaard, 2008. *Concresco\_David\_Galjaard\_05*. Source: David Galjaard (Galjaard, 2008)

Galjaard later connects the Berlin Wall and Tirana, the Albanian capital, by mentioning the Postbloku Memorial, where a bunker, a piece of the Berlin Wall and pillars from the Spaç Prison are located, furthermore emphasizing the importance of such structures to study and understand the past. He mentions also that in Tirana, one might not see so many bunkers due to the innate aspects of urban development. But he points out that in a country of almost three million people, the fact that somewhere around half of them live in urban centers provides a different point of view on how Albanians see and interact with the bunkers, which are more present in the rural areas of the country. Seeing how many people do not seem so interested in the bunkers, retaining some of them is a welcomed approach (Fig. 16). This last option is mostly due because locals tend to destroy many in order to salvage materials, especially steel, that later on they can use or sell (Teicher, 2014).

There's a lot of them, like 750,000 bunkers, so I wouldn't say that it's a good plan to preserve all of them, especially when it's in your land and you have to work this land. I think a part of them at least is interesting, because it is an important part of history. (D. Galjaard, 2015, pers. comm., 7 December).

Many bunkers face the threat of destruction and preserving some of them would allow for a better understanding of Albania's history. Galjaard is highly interested in the reuse of the bunkers, looking at how ingenious some of the ideas are, perceiving reuse as a method to guarantee the preservation of some. Perhaps having the Albanians reusing the bunkers can be the first step to truly appreciating them, as well as raising interest for foreigners, such as Galjaard, in exploring and understanding these structures, could as well spark the interest and curiosity of locals. He thinks that the key of it is time.

But I think people take time and a right attitude from the governments to decide on these things and also to show to its people that it's important to at least some of your historical monuments, even if they are as ugly – I don't think they are – as the bunkers. (ibid)

## **THE THREE AXES**

To deepen into the topic and to engage with the case studies, as well as to present the variety within aesthetics, three axes through which aesthetics can be approached are proposed and with which the three case studies will be paired. The complexity of presenting such a topic as the manifestation of displeasure or discomfort relies heavily on the visual impact that it can portray. As previously mentioned, aesthetic judgement is a tricky matter, one that does not necessarily have a clear answer or position since its subjective nature permeates the process itself, leading to extensive debate and discussion. In order to avoid this, the scope here will be limited to three major axes, which when combined or attached to each case study, offer a new and enhanced visualization of the displeasing aesthetic approach. Trying to avoid contradiction, by creating what appears to be categories for a subject that has been repeatedly demanded to be holistic, the focus with these axes is not to categorize but to provide a sample of the areas that can be related to displeasing aesthetics.

The three axes were established after analyzing each case study leading to finding a pattern amongst them. For starters, the case studies all shared a rather similar architectural typology: nothing residential, cultural, or religious but rather civilian or military. Second, and perhaps the most obvious one, is the state of neglect or dilapidation: paint peeling off, structure crumbling, rubbish and growing vegetation, are all included within this pattern. Finally, the state of intervention, which not only takes into account those structures that have been in some way touched by human activity - either readapted or cleaned - but also the visual impact that contrasting, wrong or unexpected interventions have on old existing fabric. With these three common denominators found through the case studies, displeasing aesthetics is broken down into three axes that convey in a more specific way the formal components of the presented structures. Again, these presented axes are something that came from the analysis of the case studies presented here, and do not necessarily mean that are the only ones to be considered. Additionally, they are not to be used or seen akin to architectural styles or strict categories to locate built heritage, but as a reminder that the scope of displeasing aesthetics can be wide.

## **Displeasure of the Type**

The first axis relates to an overall umbrella that covers all structures, both intervened and neglected, and focuses on those built structures which by their innate architectural typology and style have qualities or elements of displeasure. Whether it is for military purposes such as bunkers or for civil purposes such as bus stops, these are places that do not draw the attention due to a more functional quality rather than aesthetic, but also because of their common nature: an everyday scene which conveys no new excitement or appeal. In the case of the military typology, it is important to separate those that transmit a strong unpleasant or uncomfortable meaning, such as the Robben Island prison or the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, which are not just heritage sites but their relevance also does not necessarily lie in the aesthetics or typologies but rather their narratives (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2016c). Once again, it is imperative to distinguish between discomfort and uncomfortable.

When discussing typologies, applying the name “everyday architecture” for a specific typology borders in generalization. Indeed, there is no such thing as an “everyday typology”, but there is an everyday architecture, and we can find it manifested in various typologies. We can differentiate easily between a religious and an agricultural typology, a residential and educational one, with examples, respectively, such as a mosque and a barn, a house and a school. The everyday architecture refers to those buildings and structures that we encounter in a repeated and constant way, in our day-to-day lives to the point that they become obvious and common. It is in many cases that these perceptions of commonality and over-exposure create the impression of boring structures, something that, because we encounter it daily, can and *is* overlooked. We usually do not think of a bus stop – slowly turning to the case studies – as something else than a bus stop: it is a place where we go and wait for the bus.

Alex Axinte, in *Graz the Usual City* presents a series of structures from the city of Graz, Austria, that are mostly overlooked because they are always there, not drawing attention but still managing to be part of the collective urban and social psyche. He calls them “honest buildings” because they serve faithfully the purpose for which they were conceived without trying to be something else, usually overshadowed by pompous constructions (Axinte, 2006, p.3). Silently resisting against urbanization and city face-lifts, “un-sexy categories” as small pedestrian bridges, under-tunnels, car dealer

shops and pedestrian entrances to underground parking lots simply sit there, sometimes acknowledged, mostly ignored (ibid, pp.8-24). And even though they look plain these everyday structures are key to a community's life in a humble way. As Markus Bogensberger and Gabu Heindl describe in *Position Alltag. Architecture in the context of everyday life*, the relevance of this architecture is in its social value, as it becomes the context and scenario for the public's dynamics in its daily lives (Bogensberger & Heindl, 2009, pp.7-9). They become meeting areas, direction markers, and landmarks for the locals. A simple stroll with opened eyes is all that is required to understand the variety and excitement that can arise from rather anonymous constructions that expose the nodes for people's activities (ibid, pp.13-28).

An example for displeasing reactions against a style can be found in Brutalist Architecture, a style that became popular from the 1950s until the 1970s and which characterized many government buildings throughout the world, Britain and countries of the Eastern Bloc being perhaps where it was most popular. It was a style characterized for its functional program, modular elements and use of raw concrete as its main building material, a reflection of honest and non-pretentious design. This style, flourishing during the time of the Cold War, retained this connection many years after it went out of fashion and many people today equate brutalist architecture with oppression and control (Markus & Cameron, 2002, pp. 106, 112, 113). This reaction towards the style has led to the extreme of many people hailing the demolition of many brutalist buildings. Some of these voices speak from a functional point of view, such as difficulties to maintain and adapt to other uses. Many others spoke out on the style itself, and this has found echo through relevant figures – although not necessarily in the architectural circles – such as Prince Charles of Wales, who has openly and directly criticized modern architecture (ibid, pp.157-160).

With the rise of social media, brutalist architecture has found a renewed interest, in some cases through a photographic or a nostalgic filter, but this does not erase the way in which this style was perceived. The fact that there are associations called “The Brutalism Appreciation Society” or “The Postmodern Appreciation Society” (Urbalize, 2014) should already give us a glimpse on how buildings have been treated in the past due to their style. Through social media, platforms for discussion and movements for the conservation of brutalist architecture have created noticeable interest for the style, to the point of bringing the states of some buildings to the attention of

organizations in the preservation circles<sup>6</sup>. This was the case for the Orange County Government Center in New York, USA, built in 1967 (Fig. 17), which became listed in the World Monuments Fund in 2011 after campaigns – which initially started through social media – raised the alarm for its decayed state; nonetheless, it ended up being demolished and reconstructed for cultural activities in 2015 (Rosenfield, 2015). Even more discouraging is an article published in the Washington Post, discussing Washington D.C.’s modernist architecture (Dingfelder, 2016)<sup>7</sup>, in which even a senior curator at the National Building Museum says of the J. Edgar Hoover building – the F.B.I. Headquarters (Fig. 18) – “I’d be happy to push the button to blow up that building myself,”; a sentiment echoed in the comment section and a polling option asking “Which government building is the ugliest?”, where the J. Edgar Hoover building leads by a great margin, followed closely by another brutalist structure, the Hubert H. Humphrey Building where the Health and Human Services of the U.S. is located. How different could people react if these type of articles were less biased?<sup>8</sup>

With a quick view on typology and style, attention is turned to the case studies, where we get the opportunity to combine both the axis and the structure. This juxtaposition will take a visual turn to exemplify the interaction between components of commonality, perhaps boringness, through the lens of our cases. Starting with the Soviet bus stops, where a main component is either their solitude or the fact that they are overlooked by the few people around them, as seen respectively in Fig. 19 and Fig. 20. While the style of these stops is impressive and might not qualify as boring, their locations and physical states point towards something else. Continuing with the checkpoints, we experience not only isolated places but also functional ones, with a clear architectural program for border control that would not catch our view immediately, such as Fig. 21 and Fig. 22. Finally, with the Albanian bunkers we find an even more extreme attitude of commonality towards them, by people who seem to simply

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<sup>6</sup> Instagram and Pinterest, social media platforms for uploading photographs, have contributors devoted purely to unique types of architecture and dilapidated places, such as “Ruin Porn” at <https://www.instagram.com/ruinporn/>.

<sup>7</sup> Notice the negativity with which this article was written, starting from the title “Modernist marvel or monstrosity: What do you think of D.C.’s concrete fortresses?”. A lot to think over its objectiveness.

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps traversing into the opposite end of objectivity, but it puts the mindset in a different mode. For example, the exhibition “Brutal And Beautiful: Saving The Twentieth Century” by English Heritage at <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/wellington-arch/previous-exhibitions/brutal-and-beautiful1/> or the “Concrete buildings: Brutalist beauty” article by the Independent at <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/concrete-buildings-brutalist-beauty-9057223.html>

use them as sitting spots or pass by them without blinking, as seen in Fig. 23 and Fig. 24.

### **Displeasure of the Intervened**

The second axis takes into account those structures that have experienced intervention at a certain point of history, whether for conservation and protection purposes or as contemporary adaptive reuse and/or extensions. How this intervention takes place can also result in two ways. On the one hand, we have an intervention that blends in naturally, respecting what already exists. On the other hand, we have something that clashes strongly with the old fabric, a dissonance between the romantic and the contemporary. We could view both approaches as seeking the preservation of the old fabric, in their own way. Here we consider an important decision-making component, since whatever option we choose – protection or reuse – leaves a visual mark on the existing fabric. This imprint was at some point conceived by someone and approved by someone resulting in a final product that could be acceptable and attractive or not, and this latter outcome becomes our focus of displeasure.

An intervention on the grounds of sensibility is usually what is sought after when it comes to matters of existing fabric, because it is perceived as showing respect for what has previously been done. In a lecture held in Moscow in 2014, Rem Koolhaas makes an interesting point when referring to preservation: “Preservation is one of those areas where you immediately declare that you are not the author, and that you are in a way at the service of someone who existed before you.” (GARAGEMCA, 2014). This echoes the tenets established by conservation discourses such as the Venice Charter, which focuses more directly on the integrity (ICOMOS, 1964, art. 14) and authenticity (ibid, p.1) of the fabric, and expects this respect and attention to the past. An example of this sensible intervention can be seen in the Kesselhaus in Hamburg, Germany. Located in the Hamburg Speicherstadt, recently labeled a World Heritage Site and thus under strict protection regulations, the German architectural studio *gmp* developed an adaptive reuse of an old late 18<sup>th</sup> century boiler house – Hamburg’s first steam power station – into a gallery for exhibitions (*gmp*, 2001). The



trademark of the intervention is a metal framework resembling the old chimneys; of course the inside of the building is a little more elaborate. (Fig. 25)

Yet those interventions that contrast strongly are the ones that create the visceral reaction, one of displeasure, since it figuratively “moves the carpet under our feet”, pushing us outside of our comfort zone. With this type of intervention, whether it is to restore or to reuse, the fact that it becomes such an obvious invasive act is the actual reason that disrupts our pattern of order and control as exposed by Hildebrand (1999, pp.91-131). In most cases, it is perceived as an affront to historic values and even to national identity when it comes to propose and allow such clashes in fabric, such as Italian architect Renzo Piano’s restoration of the entrance to La Valletta, in Malta. Following the tradition of the old Fourth Gate, Piano takes on the task of reinterpreting the access to the fortified city (Piano, 2015). The city, while almost in its entirety designed in Mannerist and Baroque styles, is soon to celebrate the completion of this ambitious project. Although it is approached with a certain level of sensibility and respect for the setting through material, colors and general distribution, the formal aspect immediately diverts our attention, as well as the glass walls, metal structures and general architectural solutions, such as buildings elevated in columns, solar panels and the stone façade’s configuration for sustainable gains and technical additions to the open-air theater. (Fig. 26)

In both cases we have interventions, yet one is more eye-catching – displeasing, perhaps? – than the other one. Of course, the boldness of such an intervention as the one by Piano seems drastic (it has already caused discussion) but one should ask: is this not a way of respect towards the existing fabric? By not putting it in competition against the contemporary additions but on par with the old, by holding both periods of time at the same level? True, it is a drastic and dramatic work, but it is also emotional – though perhaps too far in the emotional spectrum for our comfort. And this takes us to question, why is there such a gap in the reaction and selection of sides in this emotional spectrum when we are encountered with interventions on other types of structures? We seem to praise whenever a radical intervention – especially one that adheres to our traditional beauty standards – is placed upon displeasing buildings, lauding such action as “economic friendly”, “conscious”, and even “sustainable”, but cringe at the mere thought of the opposite idea.

This approach can be seen in the three case studies, although more easily in the Albanian bunkers than in the bus stops and checkpoints, which is part of what was mentioned in the previous axis of typology. Bus stops and checkpoints by their design and location seem to be more complicated to readapt because of area and location. Starting with the Soviet bus stops, Fig. 27 captured by Soldatova brings a more obvious case of intervention – by repainting them; not invasive nor radical – than with those presented by Herwig, which as can be seen in Fig. 28, leaves little space to reuse. The checkpoints also show issues for reuse as can be seen in Fig. 29 and Fig. 30; although as Evangelista mentioned previously, some have been turned souvenir shops (see page 83). Finally, with the Albanian bunkers we see more interventions and in more ingenious ways, and just as mentioned above, we could even celebrate or praise when seeing an appropriate reuse, as in Fig. 31 and Fig. 32. Also important to mention is the project *Concrete Mushrooms* which proposes for a reuse-network of as many bunkers as possible, being transformed into bed and breakfasts, cafes, etc., as seen in Fig. 33 and Fig. 34 (Mydyti & Stefa, 2009; Concrete Mushrooms, 2012). Additionally, a joint project between the Fachhochschule Mainz (University of Applied Sciences) in Germany and the POLIS University (International School of Architecture and Urban Development Policies) in Albania called “Bed&Bunker” presented the possibility of refurbishing some of the bunkers into small accommodations that could be rented out to tourists, with unique results as can be seen in Fig. 35 and Fig. 36 (Bed&Bunker, 2012).

### **Displeasure of the Dilapidated**

In the final axis the emphasis relies on the abandoned and/or neglected structures, as well as those that purposely have been left in their original state to allow the passage of time take its toll on them. A fine and important line must be drawn, and that is differentiating those buildings and monuments that have been purposely left as ruined but are still conserved and preserved to avoid further deterioration, a sort of “freezing in time”, from those that are truly decaying and rotting away with no protection whatsoever, intended to be so. Since the line of thought in this thesis is to address the appreciation and raise interest for the displeasing and discomforting, the

focus on this section will not include such structures that are being taken care and their deterioration processes halted or delayed. This, in turn, might direct us to buildings and monuments that are not included in any directory or under any protection initiative, and in some cases it resonates in cases in which the state of decay is done on purpose, as to avoid a direct confrontation with these unattractive structures.

Decay and neglect resonate profoundly in us, as a metaphor for our own mortality (Tschumi, 1999, p.72). This can be a reason why we shy away from such images and the status of things: it reminds us that everything is transient; it, as we, will eventually pass. But it is precisely this darkness and wickedness about ephemerality that drives our interests to this topic, as can be seen in various artistic movements through the ages. As mentioned in Chapter 2, themes such as *Still Life*, *Vanitas* and *Urban Exploration*, bring a new perspective as to how decay can be seen, a view where displeasure and discomfort are the actual triggers for emotions of pleasure and bliss.

Nostalgia, melancholy and commemoration are heightened when we see images of ruins (Fig. 37), just as John Ruskin defends in his conservation approach and just as Bradley Garret expresses when talking about Urban Exploration (see page 59). For Ruskin, these emotions are extracted through a romantic prism though, focusing in thoughts of the beauty of times long gone, heroic deeds, a once all-time ruling nature (Ruskin, 1849, p.148), whereas Garret presents the memories of the everyday. Emotions are not necessarily good or bad and depending on the place we are experiencing, either of the two outcomes can be produced. In some cases, the decay brings out good memories, past – experienced or imagined – times, just as previously explained with the romantic prism. In other cases, it reveals uncomfortable memories which we would rather forget, which leads to a different type of nostalgia: one that can also be instilled with fear. It is this fear of not knowing what emotions will surface when outside of our zone of (aesthetic) comfort – especially if the prospect of feelings of anxiety and disgust are in sight – that creates weariness towards engaging face-on with ruined modern structures.

Bernard Tschumi (1999) makes an interesting point when describing our aversion towards decay and ruins, especially modern ones: “Each society expects architecture to reflect its ideals and domesticate its deeper fears” (ibid, p.72), and this is especially true when it comes to ruined modern buildings. A structure that badly reflects our housing, urbanistic and even sociological issues is something that we want

to shy away from. Tschumi even goes further by equating the decay with death: “Architects generally do not love that part of life that resembles death: decaying structures – the dissolving traces that time leaves on buildings – are incompatible with both the ideology of modernity and with what might be called conceptual esthetics.” (ibid, p.74). And to make his statement even deeper and to truly differentiate our longing for ancient majestic ruins against modern ones, he writes: “The anguish about death, however, only relates to the phase of decomposition, for white bones did not possess the intolerable aspect of corrupted flesh. Architecture reflected these deep feelings: putrefying buildings were seen as unacceptable, but dry white ruins afforded decency and respectability.” (ibid, p.73) which combined with “Death is tolerated when the bones are white: if architects cannot succeed in their quest for ‘healthy and virile, active and useful, ethical and happy’ people and houses, they can at least be comfortable in front of the white ruins of the Parthenon.” (ibid, p.72) brings a whole new perspective. Perhaps a great way to embody the relevance of decay – and ultimate vanishing – can be seen through the imaginative mind of a young boy and his inseparable accomplice through their existential debates: “If good things lasted forever, would we appreciate how precious they are?” as seen in Fig. 38 (Waterson, 2015).

When applying the aspect of dilapidation to our case studies, we encounter impressive cases, some in a greater degree of neglect than others. But not everything should be seen with gloom, as David Galjaard mentions when describing *Vanitas* (from Chapter 2), “The old Vanitas paintings have two sides on them though: some people saw them as work that could make you afraid, as the end is near, but some people saw them as nothing is forever, so you better enjoy it.” (D. Galjaard, 2015, pers. comm., 7 December). With the Soviet bus stops we find a unique combination of artistic forms with a worn out presentation (Fig. 39) or with a remote setting which enhances the idea of abandonment (Fig. 40). The checkpoints present similar characteristics as the bus stops, but in some cases there is hardly any structure (Fig. 41) and sometimes an impressive one which makes the abandonment even more noticeable (Fig. 42). Finally, the bunkers present something rather opposite than the previous two cases, since they are repeated designs, with the same materials, usually in worse shape, some of them are barely recognizable (Fig. 43), while others have clearly been left to wither (Fig. 44).



Fig. 17. ©Matthew Carbone for Architect Magazine, 2015. *Orange County Government Center*. Source: archdaily (Rosenfield, 2015)



Fig. 18. ©Gregory Varnum, 2007. *J. Edgar Hoover Building*. Source: Wikimedia Commons (Varnum, 2007)



Fig. 19. ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. *Armenia\_Saratak*. Source: Christopher Herwig (Herwig, 2015b)



Fig. 20. ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. *imb\_08*. Source: Alexandra Soldatova (Soldatova, 2015)



Fig. 21. ©Josef Schulz, 2007. *Transition\_225*. Source: Josef Schulz (Schulz, 2008a)



Fig. 22. ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. *17\_ignacioevangelista8*. Source: Ignacio Evangelista (Evangelista, 2014)



Fig. 23. ©David Galjaard, 2008. *Concresco\_David\_Galjaard\_17*. Source: David Galjaard (Galjaard, 2008)



Fig. 24. ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. *Concrete\_Mushrooms\_Alicja\_Dobrucka\_11*. Source: Alicja Dobrucka (Dobrucka, 2011)





Fig. 25. ©Klaus Frahm, 2001. *Kesselhaus, Hamburg*. Source: gmp (gmp, 2001)



Fig. 26. ©Michel Denancé, 2010. *Le Parlement*. Source: Renzo Piano Building Workshop (Piano, 2015)



Fig. 27. ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. *imb\_18*. Source: Alexandra Soldatova (Soldatova, 2015)



Fig. 28. ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. *Disputed\_region\_of\_Abkhazia\_Pitsunda\_2*. Source: Christopher Herwig (Herwig, 2015b)



Fig. 29. ©Josef Schulz, 2007. *Transition\_5*. Source: Josef Schulz (Schulz, 2008a)



Fig. 30. ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. *17\_ignacioevangelista16*. Source: Ignacio Evangelista (Evangelista, 2014)



Fig. 31. ©David Galjaard, 2008. *Concresco\_David\_Galjaard\_11*. Source: David Galjaard (Galjaard, 2008)



Fig. 32. ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. *Concrete\_Mushrooms\_Alicja\_Dobrucka\_3*. Source: Alicja Dobrucka (Dobrucka, 2011)

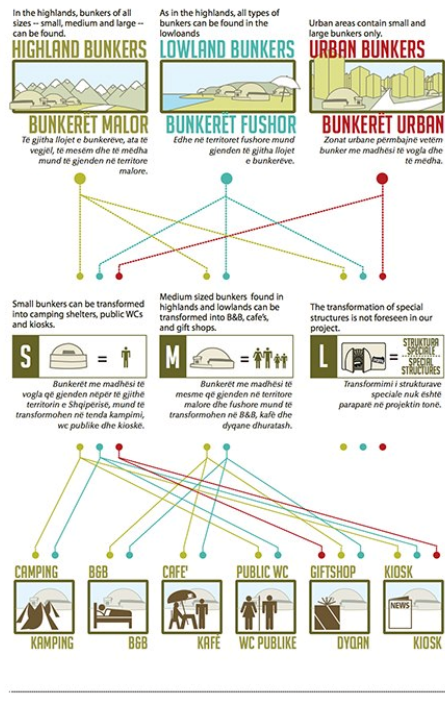
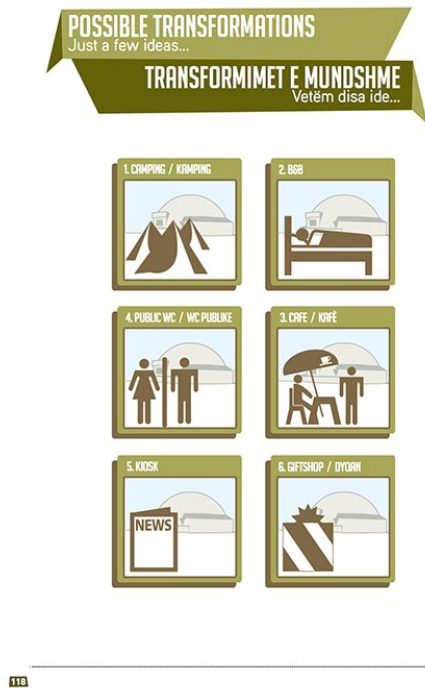


Fig. 33. ©Concrete Mushrooms. *Concrete Mushrooms – The Book*, pages 118-119. Source: Concrete Mushrooms (Concrete Mushrooms, 2012)

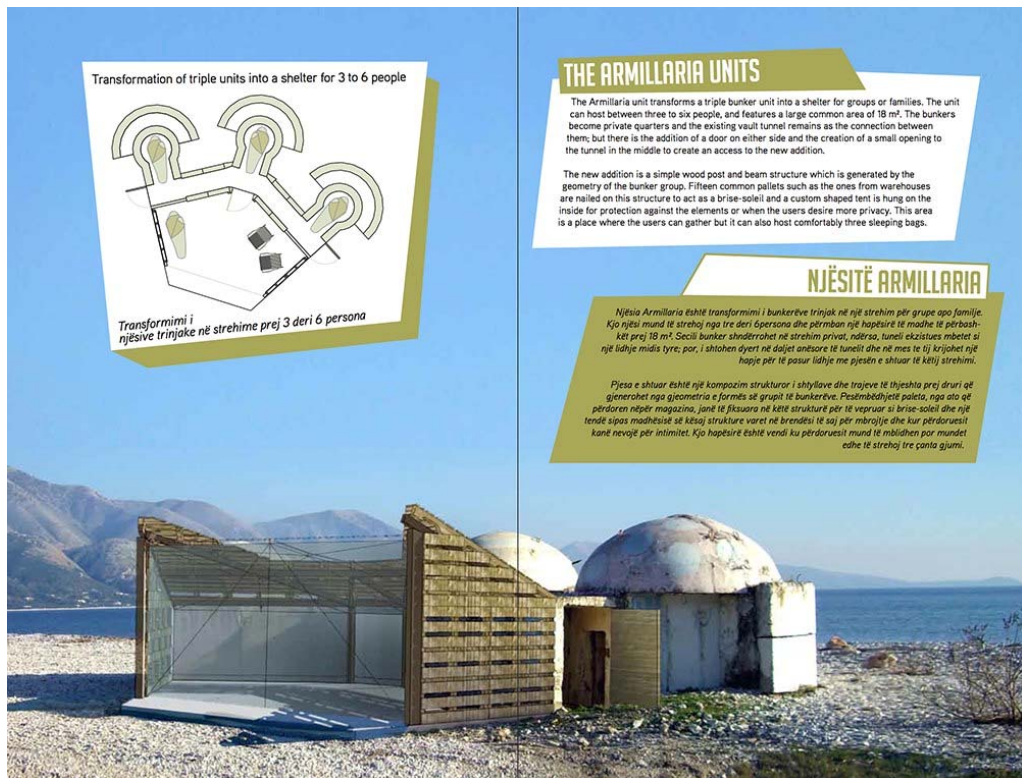


Fig. 34. ©Concrete Mushrooms. *Concrete Mushrooms – The Book*, pages 132-133. Source: Concrete Mushrooms (Concrete Mushrooms, 2012)



Fig. 35. ©Bed&Bunker. *Construction Period*. Source: Bed&Bunker (Bed&Bunker, 2012)



Fig. 36. © Bed&Bunker. *The Bed and Bunker*. Source: Bed&Bunker (Bed&Bunker, 2012)



Fig. 37. ©Tomas Zrna, 2010. *Ghost town of Pyramiden*. Source: Northern Adventures (Northern Adventures, 2016)

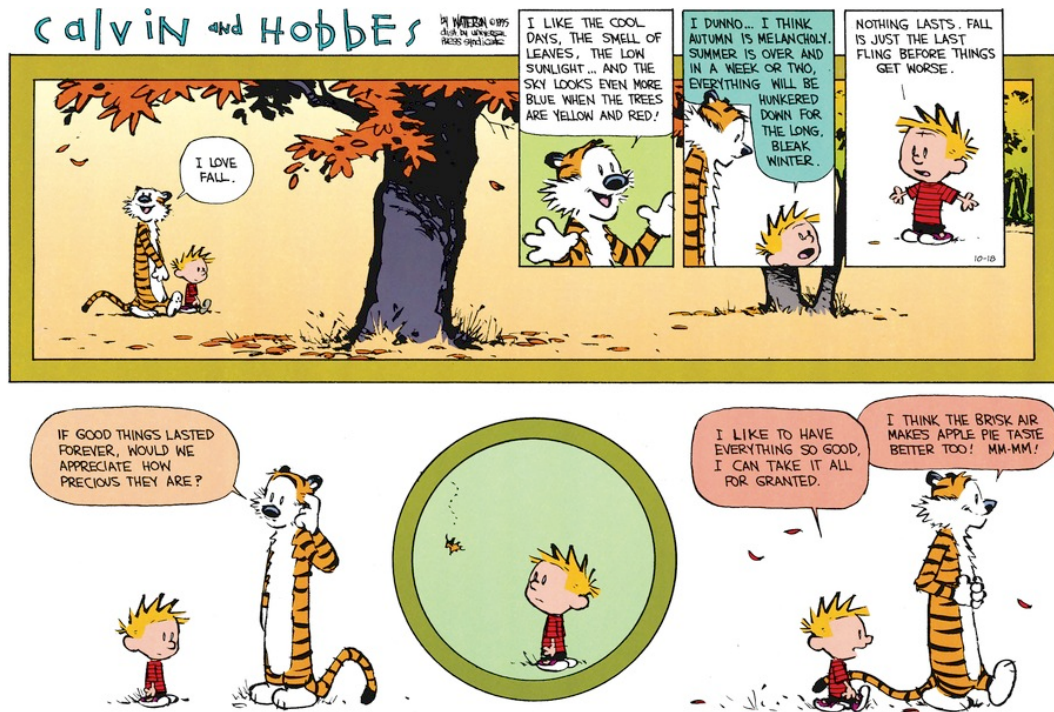


Fig. 38. ©Bob Watterson, 2015. *Calvin and Hobbes: It's a Magical World*. Source: GoComics.com (GoComics.com, 2015)



Fig. 39. ©Christopher Herwig, 2015. *Kazakhstan\_Shymkent*. Source: Christopher Herwig (Herwig, 2015b)



Fig. 40. ©Alexandra Soldatova, 2014. *imb\_09*. Source: Alexandra Soldatova (Soldatova, 2015)





Fig. 41. ©Josef Schulz, 2007. *Transition\_275*. Source: Josef Schulz (Schulz, 2008a)



Fig. 42. ©Ignacio Evangelista, 2014. *17\_ignacioevangelista8*. Source: Ignacio Evangelista (Evangelista, 2014)



Fig. 43. ©David Galjaard, 2008. *Concresco\_David\_Galjaard\_17*. Source: David Galjaard (Galjaard, 2008)



Fig. 44. ©Alicja Dobrucka, 2011. *Concrete\_Mushrooms\_Alicja\_Dobrucka\_2*. Source: Alicja Dobrucka (Dobrucka, 2011)





## CHAPTER 4 – DISPLEASING HERITAGE

*Beauty does more than simply seduce: it masks and perfumes, freezes moral categories in place. Ugliness – with all its seams unconcealed – is sometimes the closest thing to the truth.*

–Vinson Cunningham (2015)

It seems that ugliness or aesthetically displeasing, is more a matter of understanding than an actual quality – or a lack of the opposite, beauty. It takes only a quick review of architectural and artistic movements throughout history to come to notice a pattern: during or immediately after a style comes to be, criticism arises, mostly due to misunderstanding, shock, and discomforting feelings. It is not after an appropriate amount of time has passed that we seem to understand, be familiarized and even accept – or at least coexist with – the new paradigms of perceptions. Furthermore, our constant discovery and rediscovery of elements in both nature and history (such as Vitruvio's writings on architecture) enable us to widen our perspective on what could be beautiful (ibid). Wolfgang Welsch warns about seeking beauty insatiably and under the pretense "beautifying the everyday pays" (Welsch, 2005, p.64) establishes: "when everything becomes beautiful, nothing is beautiful any more." (ibid, 65). It seems that this fixation on what is aesthetically pleasing permeates even the economic sphere and that the idea that the value of aesthetic objects, as well as that of heritage, can be turned into monetary revenue through visitor numbers, is widely spread. As countermeasures, B. S. Frey presents *nonuser* values – those that depend on all individuals – such as prestige, educational, and existence: people value a theater as a cultural institution despite perhaps ever visiting one, how culture benefits education, or by simply knowing that their city has an opera (Frey, 2005, p.227).

Such line of thought brings a necessary question: by stripping beauty from buildings, would it clear the view to see other values? This recalls an episode titled “The Bubble” from the American sitcom *30 Rock*, which features criticism of the superficiality and material culture: One of the characters is never held responsible for any stupid and ignorant action because of his beauty. This character achieved a medical degree and never had to wait for a reservation simply because of his looks. When the face was covered, everyone saw the real person. One could make a parallel with pompous buildings that are mere showmanship, and poor execution only becomes apparent when objectively discussing them like when William Saunders refers to the judgement of monumental and famous architecture (Saunders, 2007b, pp.130-134). This could be a predominantly Western issue as Edward and Mildred Hall present in “*The Fourth Dimension in Architecture: The Impact of Building on Behavior*”, that opposite to the American view of the individuality, of the structure as a creation of an individual architect, Japanese culture focuses on harmony between man and nature,. “In a sense we think of and treat buildings as individual objects –good, bad, indifferent, expensive, rare, cheap, well or poorly constructed, beautiful, ugly, cherished or despised. We assign them all the qualities of objects and seldom think of them as ‘statements’ –active agents in the human situation.” (Hall & Hall, 1975, p.9)

And it is exactly this individualistic way of looking at buildings which has led to problematic situations of heritage value recognition, and thus preservation. Julia Rocchi, from the United States National Trust for Historic Preservation starts her article “Seven Tips for Saving Ugly Buildings” by quoting Tom Mayes, a colleague of hers in the Trust: “It’s always easier to save a place that people consider beautiful than a place – no matter how historically significant – that people think is ugly.” (Rocchi, 2015) Not only that, she even agrees with him and continues to present seven tips for preserving such as making an emotional connection, join the debate about beauty, and explain the architectural merits, to name a few (ibid). The fact that such an article was published might be shocking at first, but as it has been presented in this thesis, it should not surprise. In fact, Rocchi’s article is rather promising and written with a positive light, but it ends with an odd tip: “If nothing else, remember that perceptions can – and will – change over time.” (ibid) While this has been presented as a valid option, the fact of waiting strikes odd. Why is the last resort simply waiting? Who knows what can happen until something is finally accepted, and decided to be acknowledged?

This problem of saving or protecting ugly buildings is taken upon and greatly defended by Rem Koolhaas. As the director of the past Venice Biennale of Architecture in 2016, Koolhaas used this platform to diffuse the discussion on traditional preservation, something he is not very fond of (see page 55). With statements such as “Of course, preservation is also dominated by the lobby of authenticity, ancientness, and beauty, but that is, of course, a very limited conception of preservation.” (Koolhaas & Otero-Pailos, 2014, p.16), he proposes and invites for critical analyses on why buildings should be preserved, even if they are ugly or dissonant, to the point of supporting the proposal of a World Heritage nomination of the *Belyayev Microrayon* housing project in Moscow (Snopek, 2015), based on the fact that a relevant Russian artist lived in one of these places (Fig. 45 and Fig. 46).

“And of course, every single force in current society is dedicated to erasing this condition, to eliminate it, because the architecture is ugly, the kind of urbanism is ugly, and there is no sensibility that can see the virtue of this. This seems to be a worldwide phenomenon: that architecture of the 60s, 70s, 80s, is in almost every country in danger. So what we decided to try is to write one of these sections into the UNESCO World Heritage system”  
– Rem Koolhaas (GARAGEMCA, 2014)

“Preservation for this kind of things is almost unthinkable in the world. [...] Preservation should not always be beautiful things, important things, historical things, but also ugly realities, that without that kind of protection they are doomed to disappear from the face of the Earth”. – Rem Koolhaas (ibid)

In this regard, Mark Cousins defines the nature of a genius: He mentions that what sets a genius apart from others, is that it is able to incorporate strange objects to its work, being able to conceive the inappropriate into a whole (Cousins, 1994, p.61). Could we one day have a WH site under criterion (i), as an ugly masterpiece? That part of the spectrum of human creativity, remains to be seen. Koolhaas further illustrates his point with an example that has been debated in the German context – the Palace of the Republic in Berlin – and continues by explaining what has driven his approach to these new views and angles, with which not only preservation but cities and buildings are conceived and experienced:

“In the context of Berlin, I’ve been quite active and quite unsuccessful in helping a particular section of the Berlin population to provide arguments for the maintenance of the former East Berlin Parliament, the Palace of the Republic. Which again was not a particularly beautiful building, and which was put crudely in a very beautiful part of Berlin next to the Altes Museum, where I also felt it was crazy to eliminate a building that explained so much about the condition of Berlin. So, I think that evil buildings, or ugly buildings, or failed buildings, all in certain conditions would have a right to exist.” – Rem Koolhaas (ibid)

“Basically as part of my research I was writing, the research that is basically perhaps my whole, I have seen my vow in architecture to eliminate prejudices, to intervene in the profession of architecture and in the whole co-sensibility of architecture which has been for a very long time totally dominated by Western values and which certainly at the moment that I started to be active in this kind of world was deeply convinced that there was only one kind of city. That that was the European Western kind of city, that that was the only model that generated the conditions of urbanity, and that was completely convinced that we ran out of models. So I was interested in beginning to actually say ‘yes’, maybe there are no other models, but there are certainly other cities that are cities and got nothing to do with the aesthetic of the European cities.” – Rem Koolhaas (ibid)

These ideas from Koolhaas, Rocchi, and Saunders help us understand better how displeasing aesthetics can influence and stir discussions within the heritage spheres. During the 39<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Committee Meeting in Bonn, I had the opportunity to sit through a presentation of the side event “UNESCO World Heritage and Aerospace History” (see page 37). One of the panelists pointed out that the problematic for recognizing military-related properties is due to their dark connotations. My question to the panel: “where lies the difference in praising and heightening the value of similar sites related to military actions of death and destruction, such as a medieval castle or a colonial prison, against a place like Peenemünde in Germany?” By inscribing a site for its military values, we are taking in – whether we like it or not – everything that relates to the activity of war, and if the site has survived until now, if the site has repelled attacks in the past, we are tacitly stating that through the death of hundreds, even thousands of combatants, the place was efficient for war purposes: it fulfilled its role as a deathtrap for either invader or defender. And yet we do not seem to squirm on this fact on the basis of what: Beauty in design? Old age?



The advent of Industrial Heritage also opened the door to other types of heritage, specifically in the area of technology. Places such as a specific bridge (work of engineering) or places where discoveries were made (work of cartography and astronomy), fall into the category of Industrial Heritage as encompassing feats of technology (ICOMOS, 2005, p.33). Yet so do some places related to military aspects, though there seems to be an atmosphere of weariness towards specific sites to be considered as heritage, as Peenemünde in Germany (following the previous case), where tests and experiments on long-range missiles took place during WW2, achieving the successful development of the V1 flying bomb and the V2 rocket used against Allied cities (Harding, 2012, pp.32-40). The site remains largely known for its dark history, directly linked to the Third Reich, and not to be considered for nomination any time soon (this is related to how nominations are decided in Germany). Yet, the development of such technologies resonates until this day with the birth of space flights and exploration: as the first guided ballistic missile fueled by liquid propellants and being the first manmade object to cross the boundary of space with a vertical launch, the V2 rocket became the basis for those used by the USA and USSR for space exploration during the Cold War and the further developments in rocket engineering (ibid).

So we see with this example, trying to approach the site from angles other than age or beauty, we discover and learn additional scientific and historic value – rather obvious statement, not really new – but this offers us a completely different perspective on how to appreciate and understand heritage. Despite this obvious approach – looking at other values – there still seems to be something engrained regarding how a building looks, and in the case of contemporary or modern architecture, it looks like this “something” is still linked to age, as mentioned by Koolhaas on the fate of buildings from the 60s, 70s, and 80s (see page 125). Another example, a case of brutalist architecture, is the Birmingham Central Library in the UK (Fig. 47).

Built in 1973, it was the main public library in the civic center of the city until 2013, when it was closed to make way for a redevelopment project. After many discussions and despite the efforts of many local (Friends of the Central Library), national (English Heritage) and international (World Monuments Fund) campaigns to save the building, city officials were granted a Certificate of Immunity from Listing by the Ministry of Culture, allowing them to knock it down (Express & Star, 2011). English Heritage applied to list the building as a monument twice, but the minister rejected the bids on

grounds of not being “satisfied it was ‘really of sufficient architectural or historic interest’ ” (BBC, 2014). So a building that local, national and international communities wanted preserved (the community, the heritage bearers) was rejected by authorities on the grounds of insufficient historic interest? On the grounds of insufficient architectural interest, as claimed by architectural expert Prince Charles of Wales (see page 102), who described it as “looking like ‘a place where books are incinerated, not kept.’”? (ibid) Maybe, if the campaigns had presented a more lively coloration as designed by Steven Millership (Millership, 2016), they could have been successful (Fig. 48). By no means does this statement suggest that the work of Millership is wrong, in fact his works are able to transmit the feeling of nostalgia in a unique style, reaching and raising the interest of a wider public, but one definitely wonders if we really need to wait for things to actually be gone and presented in special ways to realize that we had emotions related to such sites. If we apply the idea of stripping beauty to seek other values, historical and architectural interest, which according to the Minister of Culture it had none, could the library have been preserved?

Throughout the thesis there have been many references towards the underrepresented heritage, but this seems more like a trendy wording that keeps being repeated over and over throughout the international discourse of heritage and conservation. It feels like it has actually become the new contest, who can fill quicker the gap of underrepresentation. I would suggest a different phrasing: marginal heritage. Not only do I see this as a wording that can stand on its own but also because marginality can be seen in a multidimensional perspective. By standing on its own, I mean unattached of the prefix “under”, since it automatically conveys the urge to look and achieve the opposite “over”. This means – from my perspective – in the heritage sphere, that stakeholders will simply try hard to fill this gap for the sake of filling it. But the aspect that I really believe conveys a deeper perspective towards this type of heritage is the multidimensional quality. Marginal, as I see it, is traditionally understood as something distant, at the edge of somewhere, but also refers to minimal or insignificant. What is mostly not thought of is exclusion, and this exclusion can be spread out through various channels or dimensions.



Fig. 45. ©Max Avdeev, 2015. *Belyayevo*. Source: archdaily (Snopek, 2015)



Fig. 46. Rem Koolhaas and his proposed approach of UNESCO conservation. 15.09.14 *Rem Koolhaas "Russia for Beginners"* ENG. Source: YouTube (GARAGEMCA, 2014)



Fig. 47. ©John Mason, 2014. *Birmingham Central Library*. Source: FailedArchitecture (Mason, 2014)



Fig. 48. ©Stephen Millership. *Birmingham Central Library*. Source: Stephen Millership (Millership, 2016)

A first and most obvious dimension is that of location. Sites – heritage or not – that are far away can transmit this idea of marginality, but this geographical component is beyond mere physicality. Being far away represents isolation, difficulty of access, and loneliness. It reminds us that the landscape, the world, is bigger than us. Much bigger. And this feeling of being underwhelmed is something discomfoting. Monasteries and sacred places are located far away to allow for concentration and disconnection, but so are military facilities, which benefit from this isolation to provide seclusion and protection. Places that are far, have been placed there on purpose. The reasons for this ignite anxiousness and mystery over such decision.

The second dimension, that of typology (also including shape or form), reflects on how relevant certain types of buildings are for us. Through history and media, those typologies considered as marvelous and relevant have been ingrained in the public and make the book covers and top destinations. Development, power and culture are enhanced by specific buildings that house these notions within their walls, to the point of creating pride and uniting communities under the banner of identity. As presented in this thesis, every-day, commonplace and 'boring' architecture can easily fall in this marginal dimension. People remember castles and churches, but the telephone booth (are these still in use anymore?) can easily be overlooked.

Aesthetics, covered in Chapter 2, is the third marginal dimension. As repeatedly mentioned in this thesis, the scope which aesthetics traditionally deals with is rather narrow, limited to a small portion that excludes everything which does not coincide with the traditional view. As mentioned by Mark Cousins (see page 51), ugliness, not to be seen as the opposite or negative part of beauty, is a self-standing component able to not only compliment but enhance beauty. This can be, and is, difficult to engage and cope with, leaving those places that do not convey the clean and bounded aspects of traditional aesthetics without any voice. Much has been said about the displeasing aesthetic component in this thesis, so it seems redundant to elaborate on it, but this should not distract from the effects of marginality it can exert.

The dimension of heritage might be perhaps the most worrying dimension of all. This refers to places that have been excluded from recognition, acknowledgement and awareness. Shame and disconnection is something that drives this exclusion on behalf of those in direct contact with the site and this can be understood when it has not become a conscious decision. But deliberate oversight because some heritage

does not comply with international discourse standards is unacceptable. Not only is it an affront to the cultural significance of a place and its relevance to the locality, but supporting this with the voice of expertise is appalling.

All three case studies presented in this thesis can be paired with these marginal dimensions. For the first dimension, marginal location, we see it clearly in the bus stops and the checkpoints: located in the middle of mountains, deserts or plains, they convey this idea of isolation; the mass number of Albanian bunkers makes them less obvious in this dimension, but some locations are truly secluded. Marginal typology can be seen rather equally throughout all case studies, where bus stops, checkpoints and bunkers, are function-oriented structures that are either located throughout the land or serve an everyday purpose, perceived as commonplace. Aesthetics, as the third dimension, is manifested through the three Axes of Displeasure presented in Chapter 3, including neglected spaces, awkwardly readapted, and through their innate shapes and conditions. Finally, the marginal heritage is created by the attention that they are given, reinforced by their appearances and intangible components.

This quality of marginality is what should be tackled. Simply stating that sites are underrepresented does not truly address the issue. Dismissing heritage on the grounds of looks, even if it is not explicitly said so, is not a solid reason for allowing it to vanish. Displeasing aesthetics could be a “contemporary *Vanitas*” of sorts, enhancing the aesthetic qualities of discomfort in our cultural and heritage discourse by helping us to look differently at sites, their stories and the emotional and cultural attachments. Perhaps the solution is not to devise complicated preservation parameters. Perhaps, as Christopher Herwig mentions, the solution is learning how to look:

I learned a lot about the way we look at the world around us, and the way we interpret different types of art, and different things. And it not always has to be the loudest and the most amazing thing out there, we can find pleasure and joy in the smaller things. Especially when we look for new, different things, and if we enjoy travelling and exploring the world, we can explore and discover things. For me the message is a little bit – for a couple of different things on a more sort of broader scale about photography and about travel – just about opening your eyes: going and travelling and not really always having the expectations of what you’re going to find but actually look for things, and not just look for things that you are told to find. (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November)







## CODA

*Beauty is, in some ways, boring. Even if its concept changes through the ages, nevertheless a beautiful object must always follow certain rules ... Ugliness is unpredictable and offers an infinite range of possibilities. Beauty is finite. Ugliness is infinite, like God.*

– Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness* (2007, cited in Cunningham, 2015)

When people go back to their neighborhoods, they often lament the demolition of their old schools, their playgrounds or parks where they or their children used to play, bus or train stops where they met a special person or embarked on a life-changing journey, perhaps just because these places did not adhere to an established idea of aesthetics. This reveals a narrow definition of what is significant and what is not, which in turn leads to wiping out sense of memory and continuity and the loss of a layer of the then contemporary narrative, replaced by the past that experts and authorities desire. By placing people – in fact, by giving people the freedom and right to place themselves – somewhere in the continuum of time, not only helps to secure a foothold on the past but it also offers a place in the present and in a way, paves the road for where they could be in the future. It is only a matter of time until we will hear generations lament the loss of built heritage due to misunderstandings of their significance, pointing fingers and seeking who to blame for such actions. But then again, is total preservation the right answer?

Preserving buildings can freeze them in time. Yes, it might prohibit the building to fall into decay but often it also prohibits the natural order of urban and social dynamics to take place: the building is not allowed to ‘live’ and be part of the community’s path towards a discussion of realities, of narratives. By enabling protection on a site, we cut down the potentialities for new and unique chapters of its history. Some chapters

might be more recent and very short – maybe a year due to ultimate ruin and decay – but they can also be long, which would allow the telling of stories, of events to be experienced which are otherwise denied when we install protective measures. Perhaps when it comes to matters of conservation, the line between preserving and decay becomes very fine and blurry, being the only relevant suggestion to make one that echoes what has been said in many other instances: the ultimate fate of the building lies in the people who are touched by it. On second thought, let us add “culturally informed and aware” in front of “people” in that previous statement.

At the end of his book, Hildebrand asks if we are so fond of vernacular or old architecture, then why are we not building in that way again (1999, pp.139-140). To answer his own question, he explains the technical difficulties to live modern day lives in old buildings, difficult to maintain and to keep up to safety regulations. I would add to this that we simply like to see old things in a romantic way, but do not necessarily want to *experience* them in our everyday life and routine. We want them in a context of conservation, heritage and identity in some sort of “official label”, behind a glass panel, one that heightens our sensibility to what everyone else deems as sensibility-deserving. And I would extend my argument even further as to say that perhaps the reason for not extending this label to displeasing architecture is precisely because this ugly, common and unkempt architecture is too close to our reality, too reflective of what we truly are and not what we want to show. It is not selling material for the world to see, and people do not like that.

*When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."*

– John Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, 1819 (Woodson-Boulton, 2012, pp.7-11)

If beauty is indeed truth as Keats said and if ugliness is the closest to truth as Cunningham mentions (see page 125, initial quote), extending it more to ugliness being our reality as presented by Koolhaas (see pages 127-128), should we not “stop and

smell the flowers” of our daily life and learn to see that our reality, in all its messiness, harshness and difficulties, reminding us not only from where we came but where we are and where we are going, is indeed beauty to be cherished. Through this lens, truth then exacts from us to acknowledge and understand what was, is and could be, and to not only conform with the first impression, with those aspects and elements that keep us inside the boundaries of the comfortable, of the familiar. Horror writer H. P. Lovecraft, known for vague depictions of creatures and scenarios to allow for the imagination of the reader to wonder and create its own images, wrote: “No new horror can be more terrible than the daily torture of the commonplace.” (Lovecraft, 1920), referring to how enticing and alluring exploration and discovery can be, pushing aside the “torture” that is the everyday. This is not to be interpreted as the death of the everyday architecture, but to make a case against the overuse of architecture that already dominates the cultural heritage sphere. It somehow echoes a comment by Christopher Herwig regarding the conservation of the Soviet bus stops. It is about breaking with the overuse of presentation schemes, but more importantly it is about exploration, adventure, and discovery. It is about taking us out of our comfort zone, that bubble that anchors and freezes us, and to take a leap through the looking glass, to experience that rush of adrenaline and excitement.

For what I can gather from people’s responses from the book I think that there’s a desire to engage with, or discover, or appreciate things that are new – in this case new to a lot of people, not the bus stops being new – and it is a slightly different format, a different look. There are so many things out there, that it’s tough to travel these days and go somewhere and be surprised by things. For me it was just a great opportunity to really feel like an explorer and get out there, discover something that I and a lot of people overlook or didn’t know it was there. I think in terms of something that would need to be preserved, I think that a lot of people would appreciate it because there’s a real uniqueness to it and in this day and age, no matter if it’s clean or dirty, or old or new, it’s whether or not the idea is fresh because many people want to see things that aren’t boring. They have already seen so many churches when they travel, or castles or museums, and after a while you have a preconception of it and it is usually pretty close, and that’s that. I don’t know if these will ever be preserved, but I think they should be. (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November)

As Sophia Labadi presented (2013, pp.15-16), the flexibility with which we hold values, the “relativism of values”, is nothing new: from the Eiffel Tower used by her as an example, to the brutalist buildings presented in this document, values have changed and evolved through the years of the cultural heritage discourse. That is not new. But ignoring aesthetically displeasing structures of the today, is no different from those moments in history when the misunderstood and irrational was sent to the dwell at the fringes of our comfort zones. By retaining this steadfast position of dismissing the value of the whole aesthetic spectrum, including that of the displeasing, we sign the demise of many sites that do not conform to our comfort zone. We stand at a pivotal time, where our understanding, experience and knowledge of heritage and conservation can allow us to experience, in a way, the creation of future heritage. It must be stressed once more that such places, as those presented in this work, do not need the validation of international organisms to prove their worth as valuable heritage. Railing up the experts in order to try and inscribe them on the WHL or put them under strict conservation national laws is not necessarily the solution. Appropriation and understanding from the public is what these places require so that appreciation becomes real; from there on, their fate is unknown but at least they have been exposed. The experts of today, by spreading understanding or stymieing it, can become those that raised awareness for the structures that no one vouched for, or be those that allowed them to vanish either by freezing or demolishing them. Is it really necessary to summon the old saying “history repeats itself” and prove it true?

I have thought of cathedrals. Cathedrals would supposedly be beautiful as opposed to bunkers, that are ugly. Cathedrals have been built on slavery and poverty. At the expense of those who are without rights. The bunkers are our cathedral, our scar, they are part of our face. If I want to love Albania, then I also have to love the scar. We have to live with these bunkers, give them new destinations. – from the short film *Mushrooms of Concrete* (Payens, 2010)





## ANNEXES

### **Interview with Christopher Herwig, author of *Soviet Bus Stops*. (C. Herwig, 2015, pers. comm., 18 November 2015)**

I would like to ask you first if you could talk a little about the whole project. The generals of it: how it began, how long did it last, and your initial thoughts?

The project started a little bit over 13 years ago now, when I was riding my bicycle from London to St. Petersburg and I made this game for myself where I had to take a photograph every hour of something, because I was worried that the bike trip would be over and I wouldn't have taken any pictures. I was waiting for this perfect scene, that National Geographic moment or something, which when you're riding your bike you don't really often come across with: you just come across the day-to-day, normal farmlands, streets, and you can end up just passing by a lot things that are quite normal. So I made this little game for myself to change a little bit the way I take photographs, to open my eye for less common things or things that we maybe not always appreciate and it was really an enjoyable exercise for me, and it made the biking go quite easy as well. When I got to Lithuania I started noticing these bus stops, and at that point I had already photographed a couple of them. Then I started noticing that this wasn't only just something to try and photograph on the side of the road, but these were actually quite something in themselves.

The following year I had an exhibition in Stockholm where I displayed on different walls photographs from the trip with power lines, graffiti, and one of the walls was just all these bus stops, and people really liked that, so it was something I really appreciated. As luck had it we moved to Kazakhstan the following year. We were there for 3 years and travelling around the '-stan countries' I didn't really have a project of photographing bus stops at the moment but since I had already done a little bit that seed had been planted in my head. With all the different assignments I had going around, whenever I would pass by one of these bus stops I would try my best to see if I could drive up, stop and photograph it, and this kept the collection growing and growing. Once I started showing this series I started realizing it was actually quite appreciated as well by people who didn't really realize that this existed, so then it was published in several magazines all around the world and I thought I was done with it. And a couple of years later I thought that if I have found them [bus stops] in those eight countries I bet the other countries have some as well. Then I started organizing trips specifically to find the bus stops and that's where it really took shape.

That was really well worth, in terms of being able to put together a collection of really diverse and strong images, and as well as being really fun to do. And I think that the interesting thing about the whole series is that it's such a diverse series of pictures: if it were just one picture I think it would be a little interesting but no one would really get the full appreciation of what was going on.

Now that you touched the topic about the amount of pictures, did you find any relationship between the countries in terms of design? Maybe the ones in the Baltic countries are less shocking or artistic and the ones in the '-stan countries' are more into abstract shapes? Was there anything you noticed before or during taking the photographs?

Definitely, in editing them [photographs] I started noticing that there was trend: in the Ukraine there was a lot more based on decorating the bus stops with mosaics and paintings, while in Armenia there is a lot more of this brutalist, heavy concrete, but still trying to be quite playful with big rings and sweeping arches. And in the Black Sea region, the region of Abkhazia, those were really more "sculpture-esque", almost like Gaudi-inspired; more like art pieces. In Estonia you get a lot of wood so they used wood, and in Kyrgyzstan it was more much conceptual and visual like hats, birds and yurts, actual regional items that meant something to them; not necessarily very Soviet but very Kyrgyz or local. So definitely you see some trends.

Did you ever consider other types of bus stops other than Soviet-era or were they just not captivating enough for your camera?

I haven't really consider that. I thought that it couldn't get any better than this [Soviet]. And I think for me at least, coming from a so-called Western country, growing up with these notions that there was a great deal of oppression and lack of creative freedom and boringness in the Soviet Union, or however you would describe it, I think this was a very refreshing thing to come across, and it sparks a lot of questions and curiosity. And I think that what it was a little bit about was that it was made during the Soviet Union and that there was this sort of outlet of creativity in this relatively minor architectural form; you can't really go wrong in some ways with a bus stop because the worst thing that happens is that people maybe get wet. The risks aren't that high so it was interesting to see, but then again the rewards are as well. I was talking to this designer, Armen Sardarov in Belarus, and he goes on about his medals: "Silver medals! Why? Because they're bus stops". This



kind of humility about it, it's not trying to be anything amazing but at the same time there's a playfulness and a freedom about it which I appreciate that it's not screaming out, it's just there.

Are these bus stops still in use or are they abandoned? And if they are still in use, do you know who is taking care of them?

In some cases it's the Department of Road Works that takes care of them; I actually saw the Road Works people touching up the paint and trying to fix them up. In some cases it's the villages that are close by who are taking care of them, trying to beautify their neighborhoods. The problem with the bus stops is that they are very original and once they start falling apart it's difficult, with the limit budget of the Road Works Department, to maintain each unique bus stop because it is in fact unique: you almost need to start building those pieces again, or it's much easier for them to rip it down and put up something that they already have. And I think there's a lot of people that actually do not appreciate the bus stops: they'll just see the one bus stop, and that's all they know or that's all they think "let's just tear it down and put something else up"; that's a bit of a shame.

The bus stops in the urban areas most of them have been replaced; that's what I could see. The interesting ones still standing are being really ran down and it's a question of how long will they stay. The ones that I was trying to find, that were still there a couple of years ago, were already gone. It's just a matter of time, unfortunately.

Were there people that were curious about your activity, asking why were you photographing bus stops? Was there any sense of pride in the people, especially in the villages that were taking care of the bus stops? Was there some sort of idea like "this is our story, so let's take care of this"?

I didn't find much about the care or pride, I only came across people who saw them as something that is falling apart, being used as toilets or a place to dump your garbage: in people's eyes they would see in what I was doing was making fun of them, finding something that wasn't; they were the opposite of proud, they were embarrassed by them. A couple of times I would try explain to them and show them many more pictures and say "this is part of a bigger thing and yes, there's garbage but let's try and look beyond that and see that what we're looking at is quite cool".

Sometimes when I would hire a taxi driver for the day they would have no real clue of what I was doing at the beginning. They would just go driving past the bus stops and I would say “no wait, right there! Stop!” and they would say “oh yeah, geez! You would see them every day, but you don’t really see them” and they wouldn’t really understand it. But after a day or two driving around looking for another [stop], almost all the time the taxi drivers would really get into it and start appreciating them: “oh, that one is odd!”, “that’s just a typical one!”, “oh, that one looks nice!”, “that one looks cool!”. They’re eyes were directed not to the garbage but to the smaller details and the things that made them really important. I think that’s a little bit what that bike trip made for me: it was a good exercise to just start opening up my eyes to things that you would normally just pass by.

That’s very interesting and it nicely directs to the central idea of my work, about how people perceive things and how to preserve heritage, what is the right way – if there is a right way. My question would be, do you think that there is a higher degree of interest from people on things that are well kept, nicely, clean, repaired, over things that are falling apart?

For what I can gather from people’s responses from the book I think that there’s a desire to engage with, or discover, or appreciate things that are new – in this case new to a lot of people, not the bus stops being new – and it is a slightly different format, a different look. There are so many things out there, that it’s tough to travel these days and go somewhere and be surprised by things. For me it was just a great opportunity to really feel like an explorer and get out there, discover something that I and a lot of people overlook or didn’t know it was there. I think in terms of something that would need to be preserved, I think that a lot of people would appreciate it because there’s a real uniqueness to it and in this day and age, no matter if it’s clean or dirty, or old or new, it’s whether or not the idea is fresh because many people want to see things that aren’t boring. They have already seen so many churches when they travel, or castles or museums, and after a while you have a preconception of it and it is usually pretty close, and that’s that. I don’t know if these will ever be preserved, but I think they should be. I think that there are a lot of good reasons why they should be, not only for the world to see and appreciate them, but one of the primary reasons why these were built in the first place was a way for the artist to express themselves and to show a little bit of pride in their neighborhood, and I think that would only be done by merely cleaning them up and by making them prettier, people would actually go to see them instead as opposed to seeing them in photographs; when you are there you might be a lot more aware of the garbage.

Would you think they would still have this mystique around them if they would be completely pristine? Do you think having them completely repaired nicely, sort of like a touristic attraction, they could still convey the message that caught you in the first place?

I think so. For me the project was really never about showing them being run down, depressing, gloomy, or about a 'ghost-structure'. Some people photograph these things in that kind of a manner – I don't know if mine came across that way – but that was never my intention. I try my best to put them in the most positive light, pick the ones that were in the best shape, because for me I think that the celebration is about the structure and the art itself and its interaction with nature, and not so much about a mood or an emotion, or 'ghosts from the Soviet Union'. But I can see completely how that could be an angle for someone.

You mention earlier about peoples' reaction with your book. Have people contacted you, now that the book is published and blogs and online newspapers have been advertising a lot this project, saying "there's a bus stop around here that you missed" or maybe for other types of constructions, maybe not a bus stop but a train stop, for example?

I have some suggestions, which I think is great. I by no means think I got them all – I think I just scratched the surface – and I think it's great that other people are finding ones. Who knows, I might get back out there again and add more to it; there are none from Russia in the collection.

I do get some nice messages and emails from people, especially people that are reminiscing a trip they did or their childhood: "yeah, I remember seeing all these crazy bus stops once and I would drive right by them, and now you did this and I thought this would make a great one... I should've stopped!" and you hear a lot of regret people saying "yeah, I started noticing these and I thought this would be great to start something..." but people don't.

I somewhere read or heard that you were planning on having a 2.0 of your project, in Siberia. Is this something set or as in your thoughts?

It's in my thoughts; I wouldn't rule it out. The first thing is that I need to actually find concrete proof that there are bus stops and it's not so easy to do: Russia is so big, and not so many people have blogged or really put too much evidence out there. I've found a couple but that doesn't really warrant travelling around Russia for just one or two bus stops. But the thing is that if I really want to do it I think it needs to be done now, in the next year or so because they really are being destroyed, constantly.

I had so much fun doing it, it's hard to stop. If I can somehow figure out a way to get some good research, some locations in Russia and in Siberia of bus stops, even if it's just a dozen I would love to go and check it out. It might not be another book but it might just add to the next edition of this one, and polish it off a bit.

Is there a specific reason why Russia is not covered in this book?

Yeah, because it was the one country I couldn't really find that many. I found some bus stops but they didn't make the cut, they didn't really look that good. What I think when people hear about the Soviet Union, they automatically think about Russia and I didn't want people describing it as 'the Russian bus stops'. And for me this project, although the title is Soviet Bus Stops, is really an un-centralized project, which was much more about the individual states, and the individual people and villages, and Russia even to this day is just big and the loudest voice, and with this minor form of architecture I wanted to focus on everyone else and leave Russia out. Also it's such a big country, I have taken the train across it and biked some sections, but to be honest I also haven't found many [bus stops] there. I'm sure there are, but for now I thought it was also fine that I don't include it.

Have your hopes of the project and the message you wanted to convey changed from when you started and nowadays, especially with the advertisement and hype of the book? Has there been a shift in the thoughts about this whole project?

Yes. In the beginning it was just something that was fun and quirky, little bits and bombs, but as it went on I saw what it meant to me and to other people. I learned a lot about the way we look at the world around us, and the way we interpret different types of art, and different things. And it not always has to be the loudest and the most amazing thing out there, we can find pleasure and joy in the smaller things. Especially when we look for new, different things, and if we enjoy travelling and exploring the world, we can explore and discover things. For me the message is a little bit – for a couple of different things on a

more sort of broader scale about photography and about travel – just about opening your eyes: going and travelling and not really always having the expectations of what you're going to find but actually look for things, and not just look for things that you are told to find. If you're going to go Paris, you're told to go to the Louvre or the Eiffel Tower, as opposed to just go somewhere where you have no idea what's it going to be and you just look around, trying to figure out what the guiding book should be.

**Interview with Ignacio Evangelista, author of *After Schengen*. (I. Evangelista, 2015, pers. comm., 21 November 2015) Translated from Spanish by author, Yanis Diaz**

I would like to know a little bit more about your Project "After Schengen". How did it start? What were your initial thoughts on it? How long did it last and how was it geographically distributed?

In my job I have two sides: the professional-commercial photographer side which pays the bills basically, and the more artistic side which includes the projects which I do when money and time allow for them. In these personal projects there are always that interest me, where the natural and the artificial appear together and in a way conflicting. But also there are some instances where something doesn't seem to be on the right place, in time or space. A series of photographs I have includes off-season ski station; during summer. You can see all the chairlifts there but no snow: they are physically in the right place but not in the right temporal place.

I don't really remember how the project started, but I do remember as a kid I was very interested in maps: when looking at a European map I would notice that the borders were all crooked, whereas for example in Africa they were all straight. As a kid I thought that this idea of having straight lines was very clever and practical, and that Europeans liked to be complicated – obviously I had no clue about geography, history or colonialism. I also remember the first time I crossed a border during a school trip, between France and Spain, and having this sensation of stepping in a new country, experiencing another language, using another currency. I guess that's why border crossings have always been interesting for me, just as it is for some people experiencing new cultures, other countries. I guess that at some point all these ideas and memories came together and became the project.

I would like to say that the project is on hold but for the time being I don't have the means to continue it. There are many places that I haven't visited and I would like to, and although I still apply to scholarships or grants, for the moment I wouldn't know if or when I will continue. Regarding the places that I have visited, I started in 2011 and my last photograph

was in 2014. I started with the borders of Spain, so Spain-Portugal and Spain-France – due to closeness – and later on I shifted towards Eastern Europe: Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland, because these were the countries that had joined the Schengen Agreement most recently, and there might be more abandoned checkpoints there.

After a couple of years have passed these checkpoints are either reused as restaurants, cultural centers or souvenir shops, or they are demolished and sometimes they build something new. Reuse usually happens in countries that are economically strong, such as Germany, whereas in those with weaker economies, like Spain and Portugal, they simple leave them abandoned because demolishing or readapting them is expensive. So in countries you might find two factors: that they were the most recent ones to join Schengen and their economies might not be strong enough, so you could find almost all of the checkpoints were simply abandoned, untouched. Another thing that I didn't notice at first and I knew until I started traveling around, is that the countries from the Soviet Bloc usually had two borders during the Cold War: on a border between a country from the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc, like say Austria and Hungary, you had the border between two nations, but also between two blocs. It was like two worlds, the West and East Blocs, which ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

But this border between the Blocs was not physical?

No, it was an ideological one. Traveling between Germany and Austria was not much of a problem, but crossing between Austria and Hungary or the other way around was more problematic, in terms of documents. To cross into Austria was very difficult unless you were part of the government. These ideas from novels and movies about the Cold War come to mind, people trying to jump a wall or a fence.

In some small areas there are sort of Cold War museums, with their unique charm. I was in one which used to be a normal house where a lady had some uniforms (her dad was a border officer) and some old weapons – some museums were more successful than others – and you could get an idea of how it was, because there were old photographs and newspapers.

With this comment that some border crossings had museums, are there some buildings that are completely abandoned or fully restored?

Most of them are abandoned, but there are some that are reused: police offices, cultural centers, etc. Last time I was in Berlin, we travelled to a checkpoint between Germany and Poland, and when we got there I decided not to take a photograph because the building had been readapted into a police building, and everything looked new and perfect so it didn't quite fit with what I was searching. It's a small percentage but there are some that are reused.

In Spain they have been converted in souvenir shops, with advertisement of "Spanish Sangria" and on the other side "Paté française", very kitschy stores with Spanish flags, merchandise in the shape of bulls or flamenco dancers.

These that were abandoned, who would be in charge of taking care of them? Are they owned by the government?

I don't know which exact entity would it be, maybe Ministry of Interior or of Customs, but they are definitely government owned. In Spain there are some autonomous communities, kind of like the *Ländern* in Germany, and here I am not sure if it would be the central government or the local one, but for sure it's a state thing. Those that have been reused always have some police body or a state employee. In Czech Republic there was some private security people, asking us what we were doing. Once we explained he said that we could continue as long as we don't photograph him, and he took a photograph of us and our license plate, I guess to investigate us.

But I know for sure that they are not private unless they have been auctioned. You see, here in Spain one can buy small old train stations in little villages which have been auctioned, so people acquire them and set up a small hotel or a small shop.

Once the project was official in your mind, what were your first impressions when seeing the checkpoints and taking the photographs?

It always takes some time to find your way. On my first trip to Portugal, from an artistic point of view I was searching for a specific type of light, and traveling in August through this area it's very hot and sunny. We took many photographs and not one single was used, mostly because of the light. That is part of the process and the job. The next trip was during Easter Week in Navarra, and we were surprised that the checkpoint had been converted into a bar or restaurant, and nothing else was there. So the next checkpoint I found was my very first image of 2011, called Pourtalet, between Spain and France, which gave

me the impression that this project could have some future. In 2012 I started my trips to Eastern Europe and from then on the project picked up speed.

Have you revisited some of the checkpoints you photographed?

I haven't because I haven't had reasons to go to the areas. Once it was the other way around: the very last I photographed was called Sonport, also between Spain and France, and it happened that the first time I stopped by I was not happy with the light. I visited later to actually take the photograph since it's close to Madrid, and I was able to get a good light.

By any chance, did you encounter any that was not in your plan or schedule, or that before was not abandoned and later on it became so?

Not really, because most of them were abandoned at the same time. I think that would have happened if I would have travelled in the most recent years – I think Croatia and other countries have joined Schengen – but those countries from Eastern Europe which I visited initially were abandoned at the same time, and were already abandoned when I arrived. I read that the one from Pourtalet, some 6 months ago had been taken down, taking away the customs building and wanting to build a cultural center. What I got from that is that if you would go there now there might be something but not the building I photographed, basically archaeological remains.

Were you able to talk with people from the surroundings – other than the security guard you mentioned before – about the border checkpoints? Was anyone curious about why were you taking photographs of them? Was there any exchange with people?

To be honest no, because there was really nothing much around them, especially in the secondary roads, but I do have funny anecdotes about some. To give some context, I take photographs with a big-format camera, those old ones where you need to cover yourself with a blanket. The advantage of this is that the negative is really big so you can make big amplifications with very good quality, but the working process is very slow: you need to settle in, put up the tripod, and so on, and this can take you about 10-15 minutes.



So in one occasion – also, in these areas there is a lot of prostitution going on, so brothels, strip clubs, etc. – while I was setting up the camera this guy in a huge motorcycle approached me at full speed, stops suddenly and starts yelling and talking frantically. Once I was able to fully make a sentence in English “sorry, I don’t understand” he just yelled at me “Girls! Girls!”, and since I didn’t say anything about it he just drove off.

Something that caught my attention in the Eastern European countries, was when asking for directions towards the borders in nearby villages, especially to older people, they wouldn’t know where it was. The funny thing is that the border was around 10 kilometers away. I came to the conclusion that because of this double-border that I mentioned previously, people simply learned not to look into that direction, similar to Finisterra – a place in the Galician coast that had the idea of being the end of the world. I was just surprised that a 60-70 year old man wouldn’t know where the border was. But in general there was not much exchange of information with the people from the surroundings because they were very lonely areas. The ones you could see that had a big road or much activity were usually in use, not as checkpoints but as police offices, so I would try and take my photos as quick as possible and leave, to avoid any questioning.

The other anecdote I had: remembering my heavy camera, with the blanket and tripod. I was in the border near Drassenhof, very close to Brno, and there seems to be a very famous motorcycle competition that goes through this area. It is important to mention that in many countries of Europe you are required to have some stickers on your windshields of vehicles to say where you’re from and if your registration is in order. Well, during my photograph session this competition was happening, and when I finished taking my photograph the person that was traveling with me told me that in the parking lot behind us there were like 20 Italian bikers waiting for me to leave because they thought I was a policeman with my camera, checking if people had the driving permit sticker.

Talking about the border checkpoints, did you notice any trend or pattern regarding the design of these places?

Definitely. Those checkpoints in the main roads are usually bigger, with areas for trucks and buses, places to park, etc. In rural areas on the other hand, sometimes they were really small huts, some were even prefabricated ones that I had spotted through the internet but when I arrived were gone.

Regarding their shape and form, was there any pattern that those which were more interesting in design were in the main roads?

No. For me, those in the main roads were actually the “boring” ones: a straight concrete efficient building, those were the least interesting. But on the rural roads I found interesting and curious ones. For me, there is one on the main road, very modern with red diagonal elements, “ugly” for my taste; I don’t really see much logic in it. I guess that some mayor wanted to show off by hiring a big-shot architect, and now this structure is in the middle of nowhere.

Do you think that people weren’t really interested in the checkpoints – besides the geopolitical theme – precisely because they had simple or ugly designs?

I imagine that this indifference is more related to the fact that it’s a place that unless you truly need to cross, it only brings problems: you get asked for documents, interrogated, it’s a place where authority is located, the police. I think that it’s more because of this than because of the buildings, I think the buildings are purely practical. Another thing is that this would coincide with beautiful or ugly, or boring buildings.

Going into the topic of my research, on how people perceive ugly or boring forms. As a photographer and through personal experience, do you think that there is some preference from people for things that are clean and pretty, as opposed to people’s reactions to the dilapidated, neglected?

I think that people do prefer clean, pretty places. With abandoned places it’s curious because a lot of people are fascinated by them – myself included – but the majority think such places need to be cleaned up and painted. At the same time there is a big trend of people with creative and artistic inquisitiveness, that are interested in the topic of abandoned places because of all the idea of memory, passage of time, but some still look for beautiful forms. Many people when they see my photographs they say “what a beautiful photograph!” and they say it with the best of intentions, but they are not pretty, they are photographs that show interesting and curious places. They say it with the best of intentions but maybe because they are accustomed that something which attracts or they like should be beautiful.

You mentioned before that some checkpoints had been demolished or replaced. In a personal way, do you think with those that still survive, a good idea would be to clean them up and paint them, or leave them as they are? Do you think that if they were prettier they would have interested you or they would still retain a spirit of memory?

Well, now what happens with all the matter of the refugees, I think that it would be good that some of them remained up, especially for those that have been born with Schengen and have lived without borders, so that they could see that it wasn't always like this and that it could go back at any time. For example France and Sweden have temporarily annulled the Agreement. It would be great for those that have been born with these ideas, to leave some sort of "monument" or "remains" which showed that 20, 30 years ago this was a place where people had to stop, and where you could be allowed or not to cross. Now, I wouldn't know which should be the best way to do it, either making them pretty, as a museum, an interpretation center, or just leave them as they are; although if they remain as they are now people could pass by without having any idea of what that is. If we are talking about a didactic function to remember there had been borders, they should be able to catch the attention of passersby. I don't know if to refurbish them or simply put more information. I think that maybe not all of them, some should remain in the majority of countries as a memory.

Speaking of Schengen, and seeing how more and more countries are signing the Agreement, have you had the idea to expand your project "After Schengen"? Maybe include other types of structures?

I would love to continue it – although for now it's "finished" – both with new countries joining the Agreement, as well as with areas such as between Italy and Slovenia in the Alps, where I have seen some amazing border controls through the internet that look like mountain crossings, with huts and views. The issue really is a budgetary one.

Still regarding Schengen, and with the recent events regarding the wave of refugees, especially when countries like Hungary came into the spotlight, have some of the checkpoints that you photographed been reopened or do they remain abandoned?

There is one called Nickelsdorf, which was one of the main points through which something like two months ago Syrian refugees crossed, and is now closed. What has happened in the news did not really take place in the one I photographed, because in that village there are two roads: the main one with a big checkpoint, and the secondary one which is the one I photographed. On the news I could see lines and lines of people that were waiting to cross the border near Nickelsdorf, because they had been stopped and were not allowed to cross. I would assume that some would have found the secondary road and tried crossing there, but that wasn't shown on the news. But yes, that border was shut down, although I think it was reopened now. And another thing what happened was related to the events in Paris, where they have shut down the borders.

But with the abandoned buildings, do you know if they were reused?

Not sure since I haven't been around there. It's only what I can get from the news and the internet.

Since you began until this day, especially with the idea of possibly continuing if the circumstances allow it, have your goals and public which you wanted to reach changed?

To be honest, when I start a project I don't have a clear goal as to where I would like to get. What you want is to have a decent project, something that has a good visual result, a project that anyone can see, so you think more in terms of photography and art. Apart from that, for the general public some like it, others are not interested. For example I was contacted some time ago by a lady from Slovakia, that she had seen my project on the newspaper and she got all excited because her father had worked in a checkpoint that I photographed, so that touched her closely.

As a friend used to say "you have already taken the project where you wanted to, now see where the project takes you". For example, this autumn the project has been a turmoil, in high demand for a month or two, published in many magazines and websites. A Dutch web group called "Failed Architecture" contacted me to publish my project on their website, and they have a good network in the social media which has led me to other sites. This group is about architecture that in one way or the other has failed, and my project fit right in because it's architecture that once had a specific use and once this use has

passed, it stops making much sense. Also, the University of Bordeaux will have an exhibition soon about the Schengen Agreement, and they contacted me to mount it.

**Interview with Josef Schulz, author of “übergang”. (J. Schulz, 2015, pers. comm., 23 November 2015)**

Could you explain a little about your Project “übergang”: how it began, your first thoughts, how long did it last?

The idea started mid-2004. I was involved in another project, the Dreilinden Checkpoint between West Berlin and East Germany, and I realized that it had a strange structure and architecture so I thought it would be nice to have a look at other checkpoints. Once I started and after going to other places, I realized that it had not only this strange architecture but there was also a story behind it: at one point there was the story of the European Union which ‘gave up’ to inner European borders – at that time, now we are facing something else. On the other side it was also something with my own biography because I grew up in Poland with these kind of borders, where you needed a visa and you had a bit of fear if you had to cross it, since you were never sure if you could cross or get some problems.

So one year later I had to find some visual structure where I could put all these things together. I never intended to make any kind of documentation, so that means you just go around shooting and putting them into a geographic map, but that also for me was about the psychological moment of when you are crossing the border. For me it was more important to create the moment on the picture where you feel that you are crossing from one point to another, from one society to another, therefore that’s the reason why the background is a little faded but still visible, so that means something that is visible but not that clear. That’s linked to the visual language of the project.

You mentioned about the geography and the maps. Was there any plan that you followed? How are the photographs defined geographically?

Usually I would go every 2-3 weeks for a photo-trip to a border: one time to the French-German border, then other one between to Netherlands-Belgium, and so on. It was always depending on the budget, since it was a personal thing and I had to consider costs. It was also decided by what type of weather I could expect: if it was in winter it made no much sense go to the Eastern borders or German borders, I would go to Southern borders instead.

What were your first impressions you had when encountering these places?

These places are always abandoned, that means that I was the only one stopping there; this was always my first impression. It's kind of a lost place, nobody had taken care of these places; nowadays maybe some are picked up, renovated or taken down, but it was always an abandoned place. Only in few places there were some officers left and they really didn't care about me very much; usually there were no problems with them, sometimes some discussions but mostly I was alone.

Now that you mention the officers and discussions, do the checkpoints fall under the care of some entity?

Usually they belong to the government, but as I have seen they were never attempts of taking care of them, they just closed the doors and left them. I have never seen any restoration or taking care of them, they were just there; maybe there is only a sign to clarify that you are crossing a border. Now, I have the feeling that some of these countries, like the Netherlands, tore down a lot of them because maybe they didn't want to care about them, but I never asked or questioned why they did not care for them.

Have you revisited some of the checkpoints that you have photographed, or maybe visit other ones of countries that have recently joined the Schengen?

No, I didn't. It was the plan to go on with the countries that are joining, like Latvia, but at this time I'm focused on something else. Usually, when I start with something I would like to finish it. When I did the 1st book, 2005 or 2006, I stopped and went on with another projects and in 2007 I got a grant for 6 months and I was based on Friedrichshafen, in Lake Konstanz. There was a foundation there which took care about this project [checkpoints] and we went to lots of Eastern European countries, and we did the 2nd book. We made an exhibition there, in a museum; so I stopped at one point but then retook it. In 2008 the Goethe Institute in France asked me for some images between the French-Belgian border because they were presenting a specific area where major fights of WW1 happened, although I didn't have images from there, I still was able to go and present four other images. So if a Latvian foundation invites me to go on with this project, then maybe I would continue.

Going back to your comment about speaking with some officers, by any chance did you get to talk with passersby, villagers? Were the officers surprised that you were taking photographs of checkpoints?

Sure, always. It's always strange to focus on stuff like this. They don't expect any danger, so they just wonder what crazy thing I am doing there. I had some pictures printed out as examples to show them what I was doing and what I was focusing on, and they were usually very nice about it. There was one instance when I was photographing and I didn't realize there was somebody inside. He came out and told me "maybe I'm not supposed to allow these photos, but I'm leaving in 20 minutes and my colleague is coming one hour late, so you can go on". Also, once it was just a wooden small house and somebody was inside with a radio, but he didn't even open, so I just continued.

Nobody would really stop by, though. What I discovered is that when you would cross this border, maybe the same village but divided: on one side you have a building, on the other side some bar and there is always a change of attitude and a different ambience. There is no security border anymore, but there is still a border: a cultural one. This was something that gave me lots of thoughts, everyone is sticking to their own culture, crossing the border but just for a quick shopping and then back. I never expected that, it was so strict and this stuck on me.

I noticed that some of the checkpoints you photographed have very unique and interesting designs, others are a little more discreet. Do you think that these basic, simple designs actually influence how people perceive them? And on top, because now that they are abandoned, people ignore them even more?

For sure. This kind of architecture that they chose is a sign: some points are a welcome sign, of "welcoming with great culture", a nice building; on another side they welcome with a container or an ugly brick house. And that's a sign towards the visitor. I don't think that they didn't think about it, that this was done on purpose. And sometimes in some checkpoints it's just because lack of budget that they were built in that way. Sometimes this is a signal of strength, power, and culture, sometimes it's just nothing. And even in some cases you could see the influence of East European, communistic influences in architecture, sometimes even baroque.

As I explained briefly my central idea is about how people perceive things, and in this case heritage related buildings. As a photographer, where images and how things look are central, do you believe that people are more inclined or they prefer things that look nice and have positive aesthetics, over things that are discomfoting, ugly or strange?

As a guest or visitor to checkpoints, nobody wants to be welcomed by ugly buildings; almost everybody wants a nice, well-structured building. Everyone looks for a more welcoming building, even for me. But as a photographer I am more a fan of ugly buildings, I like them. As a person I wouldn't really like these checkpoints.

Maybe it's a different thing if you go to abandoned buildings, in a broken down stage that might interest people. But usually I guess, for these abandoned places, a lot of people are interested in looking and watching but wouldn't like to visit them. Maybe it's interest in the past age, past history.

From a personal point of view, what do you think would be the best thing to do with these checkpoints? Do you believe they should be reused or let time do its work, or have them cleaned up and preserved for people to see them?

There are few checkpoints which might be good to be preserved, because they could have an interesting history. There is one checkpoint which was part of my focus in Germany, Marienbron: it was a huge checkpoint where they would check almost everybody who crossed the border and this could be a historical site; usually I am a bigger fan of reusing them. I once did an exhibition near Aachen for an artistic society, on the German-Belgian border, and they do some cultural activities: exhibitions, coffee, bar, concerts. These kind of things I really like.

When you see checkpoints which are near cities they have a unique character, which you could compare to modern train stations that are used and remain functional for a social meeting area. This is something I really like.

I'm not a fan of tearing down because this is destroying a kind of idea that is behind the notion of national borders, and I like the idea that in a hundred years if you like, you can discover some places and stories. Even in Berlin, when they took down the Wall they destroyed kilometers of it and now you can't see much, because it's mostly gone. You don't need to preserve everything, but some significant points belong to our history and it is important.



At the beginning of this conversation you mentioned about the possibility of reuse of these checkpoints. Now with the refugee crisis and attacks on Paris, do you think that they might be reused or reopened? Have some of the ones you photographed been reopened?

Nowadays many checkpoints are in function, especially after Paris. Once in Barcelona, there was a mobile control of the crossing in the middle of the traffic. I asked about it and an officer told me “yeah, they come from time to time in the afternoon to make border control”, basically stalling vehicles for an hour or so. But yes, now many checkpoints are in full function: they closed every border between France and Germany, France and Belgium, and are now in complete function.

As a last question, was there a shift between your hopes, objectives and message you wanted to convey, and the public you wanted to reach, from the beginning of the project until now?

There is a shift: I started more as a personal project, and this time when I printed the books it became a more personal thing. The interest went down after that but since some years the interest [on checkpoints] has risen again, but more on a political issue than when I did it. In one short text I pointed that I wasn't really sure that they weren't going to use them again but now it is much a bigger discussion, because at the time when I did it the European Union was more of a union than it is now. And maybe they even consider tearing down this idea of union, you don't know. Those are some points that I never expected they would consider, because I was thinking of a fixed union over some decades, and now they might reopen this idea of national boundaries.

**Interview with David Galjaard, author of *Concresco*. (D. Galjaard, 2015, pers. comm., 7 December 2015)**

You mentioned in one of your interviews that it was very difficult to find information on the bunkers. You managed to find some blueprints that appear on your book *Concresco*.

One of the few things that I found in the archive indeed, it took me almost a week to find it. I think the main reason is that they are not really up to date with organizing their own archives.

Do you think after you finished, after years have passed, has there been any update now?

I don't know, but the feeling I have is that there are just not so many people in Albania that are interested in this past, and that are willing to spend time to really look into the archives. Maybe it's there – I only spoke with few people – and in the end I was helped by a military man who was willing to help me – I never expected that especially a military man will help. The military archive was the last place I visited since I first went to a regular archive because getting information from a military archive sounded too difficult to start with, but it was actually the place that gave me something. It is possible of course - it's five years in between – but I would be surprised if somebody took the effort to look into it. Another reason was that it was state security, it was illegal even to talk about the bunkers: they were everywhere but you couldn't talk about it, which was very strange. Probably there is an archive but in the part of national security, not opened for the public; but it's just guessing.

What I really felt in Albania was that the old people that I talked to about the bunkers were really wondering why I was so interested, because they are really focused on the future; they don't focus much on the past. Which can also be a problem for the bunkers if you see them as monuments because people will break them down, since they are not really interested in their history, they want to look forward, be part of the West, economic growth. I think it will take a bit more time before they start to look back and get stuff in the archives and get up to date.

Some of the bunkers that I have seen from your project have very ingenious adaptations. Is there one that really struck you? In general, what were your first impressions the first time you saw the bunkers?

The first time I went, I came with the idea that I would visit a country completely covered by bunkers so as soon as I crossed the border and I saw my first one I was extremely excited, jumping out of the car, not knowing that I would spend all together 4 months looking for these bunkers. I made 3 trips all together. The first one, which wasn't interesting at all but I remember really well, it was a small bunker at the side of the road and I developed sort of a sixth sense for finding these bunkers – driving all the time, which can be a dangerous thing to do in Albania – while driving I could spot out bunkers everywhere, even when I wasn't in Albania I was seeing bunkers everywhere; I was really interested in them.

One bunker across the border on the North side is owned by a tattoo artist and he made his tattoo studio inside the bunker. That is the one that I think that was properly reused: he didn't really build or add anything – actually, he did but it was outside – but inside was just the tattoo parlor which looked very beautiful. There is also a bunker that you don't see any more as a bunker because it's part of a big building: it's a guy on the beach that built a restaurant around the bunker, so you can only see it being inside the restaurant.

Most of the time people just use them to dump stuff in or as a toilet, and the bigger ones are easier to reuse especially close to the beach, you see them being used as hamburger joints or something similar.

You mentioned about the tattoo artist having his bunker, but technically aren't the bunkers state owned? Do you know how this works?

What I heard about it is that yes, they are still owned by the state but they do not really care much about it. If it's on your land, as a farmer, because a lot of farmers have problems with the bunkers on their land because it makes it difficult to work the land, but the government wouldn't remove them so they [the farmers] actually can remove it. They can fix it or remove it themselves, the government is not doing it for them. It's a sort of a gray area; it's still state owned but nobody really cares about them.

With this idea of Albanians looking into the future, not looking back too much, from a personal point of view what would you think would be an appropriate way to deal with these bunkers, to treat them, considering that people don't care?

It depends who you ask, if they care about them and how. There's a lot of them, like 750,000 bunkers, so I wouldn't say that it's a good plan to preserve all of them, especially when it's in your land and you have to work this land. I think a part of them at least is interesting, because it is an important part of history. In Tirana they already did it, they had this monument where they put a bunker next to a piece of the Berlin Wall. It was put there after my last visit so I never saw it but it's there. In Tirana it's really hard to find any bunkers because most of them are already demolished so they are only there in places where nobody cares about them or whether they are used again.

I think you can see it as the Berlin Wall, which was also an unaesthetic monument which was demolished but now they have put some things to remember the wall. I can imagine that countries are too eager to go into the future and burn or demolish the past, and after

some time they figure out that maybe they destroyed too much, because the past does matter. But I think people take time and a right attitude from the governments to decide on these things and also to show to its people that it's important to at least some of your historical monuments, even if they are as ugly – I don't think they are – as the bunkers.

As a photographer's and personal point of view, why do you think there is this acceptance of things that are commonly understood as 'beautiful' and why people avoid those that are opposite?

It's really hard to explain because it's personal what people find beautiful or not. As a photographer it worked out that you give attention to something that is regarded as not beautiful but because you give attention to it, and with a photo because it's a still frame on a wall, we ask for a different type of attention for that object. It makes it easier for people to absorb it, to find something else than just saying "oh this is an ugly concrete structure", but if your similar structure is placed in an aesthetic photo you show more than just the ugly object. I think a lot of people need a little help to go beyond the thing they're seeing at first glance.

Do you think that it plays some part that when people, while looking at photo, are disconnected from the object: it's not the same seeing a photo in a very aesthetical way, in a wall, than being in front or inside the bunker? And maybe between these 2 situations, people prefer the photo because that way they are not in direct contact the ugliness of the place?

I try not to take too many aesthetic photos because I like to see myself as a documentary maker, so I like to tell stories with my photos. Aesthetics can be a way of helping to show the viewer things that I find interesting for myself. There is only one aesthetic photo in my book, and I was really doubting to use this picture because people would like to have it on a wall, but you are still looking at the same ugly bunker; if you face this place you probably won't find it beautiful. I think that photographers, artists, filmmakers should help out to see these objects in a different kind of way. But if people find it ugly, well they find it ugly.

Maybe you have been aware of this movement of *Urban Exploration*. Do you think this trend of photography has opened up or even trivialized all these abandoned places?

Do you think that there is a better communication with the public because of this, or it's just a trend?

I think the people who make these photos do it mostly for the adventure, it gives sort of kick to go into an abandoned place – I understand it, I feel it myself too. But it really depends for me, as a maker, what you want to do with the work, because most of it [urban explorers] ends with only aesthetic photographs which I myself don't find interesting. If you use those photos to tell a story then for me it becomes interesting; if it's only showing the places with all these filters for a dramatic view then not so much. For me those places are interesting enough even without filter, so when people start using them [filters] I think they're trying to hide or add something, and most of the time you don't have to because the places are interesting enough. But a lot of people stop there, show the place and that's that. I think there it just stops at aesthetic photography, and for me it feels very flat, but the public like easy, the aesthetic ones. People like to say "what a nice picture", but a picture being nice is not that interesting: it's like the sunset in postcards, those are nice pictures but what is it telling you? We're framed into thinking what is nice but not interested in what a picture can tell you, so in that way you can use 'nice' – same as being 'funny'. You can use that to lure people watching at your work and hopefully give you a second layer, a bit more information to actually learn something about you like to tell.

This project started with the bunkers, but in the end it was a book about Albania; I just used the bunkers as a metaphor. Still a lot of people didn't read it well and think that it still is about the bunkers and I get a lot of questions just about them, and for me in the end it was just a way to get a grip of a country that I myself didn't understand that well, sort of this inside glance from the outside into a country that's not that well known in Western Europe.

It [urban exploration] can also be useful, because it's like very difficult art: people see it but they don't connect with it in anyway because it's so difficult; it's art for the artists. A lot of people will just move along and not get anything from it, and I really believe in telling stories for bigger audience. But then you need to pull them in, need to interest them, that's where aesthetics can be really useful. I think people sometimes need that to see the interesting stuff behind it.

I noticed in your website you have a project called *Vanitas*. Do you think that urban exploration or the bunkers could be considered a contemporary *Vanitas*?

One of the major components of *Vanitas* is transience, which is the way of showing that nothing is there forever, so both of them have that [urban exploration, bunkers]. The old *Vanitas* paintings have 2 sides on them though: some people saw them as work that could make you afraid, as the end is near, but some people saw them as nothing is forever, so you better enjoy it. Even in the *Vanitas* movement you have different kinds of interpretations, and I think you can pair it on the *Urban Exploration* sphere, but again *Urban Exploration* is more about the adventure, something of a different time. They have things that you could compare, but honestly I don't think all of it could be comparable.

Did you by any chance get into contact with people working the project *Concrete Mushrooms*?

I had a lot of contact with people working with the subject of the bunkers, but never in contact with these guys. I saw some of their work, followed it a bit, ordered the book – after I finished my own project – and at that point I had a bit too much of Albanian bunkers so I never read it. Did you see a documentary called *Mushrooms of Concrete*? The film maker of this documentary contacted me when I was in Albania on the 2nd time and asked if I could help him find locations to shoot for his documentary. I wanted to help him but it was also a lot of research, and I didn't want to just give it away – I do believe in sharing information – but it felt like I was giving away 2 months of research, and he would have finished his project first. So I made a deal with him: he was travelling with an interpreter and doing all these interviews, so I said I could help him with locations but I would like to have the interviews and he accepted; it was a good deal, since I used a lot of his stuff in my book. His documentary was first called *Concrete Mushrooms* but the people from the architectural project contacted him and asked him to change it.

Their project is very interesting, I like the idea of reusing the bunkers, and on that note maybe you have heard of *BunkerFest*? The first one was held in 2010 and actually initiated by this Dutch filmmaker making *Mushrooms of Concrete*. They would paint the bunkers in the field of a farmer, and the DJ needed electricity to power the equipment so they asked the farmer to help them out to which he accepted. The farmer came out with two iron wires and just threw them over the electricity pole, really dangerous, and provided electricity. Now it's an Albanian yearly party but I doubt many know that it was initiated by this filmmaker; now the Albanians claim it. But it's a good example to see how they are reusing the bunkers.

You mentioned that you had interviews with other people, and that your main interest were the consequences the bunkers had on the Albanian population: how does it, or not at all, affect Albanians, how much they care or not. Do you think that after your visit it has changed? Have you gone back?

That's really hard for me to say. I went 2 times in 2009 and once in 2010, and after that I didn't go anymore. I don't think that much has changed in the meantime, but before I went back for the 1st time I had this idea that it must be hard to be constantly reminded about a black period; the dictatorship under Enver Hoxha was quite heavy. People don't know too much about it because it's such a small country but it was a horrible time for a lot of people. After the fall of the regime, a new dawn breaks and you still have all these bunkers dotted around the country that I thought would strongly remind this period, but I didn't feel that much when talking to people in Albania. I don't know for sure, maybe they didn't want to talk about it, but when I talked with them I never had the feeling experienced as heavily as I thought it might be for them. Also, there was like 80% of all the money spent in military purposes so there was a lot of people without houses or that wanted to build a shop, so especially after the fall of the regime in 1990 people started to use the bunkers to live in or as a shop, and maybe this also helps them not seeing the bunkers as a really strong reminder of the dictatorial past. I don't know really, maybe the best is to ask Albanians but they will give you different answers, they just see it as something ugly, money not spent, and that it's in the way.

With those that you talked to, did it ever come into the conservation an idea of keeping them as a part of their history?

In the interviews that I used from Martijn and from myself, some people said "demolish them all", some people – two military men – said "we have to keep them because you never know what's going to happen, maybe somebody wants to invade"; it goes into every direction. There is no one collective idea what to do with them. Also, of the 3 million people living in Albania, a million live in Tirana – a third of all the population – and it's almost impossible to find any bunkers in there. And that affects the view of how the bunkers are perceived because they are not surrounded by the bunkers all the time so they have a different point of view than those that have to work the land around the bunkers. So it really depends on who you ask.

**Interview with Lejla Hadžić, Cultural Heritage Without Borders, in Albania. (L. Hadžić, 2015, pers. comm., 9 December 2015)**

I wanted to ask if you've had any sort of connection or relationship with the bunkers in Albania. By being there, I was wondering if there has been any circumstance in which you came across them.

I have never worked personally with bunkers. The only thing I have had was the *POLIS* project, with the idea of converting one of these bunkers into a "Bed & Bunker". On the other hand, we are currently working with one of the places of persecution here in Albania, the Spaç former labor camp for persecuted prisoners at the time, and those that ended in Spaç were the ones persecuted for agitation and propaganda; in that camp many known intellectuals had been there. It's an extraordinary, notorious place, and engaging with this I realized I had these emotions that I didn't thought I had, and I will explain what those emotions are.

Recently, in front of the Ministry of Transport, the whole Tirana – all the cities in Albania – are sitting on channels of fallout shelters built during the communism, and those were built and connected to key institutions so that the elite of communist regime, at the moment of an attack if it would happen, would be evacuated in no time. Tirana for instance sits on a maze of these fallout shelters and in front of the Ministry of Transport apparently there is an entrance to one of those fallout shelters, and the Government wanted to make one of these shelters as a tourist attraction, to open it for visitors. And what they built at the entrance to that fallout shelter was a bunker. When I saw that they were building the bunker, and the people protesting or being really unhappy with using that form or that architectural expression, I felt the same: hurt; that the Government does not understand; is this a bad joke? And I didn't really understand that I had those feelings in me. Later on I wanted to react but then I said "ok, maybe I don't know enough", and that proved to be right because that bunker was built to mark the entrance to this fallout shelter. But still the continuous critique of the public and individuals in different types of social media, have made the Government to rethink the concept of what could be the architectural expression that could mark the entrance to that fallout shelter, and they were about to change some of the things. But apparently, I don't think they have done that because just yesterday there was a huge protest of the opposition marking the 25 years of the fall of communism in Albania and also of their existence in a way. So they gather a whole mass of hundreds of thousands in a protest but a quite few of them went there in an organized manner and put that bunker on fire in a way as to symbolize their disagreement with using this kind of form nowadays,



that it still seems like a bad joke or a complete lack of understanding by the current Government and that these symbols are not to be used in contemporary expressions or ideas or society.

So in a way, this was something I really didn't understand that I had, but I really do agree with that, because while working with Spaç we happened to talk to some of the experts and leading persons, and a few of us read the book of Fatos Lubonja called *Second Sentence*, one of the leading intellectuals of today's contemporary Albania. In this book he talks about the judicial process he was going through while he was still imprisoned, and there he is depicting the emotion of being scared of death because he wasn't sure what the conviction upon on that case would be, while still imprisoned. The notoriousness of the whole process and the ridiculousness of the whole system really makes you so angry and makes you ask yourself how on Earth is it possible that this kind of system had existed.

And in that sense, when I saw that bunker being erected, later on understood that it will mark the entrance to the fallout shelter, I felt really offended as well, not being Albanian, not being part of the communist system, not living in communism, but I really felt offended with the little I know about the communism, that took place here in Albania. This would be the only person-al encounter I had with bunkers, not the ones all over Albania but primarily this one, and I dis-covered these feelings about it and that I didn't really knew that I had.

Just to clarify, was the reaction – yours or from the people – because these evacuation channels were heightened or because a bunker was used?

Primarily because of the bunker, because of the bunker as a form. And the issue is that the bunker did not exist there, it was newly built, and people could not understand how can you be so blue-eyed and just build a bunker that we have so many around the country and that represent such a dark period in Albanian history, and now you are building it from scratch to showcase something.

Having spoken with photographers that did projects in Albania, related to the bunkers, the few discussions they had with some people [locals] gave them the impression that people really did not care about the bunkers: if they were there, good; if they were taken out, good as well. Between these comments and the answers from the previous questions, I get some confusion on the view towards the bunkers.

I think the reaction of the people [related to the bunker for the fallout shelter] was because this was a bunker that was erected, it was newly done. They were making a bunker, one that was never there, and they thought that just to mark the entrance to the fallout shelter it would be nice to have a bunker there. And I think that was the root of the reaction.

Why do others not react to the bunkers? Because they are spread throughout the landscape – some insane figure – and they are deteriorating in the landscape, many used as scrap sources, as cover from the rain, as storage, etc. In a way they are part of the landscape now, and I think that's why there is this almost benevolent reaction from the people, whether if they should or should not be, removed or not removed. They are just so inseparable from the landscape, you just don't think about them anymore. But this very, very strong reaction was because it was a completely new bunker and it's very symbolic: bunkers could be one of main symbols of the communistic past of Albania.

Regarding the use of the bunkers, is the government in charge of them?

That is interesting because the issue of the land. During communism all the land was expropriated from the landlords, so even if I had acres and acres of pastures, those would be taken away from me. And now I think all the land is belonging to the state of Albania, unless me as a former landlord, have made a request to get this land back. So if I have taken back my land and if there is a bunker on it, I think I am given back the land with all that is on it. So the situation now is mixed, some bunkers are owned by private people while some are still on land owned by the government.

On the other hand, the bunkers are now out of function – no defense function as they used to have – and they are not declared monuments or strategic objects by the government, so in to my logic I don't think there is a decree on who owns them. But it should be really investigated – I am just following my logic. I don't really know who the owner is, but when it comes to matters of the land, it can be tricky.

Regarding the ownership of the bunkers, there is a short film about the bunkers, with interviews of owners or people that were in contact with them. One of his interviewee is a tattoo artist and his studio is inside a bunker; he calls the bunker *his* bunker. There are also hay storages and water reservoirs. Have you heard or come up with a bunker that has an interesting adaptation or reuse?

Not really; the majority of the solutions have been what you mentioned. There were some that were turned into bars on the seaside, with vivid colors, but the only interesting adaptation that I have heard of is from this *POLIS* initiative, by trying to turn into a bed and bunker use, using the large bunkers in Leija. But on the other hand the problem is – and there you can see the cracks on the system – because the municipality, towards the end when they inaugurated them [of the *POLIS* reuse], never claimed ownership or management, so because nobody took care of them people just stole the things inside of them.

By any chance, has there been any interaction or relation between Gjirokastra and the bunkers? Are bunkers visible from Gjirokastra?

Yes, actually the whole of the Drino Valley, just below the hill where Gjirokastra is placed and only 45kms away from the Greek borders, is a very strategic valley, so there are lines and lines of bunkers.

Is there any struggle or tension between Gjirokastra and the bunkers, or do people not really pay much attention to them?

It's the second: nobody really cares about the bunkers (that's a very personal opinion); I have never heard anyone being so upset about them. You usually hear about them as a curiosity: if you hear Albanians talking about them, you would hear about a curiosity "these are the bunkers that Enver Hoxha did, during that period of time". You will never hear any deep hatred or love for them. I have never heard any profound emotion related to them.

Seeing how former Soviet countries try to deal with an almost extermination of communist history, for example by destroying statues of Lenin in Ukraine with a law, I am surprised that people in Albania are not moved by the bunkers.

I think that it's because there are too many, and I think it's not the bunkers which are the issue – all the statues of Enver Hoxha are gone, on the first year of the fall of the regime. So the bunkers are really not the issue, because if you would want to erase those then you would have to take also the fallout shelters as well, and it's just too many. I think that people are just indifferent because of this.

But on the other hand, you need to understand that even the historical or cultural heritage I wouldn't say that there is indifference of people towards that, but the power of people for

up-keeping those and the relation they have to cultural heritage or the monuments they own in many of the places, I wouldn't say it is as indifferent as towards bunkers, but there is this one could call it "emotionless relation", so I am not surprised, but in relation to the statues, yeah they are all taken down.

Have you heard of a group of architecture students that came up with a project called *Concrete Mushrooms*, they wanted to create an adaptive reuse network with the bunkers?

No I have not. Never heard from them, maybe because we are not really related topic-wise.

As a conservation architect, do you see any possible logic behind conserving some of the bunkers? Does it make sense as somebody that deals with Albanian history? Mostly because of the point of 'relevance', is there any relevance in trying to preserve or getting them into a heritage level or inventory?

For sure they would fall into some category of military architecture, so as we have several categories of Cultural Landscapes, Historic Cities, Industrial Heritage, Military Architecture I think is not picking up yet as a group. On the other hand, the bunkers have this almost intangible value where they are linking or they are good representatives of a particular historical period, but not only them: the fallout shelters, prisons, etc. For the sake of the argument, I think one should definitely do an in-depth research and really document all of those, at least in statistical terms and then try to classify. Whether this is to be considered part of the cultural heritage I can't say no because I feel I know so little from the value point of view, and in a way I feel that research should be done in order to gather all the data so you could really pull out good value analyses, where you could really see in a comprehensive matter the values they have, both tangible and intangible, and for people, and from the historic and professional point of view. My initial reaction is that I feel indifferent as the rest of Albanians about bunkers, but on the other hand I know so little to really give you a proper answer to this question. I definitely do think that research on all these structures from the communist period should be made and classified, and then it would be of course, not an easy factor that military architecture is not so spread. So I don't really know enough about them. If there are indeed more than 750,000 bunkers around Albania, the whole question becomes even more complex.

Is there a main difference between an ancient military complex and contemporary or more recent ones? Is time the only valid variable to engage with when inscribing sites?

In essence I agree, and I am for marking all the levels of development within history because this is what we inherit, this is what we need to pass on, what we need to understand: where we come from and how we developed to the level we are at. I completely agree. On the other hand, the complexity of that and the weight that is put now on the central government (Albania has 2,700 monuments, out of which 150 are fortresses) are a huge burden to a state. And listening to you I think "all these 750,000 bunkers would go on a list and they can't even take care of the things they have", I say no way. And this is the balance that needs to be found and probably the answer lies in decentralizing it, building capacity of people in the provinces and smaller cities, and the people in the central government don't think that they are the only ones able: this balance needs to be found. How to get there is the challenge, and I think that at least the bunkers could be surveyed and try to develop the value analysis of these structures. That would be already an enormous contribution to marking that particular part of the history.

Regarding the topic of my thesis, the role of aesthetics, I think that there is another face of aesthetics that is not explored much. Going through international conservation and heritage documents and charters, aesthetics is not really explained leaving the door opened to truly be subjective to the approach of aesthetics, including typologies as well.

I think that aesthetics is replaced by values. I think it's difficult and a little bit dangerous to take the concept of aesthetics and apply it to heritage. The questions that emerge are important and interesting, of course, but that's why I think we have value analysis instead of aesthetics, and this value analysis is extremely complex. And it took from different aspects of values, and if you would in a way combine all the layers of the values you could ascribe to a monument, you actually could come to a summarized version of the formula for aesthetics in a sense, because aesthetics is in a way, multidimensional. That's why I think aesthetics is not really mentioned.

Do you think that there is a tendency of people to go towards something that looks nice, a nice typology, a clean, shiny image of a monument or a building, over something that is the opposite?

What I understood about the Balkans at least, the public here want to see deteriorated buildings. In order for them to grasp that they are monuments and keep them as monuments in their thinking and believing, they need to be deteriorated and falling apart, and they should not be used. We had an interesting debate: recently we finalized the conservation of a hamam, a Turkish bath, in city just outside of Tirana, the historic city of Krujë. The building comes from the 15th century but in the 1960s it fell in complete disrepair and Enver Hoxha was supposed to have his walk through Krujë, and the Communist Party could not allow that his visual observations be disturbed by ruins. So they sent the team from the Institute of Monuments and Culture to clean everything, and they reconstructed parts of the bath. What we found was a building that was partially reconstructed to a form of what was believed to be the form of the authentic hamam, and the inside, with the hypocaust pillars and floors, was completely covered with debris, and it was left like that. From the 1960s until today it was used as a public toilet, with a leaking roof and horrible interventions.

What we did was excavate everything, cleaned up and restore, and made it into a functional hamam. But the Albanian audience did not agree with that: the people criticized to the level on why we plastered the walls. You cannot explain to a majority of people by saying “the wall was originally plastered”, and they said “no, you should’ve left the visible wall structure”. And this is what I see across the Balkans: if it’s a building or a monument it should give you the notion of old, but old that is not to be touched, only to be observed; like an artifact in space. At least here, that’s how it works. Ugly or not ugly is not something I have heard in a professional context, if a building should be conserved or not because of the looks.

**Interview with Jukka Jokilehto, former staff member of ICGROM. (J. Jokilehto, 2015, pers. comm., 19 January 2016)**

I wanted to ask about aesthetics and the values of aesthetics in terms of OUV and heritage, and how it has been approached by the World Heritage Convention. I read in some documents that the wording of criteria has changed through time, where words like “aesthetics” and “artistic” have slowly been taken out and are now implicit rather than written. How has the evolution of the criteria happened?

You may have noticed that beauty is more for nature and aesthetics is more for culture. Of course, in the history of art the aesthetics comes from the 18th century, but basically the criteria have been evolving on the basis of the development of the World Heritage List. When you have new sites, they might have some problems because they do not correspond exactly to what was the initial intention, so the Committee makes a change; they can make a change at any time if they would like to. The first criteria were established in the 1970s, as an ICOMOS proposal as you can see in the book *What is OUV?*. That is basically it, nothing else.

So for 1976 it says that “properties that represent a unique artistic achievement, including masterpieces”, etc. This concept of “unique” has become a problematic issue because everything is unique if you like, and so it is not a very good definition. And then “artistic” is more for works of art, so it is already broadening in 1978. And then you have like “unique artistic achievement or masterpiece of human creative genius”; it is only in 1976 it became a “masterpiece of human creative genius”. Basically however, for example the 2005 UNESCO Convention – the Cultural Expressions – is a very important convention because it broadens the human creativity from works of art or some other places, to the fact that humanity has this creative capacity.

At the beginning of the World Heritage Convention it was thought that we were to identify some of the big masterpieces, the most important ones. But especially from the 1990s it has broadened to cultural landscapes, to vernacular architecture, industrial heritage, and so on, which cannot create big works of art, but they are still human creative productions. Therefore UNESCO has adopted this cultural expressions concept, which I think is a very interesting concept, because it actually puts in a slightly different position, with the philosophy of Henri Bergson who talked about human creativity – which was from the first years of the 1900s – and also Nietzsche talked about it. With human creativity this work of art has slowly been broadened and now we can talk about that anything can be of the human creativity. Because a work of art is a really particular object, something that you can sell for an aesthetic value. And then of course, if you look at works of art today, anything can be considered a work of art because it depends on the artist.

This leads me to how subjective judgement can be. Do you think that there is some level of fear or caution in debating aesthetics because it is such a subjective issue?

The whole World Heritage List is based on comparative studies: you first do a comparative analysis, then you identify [criteria]. For example if you go to Japan you have to – it is a judgement which is based on saying how skillful the human beings have been and how

interesting, so you can actually identify some criteria, that is sort of how an art historian works. If you read a bit of art history then you will see that there criteria which are gradually developing, of course most of the art history was written in the European context and now is being expanded to other regions of the world.

Regarding this European point of view on approaching aesthetics in some cases, when it comes to presenting heritage, there is the idea that it has to be clean, polished and adhere to certain criteria. How much influence can these international standards have on the collective mind of the people? If buildings are presented dirty or in bad shape, some countries and the communities might not consider it good enough for tourism or to present it for heritage, because they believe that it is not good looking, not photography material. There is this notion that things have to be in very pristine condition to be considered as heritage.

For example in Zürich, while walking through the medieval historic town in Zürich, everything is in perfect shape, like from last week. I think it is a mistake, from my point of view but of course, there are different attitudes and it is very difficult to oblige everyone to think like I do, or what I would do. The question of culture, modern culture, with this conservation of cultural heritage and the age value particularly, I think it is really a European product.

Often these attitudes are discussed by conservationist professionals and they are a very small group of people. In some way this has been accepted by organizations such as UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, etc., and of course when something is put on the World Heritage List the patina of age becomes one of the issues, but it depends. There are sites that have really lost their patina.

Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas has made some statements on how preservation has gone in another direction, from an architectural and personal point of view. One thing that has caught my attention is how he is more interested in preserving what he calls “the ugly realities”. He is more interested in contemporary architecture, preserving failed social housing is important, saying that humanity has nice things but also ugly realities and it’s important to know that these exist. Trying to destroy a building just because it looks bad shouldn’t be reason enough to do it.



Look at the example of the favelas in Brazil, and sometimes they are actually quite organized because they feel responsible. And often it is these so-called social housing from the governments or authorities which are the ones not so well maintained. This happens also in Europe: if you go to Naples or in some parts of Rome you have these social housing complexes without any maintenance. I don't think that there is any real justification for maintaining these places but there must be a justification for putting them in order. For example, in Finland in the 1960s there was a lot of construction activity and the apartments were very small because we didn't have much money. Dimensions and sizes were really small and now they have a problem because people have much more money and they are not interested in living in these small flats. That is the reason why they are being refurbished by joining 2 or 3 apartments and putting the services outside in one block. You don't have to necessarily always demolish and then rebuilt, in the general economy it is better not to if there is a possibility to do some re-search and change places.

Regarding the conservation issue, development of conservation policies has started more or less with the newspapers. In England for example, the era of the first magazines in the late 18th century - early 19th century, when these magazines started being read by people they became informed about things, and so they gradually developed a new attitude towards issues. I think that is still the case, we still have to continue, we have to write. Who is interested in conservation must write articles in the newspaper, must publish papers, must participate in conferences, make exhibitions, etc., in order to raise awareness. But if you are proposing that an old building could have some patina of age, then you have to explain why and you have to make it relevant to the people. If they don't like it then you have to try and convince them that it is nice. There is no magic in this.

A month ago there was a short article, like an opinion, from the National Trust of the USA that ugly buildings have less chance to be conserved over nice buildings. Do you think that this is somehow true?

I don't know, but I can say that I see continuously lots of ugly buildings around and they seem to survive quite well. I don't see that it is this beauty or the ugliness which makes them survive, it is probably sometimes... when you travel in various countries, you realize that –for example in Calcutta, there are some of these artisans and craftsmen who do a lot of sort of this intangible heritage and they do sculptures for various processions and so on. They live in these cottages which have no beauty, even – and it is actually in very poor conditions – they are not very happy to live there, but in fact the authorities insist that

they must be living there because it's a tourist trap – they would be happy to live somewhere else – since they are historically there and have always been there, so they should always continue living there.

I think that human beings are interesting: they create always some things and then try to convince everybody that that is the right thing to do. I don't think that ugly buildings are better than beautiful buildings, what exactly is beautiful is always a problem. For example when Modernist architecture started being built not everybody liked it, it's also a question of taste; we have gotten used to it. For example I was responsible for justifying Mies van der Rohe's house [Villa Tugendhat] in Brno, and I proposed criterion (i) not necessarily for the aesthetics as such but for the creative capacity of using technology, new spatial concepts, and so on and so forth. And some of the Committee members said "but we see this all over the place nowadays, what is the problem?", but that was the first one, and they refused this criterion (i) for it.

Of course, when you are talking about aesthetics it can easily become a personal judgment, subjective. But actually for the World Heritage purposes you must go through this comparative study, and of course the World Heritage List in some ways provides an interesting lecture, a lesson.

I haven't seen much discussion in the heritage context about aesthetics. There are mentions about it as a value, but not so much as in philosophy, architecture, or art. That's why it caught my attention.

I think aesthetics is very important, it's part of the human creative capacity and it has been discussed of course, with Baumgarten and so on. But of course what is a work of art is not necessarily always based on aesthetics, there are other criteria. There is also the idea that they are very culture related: the Japanese aesthetics is very different, or the Chinese and African aesthetics, from the European. Initially in fact, some Europeans had a difficulty in accepting other cultural aspects. Actually starting from the 18th century there has been much more interest in approaching these cultures. Many of the modern artists like Gauguin went to these islands.





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