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Rebuilding: where, how, when, for whom?

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The Italian architects' debate on the topic of post-seismic reconstruction for fifty years, if not more, has essentially stalled on the question “where and how”. Every earthquake, and there have been several in the last 50 years, is followed by an interminable debate between those who believe it is necessary to reconstruct “as it was, where it was” and those who - using as a pretext an alleged compositional freedom and the need to express *contemporaneity* – believe that we should instead rebuild elsewhere, or with other forms. On the other hand, this debate is evidently entirely contained within the architects' category, which in our opinion seems to want the repression of the real theme underlying the reconstruction of urban fabrics, a theme that we can summarize in the other two questions that the title proposes, i.e. “when and for who”. In short, we must never forget that the earthquake is a tragedy, and that it leaves behind ruins, dead and survivors without roots. The real theme of every reconstruction project is that included in the headlines of the newspapers the day after the earthquake in Irpinia which occurred on November 23, 1980, quoting the commendable words of President Pertini, “be fast”. With each earthquake a phase of emergency begins, and it does not end until the urban tissues have been rebuilt and the people have returned (if that is ever possible) to a normal life. The reconstructions of historical fabrics destroyed by recent earthquakes (Abruzzo 2009, Central Italy 2016) take more than ten years, and as consequence when the reconstruction has finally taken place, many people will have died in the meantime, and many others will have been born elsewhere and will not recognize in that reconstruction any identity value. In short, the reconstruction must begin immediately, that is, as soon as the earthquake swarm has ended. And this must be done with a medium-term planned strategy, which on the one hand guarantees immediate temporary accommodation for the displaced persons, but which in the meantime very quickly, within a maximum of 5 years, gives back to the inhabitants, in one way or another, their homes, their workplaces, their streets, their public spaces and their services (all of which are constitutional rights) thus allowing them to return to normal a life, as much as possible.

The volume by Bordogna and Brighenti, with the preface by the great master who unfortunately passed away recently and prematurely Giovanni Carbone, brings the architects' attention back to the age-old reconstruction pro-

blem, an attention that is never sufficient, and presents us with numerous high-quality illustrations and various design experiments on this theme. In the first part, the volume examines the various reconstruction strategies that have been implemented in the past for the reconstruction after an earthquake, accompanying them with important author's projects. Once again, we cannot fail to mention the project by Gianfranco Caniggia and Francesca Sartogo, Historical-critical research for the reconstruction and restoration of the historic center of Venzone, 1977-1979 (Strappa, 2023) and the Recovery project of the historic center of Teora, 1981-1983, by Giorgio Grassi and Agostino Renna (Capozzi, 2011). But let's examine the dates, 1 year after the Friuli earthquake (1976) Caniggia and Sartogo were already at work, 1 year after the Irpinia earthquake (1980), Grassi was already planning. For the L'Aquila earthquake, which occurred in 2009, today after 14 years, construction sites have not yet started in some smaller towns, but neither have the projects. In the second part of the volume, various high-quality projects are presented which, at different scales, propose the reconstruction of buildings, portions of urban fabrics and entire inhabited centres, as in the case of Amatrice. The volume collects a series of design experiments, conducted as graduation thesis, where for Amatrice, Camerino and Norcia, the authors explore the reconstruction of historical buildings with great care and different strategies, and with formal results worthy of attention. It is here that Bordogna Brighenti's contribution shines, having brought the attention of the faculty of architecture students to the reconstruction project theme for several years, it has contributed meaningfully to avoiding that widespread effect of psychological repression that follows every earthquake, not only as and understandable among the earthquake victims, but also among politicians and above all – and it is even more serious – among intellectuals.

The third part concludes the volume with an anthology of texts by various authors on the reconstruction theme. The book as a whole can be proposed as a reasoned guide to reconstruction, of great use both for professionals and for students of the faculties of architecture and engineering who find themselves drawing up post-seismic reconstruction projects.