

Reimagining unfinished architectures: ruin perspectives between art and heritage

cultural geographies

2019, Vol. 26(2) 227–244

© The Author(s) 2018

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/1474474018815912

journals.sagepub.com/home/cgj**Pablo Arboleda**

University of Glasgow, UK

Abstract

For the past five decades, hundreds of unfinished public works have been erected in Italy as the result of inconsistent planning and the presence of corruption and organised crime. A third of these constructions are located in Sicily alone, and so, in 2007, a group of artists labelled this phenomenon an architectural style: *'Incompiuto Siciliano'*. Through this creative approach, the artists' objective is to put incompleteness back on the agenda by viewing it from a heritage perspective. This article reviews the different approaches that the artists have envisaged to handle unfinished public works; whether to finish them, demolish them, leave them as they are or opt for an 'active' arrested decay. The critical implications of these strategies are analysed in order to, ultimately, conclude that incompleteness is such a vast and complex issue that it will surely have more than one single solution; but rather a combination of these four. This is important because it opens up a debate on the broad spectrum of possibilities to tackle incompleteness – establishing this as one of the key contemporary urban themes not only in Italy but also in those countries affected by unfinished geographies after the 2008 financial crisis.

Keywords

active arrested decay, critical heritage, demolition, entropy, modern ruins, unfinished architecture

Introduction

In 2004, Alterazioni Video, the group of artists started by Paololuca Barbieri Marchi, Alberto Caffarelli, Matteo Erenbourg, Andrea Masu and Giacomo Porfiri, was founded in Milan, and today, they operate nationally and internationally. Throughout their career, their use of a disconcerting irreverence highlights heritage and artistic conventionalisms through the lens of popular culture. Anthropologist Ivan Bargna, who has occasionally collaborated with the artists, suggests that for Alterazioni Video, art is a medium through which they "bring out the underlying political logic of

Corresponding author:

Pablo Arboleda, School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow, Main Building East Quad., Glasgow G12 8QQ, UK.

Email: Pablo.Arboleda@glasgow.ac.uk

- Sicily', 10 August 2015, <<https://ragpickinghistory.co.uk/2015/08/10/incomplete-futures-giarre-sicily/>> (18 May 2017).
54. Þ.Pétursdóttir, 'Small Things Forgotten Now Included, or What Else Do Things Deserve?' *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 16, 2012, pp. 577–603, p. 599.
 55. C.DeSilvey, 'Palliative Curation: Art and Entropy on Orford Ness', in B.Olsen and Þ.Pétursdóttir (eds), *Ruin Memories: Materialities, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 79–91, p. 88.
 56. H.Lorimer and S.Murray, 'The Ruin in Question', *Performance Research*, 20, 2015, pp. 58–66.
 57. More information available at <<http://www.exibart.com/notizia.asp?IDNotizia=26829&IDCategoria=71>>.
 58. Students' analytical materials and final productions are available at <<http://www.gpspace.org/crossing/>>.
 59. Bonizzoni et al., 'WHITE ELEPHANTS'.
 60. The workshop's complete dossier is available at <<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GM5zLQdtC2j0ghY0c-fnfyAIXQuFLcpW/view?usp=sharing>>.
 61. D.Petrescu, 'Losing Control, Keeping Desire', in P.B.Jones, D.Petrescu and J.Till (eds), *Architecture and Participation* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 42–70, p. 45.
 62. H.Oevermann, J.Degenkolb, A.Dießler, S.Karge and U.Peltz, 'Participation in the Reuse of Industrial Heritage Sites: the Case of Oberschöneweide, Berlin', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 22, 2016, pp. 43–58.
 63. The completed list of workshops and master thesis that have focused on the reuse of Incompiuto Siciliano is available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_4tPt3jKjYWbVdFaFMtTjMwNHc/view>.
 64. D.Dixon, M.Pendleton and C.Fearnley, 'Engaging Hashima: Memory Work, Site-Based Affects, and the Possibilities of Interruption', *GeoHumanities*, 2, 2016, pp. 167–87; C.Lavery, D.Dixon and L.Hassall, 'A Future of Ruins: The Baroque Melancholy of Hashima', *Environment and Planning A*, 45, 2014, pp. 2569–84; M.Gallagher, 'Sounding Ruins: Reflections on the Production of an "Audio Drift"', *cultural geographies*, 22, 2015, pp. 467–85.
 65. C.López Gálviz, N.Bartolini, M.Pendleton and A.Stock, 'Reconfiguring Ruins: Beyond Ruinenlust', *GeoHumanities*, 3, 2017, pp. 531–53.

Author biography

Pablo Arboleda has an architecture background and is a Spanish interdisciplinary researcher whose interest is on how the existence of modern ruins defies assumptions of progress while putting heritage dogmas into question. Within the University of Glasgow, he is a Postdoctoral Fellow funded by the Urban Studies Foundation, and his current project studies the processes by which abandoned buildings are reused as cultural assets while aesthetically remaining like ruins.