*Resilience, cultural heritage, community participation and digital activities:*
*analyzing Shuri Castle's post-disaster strategies*

**Resiliência, patrimônio cultural, participação comunitária e atividades**
**digitais**: analisando as estratégias pós-desastre do Castelo de Shuri

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**Resumo:**

Este estudo analisa as estratégias de recuperação pós-desastre adotadas pelo Castelo de Shuri no Japão, um Patrimônio Mundial da UNESCO, após seu incêndio devastador em 2019. Com base na Teoria da Comunicação de Crise Situacional (SCCT), este artigo explora como a transparência, a participação da comunidade e as atividades digitais podem sustentar o engajamento público e fornecer resiliência cultural durante um período de reconstrução. A análise de conteúdo das comunicações institucionais em seu site oficial, comunicados de imprensa, vídeos e eventos híbridos (online/offline) de 2019 até o início de 2025 - o estudo revela que a adoção da política de "portas abertas" por Shurijo transformou essa gestão de crise em um objetivo coletivo, ao priorizar a transparência culturalmente informada, o conhecimento tradicional e as experiências digitais imersivas usando Realidade Virtual e Realidade Aumentada, a instituição mantém o engajamento da comunidade enquanto reforça a identidade de Okinawa.

**Palavras-chave:** patrimônio cultural; resiliência; Castelo de Shuri; recuperação

**Abstract:**

This study analyzes the post-disaster recovery strategies adopted by Shuri Castle in Japan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, following its devastating fire in 2019. Based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), this paper explores how transparency, community participation, and digital activities can sustain the public engagement and provide cultural resilience during a period of reconstruction. The content analysis of the institutional communications on their official website, press releases, videos, and hybrid (online/offline) events from 2019 to the beginning of 2025 – the study reveals hos Shurijo adoption of the "open-door" policy transformed this crisis management into a collective objective, by prioritizing culturally informed transparency, traditional knowledge, and immersive digital experiences using Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality, the institution keeps the community engagement while reinforcing Okinawan identity.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage; resilience; Shuri Castle; recovery

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## 1 Introduction

Every end of the year there is a poll in Japan to decide the kanji that symbolizes the year that is coming to an end. The winner for the 2011 poll was 絆 (Kizuna), after the big Fukushima disaster which took place in March. According to Noguchi (2012), the most common usage for Kizuna nowadays is to refer to invisible bonds that unite humans. Furthermore, the Japanese Government website puts the concept as the sense of human connections, that can be recognized among people after disasters through the cultivation of the feelings of solidarity and strength to overcome hardship.

This type of connection between humans can be found easily in the context of disaster, not only in Japan, but it can also be a symbol of the ties of humans, their identity, and their heritage. When a disaster takes place in a cultural heritage site there is this sense of loss of something that you cannot put a value into it, as a cultural and historical asset, there is grief from the realization of a change in life. It is a moment of vulnerability. Vulnerability of cultural heritage and its meaning to the society, where there is a moment to choose either to reconstruct or to give it up. From an institution or government perspective, a way to overcome this is to engage the audience in the first scenario, where the reconstruction is unavoidable.

And how do you do it in modern days? The possibilities are infinite with technology and social media so integrated into daily lives.

This paper focuses on the strategies chosen by Shuri Castle to maintain public engagement in the reconstruction of the castle during the almost 10-year closure, as they have chosen an open-door approach to the reconstruction, trying to regain the trust of their community and to expand the public beyond that. This can be a great example for future generations, but it also comes with extra challenges as the balance between public expectations and what it is possible to present and make it true.

The methodology departs from Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), using social media, press releases, reports, documentaries, and website updates as the data source to trace the level of transparency on the 'open-door approach', audience engagement, and educational outreach, aiming for the maintenance of the public interest and trust during the closure period.

## 2 Background: cultural heritage, memory and society

Cultural Heritage is present in most societies with most of us treating it as something guaranteed, or something that needs to be protected by any cost, wanting it to be frozen on time for future generations. This type of view is considered outdated and currently fought against by cultural institutions and researchers, as meaning of a heritage depends on the society's creation, appropriation and reading. The thought of losing it, can be like the loss of a distant parent, it is not found in our daily lives, but it is a possibility with every new day. As part of a multidisciplinary field, the concepts of identity and memory are often the most associated, mostly its intangible façade but also present on the tangible one represented by cultural heritage or assets.

To Candau (2011), a cultural assets that needs to be preserved is described as a mark of the identity represented of a social group. Heritage choices are not accidental, usually they represent a majority or group in power. But there are many examples of heritage being used as a counterpart of the imposition of power over culture, something that was already discussed by Canclini (1999) as the diversity on the relationship between social groups and cultural heritage is result of the uneven participation on the formation of it. Both authors agree that heritage is something that is always changing, renewing it, and being appreciated in different manners.

The pace which cultural institutions like museums, archives, and libraries, change together with their community can be perceived as slower, and the same perception can be putted into the heritage account. But according to Holtorf (2018) the cultural heritage should not be considered as complete legacy, and it is something that is growing rapidly. If we look back couple of decades, the same occurred to the concept of culture, and by consequence the cultural heritage field. In current times, globalization and technology already changed the way in which people perceive, access, and share their heritage. The access to information is literally on the palm of our hand to most of us, in a diversity of contents to different tastes and purposes, specifically when the topic are heritages that exist in contemporary society. On the beginning of the millennia, Bauman (2005) already setted that the current stage of globalization which society was a point of no return, where people has no other choice but to depend on each other and the agreement of the way in which everything can be in a state of vulnerability.

Furthermore, Kobashi and Talamo (2003) point out that the access to information is a fundamental right, even more when the focus is the current information flux part of a global scale, as a cultural asset is created with the objective of satisfy a physical or cultural human need. In other hand, Radice (2014) reinforces the importance of embracing on physical world

something that is inherent to the digital world: the different modalities of participation and visiting experience opportunities. The digital world exists provided a new deck of possibilities to cultural institutions, and some of them take this as an opportunity to explore their position within society and possible discourses, enriching even more the experience of the community within their heritage, and with this paper, the objective is to understand this in the context of a disaster, temporally loss and reconstruction.

## 2.1 Disaster and cultural heritage

On the survey conducted by Iwasaki and Pederzoli (2023) to the project *Our Collections Matter* of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) they observed that some respondents recognized that the grounding to present community and transmission the beliefs, customs, and values comes from their heritage collections, not only that, but there was the indication that if those collections disappear, that might compromise their understanding of self or community, as they promote the sense of belonging, either to a place or a community: "as the past has shaped the present, understanding our contemporary world bears engagement with the past." (Iwasaki; Pederzoli, 2023, p. 1238).

The importance of cultural heritage in society is inherent, it is a link between generations and a representative stepstone for most communities. But another reality of heritage is how delicate it preservation can be, requiring specialized work and community engagement to continue to exist. What would happen when they are destroyed? More often than before, we are having access to new information of heritages being destroyed by disasters (natural or hazardous). Diving deeper into this topic, Castro (2021) arguments that the level of community participation with the Cultural Heritage before a disaster becomes a key factor on the type of response you get after the tragedy happened, when it is possible to recognize the psychosocial resilience bond and the capacity to face challenges. The research conducted by the author in Mexico showed that the responders to the event take singular paths to protect the heritage, as by paying attention to different attributes and having distinct discourse of the same heritage, so the results presented are the national heritage authorities focusing on the big scale monuments and buildings, and the community prioritizing the local sites with the spaces where cultural practices and rituals take place:

> Therefore, robust social interconnections tools, with solid participation tools, and strong ties with cultural heritage assets are key elements to improve resilience and should be not only encouraged but also integrated into institutional frameworks. Furthermore, cultural heritage institutions need to understand how socially assigned values evolve before, during and after disasters, as heritage is the physical representation of a group's history and a container of their collective memory, including what is perceived as a 'catastrophe'. (Castro, 2021, p. 7)

Resilience is a common word associated to cultural heritage too, as some examples are still standing after different types of disasters happened. Cultural institutions should by default strengthen the bond between heritage and their community, as this is one of the only ways to assure the continuity for future generations. Holtorf (2018) shows there is a change on the notions of resilience, having the bigger emphasis on the process in moving forward involving absorption, learning, adaptation and transformation instead of the notion of coming back to a previous state. So, the focus of the institutions should not be to comeback to a time before a disaster, but either take this as an opportunity to expand their presence, as the author states:

> Cultural Heritage should not be seen as a token of the past, now threatened, but as a way of facilitating changes that improve peoples' lives under new circumstances and this enhance cultural sustainability. Cultural heritage that has persisted to the present day can tell powerful stories about transformation over time. The question is not whether some of it is gone, together with the times that are gone, together with the times that are gone but how much of it has developed and adapted to new realities. Cultural heritage is significant in society because it promotes cultural resilience – precisely through the way often highly evident, in which it has been able to adapt and develop in the past (Holtorf, 2018, p.647).

The resilience of a cultural heritage and cultural resilience are under the same umbrella, but are not significantly the same thing, and disasters are a recurrent treat to it. Once the physicality of a heritage is destroyed, the preservation of the intangible significance of what is under recovery (if recovery or reconstruction is possible). The cultural heritage buildings are often considered to be in a vulnerable position within their audience, as it is highlighted by Nishi (2022), and if those institutions have a good social flow during a recovery process, it is possible to guarantee the continuity of it, as also emphasized by Castro (2021) before. In a similar way, Ocón (2021) affirms that the destruction of a cultural heritage site is often irreversible, and acts as an on-going reminder of how fragile can they be and how diverse the threats can happen.

On this paper, the focus will be the fire disaster, because of it irreversibility and how it is often found as a current threat to tangible heritage. As Nassi and Resti (2024) shows in a

article for the magazine arte generale, Nassi (an engineer) states that museums, exhibitions, galleries and libraries are expanding their spaces to a multifunctional ones, with the presence of spaces that increase the need to electrical installations, but areas with no use on historic buildings can also create the conditions for a fire to start. According to him, it is possible to say that fires are a serious risk to people, buildings and contents, and it is important to the institutions to have a clear and adapted to each building emergency plan to cover possible hazards.

One of the solutions to guarantee the continuity of heritage is also to put into place digital technologies, not only as a depository of information, but as an active tool of communication between the cultural institution and the community. The Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) is one of the most important documents which serve as a guide through many of the challenges on the transformation of a physical cultural heritage to something digital. There are many ways to use digital platforms in the cultural heritage post-disaster context, some examples being as a platform for updates, to the preservation of memories or stories, historical findings, tourism information, and others. The digital information can actually be the representation of one more layer of the interaction between the community and their own heritage, and how they approach in their own ways.

## 3 Study case: Shuri Castle's history

Located in a island part of Japan's territory, Shuri Castle's is a symbol of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Kingdom. This cultural heritage complex is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, part of the Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Ryukyu Kingdom, created on the 13th century and being located on the top of a hill with great view to Naha city, the castle is divided into a inner ward and a outer ward. The architecture and decorations of the building is a representation of the exchanges between the Ryukyu, mainland Japan, and China. The castle itself is not obnoxious to changes, since it own role changes several times, serving firstly as the residence of the royal family, and changed to the Okinawa Prefecture, a military post, and a campus for the University of Ryukyu.

The site is also not unfamiliar with destruction and rebuilding, since it is a common occurrence on its long history, but the most known destruction was the one which took place during the battle of Okinawa in World War II. The reconstruction after the battle gained force only after the control of the island was returned to Japan in 1972, according to Mukai (2022), after being given to United States from a long period. Currently, the management of the site is

divided between the National Okinawa Memorial Park Office, the Okinawa General Bureau Cabinet Office, and the Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education.

**Image 1**- Shuri Castle.



Source: Wikicommons/ Photo by CEphoto, Uwe Aranas

In October of 2019, another disaster took place on the grounds of the caslte: a big destructive fire. The flames quickly consumed the wooden structures of the main hall, with nine buildings being destroyed and 391 artifacts lost (Notredame-Shurijo Project, 2019). The recovery quickly started, since Japan it a country with a lot of experience with disasters, with the reconstruction campaign being named Road to Revival Shurijo or 里城復興へのあゆみ . The grounds of the park were not totally closed, so only part of the castle are totally inaccessible to the public.

## 4 Methodology

The methodology applied to this part of the research was a content analysis focused on institutional communication based on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) traced by Coombs (1995,2006,2007), having as data source the Shuri Castle's official website newsletter and archive from 2019 to 2024, as a tentative analysis of the first 5 years of the reconstruction of the castle. By analyzing the institution social media, press releases, reports,

documentaries, and website updates as the data to trace the level of transparency of the information given, audience engagement, and educational outreach, aiming for the maintenance of the public interest and trust during the closure period. Not only text data was analyzed, but also visual content, as images and videos to look for the presence of visual symbolisms (comparison pictures, traditions clothes or artifacts, etc) in a way to emphasize the cultural authenticity of the heritage. Exploring the website with the content analysis lenses can help to identify the frequency of updates, the transparency of the information and current state of the heritage, the multimedia usage, and a possible dialogue with the community.

## 5 Findings

Shurijo have maintained a constant agenda with their events and their content available online. On the first year after the fire, they apologized for the trouble caused by the fire to the local community and other visitors they might have, accompanied of a final message that says they will continue to work hard to further restore the Castle. The language of most contents analyzed for this paper is Japanese, although the website does have a machine translation to English available, the content from the Japanese version of the website is different. This is not a critic to this fact, as their main audience is Japanese, requiring English or other language can be considered a bad type of approach to any heritage. Also, this is an on-going thesis, so there are contents to be analyzed and this is a partial result of the research. But for a better visualization of the activities, they will be divided into two categories: In-person and online.

## 5.1 In-person activities

Only two months after the fire happened, Shuri Castle was already offering lectures to inform the concerned parties how the restoration would take place. On the sixth of December of 2019, the night illumination of the grounds were lighted again, and the services offered before the fire like overview of local history and the culture learning projects were resumed. Something that it is not possible to ignore is the effects of the COVID-19 to the agenda on the years 2020 and 2021, it seems like the main events were not affected, but there were long closing periods. But since the castle is part of a park, the open areas mostly were open.

There are a set of events that primary are not directed linked to the restoration itself, but they are recurrent yearly and all involve the community on a diverse manner. In some occasions during the events, the cidizens that reside in Okinawa receive a discount on their entrance ticket.

The continuity of those events is very important to the local community bond with their heritage, creating a reservation for the dates to attend.

**Table 1**- Yearly events.

| Event name | Translation | Schedule/Content |
|---|---|---|
| 首里城公園 新春の宴 | Shuri Castle Park New Years Party/Banquet (3-days event) | Starting the year, in January there is the cultural performance of the royal new year banquet. In 2020, the schedule was King and Queen Appearance, Uzagaku Performance, Ryukyu Performing Arts Banquet, Free Tea and Sweet Sake, Awamori tasting, New Year's Special Commentary Session Flagship Dance Performance, Satonoko-kun appearance, Shuri Castle Park "Morning Ceremony" Panel Exhibition, and a Shuri Castle message board installed. |
| 園内装飾（フォトスポット）/ 華みぐい 伝統芸能公演 | Photo Spots with flower decoration and Hana Migui Traditional Arts Performance | Takes place usually on the end of February and start of March. |
| 首里手作り市: テーマは「みんなが主役」/ 春の御城まつり～首里手作り市 | Shuri Handmade Market: Theme "Everyone is the main character" /Spring Castle Festival ～ Shuri Handmade Market ～ | Children's Flag event Hatagashira, Aquarium Tent with fish from Churaumi Aquarium, Cooking Chinsuko and Kumpen experience, Craft Experience, Mori Stage Event, and Starry sky observation party. Later, even Dragon boat rowing experience was offered, and the reading of folk Okinawa stories by volunteers, Coral dyeing experience, and others. |

| 首里城公園ＧＷ体験イベント | Shuri Castle Park Golden Week Experience Event | Taken place during the holiday week known as golden week in Japan, with activities like: Plaster painting experience, Lantern making experience, Paper craft experience, Yanbaru vegetable market. |
|---|---|---|

Source: my own, 2025.

According to Shuri Castle own website, Keizuza was the government office responsible for taking care of the family history of aristocrats, and the Yomotsuza was the office responsible for the goods and materials that were used in the Castle, and one of the dances that is often performed during this event is by representing these two. In 2020, the New Year banquet attracted the total of 37,841 participants according to a report shared by the administration of the castle after the event. There were also messages from some audience members shared, they say "Let's unite the souls of Okinawans! I sincerely pray for the reconstruction of Shuri Castle. (1st message) It's sad to see Shuri Castle, which I visited every year, in such a state, but I want to cherish the Okinawan spirit and help with the reconstruction. Fighting Shuri Castle! (2nd message)". A further context about the phrase "Fighting Shuri Castle!", is that fighting is a encouragement expression used in Japanese that is used with the feeling of 'you can do it!'.

There are also events that were made because of the fire, like the 首里城復興祭 (Shuri Castle Reconstruction Festival) that is held every year in honor of the reconstruction of the castle. But the agenda beyond the Festival is also quite diverse, starting with a Comprehensive Fire Training, in which there were two types of training: a daytime training (participants would be responsible to carry out initial firefighting, evacuate visitors, provide first aid and guide emergency personnel and vehicles), and the night shift training (participants would be responsible for initial firefighting, and directing emergency vehicles). What it is a very important type of training to have with the community that lives close to castle, as in a emergency during closing hours they would be the first ones on the scene, and having them trained rises the chance of minimize the damages caused by the disaster.

Going back to the Restoration Festival, the festival was named from the year 2021 and before was addressed as Shuri Castle Festival only, and , and recently involves events in the castle grounds, the surroundings and the main street of Naha during three full days. There are the already traditional cultural performance of the King and Queen appearance, as well as the reproduction of different processions that were held during the Ryukyu period, but most importantly it is the only occasion until now that they offer a special visit inside the restoration

protection building. It is important to note that the restoration is happening with a open-doors approach, where the main hall restoration process can be seen everyday from the transparent walls used on the inside part of the protection construction that surrounds the hall, but you cannot go inside where the workers are doing the jobs. Only during this opportunity, what it can be a very good technique to attract curiosity and strengthen the bounds with whoever participates in it. And a exhibition that is made during some of the events is the panel exhibition that introduces the cultural assets that were damaged after the fire, the current state of the restoration and what are the future efforts that will be taken by. Within the castle grounds, there are explanatory videos, panels and even materials you can touch to better understanding of the audience of the processes that are happening inside the transparents walls.

There are a lot of other experiences offered, only some are shown on this paper. Other examples of events that involves directly the community are examples like the photo contest held in 2024 with the thematic Castle Memories was realized by Shuri administration, and it had the total of 170 photos submitted, with ten winners the contest had old pictures dated from 1992 and more recent ones that were reviewed and selected by the staff.

The Shuri Castle Main Hall Restoration Construction Special Open Event is also one of the most important events held yearly since it started to be held in 2023 with a special opportunity to learn directly from the carpentry team and to go inside the transparent walls. In the following year, the event expanded even further to give to the audience more experiences inside the reconstruction works, like to be able to join the Miyadaiku carpenter into their activities, to go inside the transparent walls for the last time before the coloring process starts, to join a Miyadaiku carpenter into their activities, a roof tile experience where you can learn about the mechanism of roof restoration that does not use any plaster, and a tile pattern craft experience where you can make small items with clay using the mold engraved with the tile pattern of Shuri Castle's Seiden. It is worth to notice that most of the techniques used on the restoration details are following traditional techniques, or adapted traditional techniques when the original cannot be fully followed. There are also partnerships that were created to help the restoration, as the Shuri Castle Reconstruction Charity Cycling Event or the Coke-on Ticket event, where you get a free drink from coca-cola vending machines by using the app Coke-on and inserting the code in the ticket you receive after spending more than 1000 yen on the shop, and others that are more focused on the digital events and content, which it will be addressed next.

## 5.2 Digital activities

The solutions found for the limits of physicality were present in the digital platforms. The diversity of activities available is as impressive as the in-person ones, and sometimes even providing more insights and information. The team has embraces the usage of different types of technologies and platforms like the Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), 3D models, social media posts, videos, documentaries, and a very updated website. There are an activity to almost every type of public (also important to address here, that most of it are in Japanese but there are some available in other languages).

Starting on the Youtube Channel of Shuri Castle, there you can find live streams, produced videos that includes interviews with the professional involved on the restoration, what type of work they do, important progresses made into the restoration, and others. The promotional video posted in February of 2025 about the completion of the Main Hall restoration in 2026 alone counts with impressive 193,000 views in only two weeks on the platform, and also a popular series of videos is the one with title 首里城正殿に会いたくて (translated to I want to see the Shuri Castle main hall) which includes different types of content, going from recording from the paths and services offered, different staffs perspectives, food, exhibitions, and views from inside the restoration area and outside. The videos often starts with the greeting 'Haitai' or 'Haisai' that are Okinawan greetings. The channels has videos with different point of views of the castle (even drones images), lectures given by specialist, volunteering activities held on the castle, and others. The Kiyari Procession, Traditional Procession, and one of the ceremony that took place on other festivals were also live streamed on the official youtube channel.

The castle also made usage of different VR and AR experiences during these 5 years of restoration, like a traveling mystery-solving event that you solve riddles about Shuri Castle and Okinawa (AR), a VR experience of the music game "Nidou Takiuchi" where you can try the music game using VR goggles, the VR experience where you can enjoy 360-degree high resolution images of the castle before the fire, and most recently (this is available without need to be in the Castle), there is the VR experience of the reconstruction sight inside the transparent walls, hosted on the matterport website in January 2025, you can see the progress of the wood work and ceiling.

Also, in 2025, a new experience was released, with the name 'Shuri Castle Collection' or '首里コレ'. No downloaded needed, this is an web-site application where a visitor can

collect virtual medals during their visit in the castle and win drink vouchers, meal discount coupons, special experiences, and others by scanning the QRCode available in different areas of the park. What it is a good idea to make the visitors explore the totality of the are available, not only the Main Hall. Another app that is available is the audio guide for the park, you need to download it, but app is free and is available in Japanese, English and Chinese.

In another hand there are also the experiences that are provided outside the park and the website, by partnership with other companies and platforms. One of the first partnerships was the Our Shurijo, this project was conduced by professional, academics, and students with the objective to develop compute algorithms and high quality images and models to help with the reconstruction (Shurijo Website, 2020). The website is still available, and there are different 3D models to explore, going from objects of the collection to the full main hall. Outside of that, the most recent 3D virtual experience was made at the Fortnite Software (an open-world online game from Epic Games where you can create your own map) by the Asihibi Company, named "Shuri Castle Parkour" as part of the Virtual Okinawa Project, the same project which release the Metaverse experience of Shuri Castle years before. On both experiences you can explore the outside of the main hall, and interact with characters and mascots, while getting information about the castle history and symbols.

Outside of the 3D exploration type of experience, there is also a virtual exhibition on the Google Art & Culture platform, the page which was hostel by the Okinawa Prefecture, shows two places for visiting, one that it is the digitalization of the space when the restoration first started named 'A Virtual Tour of Shurijo Castle' and the other is a 3D model constructed from pictures sent by 3000 volunteers, linked with memories of some of them.

**6 Discussion**

The analysis of Shuri Castle's post-disaster strategies offers great insight into the interplay between cultural heritage resilience, community participation, and crisis communication. Grounded in the SCCT, the findings showed how transparency, hybrid engagement, and culturally informed narratives can sustain the public interest during the reconstruction efforts. Putting the castle recovery as a collective achievement rather than a technical restoration, it was possible to perceive how the institutions objectives aligns with the SCCT strategy of emphasizing on the reputation management and the stakeholders inclusivity, fostering between the audience a sense of shared responsibility.

Another great success on the open-door approach adopted by the castle relies on the SCCT recommendation for organizations to rebuild the audience trust after a crisis. For instance, the short time to resume the activities on ground, the apologies for the trouble caused, and acknowledging the community loss of a cultural asset with the reinforcement of the commitment to the recovery. Going even further and integrating traditional practices both on the events and the restoration itself, helps to anchor the cultural authenticity of the heritage site, transforming the crisis into an opportunity to reaffirm Okinawa identity.

The adoption of a hybrid model of engagement – combining in-person event with digital activities – reflects on Holtorf's (2018) view that cultural heritage resilience lies in adaptive transformation rather than a static preservation. The usage of digital tools like the VR reconstruction and experiences, AR Rally, and 3D modeling not only mitigated the temporary physical inaccessibility but consequently allowed a bigger democratized type of participation, enabling global audiences to virtually visit the castle and get informed about its reconstructions, in alignment with Castro (2021) argument that pre-disaster community engagement enhances resilience by inserting the cultural heritage into daily social practices.

While the outcome of this analysis are mostly positives, there are still challenges. The predominance of the Japanese-language content can risk the exclusion of international audiences, since it is a recognized World Heritage by UNESCO, although the prioritizing of local stake holders is understandable. There is also the need to be careful with the digital content, as the digitization objective is to complement, not replace, the values that are part of this heritage. But by framing the fire as a shared trauma, the institution took leverage of the Kizuna concept to mobilize collective action and interest. This aligns with Iwasaki and Pederzoli (2023) observation that heritage loos threatens community identity, making its restoration a act of memory preservation, and events like the Reconstruction Festival, photo contest, cycling, etc., have the power to transform passive observers into active, putting the revival of the castle in a personal and collective narrative.

## 7 Conclusion

The outcomes of this research were surprising for the amount of work that was putted in practice by the Shuri Castle during the five years of closure, they found an answer to balance the restoration progress and traditional techniques authenticity with community expectations by investing on active and passive types of participation. The usage of Okinawa explicit greetings, to costumes, cultural performances, local foods, and others. There are the valorization

of the audience, the castle, and the staff involved on the restoration. And it is also possible to notice the role of digital media in democratizing the heritage access during closure, that can be used as an example for future institutions that face a similar disaster. The restoration timeline, between the emergency stabilization to the reopening plans are very clear to the stakeholders, making a good use of the communication channels available. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of the applied strategies on the community and their bonds with the heritage, additionally by investigating how SCCT adapts into non-western context, where the values of the collective can be more important then individual ones. In conclusion, Shuri Castle's reconstruction exemplifies how cultural heritage can serve as a dynamic medium to cultural resilience, uniting past, present and future through shared purposes.

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