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### Learning from Warsaw:

#### How to Make or Break an Urban Historic Reconstruction Project

Europe is known worldwide both for the conspicuousness of its historical narrative and as the starting point and an epicenter for the two largest wars in world history, where medieval and Renaissance structures make their presence known on streets hallowed by the bomb. The cities and nations of Europe have many times deemed it necessary to reconstruct their historic buildings to fight the ephemerality of the built environment, and these reconstruction projects raise complicated discussions about the role of history and the merits of replicating an object that no longer exists in its original form. However, there is no standard or common way to individually evaluate the merits and shortcomings of historic reconstruction. While acknowledging that the success of a historic reconstruction project is a subjective matter, the merits of a reconstruction should be evaluated based primarily on the degree of public involvement and enthusiasm associated with it. Just because a civic reconstruction is well-researched and historically accurate does not mean it will reflect the collective memory and cultural history of its city.

Reconstruction is a fraught and controversial aspect of the historic preservation field. Usually reserved for places of the most cultural significance, myriad ideological and moral issues stem from the idea of resurrecting a lost place. Will it be a pastiche or a phony if it uses the architect's original plans and/or reuses material salvaged from the original? To what degree

should the materials or methods be altered from the original, for the sake of either durability or cost savings? Is a place really being resurrected if it is merely a façade for a modern facility, or is the opportunity for a functional interior space welcome? Does the reconstruction obscure evidence of an important episode of the nation's history or marginalize groups of people who have connections to the site? These questions are for the citizens who form the community around a proposed reconstruction site and will be impacted by a potential reconstruction project to determine. The specific examples of reconstruction projects that will be described in this article demonstrate that the public experience is the most critical aspect of a reconstruction that has a net positive impact on its community.

This article will examine four reconstructions that have taken place in Europe at various times since 1945 that score differently against these points of analysis. The purpose is not to judge whether each of these four reconstructions are good or bad, but to analyze the circumstances and outcomes of these reconstructions and compare them to determine what lessons can be learned, then to apply those lessons to potential future reconstruction projects, such as in Ukraine after the resolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The four selected projects are Warsaw, which was deliberately demolished by the Nazi regime during World War II, and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site in its rebuilt form;<sup>1</sup> the Frauenkirche in Dresden, which was damaged during World War II with the pieces salvaged by local residents and reassembled in an international healing and peace campaign after the reunification of Germany;<sup>2</sup> the Berliner Schloss, destroyed in World War II and replaced with

1. Demshuk, Andrew Ph.D. *"Inventing authenticity: how the rebuilding of Warsaw's Old Town became a model for other cities."* Notes from Poland. Krakow, Poland: Notes from Poland Foundation, 18 Aug. 2021, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/08/18/inventing-authenticity-how-the-rebuilding-of-warsaws-old-town-became-a-model-for-other-cities/>.
2. Stiftung Frauenkirche Dresden. *"The Reconstruction of the Frauenkirche Dresden."* Dresden, Saxony, Germany: Stiftung Frauenkirche Dresden. <https://www.frauenkirche-dresden.de/reconstruction>

the Palast der Republik by the East German government (the DDR), which was in turn demolished despite popular support for its rehabilitation and replaced with a partial replica of the Schloss's facade in 2020;<sup>3</sup> and Skopje, the Balkan ex-Yugoslav capital of now-North Macedonia, where an earthquake in 1963 destroyed most of the city and a modernist cityscape was constructed under communist rule, followed by the Skopje 2014 nation-building project that fabricated Greek facades that never existed before the earthquake along with monuments that appropriated Greek history.<sup>4</sup>

The rationale for choosing these four projects is that the first two demonstrate primarily community-led movements to reconstruct historic places as a healing process, while the latter two demonstrate primarily authority-led projects that have problematic consequences for historic interpretation and public relevancy. The takeaway from this contrast is that the myriad issues that are raised by reconstruction are best resolved with the greatest degree of public participation possible, allowing the most popular solutions and treatments to be chosen democratically.

During World War II, at the end of the Warsaw Uprising, approximately 85% of the buildings in Warsaw had been destroyed. While the destruction began as early as 1939, the majority of these buildings were destroyed in a deliberate manner by the Nazi German troops upon the surrender of the Uprising.<sup>5</sup> Symbolically, this was a signal of the Nazi regime's opposition to Polish statehood and an attempt at eradicating Polish independent identity.

Initially, the new communist administration intended to move the Polish capital to Łódź. However, as Polish people returned to Warsaw and Germans were ejected after the war, the

3. Berlin, Germany: Association Berliner Schlosses E.V. <https://berliner-schloss.de/en/>.

4. "Skopje 2014 Uncovered." Project for Investigative Journalism and Cooperation Between Media and Civil Society - USAID Program for Strengthening Independent Media in Macedonia. <http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/en>

5. Koschalka, Ben. "The underground photographer who chronicled the Warsaw Uprising." Notes from Poland. Krakow, Poland: Notes from Poland Foundation, 28 Jul. 2021, <https://notesfrompoland.com/2021/07/28/the-underground-photographer-who-chronicled-the-warsaw-uprising/>

Warsaw citizens began to organize the ruins and rebuild their properties. Additionally, Joseph Stalin realized that Poland's capital needed to stay in Warsaw in order to be recognized at the Yalta Conference. In February 1945, a government-funded Reconstruction Office, *Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy* (BOS), was formed, satisfying both Stalin's need to develop Warsaw and the citizens' desire to rebuild their homes and landmarks.<sup>6</sup> Accompanying the BOS was the Social Fund for the Rebuilding of the Capital (SFOS), which took public donations for the reconstruction.

The BOS was headed by architects Roman Piotrowski and Józef Sigalin, and the Department of Monumental Architecture was headed by the university professor, architect, and restorer Jan Zachwatowicz. Meeting opposition from Piotrowski and Sigalin, Zachwatowicz argued that the complete and total restoration of the city's built fabric was culturally necessary and would be the most patriotic option. After all, Warsaw had been the site where the Constitution of 3 May 1791, the first democratic constitution adopted in Europe, was signed, and the city itself was a major symbol of Polish identity and statehood.<sup>7</sup> Piotrowski and Sigalin, who associated more closely with the communist government, took a more modernist stance and wanted to see modernization accompany the reconstruction. The two sides kept each other in check, and both of their ideals influenced the reconstruction effort. Zachwatowicz successfully championed for the reconstruction of a very large number of the city's historic neighborhoods, reaching far beyond the central market square. However, the crowded, dark back alleyways from before the war were not rebuilt, with the back areas behind the principal structures becoming

6. Gliński, Mikołaj. "How Warsaw Came Close to Never Being Rebuilt." Culture.pl. Warsaw, Poland: Adam Mickiewicz Institute, 3 Feb. 2015, <https://culture.pl/en/article/how-warsaw-came-close-to-never-being-rebuilt> "Skopje 2014 Uncovered." Project for Investigative Journalism and Cooperation Between Media and Civil Society - USAID Program for Strengthening Independent Media in Macedonia. <http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/en>

7. "Historic Centre of Warsaw." UNESCO. Paris, France: United Nations, 1980, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/30/>

open yards with greenery.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the new green space, the reconstruction enabled the implementation of modern infrastructure projects such as the Trasa W-Z, a tunnel for Provincial Highway 629 underneath the Castle Square. The entire city was given modern indoor plumbing and electricity for the first time, taking the opportunity not to retrofit older structures. Nearly all of the interiors of the rebuilt buildings are contemporary and have no reflection of the original interiors, except where the historic interiors are culturally significant.

The primary phase of Warsaw's reconstruction took place between 1945 and 1951. Guided by the Warsaw Reconstruction Office, salvageable and undamaged structures were repaired, the layout of streets and foundations was documented, rubble was used to piece together the architectural makeup of the city blocks, and any and all archival documents, artistic works, photographs, and public memories were used to complete the picture. One of the sources used was a surviving collection of paintings of Warsaw produced during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century by Venetian artist Bernardo Bellotto, who was the King of Poland's court painter. The paintings themselves had a turbulent history, being seized by Napoleon, by the Russian Empire, and by Nazi Germany, but they returned to Polish hands after World War II and were used to find the precise locations of the city's architectural pieces.<sup>8</sup>

The enthusiasm for the reconstruction of Warsaw spread all over Poland, and while there is undoubtedly an aspect of communist propaganda behind the project's media promotion, the concern and drive to rebuild was legitimate among the Polish people, even in spite of the new Soviet rule. Workers and volunteers, as well as donations, poured in from all over Poland, earning Warsaw the slogan "built by the whole nation."<sup>6</sup> The degree of public effort and will that

8. Mersom, Daryl. "Story of cities #28: how postwar Warsaw was rebuilt using 18th century paintings." The Guardian. London, United Kingdom: Guardian News & Media Limited, 22 Apr. 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/apr/22/story-cities-warsaw-rebuilt-18th-century-paintings>

went into the project demonstrates the power of the Polish sense of history and statehood contrasting to both the German destruction and the Russian occupation.

The effort was not without the sacrifice of health. The writer Leopold Tyrmand wrote, "...Varsovians inhaled four bricks each year at that time. One must love one's city in order to rebuild it at the cost of one's own breathing. It is perhaps for this reason that, from the battlefield of rubble and ruins, Warsaw became once more the old Warsaw, eternal Warsaw... Varsovians brought it to life, filling its brick body with their own, hot breath."<sup>8</sup>

The BOS was dissolved in 1952, and the majority of reconstruction had occurred by this time, but work continued through the 1960s and up to the completion of the Royal Castle in 1974. In 1980, the effort in Warsaw and its impact on Polish identity and Warsaw's sense of history and community was recognized by UNESCO when they named the resurrected city as a World Heritage Site. According to UNESCO's website, "The reconstruction of the Old Town in its historic urban and architectural form was the manifestation of the care and attention taken to assure the survival of one of the most important testimonials of Polish culture."<sup>7</sup>

Another notable story of World War II's destruction and the following reconstruction is Dresden in the German State of Saxony (Sachsen), which was in East Germany until 1990. However, unlike Warsaw, the Neumarkt, the central square of Dresden, remained largely undeveloped, with the city receiving sparse reconstructions of important buildings, such as the Semperoper and Zwinger Palace, among many new structures in the Stalinist style. Comprehensive reconstruction of the pre-war built environment only began after the Reunification of Germany.

While most of the Neumarkt has been returned to its pre-war appearance now, the first and most interesting achievement was the Dresdner Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady), an 18<sup>th</sup>-

century Lutheran church designed by city architect George Bähr and finished in 1743. The Frauenkirche was an extremely culturally important building, as it helped to cement the Lutheran faith's place in Dresden over Catholicism. It contained an organ crafted by Gottfried Silbermann and performed on by Johann Sebastian Bach. The sounds of the original organ and the bells are preserved on an audio recording produced before the war.<sup>2</sup>

During the Allied firebombing of Dresden in 1945, the Frauenkirche was not targeted directly, but the firestorm melted an iron structural ring at the base of the dome-shaped stone-block roof that Bähr had specially designed to carry the oddly-distributed load of the elaborate dome. Without the support, the dome collapsed the day after the bombing, bringing down many of the exterior walls with it.<sup>9</sup>

Like in Warsaw, there was immediate desire to reconstruct the Frauenkirche. However, the communist government was unable to budget its reconstruction and decided instead to turn it into a memorial site. An attempt to clear away the rubble was also unable to receive enough funding, so the rubble was left at the site or collected by individual area residents. No further action was taken at the site, despite continuing conversation.

The desire to rebuild the Frauenkirche survived the communist era, and when Germany reunified in 1990, the effort was organized almost immediately. A citizens group formed to publish the Appeal from Dresden, a letter that outlined the dearness of the Frauenkirche to Dresden and the State of Saxony and the collective desire to restore the structure into a center for the promotion of world peace, where Christianity would become a force for reconciliation and friendship. This is best expressed in the following excerpt:

“We turn especially to the states that led the Second World War. We are painfully aware

9. Uplekar, Krupali Ph.D. “*The Reconstruction of the Frauenkirche.*” Sacred Architecture Journal. Notre Dame, Indiana, U.S.: The Institute for Sacred Architecture, Spring 2006, [https://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/the\\_reconstruction\\_of\\_the\\_frauenkirche](https://www.sacredarchitecture.org/articles/the_reconstruction_of_the_frauenkirche)

that Germany unleashed this war... Nevertheless, we also address the victorious powers and the many people of good will in the USA, Great Britain and all over the world: make this European "House of Peace" possible!

A list of citizens who signed the Appeal and joined the reconstruction movement is published on the Frauenkirche's website and includes people from disciplines ranging from architecture, history, and religion to engineering, healthcare, science, and theater. This group soon became the Society for the Promotion of the Reconstruction of the Frauenkirche Dresden. The Society was chaired by the music conductor and trumpeter Ludwig Güttler, founder of the chamber orchestra Virtuosi Saxoniae. They began collecting donations on an international scale, a testament to the power of their Appeal. The Wiederaufbau-Fördergesellschaft (Reconstruction Management Association) was founded to form a membership system, and by the end of the project, it had amassed approximately 5,600 members worldwide. The Evangelical-Lutheran Regional Church Office of Saxony founded the Stiftung Frauenkirche Dresden, the management organization for the facility, which is still functional today. The civil engineer Eberhard Burger was chosen to direct the reconstruction activity.<sup>2</sup>

The process to clear and sort the rubble was led by Professor Wolfram Jaeger from the University of Dresden's Department of Structural Design, with labor carried out by citizen volunteers. The University of Dresden team took inventory of every rubble piece and sorted them on shelves next to the site. Historians and researchers analyzed documentation of the building that included measured plans and drawings of both the intact and the ruined structure. One of these measured drawings was by architect Arno Kiesling, produced in the years after the war, showing the locations where the stones originally fell.<sup>9</sup>



New computing technology was extensively used to piece the Frauenkirche back together. A software called Phidias, produced by PHOCAD, was used for photogrammetry, the 3D modeling and taking of measurements from photographs. Another 3D modeling software (which is not named by the sources) was used to simulate the location from which each rubble piece fell, based on the location and orientation where it was found. Using these technologies, the investigative teams were able to place the rubble back where it had been in the original structure with relative confidence, and were able to synthesize measurements for the building with excellent accuracy.<sup>2</sup>

Another major challenge that was overcome using modern technology was the structure of the stone dome roof. While Bähr's original design for an iron ring around the base of the dome is a novel historical artifact in its own right, the stability, resiliency, and longevity of the structure would be better ensured using a more modern structural system than it would be using a replica of the ring, so a modern system was chosen instead, a well-reasoned sacrifice for the Frauenkirche's continued wellbeing. The engineering team chose a post-tensioning system, with tensioned cables secured to the sides of the dome. The tensioning is able to be adjusted during routine maintenance of the building if found to be necessary.<sup>9</sup>

The stone used both originally and for the new stones is sandstone quarried from the Elbe Mountains, and the new stones were carved by skilled stonemasons in a controlled shop environment before being transported to the site. Like the roof structure, a change was made to Bähr's original design in the sizes of stone blocks comprising interior load-bearing posts. Fewer and larger blocks were used, reducing the number of joints and increasing the load-bearing strength of the posts.<sup>2</sup> Mortar types were subject to investigation by the Technical University

Dresden, where experiments were conducted to determine how different mortar formulations would react to weather.<sup>9</sup>

An immense amount of scaffolding was used in the construction. The arches were centered using traditional formwork methods, while a hydraulically-adjustable exterior scaffold protected the site from weather. This adjustable scaffold and roof was specially invented for the Frauenkirche reconstruction and was adjusted upward as the stone structure increased in height.

Of course, one of the original defining features of the Frauenkirche was the Silbermann organ. The reconstructed Frauenkirche would have been incomplete without the organ, and, of course, its sound was considered the most important aspect of its character. Additionally, the original bells, which were made of stone, had rung over Dresden for nearly two centuries. A new organ and bells were commissioned to match not only the appearance but especially the sound that had been recorded before the war. One of the original eight bells survived and was set back in place with the seven replicas.<sup>2</sup> The golden cross on the top of the dome was handcrafted in the United Kingdom by Alan Smith, whose father, Frank Smith, was one of the English pilots who had bombed Dresden during the war.<sup>10</sup>

Lasting over a decade, the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche was complete in October 2005. The church was consecrated by Bishop Jochen Bohl, who spoke, "A deep wound that has bled for so long can be healed. From hate and evil a community of reconciliation can grow, which makes peace possible," and President Horst Köhler remarked that the Frauenkirche had proven its necessity to Dresden in a time when eastern Germany was full of other issues that needed to be addressed. Ludwig Güttler and Eberhard Burger were both named by Queen Elizabeth II as Officers of the Order of the British Empire for their contributions to this project

10. DW Staff. "Landmark Dresden Church Completes Rise From the Ashes." Deutsche Welle. Bonn, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany: Deutsche Welle, 29 Oct. 2005, <https://www.dw.com/en/landmark-dresden-church-completes-rise-from-the-ashes/a-1758986>

of international cooperation and peace.<sup>2</sup>

200 kilometers to the north, on Museum Island in the Mitte Borough in former East Berlin, a major partial-reconstruction project was finished in 2020. The new Humboldt Forum Museum, a merging of the former Ethnological Museum of Berlin and the former Museum of Asian Art, was built with three reconstructed façades of the Berliner Schloss (Berlin Palace), a Prussian city palace that had been damaged in World War II and demolished afterward, wrapped around the otherwise contemporary new museum building.

The original Berliner Schloss was built at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to house the Prussian royal family of the House of Hohenzollern, replacing an earlier palace that had stood on the site since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. However, the full extent of the architectural plan was not realized until 1845, with the construction of its dome. The structure was damaged in World War II and, declared an unwelcome symbol of Prussian militarism, was demolished by the East German government in 1950, replaced with the Marx-Engels-Platz. One single piece of the façade, with a balcony where Karl Liebknecht declared the formation of the German Socialist Republic, was kept intact and incorporated into a new State Council building.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-1970s, the East German government, led by Erich Honecker, constructed the Palast der Republik (Palace of the Republic), a combined parliament building and community center, on the site. At the time, the DDR's cracks were showing, as its citizens were well aware that West Germany had access to more goods and entertainment. Honecker's goal was to introduce a comparable quality of life to communist East Germany and demonstrate the supposed good will of its government. Of course, nobody actually gained any civil rights or free enterprise, and the government became no more magnanimous, but the effect of Honecker's project was enormous. The new facility, designed by architect Hans Graffunder, was considered

state-of-the-art at the time, both structurally and stylistically, and was immediately iconic for its amber-tinted glass curtain walls against white marble panels. Its steel framing was fireproofed using sprayed-on asbestos.<sup>3</sup> The heavily mid-century modern interior was lit with hundreds of globe lamps hanging in a randomized fashion from the ceiling, leading the facility to be nicknamed “Erich’s Lamp Shop.” In addition to the government chambers, the Palast der Republik contained auditoriums and a movie theater, restaurants, cafes and bars, a bowling alley, and shops. The Palast quickly became the center of public life in East Berlin as citizens flocked to the facility for a sense of entertainment and luxury. Of course, the Palast was not appreciated as the symbol of state-managed luxury that Honecker had intended it to be, as the East German populace was still fully aware of their lack of freedom compared to the West, but nevertheless, it made a firm impact on the cultural life of East Berlin.<sup>11</sup>

However, the Palast der Republic’s heyday did not last long. Upon the Reunification of Germany, its asbestos content was assessed and found to be dangerously high. An asbestos abatement was undertaken, and the entire building was stripped down to its steel framing, void of all finishes. Throughout the late 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, the steel hulk stood amid public campaigns relating to its future. The federal government debated and heard arguments about the future of the site for over a decade, eventually resolving to demolish it, deeming it inappropriate for its historically-rich location in Berlin, in addition to being a symbol of authoritarian communism. Large protests for its retention and rehabilitation took place, but were unable to sway the government. The structure was demolished in 2008 and 2009.<sup>11</sup>

A coalition for the reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss was formed by Kathleen King von Alvensleben, an American architect descended from the aristocratic German House of

11. Hohensee, Naraella Ph.D. “*Negotiating the past in Berlin: the Palast der Republik.*” Smarthistory. New York City, New York, U.S.: Smarthistory: The Center for Public Art History, 21 Oct. 2018, <https://smarthistory.org/palast-der-republik/>

Alvensleben, along with the businessman Wilhelm von Boddien. In 1993, their organization, the Förderverein Berliner Schloss e.V. (the Berlin City Palace Sponsoring Association), in partnership with architecture historian Dr. Goerd Peschken and architect Frank Augustin, erected a multi-million-dollar trompe l'oeil mockup of the Schloss's facades using the world's largest scaffolding, supplied by the Thyssen company, and plastic tarps painted in France. This effectively simulated what a reconstructed Berliner Schloss would look like amidst the surroundings on Museum Island, allowing anyone to experience it in person rather than just viewing photographs or renderings. This display helped to solidify support for reconstruction within the federal government, but protests against the demolition of the Palast continued. Hans Graffunder, the original architect of the Palast, actually offered to design a reconstruction of the Schloss's facades with a refurbished Palast der Republik as the interior, but this idea was dismissed.<sup>11</sup>

In 2000, the government and the Berlin Senate formed a commission to decide the future usage of the site. The commission found that a reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss would be favorable to the historic center of Berlin, and in 2002 the Bundestag voted in favor of reconstruction. An international design competition was held to determine the architect for the reconstruction, won by the Italian architect Franco Stella and his concept for enclosing a contemporary museum space within the façade.<sup>3</sup> The museum was decided to become the Humboldt Forum Museum, the new combined location for the Berlin Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art, which had previously been located on the outskirts of the city. However, over time, this decision drew increasing criticism due to its implications about Germany's colonial past. The Schloss was resided in by Prussian monarchs at the same time that

Prussia was embarking on a campaign of colonization and many of modern Germany's African and Asian collections were being removed from their rightful homelands.<sup>12</sup>

Further increasing controversy, the dome atop the Schloss was originally built as a chapel, and inscribed around it is, translated to English, "In the name of Jesus, all that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth should bow down on their knees." At the very top is a gold cross. The chapel was added to the Schloss by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV in retort to public calls for democratic reform, sending the message that he would only answer to God. The decision to reconstruct these elements in particular sparked public protest, which included an effigy of the cross being dumped into the river Spree in 2021.<sup>12</sup>

The reconstruction was delayed due to a temporary budget cut, but had fully commenced by 2015. The Schloss façade was funded privately by the Förderverein Berliner Schloss e.V. while the museum interior was funded by the federal government. The museum facilities were finished and opened to exhibition in December 2020, which was initially virtual due to COVID-19 restrictions. The chapel and cross were finished in 2021. In addition to 19<sup>th</sup>-century artifacts, the museum features contemporary installations by Asian and African artists, which heavily reference Germany's colonial history and its damage to indigenous peoples. The Humboldt Forum Museum's staff has stated that it strives to be the catalyst for public reckoning about colonialism, but the façade of a Prussian palace still makes a jarring and disconcerting pair in the eyes of many Berliners.<sup>12</sup>

The final reconstruction project analyzed for this article is in Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia, which, since the project was announced, has become North Macedonia. It is a landlocked Balkan, post-Yugoslav nation between Serbia/Kosovo, Albania, Bulgaria, and

12. Trilling, Daniel. "Has the Humboldt Forum got it horribly wrong?" *Apollo Magazine*. London, United Kingdom: Apollo, the International Art Magazine, 21 Jan 2022, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/humboldt-forum-berlin-ethnographic-collections/>

Greece. The original land known as Macedonia, the main figurehead of which is Alexander the Great, is almost entirely within modern Greece. This led to a naming and cultural dispute between the newly-established Republic of Macedonia and Greece that prevented the Republic of Macedonia from joining the European Union and NATO. The other complication is that the Republic of Macedonia is, more so than Greek, very largely Slavic and Albanian; the Macedonian language is mutually intelligible with Bulgarian, a South Slavic language written in the Cyrillic alphabet, and Islamic Albanian people comprise a 1/3 minority of the population. The right-wing nationalist party VMRO-DPMNE (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity), in power from 2006 to 2016 but still in existence as a minority party, is anti-Greece, anti-Bulgaria, pro-Russia, and Islamophobic and considers Greek Macedonian history and heritage to be the true history of the present Republic of Macedonia.

The city of Skopje, a compact, mountainside metropolitan area known for being the birthplace of Mother Teresa, was almost fully collapsed by a major earthquake in 1963. Josip Broz Tito, the leader of Yugoslavia at the time, made an appeal for assistance, and, since Yugoslavia was non-aligned, the United Nations funded a rebuilding effort intended to showcase an ideal modernist city plan. Kenzō Tange, a Japanese architect, was hired to lead the project, with a full team of leading modernist architects working below him. Their plan envisioned a circular concept that recalled medieval cities, with an outer wall formed by a residential area and a central court where commerce and transportation would converge. Much of this plan was carried out, but not in full before an economic recession in the 1980s slowed construction.<sup>13</sup> Despite its incompleteness, the modernist rebuilding of Skopje reestablished it as a world

13. Sidzimovska, Ivana. “*After overthrowing its government and changing its name, North Macedonia faces up to the urban crisis in Skopje.*” The Calvert Journal. London, United Kingdom: Calvert 22 Foundation, 29 Apr. 2019, <https://www.calvertjournal.com/features/show/11141/after-overthrowing-its-government-and-changing-its-name-north-macedonia-faces-up-to-the-urban-crisis-in-skopje>

destination of unique brutalist and metabolist architecture.

After the fall of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Macedonia's formation as an independent state, the VMRO-DPMNE came into power, led by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, with the desire to employ a seamless Macedonian national narrative spanning from ancient Greece to the present day. However, Skopje, recently becoming the national capital, clearly did not express the narrative that Gruevski wanted it to express.

In 2010, Gruevski announced Skopje 2014, a reconstruction project that would, in his mind, restore the pre-earthquake glory of the city and bring new attention to his party's national narrative. The estimated cost of the project was, at the time, 80 million euros, to be paid with public funds. The scope of the project was more than just reconstructing buildings from before the earthquake; in fact, most of Skopje 2014 was not focused on actual historic buildings, but rather on new construction. New government buildings and museums were constructed along the Vardar River in a neoclassical style. Neoclassical facades were attached many of the iconic modernist structures around the city square, including five existing government buildings. To emphasize the historical narrative that was being pushed, 73 monuments and bronze statues were sprinkled throughout the city. This included, at the very center, a large statue called "Warrior on a Horse," allegedly depicting Alexander the Great, surrounded by lions, Greek soldiers, and a large fountain. A monument to Philip II of Macedon was built as well. The expense did not end there; a triumphal arch, resembling a smaller Arc de Triomphe, was constructed on the square, and a ferris wheel and a carousel graced the city. The project was originally planned to be finished by 2014, hence its name, but construction did not stop in 2014. Public expenditure on Skopje 2014 had far exceeded the original budget estimate and had reached 600 million euros.<sup>14</sup>

14. "Skopje 2014 Uncovered." Project for Investigative Journalism and Cooperation Between Media and Civil Society - USAID Program for Strengthening Independent Media in Macedonia.  
<http://skopje2014.prizma.birn.eu.com/en>



The public response to Skopje 2014 was contentious from the start and only became more heated. At the beginning, many of the residents of Skopje welcomed the idea of revamping the city's image from the drab concrete of the 1960s, while many residents felt that modernist Skopje held unique importance to the city's culture. As the project continued to reshape the appearance of Skopje, public opinion turned more negative. The city became increasingly alienating to the people who had lived their entire lives in the concrete city. Especially frustrating was the degree to which the narrative of Skopje 2014 was mismatched from the lives of the citizens, with the Slavic and Albanian populations unable to relate to the exaggerated and fabricated Grecian history.<sup>15</sup>

The poor quality of both the architectural design and the construction was also gaining criticism. Because many of the new neoclassical facades were being added onto modernist buildings, their proportionality and scale was dictated by the original modernist facades, not by any historically legitimate neoclassical design, leading to an appearance described variously as “kitschy” and “Disneyland.” While most reconstruction projects throughout Europe make every attempt to use period materials, such as stones from the same quarries, the facades in Skopje used such materials as EIFS stucco board and styrofoam-core moldings. Much of the workmanship has already begun showing signs of mold and other decay.

Political opinion in Macedonia was turning sharply against Gruevski and the VMRO-DPMNE. In 2015, a whistleblower from the Macedonian Secret Police released audio recordings of Gruevski and his associates discussing extensive wiretapping surveillance operations they were conducting against approximately 20,000 people illegally.<sup>16</sup> The recordings also served

15. De Launey, Guy. “*The makeover that's divided a nation.*” BBC News Macedonia. London, United Kingdom: BBC, 30 Aug. 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-28951171>

16. Marusic, Sinisa Jakov. “*Macedonia's Wiretap Whistleblower Hails 'Fairytale' Ending.*” BalkanInsight. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 1 Sept. 2017, <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/09/01/whistleblower-sheds-light-on-macedonia-wiretapping-scandal-09-01-2017/>

evidence that the VMRO-DPMNE were controlling both the electoral system and the justice department. A 2015 investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) acquired copies of the contracts awarded in the project and found that not only were the awards excessive, but many of the contractors are associated with the VMRO-DPMNE.<sup>17</sup>

In response to the newly-revealed abuses of power by Gruevski, protests erupted in Skopje. The protestors were furious about the government's authoritarian overreach, its misuse and apparent embezzlement of public funds, and its hostility toward the Albanian community. Largely peaceful in nature, the protestors fired paintball guns at and graffitied the Skopje 2014 structures, leading to the popular naming of the protests as the Colorful Revolution. The new fountains were filled with soap and anti-government slogans in all of the region's major languages were painted on the streets.<sup>18</sup>

The Colorful Revolution was remarkably successful at changing the government. The protest triggered an early national election, in which the Social Democratic Union party won the majority and took power from the VMRO-DPMNE. Skopje 2014 was quickly halted, with some new buildings never finished, and the new government has started removing many of the statues and monuments. Making amends for past disagreements, the new administration made friendship agreements with Greece and Bulgaria, including the Prespa Agreement, in which Macedonia officially changed its name to North Macedonia and Greece would allow it to join NATO and the European Union. North Macedonia acceded to NATO in 2020 and, as of this writing, is in the process of joining the EU.

17. Jordanovska, Meri. "True Cost of 'Skopje 2014' Revealed." BalkanInsight. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, 27 Jul. 2015, <https://balkaninsight.com/2015/07/27/true-cost-of-skopje-2014-revealed/>

18. Kjuka, Deana. "Macedonia's 'Colorful Revolution' A Palette Of Public Anger." RadioFreeEurope. Prague, Czech Republic: RFE/RL, 22 Apr. 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/macedonia-colorful-revolution-a-palette-of-public-anger/27691237.html>

The legacy of Skopje 2014 is still being debated. Whether it should be fully reversed, kept as it currently appears, or slowly changed over time has not been decided by any authority. However, considering the quality of the craftsmanship and the incompleteness of some of the structures, decisions may come relatively soon.

The four examples of reconstruction projects described in this article teach lessons about how the relationships between citizens and civic reconstructions affect their outcomes culturally and socially. In Warsaw, citizens donated and volunteered to resurrect their sense of cultural and national identity after a deliberate destruction campaign by an enemy power. In Dresden, citizens organized to turn a ruined church into a monument to peace and reconciliation between the formerly warring Axis and Allied states. In Berlin, a partnership between the government and a wealthy interest group removed a major cultural symbol of the former East Berlin and wrapped a new museum in a historic façade that, while historically accurate, conflicted with both the museum's contents and the moral compass of the public. In Skopje, an authoritarian government, hostile to many of the region's ethnic groups and other nationalities, hijacked a familiar cityscape to impose a historical narrative that was dissonant to the citizens' sense of history and culture.

To reiterate from before: reconstruction is a fraught and controversial aspect of the historic preservation field. Will it be a pastiche or a phony? Is a place really being resurrected if it is merely a façade for a modern facility? Does the reconstruction obscure evidence of an important episode of the nation's history or marginalize groups of people who have connections to the site?

Warsaw and the Frauenkirche are places where the organizing and volunteering activity of citizens resolved these issues organically. By taking action, they decided that their sense of

place would be authentic and that the place would resonate with their cultural values. Berliner Schloss and Skopje are places where public wishes were discarded, leaving those issues not fully accounted for.

Reconstruction is inherently a healing process, and as such it must be a healing experience for the people whose lives it impacts. The degree of public involvement in and enthusiasm for a civic historic reconstruction project is the best point by which to evaluate its merit. A project that is primarily politically motivated, ignores the wishes and views of citizens, and/or disregards its own social relevance should be considered questionable and likely to have a negative impact on its community.

In the future, it is likely that reconstruction projects will be undertaken in places such as Ukraine. To ensure the best outcomes for the communities that will be impacted by such projects, it is imperative to engage the public in the decision-making and design process to the greatest extent possible. That is how a reconstruction project becomes a source of joy and pride for communities, cultures, and people.

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