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L.P. Kholodova*Doctor of Architecture, Professor, Ural State University
of Architecture and Art, Ekaterinburg*

FROM “URBAN HERITAGE PRESERVES” TO CONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Abstract: Numerous concepts and theories have been developed concerning the conservation of architectural historical heritage. Given the recognition that the concept of “view of the world” is changing, the scientific community is recognizing that the “view of values” concept is also changing. This means the process of historical architectural heritage conservation itself is undergoing transformations. The issue of architectural heritage conservation should now be considered on various levels: whole world, country, region, city, borough, and neighborhood. Moreover, the issue of historical architectural heritage conservation should be consistent with the latest globalization concepts.

Keywords: historical architectural heritage conservation, globalization, architectural heritage research methodology.

Numerous concepts and theories have been developed concerning the conservation of historical architectural environments. Given the recognition that the concept of “view of the world” is changing, the scientific community is recognizing that the “view of values” concept is also changing. This means that the process of historical architectural heritage conservation itself is undergoing transformations. Whereas previously cities identified separate heritage conservation sites and listed objects as monuments of architecture, which could not be reconstructed or, sometimes, even repaired, a new strategy of architectural heritage conservation is now emerging based on a socially oriented methodology involving comprehensive study of the historical architectural environment. This methodology should be a “live” and democratic one (Baranova, 2006).

The issue of architectural heritage conservation should now be considered on various levels. There are sites which present value for the whole world, being important milestones in the evolution of the humankind and its culture. I argue that the famous Acropolis in Athens is a monument of world value, and it is the whole world that should be responsible for its conservation rather than Greece alone.

The conservation of architectural and historical sites belongs to the priorities of sustainable development for any residential formation. Architectural memory is one of the most important ingredients of city’s or country’s identity. The majority of major human settlements are experiencing the problem of strained relationships between the “old” and the “new”. Historical sites are typically found in central areas of the cities. Their reconstruction may become a vital issue. Combination of historical buildings with new structures is a normal thing in contemporary architectural design practice. The problem is that often doubts arise concerning the conservation of a building and decision to demolish it for erecting a functionally justified facility which may be more important for the functioning of the city. This is an objective problem rather than being the malicious intent of a local authority or agency. Let me try and provide some support to this statement.

The world keeps reconsidering its values. Sometimes a listed site may be found to be of secondary value when, for example, its original has been discovered and this listed site is recognized as being a copy of the project located in another geographic locality. The value of the

site thus decreases, as would a copy of a famous painting do. We put value to architecture sites by rank: world, Russia, region, city, and locality. At any specific moment, the significance of a site may be reviewed, its value reconsidered, the originality challenged, etc. This is normal because the “view of the values” may change. Each of us may recall how our view of historical architecture changes when we come back from Rome to our native city only to see its heritage in a very different light. The globalisation processes that are commonly recognized to be under way enable us to judge objectively about the significance of individual architectural and cultural sites. The very philosophy of “view of values” has changed. The world has catastrophically shrunk in our minds due to the highly mobile lifestyle not only in Russia but around the world as well. Using information systems we can visit any site in the world and compare and identify the merits of a historical building or a whole site. However, the procedure for establishing the value of a heritage site seems rather complex.

Let me illustrate it with examples. Figure 1 shows the famous leaning tower in Pisa, Italy. It is well known that the tower tilted due to the sinking of the foundation (it was strengthened to prevent the tilt from increasing). Tourists from around the world come to see this miracle.

It so happened that this miracle came into the sight of the Russian merchant A. Demidov who then started building the Nevyansk Iron-Making Works in the Urals following Peter the Great's order. So this merchant took fancy in building a similar miracle. However, A. Demidov was building an iron-making facility, whose brutality prompted that the “miracle” had to be convincing and pithy. It is still puzzling whether or not the tower of the Nevyansk Works was built tilted intentionally. There is a certain degree of absurdity in this. However, the horizontal floors of the levels and in the basement and a varying number of brick rows on the opposite bearing walls suggest that the tower was designed to be with a tilt. One should be aware of A. Demidov's personality to believe this to be true. Desire to be famous and create something grand was inherent in this Russian man of “big soul”. It is akin to “shoeing a flea”. There is no common sense in this. The tower did materialize however (Fig. 2).

The above is just one of the complex problems in architectural heritage evaluation. Both buildings are unique. It is likely they are equivalent considering all factors. But it is just the choice of factors that presents an important scholarly research challenge in the preparation of a listing register against which heritage would be classified.

Let us consider another example. Iron and still making mills are unique architectural objects. In the world, there are several historical iron and steel making centers: in Germany (Ruhr), France (Paris, Bordeaux), the USA (Johnstown, Detroit, Philadelphia), etc. Russia has had four such sites over its history, including one in the Urals, which may be regarded as the country's third metallurgy site. These industrial sites may be different in terms of historical value (technologies, power generation, quality of architecture, etc.) when compared with one another against various criteria for determining their value for the world.

Figure 3 shows the iron-making works in Nizhny Tagil in the Urals (Russia), and Figure 4 a steel mill in Ohio (USA) – these are historical industrial heritage sites. Preserving such heritage is a very difficult challenge, primarily because this implies major funding problems, particularly for protecting their metal structures against corrosion.

Typically, the metal structures at such historical metallurgical sites are simply re-melted in furnaces and, thus, no problem of their conservation arises. However, it is essential to keep the heritage of the industrial era. This means answering such questions as how to compare these monuments, which objects are worthy of conservation, which objects could be recognized as symbols of that era at global or country level, etc.

There are international organizations, such as ICOMOS and TICCIH, which deal with these problems. However, we need a new theory which could serve as a framework for developing a vision how heritage should be classified by priority. It should be different, first of all, in that it should be based on a globalistic view of the cultural processes. This theory could help the above-mentioned and other organizations in their work of cultural heritage conservation.



Figure 1. The Tower of Pisa



Figure 2. Nevlyansk Tower. Nizhny Tagil. Photo 2017

Any new theory should correspond (according to K. Popper) to three rules (Popper, 2008). It should meet the requirements of simplicity, independent verifiability and testability.

In relation to the issue of developing a new theory of architectural, cultural and industrial heritage conservation, the idea of globalization should be key. Each city has listed heritage which the municipal authorities are supposed to upkeep. However, people should not live in a reserve. It is inevitable that the need for renovating the environment would arise in the course of time. It is essential to compile a list of the heritage that has played an important role in the history of the civilization. The new theory should be based on undoubted evidence and documented characteristics of the heritage and its condition. Something similar is currently to be done when nominating a national heritage site for inclusion into the UNESCO's World Heritage List. Theoretically, however, this looks rather subjective, since there are only compulsory conditions to be met with no theoretical foundations to be based on.

The simplicity of the new theory is ensured by the fact that historical heritage sites are already there and have passed the test of time. It is now important to select criteria which would help answer the question of their importance in the shaping of the environment in the course of the evolution. We should not forget that there is another position in relation to the idea of urban heritage conservation, which is the theory of 'Manhattanism', which emerged almost three centuries ago. This theory does not imply conservation of any buildings within the Manhattan grid. Within one block in Manhattan, any building may be demolished for constructing a new one. Whether we like it or not, this philosophy is penetrating into the architects' minds, although the majority of professionals recognize that the absence of any architectural memory impoverishes the living environment.

The issue of historical architectural heritage conservation should therefore be agreed with the latest globalization concepts.

The currently available possibilities for preserving architectural reminiscences with the help of information technologies suggest a different approach to the process of heritage conservation. Conservation may exist in two classes: natural and virtual. Each class may have several categories or levels in it. Moreover, there is a technique of "augmented reality" which enables us to use an ordinary smart phone to "see" the buildings that once existed in a particular site but then were taken down. However, we are very slow to take advantage of this technology for architectural, cultural and historical heritage conservation.



Figure 3. Iron-Making Works in Nizhny Tagil. Industrial Heritage. Photo 2014.yandex.ru/images/search



Figure 4. Still mill in Stuebenville, Ohio. Dobrijhomjachok.livejournal.com/29304html

Thus, the current context suggests the possibility of essential changes in the historical heritage conservation process. Let me suggest a few statements.

1. Physically, it is essential to preserve such architectural heritage that signifies a turning point or milestone in the evolution of the civilization.

2. The possibilities of architectural and historical heritage conservation should be consistent with the latest globalization advances in the international community. Each historical and cultural heritage site should be compared with similar sites not only in the country but also around the world.

3. Whereas previously it is the material value that was the basic conservation premise, the modern-day concept of architectural historical heritage conservation is enhanced by mental value, social value, identity and changeability.

4. The entire range of heritage conservation options should be used rather than just physical conservation, which often comes into contradiction with development and renewal needs. Conservation may be both physical and virtual.

References

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