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**MONUMENT PRESERVATION IN HISTORICAL SITES**  
(Entry of new building work)

*After political and social changes in 1989 historic sites in Slovakia are coming under a considerable pressure of new building activities. New design can be a danger for the appearance of our historic sites, but it can be also an effective method of architectural heritage protection and monument restoration. It is important to accept that designing in historic sites requires a different approach in comparison to common architectural design. Sufficient financial resources and quality guides and regulations are important, but the quality of a final piece of architectural work depends on cultured manners of investors and talent of architects.*

#### Introduction

Historic areas are progressively coming under threat of new building activities, not only in conservation areas, but also at historic houses, gardens, and archeological sites. The impact of new building activities and new design is noticed, not only at nationally important sites like World Heritage sites or Monument reserves, but also in small conservation areas and remote archeological localities with lower level of legislative protection. Social and cultural relations have changed, and history now has a high profile in peoples minds. The increased interest in Slovak history has led to a growth in the number of visitors to these areas. This in itself has raised the need for new buildings, but there are also other factors of pressure: visitors expect better facilities and higher comfort at the sites, interpretation for foreign tourists, specified information, cafés, and retail outlets. All of this has made historic areas especially historic cities a commercial commodity. Investors realise the potential of investment in „history“, not only through number of visitors and retail profits, but also through an increase in rent returns for commercial developments located close to attractive old buildings in historic places.

The topic of my thesis is the monument restoration of public areas in historical city areas. This essay, aims to outline some of the problems of new design and building activities in historic sites. Recent design activities in historic sites could become a useful and vital help in monument preservation and protection. It is also a method, which can be used in restoration of public areas in historic city structures. The essay discusses five aspects:

- . The conservation field
- . Preservation or restoration
- . Market forces
- . Guides and regulations
- . New building work.

Nowadays, problems of new design in historic sites are widely discussed. There are different approaches to this problem between the specialists in the field of architectural heritage preservation. This article aims to be a contribution to the discussion.

#### The conservation field

Why do we value historic sites? It is self-evident that they are old, but what is it about being old that gives them value? Their primary importance is that they are an evidence of history, a source of information, a record, a primary source for research. They are a record of history that should stay available to be experienced by future generations.

It is only in the last thirty years that all this aspects of preservation have entered into conservation debate. We should realise that debates to this topics form an important part of the decisions that have to be made in the field of conservation. Topics such as marketing of history, control of visitor numbers, recognition of the special characteristics of each site, whether to preserve as found or restore to a specific period, all these need to be resolved for each site before any of the technical steps can be taken. The answers to the technical questions like: should the historic roof frame be substituted by a new one, or should the nineteenth-century paving be taken out of the medieval St. Martin's Cathedral, or should the ruin of the Bratislava Water Tower be rebuilt or conserved, depend on the overall strategy adopted for the specific site.

ICOMOS Charter of 1966 is a usefull base for many solutions. Representatives from many countries met in Venice in 1964 to set down „the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings“ These principles became the 1966 Charter. Following are some important articles from this Charter :

Article 1 - The concept of an historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work, but also the urban or rural setting in which is found evidence of a particular civilisation, a significant development or a historic event....

Article 3 - The intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of an art than historical evidence.

Article 9 - The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for the original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where



conjecture begins, and in this case, moreover, any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp....

Article 13 - Additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional settings, the balance of its composition, and its relation with its surroundings.

We may ask: What is the relationship between architecture and history, what is the role that the newly built architecture can play in preserving our heritage, and what is the role of history in the present architecture? No doubt that it is a two-way process. The communication between new and old should be of reciprocal character.

### Preservation or restoration

The primary objective of monument restoration should be to preserve the fabric as it is found, to undertake the preservation without taking the historic fabric to pieces, or to replace only minimum amount of fabric that needs repair or conservation. Although new building work can be considered as a record of the past, it is no longer the actual historic fabric, the duplicate is not the same as the original and should not be presented as such. Article 12 of Venice Charter states:

*„Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time, must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.“*

However, there will be occasions where it is appropriate to take out an element of the existing fabric and replace it with something new. The debate as to whether to preserve as found or restore with new construction has always to address the question: why does the existing fabric have to be disturbed?

We've got an array of techniques available to consolidate and protect old fragile fabric. However, such consolidation is not always practical, and a duplicate or a new building part may be necessary.

### Market forces

Financial resources of course, play an important part in the decision-making process. This is an important aspect in the number of historic buildings which are „at risk“ through neglect. There are 9518 real estate National Cultural Monuments in Slovakia and over 30 % of them are at risk. These may be lost and with them much of the Slovak's famous historic townscape. Some of these buildings could be saved by the use of new building work.

It is necessary to recognise the opportunities, that could be opened

up for a more economic use, change of function or through additional accommodation built alongside the existing buildings. This approach requires amongst other things, a clear understanding of the design criteria involved. An awareness of design parameters allows to enter a new architecture into historic sites.

### Guides and regulations

We need a method to control the pressure of new building activities in historic areas. The existing guides and regulations could be grouped into three categories: legislative documents, design guides and related reading.

Our basic legislative document is Act No. 49/2002 – about the preservation of monuments. In this document are specified legislative levels for monuments safeguarding. On the highest level are monuments inscribed in the World Heritage List, then Listed buildings, Monument reserves, Monument zones and finally, on the lowest level, are Protective areas. The executor of this legislative is Monument Bureau under the Ministry of Culture. The most common form of design guide is that produced by regional and local planning departments. There are many versions of these documents covering the sort of problems that occur throughout the country. The problem of these documents is that they vary in quality.

We tend to underestimate the importance of the related reading. It is better to have a well-informed team, including the client, rather than a tight system of control. Related reading includes all books that refer to architecture at historic sites and other related topics.

Rather than restrictions, the guides should be seen as challenge. The architect should remain independent, but he should accept values of the historic setting.

### New building work

We can start this section with a question: What architectural period should the newly built objects in historical environment represent? Should it be an evidence of our time, or should it look like a historic building? Architects should recognize that architectural heritage is made up of layers of time, periods and styles. They should be aware, that each layer has its specific features that have been left for future generations. The street scenes of many of our historic cities demonstrate this notion. The Main square in Bratislava, for example, is surrounded by buildings of various styles from gothic period to 20<sup>th</sup> century. It would be natural to continue in this process. For our society it means that new architectural composition „must bear a contemporary stamp“(Venice charter). There is, however, a current view about the new architecture which seeks to hide the time of its origin. This current view is based in the feeling that pretending of the building's historical roots is polite.



*Something is wrong? - Kremnica*

It is the character of each historic site that plays the crucial role. Adding a new building into a street scene of mixed periods is, from a historical point of view, straightforward. It is an adding of new colour to a varicoloured pallet. Of course, the architectural difficulties of scale, size and some other factors still have to be carefully handled.

Adding a new piece of architecture to a historic site that is made up of one single style of architecture presents different criteria. The modern insertion would be more striking. The specialists together with public have to decide if a disruption of the existing homogeneous structure of a set of buildings in the area is justified. There are solutions to the problem of disrupted homogeneous structures. Gap sites in a homogeneous street or square should be either left without any building activity or can be used for replica buildings. Another approach to these homogenous, single-style sites is an attempt for a design that is related to the used style.

There is a danger when undertaking building work at historic site that the project is reviewed the same way as any other building project. However, it is important to recognise, that buildings and public spaces at historic sites require a different approach. Architecture for conservation demands a specific attitude. These projects are special and they specifically require additional time, additional funds and particular skills. It is a proces in which Carchitects have to co-operate with historians, archeologists, art-historians, civil engineers and other related professions.

## Conclusion

Historic buildings and monuments, together with their settings and landscapes are part of the built enviroment. They are our collective cultural heritage. Architectural design at historic sites which is expected to be inspiring and sensitive, requires energy and enthusiasm. There are many obstacles to overcome: decision making, design codes, town planning requirements, building regulations, fire precautions, safety requirements, that have to be included in the design process. The ways of monument restoration are not simple, but there is always a solution.

## References

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