

Martina Patschová

CONDITIONS OF USE OF THE COMPLEX STYLE RECONSTRUCTION

Introduction

„Unfortunately there are still many artists, especially architects, who consider an old art to be their enemy. ... They see in this art a rivalry for their own works...“

Max Dvorák

The topic of the thesis is an area of use of the complex reconstruction of monuments to a particular architectural style.

(Note: It is difficult to translate the special Slovak term „úplná slohová rekonštrukcia“ into English and express what the term means in Slovak. Therefore, for the purpose of the thesis a working term „complex style reconstruction“ is going to be used. Under this term we mean the following: Style reconstruction methods are used in order to preserve historic architecture when it is possible to scientifically support its individual style modifications over the course of time and when we want to preserve the existing valuable originals or amend missing parts of the monument by repeating the original pieces. Complex style reconstruction is used when we renovate an exceptional and rare monument. The following aspects are usually discussed:

- it is a typical representative of an individual type of building, but the purification from younger style period alternations must not cause a loss of its values,*

- there is an absence of style architecture within the integrated urban structure,*

- the society has an eminent interest in preservation of the monument in order to preserve genius loci of a particular site, etc.*

It could be a complex style reconstruction of a detail, the whole building or urban structure. This method is allowed only in the cases when we have enough deep scientific knowledge of the monument - archive materials, researches, photos, drawings.)

Since man has started to preserve the works done by our predecessors it is possible to speak about purposeful conservation,

interpretation and presentation of the values of cultural heritage. The originally utilitarian attitude towards the monuments has continually changed into the scientific discipline. Man has started to speak about conservation of authentic monuments. Originality and genuineness have started to be the very important aspects of the monument conservation.

The problems of conservation of the authenticity are complex. Cultural, social, economic, and political level of a particular society have also a great influence on the quality of the society's relationship to monuments. These aspects are reflected also in the conceptions concerning the monument conservation. Methodology, as well as the individual methods of preservation were changed and developed during the centuries. The issue of authenticity has had different meanings throughout every period of mankind. For example, in the 19th century a method of pure restoration was very popular. The date of origin of the monument was a top priority. Except for the restoration the monument was artistically finished within the meanings of an assumed style (e.g. the Gothic). At present time, the experts on monument preservation have different approach to the authenticity. It represents a separate category in the process of monument's evaluation. The term of authenticity is gaining a greater significance century-by-century, day-by-day. The Nara Document on Authenticity, adopted in Japan in 1994, is an evidence of the rising importance of the authenticity and the need of its conservation.

In our times, an architect has a wide range of methods of monument preservation to his/her disposal. A group of reconstruction methods is one of the subgroups in restoration methodology. A historic original with its authenticity is the most important object for that subgroup. The aim is not to destroy the original while the listed building is being restored.

One of the methods of monument reconstruction is also a method of complex style reconstruction.

Style reconstruction plays an important role when the authentic values of the monument have to be preserved. It is a fundamental scientific method which aims to preserve originals from the smallest elements on the building, through the whole building till the vicinity of the monument (an urban structure). This method enables an appropriate future use of the listed building on the contrary to the method of conservation. When conservation is used majority of historic original elements are preserved on one hand, but on the other hand, the monument becomes a dead museum piece. Style reconstruction is one of the most demanding methods of monument restoration therefore it is not popular among the architects. It requires a deep scientific study of all available written materials about the monument. Using this method it is the architect who bears a great responsibility for the conservation of the monument's authenticity. He/she takes responsibility for:

- restoration of the monument to a particular period of its development, with an awareness that other phases of monument's evolution could be destroyed,
- final composition of the restored building,
- limits of usage of the original element's copies,
- adequate solution of the layout with a regard to a proposed function,
- suitability of used materials and techniques, etc.

Harmonious application of all demands is difficult especially in our times. The commercial interests of investors, superficial knowledge and non-adequate education of the designers in the area of monument conservation and preservation, the lack of legal regulations, etc substitute a respectful approach to the monument.

The aim of the thesis

Some of the mentioned problems lead to a need of „a new handbook“ for architects (designers) who would follow the instructions when designing a reconstruction of a specific type of an architectural monument.

The aim of the thesis is to answer the questions:

- What kind of monument is the best to use complex style reconstruction for?
- When and how should the designers decide for this special procedure?
- What kind of values can be saved or, on the other hand, destroyed when the complex style reconstruction is used?

The structure of the thesis

Next part of the thesis will focus on the specification of the type of the architectural monument that will be examined in the thesis. The approach to restoration of each kind of listed building is totally different. Therefore a group of Slovak manor houses and town palaces will be chosen for the purpose of the PhD thesis. Both two types of buildings have kept their constant character (impressive, residential, and sometimes religious function) for a long period of their existence. Majority of the manor houses and town palaces underwent complete style modifications, e.g. from the Renaissance appearance to the Baroque one. But the function was preserved without great changes. Thanks to that unbroken continuity in the function and complex renovations, the manor houses and town palaces are one of the most complex sources of the authentic historical original elements. Due to the historic written or picture materials experts are able to realise the exact appearance of these buildings in each period of their history. That is why the complex style reconstruction could be used especially on this kind of listed buildings.

A progressive shift in precise elaboration of the thesis could not be reached without knowledge of everything what was written and done in the area of monument conservation and preservation till the present time. Therefore one of the chapters will deal with a brief survey of the terminology and methods of monument restoration. The aim of the first part is to explain the special terminology pertinent to the monument preservation. It is essentially important because poor understanding of individual terms can cause a lot of misunderstandings when deciding for the method of preservation and successively the loss of the valuable authentic elements. For example, single terms such as conservation, repair, reconstruction, renovation, and alteration

represent individual methods of restoration. They differ in the extent of the intervention to the monument. Therefore it is inevitable to specify the content of each method that could be used.

The second part of the chapter will concern the brief development of methods of monument restoration. The sense is not in a mere enumeration of methods. The emphasis will be especially on the aspects that have caused continual changes in the attitude of society towards monuments as it is mentioned in the introduction. Also actual conditions of use of each monument preservation method will be mentioned. It is essential because of specific usage of every method in different time periods. At the same time it is important to stress that it is impossible to determine precisely the borders of each method's use. They are usually used in mutual combination. The final strategy of renovation is named according to the prevailing method. The choice of method is individual. It depends on individual building. Generally it is possible to say that basic reasons for the method selection are:

- monument values (they are the subject of preservation),
- original and proposed functional usage of monument (suitable use of building and its integration into life),
- technical and structural conditions of the building.

In the next part of the thesis I would like to focus on complex style reconstruction, its development under the influential factors and present conditions of use. Use of copies, which is a specific case of the style reconstruction, will also be discussed here. The copy is used when it is necessary to replace an original piece of the disappeared element, the whole monument or the whole urban structure. I will also examine here:

- when the copy is justified in the historic environment,
- what would be a function of the copy after the reconstruction has been finished,
- what extent of knowledge should an architect have when he/she decides for a copy,
- an extent of general social interest to reconstruct a disappeared phenomenon (structure),

- the way the copy will be elaborated so that it does not get a false interpretation of monument values.

In the following parts of my thesis I want to explain how will the chosen examples be collected and evaluated according to a specified system. The sense of this work is to use the research results and to formulate the principles of the use of the style reconstruction. From a large group of manor houses and town palaces roughly twenty examples will be selected. They will be added to the paper in the form of catalogue cards. There will be basic information about the building, its brief history, state of repair before renovation, realised observations and researches, original and proposed function, and all other necessary information. Then the examples will be evaluated according to a defined system. Every object has its own uniqueness, which has to be respected, protected, and correctly presented. There will be all relevant inputs included before renovation can start. These inputs are: researches, proposals for monument renovation elaborated by the Institute for monuments, financial prospect of investor and his relationship to the monument (cultural consciousness), technical, technological, and material facilities of the period when the monument was renovated, architect's professional qualities, etc.

Finally I will evaluate all analyses and specify the positive and negative interventions on selected buildings. All obtained information will be discussed with other specialists, e.g. art historians, architects, and representatives of construction firms. On the base of this co-operation and synthesis of all gathered knowledge the fundamental principles of use of complex style reconstruction with possibilities of further elaboration in the future will be elaborated.

Relevant literature in English

From a great amount of books referring to monument conservation in English I have chosen the book ***Conservation in the Built Environment*** by R. D. Pickard.

The book takes a global approach by dealing with all aspects of the built heritage, from principles, policy and legislation to conservation

philosophy, project management, financial and appraisal issues.

From a wide spectrum of conservation problems dealt in this book I have decided for two chapters, which examine the principles of repair and conservation as well as conservation projects. On the case studies the chapters allow to compare an approach towards monument conservation in our country and in the United Kingdom (UK) such as legislation and development of conservation philosophy from historical and current perspectives.

Having read this book it is possible to ascertain what both countries have communal and on the other hand how their attitudes to the monuments differ. Having omitted similar historic development from the purist restoration of ecclesiastical buildings in the 19th century through the conservation of the ruins, experts in both countries have reached similar opinions. They continue in a debate whether it is better to restore, or repair by providing new sympathetic replacement designs to replace the lost features into the historic building. The basic ideas are the same:

- a conservation policy must be established for each conservation project whether it involves repair or alternation work,
- the certain basic principles of conservation philosophy must be respected to ensure that „the significant archaeological, historic, social, and architectural values“ of a particular building fabric and environment are retained,
- it is necessary to emphasise a role of constant studying, development, and improvement of ways of putting the policy of various conservation societies into practice through an advice, teaching and casework,
- the objective of a repair should be preservation of the building and it may then allow for long-term use either for the purpose for which it was designed or for a new use which may be appropriate to its character,
- historic buildings should not be used for experimentation
- „minimum intervention“ is a key principle in conservation work,
- no repair work should encroach on the original fabric in a manner which diminishes the authenticity of a building,
- no repair work should be carried out until a full understanding of a building's history has

been achieved (particular architectural and historic qualities, any repairs and alternations carried out over time, a record of a building, analysis of conditions of the structure and materials, etc.),

- repairs should be carried out in a simple and „honest“ manner, matching existing materials and methods of construction or by accepted techniques appropriate to historic buildings,
- replacement of the past repairs, which may form part of the intrinsic history and character of the building, simply for cosmetic reasons may create a „forgery“, particularly if new work is artificially distressed,
- there are problems with extreme cases of façadism in both Slovakia and UK,
- repair and alternation work should not prevent the future re-evaluation of a building. Thus the concept of „reversibility“ may be an important factor to consider where, for instance, a new use is required to rescue a building at risk,
- in both countries there are some institutions which continue to argue against the reproduction of „worn or missing parts“ even when there is archaeological evidence for their replacement (except in the case of very small-scale items). Official advice accepts that particular items, which are crucial elements of the original design or structural significance, may be re-instated when a sufficient evidence for accurate replacement exists. Speculative reconstruction is unlikely to be justifiable, where a building has been demolished, the restoration should be carried out where appropriate evidence is available,
- in any case, where restoration or reconstruction is proposed its relative merits should be considered according to accept conservation philosophy and policy.

It is quite understandable that except the same opinions and approaches towards monument preservation there are many differences between our countries. It comes from a different cultural, social, economic, and political background of each country:

- the Society for the Protection of Ancient Building (SPAB) in the UK runs specialist repair courses for craft workers and building professionals and produces a number of *Technical Pamphlets* and *Information Sheets* on conservative repair and

technical procedures relevant to historic buildings - in Slovakia there is a limited number of relevant literature and the courses for professionals are organised especially thanks to the volunteers from the Institute for Monuments and the Department of Monument Preservation and Design in Historic Sites (DMPDHS) at the Faculty of Architecture in the forms of short seminars, summer workshops, etc.

- there are now a number of universities and colleges running courses in traditional building skills and repair and conservation work in the UK - in Slovakia DMPDHS is the only legal institution which provides education concerning monument conservation in a form of Master degree studies and various workshops for students,

- there are problems with using a special terminology, especially when some specialised texts are being translated - on one hand each term has a special content in each country, on the other hand there are special terms used just in our monument conservation,

- the Venice Charter is adopted in both countries, but in the UK it is observed in a large scale,

- government's approach to the monument restoration financing is remarkably different; in the UK, on the basis of the feasibility study, there is a possibility to obtain a state financial contribution or the restorer is exempted from paying the taxes for several years.

Except for the mentioned similar and different attitudes and activities in the field of monument conservation, reading this book provides knowledge on some „specialities“ which are not typical for our country. For example, there are now over 100 architectural salvage outlets in England offering so called „second-hand“ materials, which could be used when the historic building is being repaired. The outlets comprise two basic forms. First, some dealers specialise in the trade of architectural antiques such as doorcases, chimneypieces, and statues. Secondly, demolition salvage merchants collect re-usable materials such as tiles, bricks, and skirting boards. Many of these companies are legitimate traders. But this business attracts also disreputable traders. The acquisition of materials for repair/ reinstatement purposes from such sources may be

acceptable, as long as other building have not been „cannibalised“ legally or illegally. On one hand it is a good source of traditional materials, on the other hand a large number of second-hand materials may be defective, or damaged in transport, or cleaned in an inappropriate manner before sale, or re-used in inappropriate content. There is a big difference between our country and the UK - in Slovakia when there is no original piece available for restoration it is replaced by a copy or a different shape, but in no case it is replaced by a piece from a different historic building.

Book's Contribution to my Thesis.

After reading two chapters it is impossible to become an expert on both Slovak and English monument conservation. The chosen chapters allow just a gross comparison of the basic philosophy and principles of repair and conservation in the UK and Slovakia, as well as comparison of the special terms. The obtained knowledge helps to define briefly what is positive or negative in both countries from the monument conservation viewpoint, what could possibly be implemented from English experiences into our methodology. The book has also indicated some particular things that are more elaborated in Slovakia (e.g. methodology with a large number of conservation methods which respect uniqueness of each historical building). As the greatest contribution of the book I personally consider references to other literature, which could be helpful for elaboration of my PhD. thesis.