

GREEN ARCHITECTURE AND PRESERVATION OF THE BULGARIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract. Green architecture must get out of the stagnant “sustainable development” paradigm and proceed to the responsible “reasonable architecture” in the preservation of cultural heritage. Modern construction practices of Styrofoam insulation, PVC joinery and reinforced concrete homes are deepening the ozone hole. Bulgarian legislation on the protection of architectural heritage “works piece by piece”. World cultural monuments protected by UNESCO such as the city of Nessebar, etc. are being destroyed. A change by developing a pact of laws on cultural heritage including a law on architecture, philanthropy, archaeology, etc. is needed. The philosophy of green architecture and its principles of application are illustrated by several author’s works in progress.

Keywords: sustainability, architecture, harmony, cultural heritage, renewable materials.

“If all were but new, and if there were no repetition to lead from the past to the future, we would fall into absolute nothingness” [1], Reinhart Koselleck.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an architectural debate with students from the Catholic University of Leuven (UCL), the thesis that one of the greenest buildings in the world is the Acropolis of Athens was presented. Arguments for this are the beauty and grace, the timeless functionality of an architectural work created entirely with natural materials, etc. Those are characteristics that have saved humanity from repeatedly demolishing the site over the centuries, the building of other similar ones in this place and from pouring new and new cubic meters of concrete till present days, which would lead to an even bigger hole in the ozone layer.

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We are far from the thesis that “Beauty will save the world”. Along with this, we should note that the harmony in the traditional Bulgarian architecture in towns such as Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv, Koprivshtitsa, Melnik etc. with buildings delicately inscribed in the natural landscape, built years ago entirely with renewable materials – stone, bricks and wood cannot be replaced by the “sustainable architecture” paradigm.

The “sustainable development” formula brought with it, first of all, heat insulation from Styrofoam, PVC joinery and photovoltaic cells on the roofs. Arguments for energy efficiency pushed into the background the important meanings of harmony, strength, beauty, nature – everything that places “Homo sapiens” at the top of the pyramid of significant values.

Despite the Stability Pact, the Recovery and Resilience Plan, the destruction of our environment continues as if we have another spare, green planet. Bulgaria is one of the largest producers and users of reinforced concrete for residential buildings in Europe. We generously and avalanche-likely build new panels of concrete parallelepiped boxes, especially in the big cities, with which we mortgage future generations with loans.

In “Green architecture now” [2] we decipher the concept of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), which has become almost a commercial standard. This norm allows and develops a comprehensive construction approach to sustainability by defining five main directions – human health and environment, ecological treatment of the location, savings in the use of water, efficiency in energy consumption, choice of materials and quality of interior spaces.

Unfortunately, these notions of sustainability become apologetic indulgences for the damage we are doing to architecture, destroying cultural monuments and supposedly replacing them with modern very thermally insulated, quasi-efficient buildings. The bricks go to the museum replaced by aerated concrete and plasterboard. We cover the facades with EPS and XPS – Styrofoam, additionally embalming them with nylon nets and silicone plasters. Residents live in boxes of solid reinforced concrete that work as Faraday cages with a complete loss of memory of the past – houses with wooden structures and brick and adobe infill, baked clay roofs and south-facing verandas that catch the sun and work as conservatories.

Far from nostalgia, we must build the new, perhaps “third humanism”, in which man returns to the center of the meaning of Being. The architecture from “sustainable” to become “reasonable” preserving and transferring over time the idea of a harmonious environment in harmony with nature and landscape, architecture built entirely with recyclable materials. The call “back to

nature” can be translated into a “forward to the future” idea, a future that we will build not only with wind farms and photovoltaic cells, but also with responsibility towards the generations.

Reconstructions of buildings and rethinking of the environment and not a policy of front-loaders and bulldozers and asphaltting of the fertile territories in Thrace and the Black Sea. The first skyscraper with a wooden skeleton was already built in Norway. Arch. Stefano Boeri built in Milan the new green (but not Babel) tower. Almost everywhere in Europe sports halls, schools and offices are switching to roofing and load-bearing structures of wood and metal, abandoning the generous carbon dioxide-producing reinforced concrete.

In all this, in our country, the preservation of the architectural heritage is treated by the means of “dentistry” – a filling here, a crown there and implants masked with Styrofoam gables and glass railings. There is a lack of legislation that considers the environment as a whole. For this reason, entire neighborhoods are disappearing, the world cultural heritage monument Nesebar is being destroyed and tobacco warehouses are burning in Plovdiv.

There is a need for new legislation to protect immovable cultural heritage.



Fig. 1. Sliven – Tuberculosis Hospital – an architectural monument from the end of the 19th century is transformed into a modern center for health and social care – a new winter garden “atrium” with trees and a waterfall combines the functions of the existing pavilions of the hospital



Fig. 2. Opera and Philharmonic – Plovdiv – reconstruction and “upgrade” of a complex from the era of modernism and its transformation into a new center for culture, music and media



Fig. 3. Slatina Sports Hall – Sofia – with the beginning of the construction of the site, grass and leaves “start to fly” and are being embedded in the glass of the future suspended facade walls

In European practice, there are established legislative “pacts” for the protection of architectural monuments and the legitimization of quality in Architecture as the main argument for turning the past into an effective and renewed future.

New laws on architecture, on patronage, on archeology and movable assets would build a new spatial and value continuum for the generations in accordance with the French, Italian – European model.

“... the horizon of this life, of this world, is not the absolute limit of human existence and does not define it to an end, but as a true horizon opens it ...” [3].

In support of the above theses, as an illustration, several current authors’ projects in the process of implementation are presented.

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