Pina Ciotoli, Rosalba Belibani

The Rewriting process in post-war cities

/Abstract

The drama of reconstruction is, by its very nature, linked to numerous implications of the sphere of memory and the tangible and intangible aspects of perception and enjoyment of the city. Indeed, the loss of landmarks combined with the trauma suffered brings citizens to need reconstruction not only for physical, but also for emotional and psychological stability. Therefore, reconstruction, whether necessary following a war event or a natural disaster, requires reflection on the meanings of urban traces and signs, and to the role they play as identity, physical and affective references for people. Especially in the case of post-conflict reconstruction, the regeneration program must answer a long-standing question: how reconstruction and in what ways? Total reconstruction, on the one hand, tends to eliminate the trauma suffered by rebuilding the city "as it was where it was", on the other hand, selective regeneration involves the reconstruction of certain parts of a building or the selection of individual architectures, almost as if they were memory acupunctures.

Places generate different forms of feeling, emotion, and memory. When discussing urban reconstruction, therefore, it is also important to reflect on the kind of affection, emotion, and remembrance that a place is able to evoke, so that we can then reflect on the meanings that are more related to the sphere of memory. The theme of memory, moreover, is also central in those cases where reconstruction has failed: where the injuries on buildings seem to have lost their deep meaning as mementos, that is, as urban monuments that, their silent presence, bear witness for future generations to the horror of war.

This paper aims to offer a reflection to the theme of reconstruction understood as the regeneration of intangible (as well as tangible) urban values, trying to outline some possible scenarios with respect to the recent destructions in the city of Irpin in Ukraine.

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War and peace: destruction, reconstruction, memory and feelings[1]

The reconstruction of cities destroyed in the aftermath of war compels reflection on sensitive issues related to multiple aspects of living together: the fury of conflict, in fact, changes the temporal and affective perception that citizens have towards their urban context and, even more, imposes an abrupt break in the process of modification that -especially in Europe and the Asian area- is inherent to the city. To borrow a famous quote from Lewis Mumford, «Cities are a product of time. They are the molds in which men´s lifetimes have cooled and congealed, giving lasting shape, by way of art, to moments that would otherwise vanish with the living and leave no means of renewal or wider participation

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behind them»[2], it can be confirmed that destruction due to conflict profoundly alters the process and the cyclical nature of an urban organism. After all, «The concept of time is interrelated with other concepts such as: experience, motion, human actions and consciousness and also space. For this reason, attempts are made to integrate the element of time into the understanding of designers and architects, in respect of analyzing the social processes involved in the making of space and place».[3]

Within this perspective, therefore, the drama and the search for reassurance become the main driving forces capable of stimulating a prefiguration of the postwar city. It should be emphasized, however, that reconstruction -usually coinciding with the period of peace- is to be considered as problematic and painful as the destructive phase: if the latter leaves obvious traces even for those who did not experience the nemesis of erasure and annihilation, under the scars of reconstruction survivors still feel the memory of traumatizing events. War and Peace, as well as destruction and reconstruction, are sequential phases, united temporally in an almost inseparable way, and although they seem opposite in ontology and in their manifestation, they share an equal degree of difficulty. War and peace induce at the same time, in their temporal development, different emotions in those who experience them. These develop according to the full spectrum of the seven primary emotions[4] not only about the individual's personality but can articulate themselves in the richer range of secondary

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2   Mumford Lewis, *The Culture of Cities*, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1938), 4.

3   Kaçar A. Duygu, *Time perception in relation to architectural space,* in *Proceedings of the 2nd Scottish Conference for Postgraduate Researchers of the Built and Natural Environment (PRoBE),* (Rotterdam: Glasgow Caledonian University, 2005), 34–44.

4   The seven primary emotions are anger, happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, contempt and surprise.

Fig. 1
Irpin in April 2022. Photo by
Rasal Hague. @ Wikipedia.

emotions concerning events. The war/peace oxymoron is therefore similar in value, form, and content to the war/architecture[5] one, in that urban destruction does not only affect the city, but its material heritage -historical, architectural and environmental- and immaterial one, also built by the deposit of feelings in places. Destruction then is a process and, as we can understand from the Latin etymology -*destructio-onis*, from *dē-* (un-, de-) + *struō* (I build)- it indicates the action of destroying and the resulting effect, demolition, massacre, ruin, and wreckage. If the intent is to erase whole chunks of history, then it is indeed necessary to figure out what and how to salvage, despite of a position advocating the aesthetics of destruction, in the knowledge that places hold traces of memory of both the domestic life (now lost) and the violence suffered (from which, perhaps in the first instance, one wants to escape and not retain the memory).

In the background of the studies conducted from a historiographical perspective by Cohen and from the viewpoint of urban transformations by Bevan and Hersher, this paper aims to offer a reflection on the destruction/reconstruction/memory theme applied to the recent cases of Ukraine. [Fig. 1]

Cities destroyed by war: the paradigm shift of the 21st century[6]

War, probably more than other events of a destructive nature, establishes a relationship between loss, memory and symbol as, moreover, the most recent historical events testify. Empathic understanding and collective involvement, for example, are among the perceptual capacities most stimulated in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict (2022-ongoing), as a result of which our society has undergone a real emotional upheaval. In this regard, it is worth noting how, since the end of the Cold War[7] -with the subsequent political and military crumbling of the USSR- the Western world has perceived any reference related to the conflict as remote. It is a perception that has been substantially altered with the wartime events of the Kosovo War -defined by Thomas Keenan as the first war of the Internet Age[8]- as there has been, for the first time, a *surplus* of images, of interviews with displaced people, of direct testimonies being channeled into the web. It is indeed an epochal change from the critical, and clearly political, selection that had been implemented up to that point with war photography[9].

The proximity with respect to the hot spots of the planet, already expanded thanks to the medium of television, had undergone a further change of scale: with Internet, every user has the power to inform himself or herself at any time about what is happening and, by increasing his/her awareness regarding the

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5   See Herscher Andrew, *Warchitectural Theory, Journal of Architectural Education*, no. 61 (2008): 35-43.

6   Cities destroyed by war: the paradigm shift of the 21st century is written by Rosalba Belibani

7   Barbara Biscotti, *Un tema terribilmente attuale*, in Giovanni M. Gambini, Giovanni Landi, *La Guerra in Ucraina* (Milan: RCS Mediagroup, 2023), 7.

8   Thomas Keenan, *Looking like Flames and Falling like Stars: Kosovo, the First Internet War, Social Identities*, no. 7 (2001): 539-550.

9   See. Annarita Curcio, *Le icone di Hiroshima. Fotografie, storia e memoria* (Rome: Postcart, 2011).

war bulletin, nurtures an empathy reassured by the remoteness for the populations in conflict. These constant visual streams, guaranteed by the latest technological instrumentation, clashed in a sense with the concrete distance of television users from such scenes; after all, "the only real involvement that the Western world perceived was that concerning, if anything, its own military personnel on missions or the economic consequences of those conflicts in the everyday made, for example, of gasoline price increases".[10]

Indeed, political propaganda and Western voyeurism[11] for wartime events far from one's daily experience are among the most recognizable characters in the narrative of the war from 1945 onward. Unlike the First World Conflict, the Second sought to emphasize the role that art, design, and more generally multimedia communication had with regard both to the population and the military[12]. For this reason, the use of the photographic image would become the tool par excellence through which to declare, to the entire world, a victory and at the same time to testify the defeat of the enemy[13]; within this perspective, the vision of entire pieces of cities plundered or completely damaged, as well as the destruction of individual monuments related to a particular historical period, acquire identity values and iconologies[14]. This is even more true when we consider how to date, in addition to the direct testimony of war photography, we can also count satellite images, videos filmed by drones, or frames shared directly online by civilians under attack. Compared to the numerous conflicts that occurred during the first decades of the 21st century, the one in Ukraine presents some interesting specificities from an urban point of view because, by wanting to act on political, social, and cultural rewriting, they emphasize the topicality of the reconstruction-regeneration-memory link.

Returning to the opening stages of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and trying to analyze, albeit schematically, what happened in the days immediately following February 24, 2022, we find how, after a tactical and military phase carried out by aerial bombardments, the Russian army positioned itself on Ukrainian territory, invading by land. Such a strategy[15] entails, as an immediate consequence from the urban point of view, the occupation of the land and the shifting of the conflict from battlefields and strategic places (such as infrastructure, production areas, military zones, etc) to the inhabited city. It is a logic already widely experienced during the last century and, in particular, with World War II[16], and currently

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10   Barbara Biscotti, *Un tema terribilmente attuale*, 7.

11   Annarita Curcio, *Le icone di Hiroshima*, 46.

12   See Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for the Second World War* (Paris-Montreal: Hazan-CCA, 2011).

13   Such as, for example, Joe Rosenthal's *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima* and Yevgeny Khaldei's *Raising a Flag over the Reichstag*, two images that, in a sense, summarize the entire wartime course of World War II and express the instrumental use of photography in the service of wartime propaganda. See Annarita Curcio, *Le icone di Hiroshima.*

14   See Lisa Parola, *Giù i monumenti. Una questione aperta* (Turin: Einaudi, 2020).

15   According to Giovanni M. Gambini and Giovanni Landi, this is "a typically Twentieth-century scenario that leaves the entire West baffled", see Giovanni M. Gambini, Giovanni Landi, *La Guerra in Ucraina,* 59.

16   According to Andrea Lopreiato, the Russian Campaign (1941-43) markedly transformed the role of so-called "urban operations" making them, unfortunately, a custom of the last years of the World War II, whereas previously

reiterated in the Ukrainian cities of Irpin, Bucha, Mariupol', whose streets have been transformed into urban trenches.

The change in the location of war (understood as the area historically designated to contain the conflict) also implies a change in the perception of it by citizens: they in fact experience firsthand not only the negative effects (i.e., deprivations, such as lack of food, water, medical care, etc.) as much as the more direct implications, usually reserved for the military alone. [Fig. 2]

After all, as Alberto Ferlenga points out:

> However, it is not just the mechanisms and tools of destruction that found new life in post-war reconstruction: war profoundly changed the land and prepared it, indirectly, for new uses. The tragic events that took place in battlefields, where the smell of gas and death lingered, led to the decades-long abandonment of entire areas, from the plains of the Isonzo to the fields of the Somme and the gutted houses and churches of German and Italian cities. These acted as a reminder of how a previously unseen destructive power could also violate privacy, the shattered walls and roofs revealing the objects of domestic life. However, war also had a "constructive" aspect (…).[17]

they played a subordinate role to the sites of choice of warfare, namely battlefields and trenches. See Andrea Lopreiato, *Guerra nelle città. I combattimenti urbani nel dopoguerra* (Milan: Ugo Mursia editore, 2016).

17   Alberto Ferlenga, *War*, in *Recycled Theory Dizionario illustrato/Illustrated Dictionary* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016), 631.

Fig. 2

A transfer of civilians from Irpin to Kyiv due to Russian attacks. 8 March 2022. Photo by Mvs. gov.ua. @ Wikipedia.

The transformation of the city into a battlefield[18] determines a whole series of observations on the material and immaterial characteristics of public space, the annihilation of a community, the need to remember the violence and the fallen, and even the importance of the collective memory of the places that, more than others, have suffered the operations of war. In this sense, City and War relates to the theme of tangible and intangible Memory, triggering a process of study and knowledge that is important in tracing the various systems of relationships that, in an urban environment, naturally exist.

War therefore is understood as:

> as conflict of forms: territories, constructions and naval, aerial and land equipment were all designed – into shapes that combined criteria that were universally valid for anything mechanical (...) into particular concepts and interpretations that also resulted from firmly held aesthetic positions.[19]

The drama of reconstruction is, by its very nature, linked to numerous implications of the sphere of memory; the loss of landmarks combined with the trauma suffered, brings citizens to need reconstruction for not only physical, but also emotional and psychological stability. Therefore, reconstruction, whether necessary following a war event, requires reflection on the meanings of urban traces and signs, and to the role they play as identity, physical and affective references for people. Furthermore, in the post-conflict reconstructions, the regeneration program must answer a long-standing question: how reconstruction and in what ways?

Total reconstruction, on the one hand, tends to eliminate the trauma suffered by rebuilding the city "as it was where it was", on the other hand, selective regeneration involves the reconstruction of certain parts of a building or the selection of individual architectures, almost as if they were memory acupunctures.

The diversity of approaches, however, is united by a common basis:

> the regeneration interventions of parts of cities, in which the new integrates or replaces the pre-existing structures, do not take account of a series of practices related to a broad concept that may be defined as "affective sustainability" – that is, an affective heritage that can and must be maintained in the inhabitant's memory, to his or her comfort. This new aspect of sustainability is translated in terms of affective projections and impacts on the inhabitants, of recognition of the place, of affective result to be maintained or reconstructed. The new design, (...) overwrites the previous one and, in building a new one, reassigns new values to the places while not taking the role of memory into consideration.[20]

18 See Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform.*

19 Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform.*

20 Rosalba Belibani, *Affective Sustainability in the Rewriting Process of Places*, in Stefano Catucci, Federico

The war and the resulting destruction brings before us a number of relevant issues, such as the different impact of war strategies and technologies on urban fabrics and the need to adapt the conflict to the city and the city to the conflict[21]. Indeed, it is worth noting that there are different examples of urban erasure: in the specific case of the war in Ukraine, a strategy of "reversible damage", aimed at psychologically bending the population by surgically acting on the infrastructure and symbols of power (found in the cities of Mariupol' and Irpin), is reported. Some fairly recent studies[22] (but all prior to the outbreak of war in Ukraine) categorized cases of total city destruction as a result of wartime intervention in the more generic realm of natural disaster; it is the writer's opinion that, on the contrary, it is necessary to highlight some specific features of post-war reconstruction from those of natural disasters, especially in terms of social and urban repercussions. The reconstructive phase (whether partial, complete or even failed) has different values in pre-decisional and post-building terms: in prefiguring where required a new urban model with advanced technologies; in reinterpreting its relationship with the memory of the city itself; in establishing the boundaries of nostalgia with respect to permanence and the lost; and finally in implementation it has a preponderant role in drawing future and plausible scenarios for the city in order to create new spatial relationships, and fallout emotional among the inhabitants.

The Rewriting process in Ukraine. The case study of Irpin

Although the conflict is still ongoing, there are many initiatives (public or private in nature) proposed at the international level to activate, with the war still going on, a reconstruction plan for Ukraine. While politics seems to be concerned with the issue only to figure out the amounts that will actually have to be allocated to carry out such projects, it is interesting to dwell on the ways and timing as well as the demands of the population in this regard.

Re-Start Ukraine is one of several associations that, at the European level, is looking for collaborators and stakeholders to disseminate its program for the reconstruction of the country divided into nine strategic clusters: Observe (surveying, mapping and assessing both tangible and intangible damage left after the war), Reclaim (Developing effective temporary infrastructure for those who have been displaced), Clean (Removing, recycling and upcycling the debris), Predict (Analyzing the current and future trends of how Ukrainian cities and villages by the war may change), Remember (Working with material

De Matteis, eds., *The Affective City. Spaces, Atmospheres and Practices in Changing Urban Territories* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2021), 234.

21   See Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform.*

22   See Kealy, Loughlin, de Marco, Luisa, Hadzimuhamedovic, Amra, Marchand, Trevor and Gregory, Alyssa Rose, eds., *ICOMOS-ICCROM Analysis of Case Studies in Recovery and Reconstruction*, *Case Studies*, ICCROM and ICOMOS, 2021, vol. 1 and vol. 2, https://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do/621-english-categories/what-we-do/focus/reconstruction/91268-publication-of-icomos-iccrom-joint-project-analysis-of-case-studies-in-recovery-and-reconstruction (last accessed November 2024).

and immaterial pre- and post-war heritage), Plan (Rethinking the urban and rural planning of the destroyed settlements to make them more resilient and human-centered), Finance (Balancing the ambitions of the recovery with available financing and identifying new financing mechanisms), Participate (Involving locals and various other stakeholders to co-create this new vision, and ensure a human-centered approach within all the steps of the regeneration), Build (Building the new structures, restoring the old ones, protecting the heritage).[23] Some of these actions (Observe, Finance, Build) are common in cases of conflict and, come to think of it, were also basic to the reconstruction plans carried out in European cities following World War II[24].

In contrast, Reclaim, Clean and Preditct focus their attention on the urban and environmental quality that a post-conflict city should have. Indeed, in the aftermath of large-scale chemical pollution, it is necessary to take action with targeted and concrete short-range actions, as well as with time-dilated strategies by which to enable a restoration of the environmental balance. Therefore, the problem of polluting residues and abandoned debris is combined with the urgency of a project of conscious reuse and recycling of the elements, capable of giving birth to a new cycle for the city and the territory[25]. The Predict Cluster works in this direction, providing a whole series of questions and insights on the issue of reconstruction (these questions were deduced from the specific case of Chernihiv but are analogous to other Ukrainian realities as well): how is it possible to restore the ecosystem while ensuring an industrial-type production strategy capable of reactivating the economy as well? What initiatives need to be proposed to stop the current demographic crisis in Ukraine and enable residents to return to their cities?

The post-conflict phase establishes a series of priorities, related to the need to rebuild, that put people and the environment at the center. In fact, even before restoring the economy of places and the social fabric (still two vital and indispensable factors for the postwar phase), it is important to heal the environmental and urban wounds, which constitute the perpetual memento with respect to what happened. In particular, the environmental disaster that resulted from war time intervention calls for action by restoring wildlife and natural habitat, and consciously managing the debris and remnants. The destruction also concerns the environment, violated and mortified by the war. It is necessary to focus on the urgency of the environmental disaster caused by the war in order to act,

23   All reported actions are published on the Re-Start Ukraine association website. See https://restartukraine.io/ (last accessed November 2024).

24   Here is a brief bibliographic selection concerning, specifically, postwar reconstruction in Italy: Bonifazio Patrizia, *Tra guerra e pace: società, cultura e architettura nel secondo dopoguerra* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1998); Lorenzo De Stefani, Crlotta Coccoli, *Guerra, monumenti, ricostruzione. Architetture e centri storici italiani nel secondo conflitto mondiale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2011); Marco Praticelli, *L'Italia sotto le bombe. Guerra aerea e vita civile 1940-1945* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2009); Salvatore Settis, *Battaglie senza eroi. I beni culturali tra istituzioni e profitto* (Milan: Electa, 2005).

25   The issue of environmental reconstruction has also been addressed in the dramatic case of Hiroshima; it is no coincidence that after the March 2011 accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, the attention of the Japanese and the international press has once again been focused on the urban and territorial reconstruction of Hiroshima and how it is possible to initiate a large-scale environmental regeneration process.

reactivating the production processes of the area, vital for the local economy, and restoring, where possible, the wildlife and naturalistic habitat.

In the early months of the conflict, Norman Foster was among the first architects called by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to intervene in Ukraine, working on the reconstruction of Kharkiv, the country's second largest city. While Foster's masterplan is still being drafted, the international press has learned of a letter, known as the Kharkiv Manifesto, in which the British architect lays out some ethical and moral priorities, rather than setting out a more concrete plan of interventions to be implemented. The following is an excerpt from the Manifesto:

> I undertake to assemble the best minds with the best planning, architectural, design, and engineering skills in the world to bear on the rebirth of the city of Kharkiv. In the spirit of combining a planetary awareness with local action, I would seek to bring together the top Ukrainian talents with worldwide expertise and advice.

> The first step would be a city masterplan linked to the region, with the ambition to combine the most loved and revered heritage from the past with the most desirable and greenest elements of infrastructure and buildings - in other words, to deliver the city of the future now and to plan for its life decades ahead. (...).[26]

These few lines probably refer to Churchill's famous speech «We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us»[27] in October 1943, when the British Prime Minister emphasized the urgency of rebuilding immediately

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26   See https://normanfosterfoundation.org/?project=kharkiv-masterplan (last accessed November 2024).

27   See Winston Churchill, *Never give in! The best of Winston Churchill's speeches*, (London: Pimlico, 2003).

Fig. 3
Street view of the residential neighborhood near the Zemsnarad and Karyer Lakes. @ Google earth.
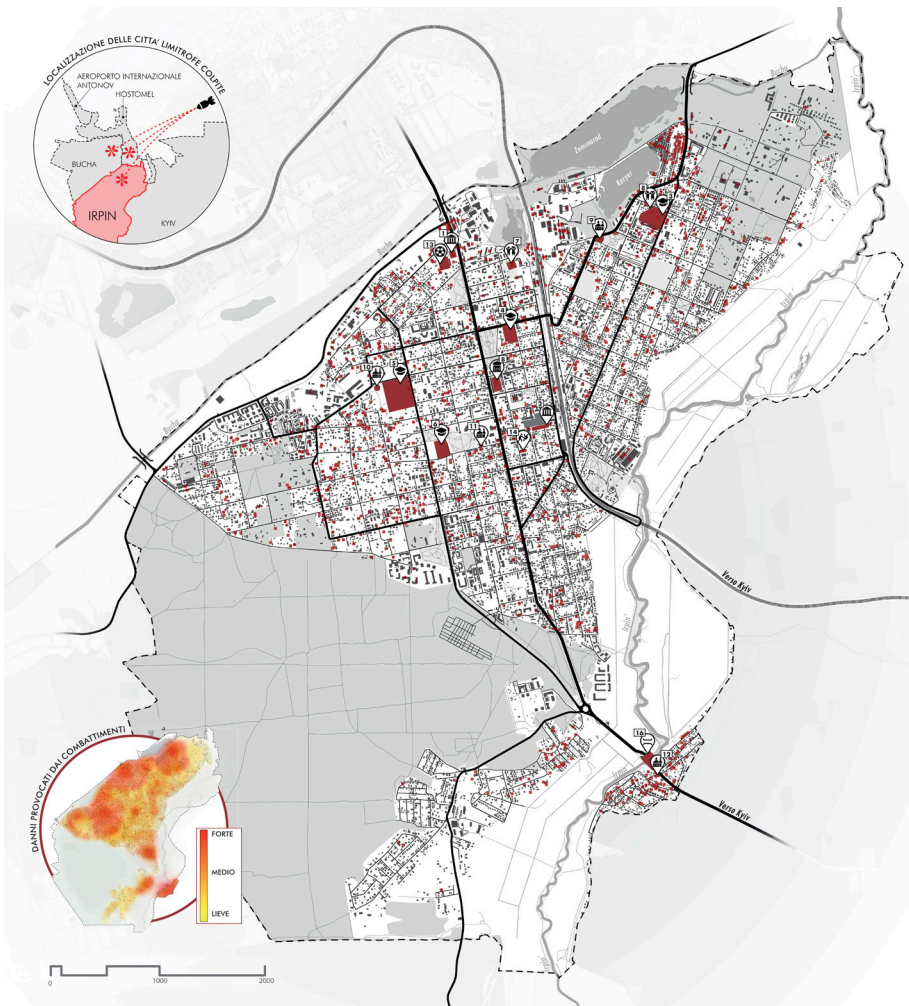
– before the end of the conflict – the Commons Chambers because it was a symbol of British democracy. Foster intends to act in the immediate term, mapping out possible rebirth scenarios for Kharkiv, which, not coincidentally, was named City of Future. Foster's Manifesto was the first step taken by the government administration toward a reconstructive vision that could extend from Kharkiv to the whole of Ukraine, conceiving a whole series of prototypical solutions that could be implemented in the heritage, in the industrial-productive system, in the housing, in the environment.

Irpin, a town located in the Kyiv oblast' and part of the Bucha district, is particularly respondent precisely to the need to restore the environment destroyed by wartime action. The large forests surrounding the city to the north (in the direction of Bucha) and to the south (in the direction of Kyiv) became, from the earliest stages of the conflict, the scene of war. Specifically, the northern area of Irpin -along the Bucha River to the Zemsnarad and Karyer Lakes-, is still today a militarized edge, surrounded by some residential neighborhoods (partially destroyed) and a now disused industrial district [Fig. 3]. It is precisely in the northern belt that a peripheral regeneration that deals with the city limit, rather than privileging a reconstruction of the inner areas, is conceivable. Reconstruction, by its nature complex and delicate, imposes choices: a ten-year planning in which the most historically relevant works are selected,

Fig. 4
Reconnaissance of the destroyed buildings in Irpin. Drawing by Alina Kruk, supervisors Rosalba Belibani, Pina Ciotoli.

keeping the symbols of the war (reasoning is imposed on the meaning to be attributed to such architectures and how to rebuild them)[28] and working on the edges of the city, on the urban gates of which only rubble remains.

The rubble, in fact, is visible everywhere, in the initial surveying and street restoration operations it is placed along roads and becomes part of the everyday life of the survivors. As Silvia Dalzero argues:

> The rubble thus takes on all the characteristics of a Heideggerian spatium, of varying thickness, through which action and matter come into mutual contact giving shape to a renewed urban space. In this way another territorial conformation is being delineated, and the orography itself is transformed by tracing: rubble hills more or less high, more or less internal to the urban system, marshy areas transformed into solid land, coastlines gaining surface in water...[29]

There are many reasons why Ukrainian governance chose Irpin as the preferred site to experiment with a kind of reconstructive model that can be extended to the entire country. In fact, the geographical location, close to the northern outskirts of Kiev, has resulted since the first days of the conflict in a series of war interventions that have almost completely destroyed the center of the town [Fig. 4]. Also significant is the destruction of the Central House of Culture and the Irpin Bridge, structures made known to Westerners through the photos and video footage of war correspondents[30] [Fig. 5]. While it is true

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28   See monograph issue *Figli di Marte 2022 | Immagini in guerra*, "La rivista di Engramma", no. 190 (March 2022): 159-164.

29   Silvia Dalzero, "Rovine, detriti e macerie dei teatri di guerra", in *Dentro i confini della grande guerra. Memorie rimembranze. Tracce assenze* (Rovereto: ListLab, 2016), 42-47.

30   The Battle of Irpin was fought between February 27 and 28, 2022: although the urban area was recaptured by the Ukrainians, the green border surrounding Irpin to the north and south is still the scene of military incursions.

Fig. 5
The destroyed bridge over the Irpin River on the R-30 highway. 4 April 2022. Photo by Press Office of the President of Ukraine. @ Wikipedia.

that with the advent of new technologies, war destruction becomes surgical and mainly concerns sensitive objectives, it is pointed out that the inevitable destruction of buildings or entire parts of cities, inescapable consequences of conflicts, are often deliberate, intentional and consciously perpetuated, and it is precisely this aspect of premeditated violence that distinguishes the collective trauma of those who survive war from those who suffer natural disasters. In this regard, the insight that Robert Bevan brings forward by analyzing the relationship between wartime destruction, collective memory and urban heritage in the wars of recent decades is interesting:

> There has always been another war against architecture going on – the destruction of the cultural artefacts of an enemy people or nation as a means of dominating, terrorizing, dividing or eradicating it altogether. The aim here is not the rout of an opposing army – it is a tactic often conducted well away from any front line – but the pursuit of ethnic cleansing or genocide by other means, or the rewriting of history in the interests of a victor reinforcing his conquests. Here architecture takes on a totemic quality: a mosque, for example, is not simply a mosque; it represents to its enemies the presence of a community marked for erasure. A library or art gallery is a cache of historical memory, evidence that a given community's presence extends into the past and legitimizing it in the present and on into the future. In these circumstances structures and places with certain meanings are selected for oblivion with deliberate intent. This is not 'collateral damage'. This is the active and often systematic destruction of particular building types or architectural traditions that happens in conflicts where the erasure of the memories, history and identity attached to architecture and place – enforced forgetting – is the goal itself. These buildings are attacked not because they are in the path of a military objective: to their destroyers they are the objective.[31]

The new regeneration interventions of Irpin's architectural and environmental heritage are configured as paradigms of inescapable operations, which can become examples for the current need for mementos, which with their silent presence, hopefully bear witness for future generations to the horror of war. As in all manifestations of the real, so also physical reconstruction conceals in the eyes of most other meanings, bearers of lived histories and feelings, and remains unfortunately inescapable objects of study, depending on place, time and memory, in an ongoing investigation.

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31   Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory. Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006), 6.

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