

DESIGN OF NEW STRUCTURES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

"Form cannot be given to the past or to the future, but only to the present. Only such building is creative."

Mies van der Rohe

Today, 23 years after the elaboration of the most significant international document on preservation and restoration of monuments and entities - the Venice Charter, we can state with certainty that no other age as this post-war period has had such developed heritage protection doctrine. International gatherings have been organised at the highest level, ideas and experience are exchanged, recommendations, resolutions are issued, new legislations are determined and old ones supplemented, and all this with the aim of preserving the original values of the cultural-historical heritage and its connecting with the contemporary life. The general progress and new technical possibilities have opened various spheres of action. General consciousness has evolved as well as our attitude towards heritage, much has been done with regard to the preceding centuries, both on the theoretical and on the practical plane, polemics are constantly carried out, but despite that no great shifts in the profession have been achieved. We are witness to the fact that numerous omissions have been made which have forever transformed, degraded or destroyed a considerable part of our heritage. Numerous interventions do not comply with the existing doctrine or are contrary to it. This can be particularly noticed in the construction of new structures in historic districts. Reconstructions of old buildings often take place although this has been à priori excluded by the Venice Charter. Facimiles are created which in majority of cases are not "real" since they are not faithful copies of that which once existed. Due to insufficient old documentation or information "in situ", quasi-originals are created, although we are well aware that every reconstruction work must guarantee a high degree of accurateness - it must be exact.

Another aspect of interventions which has also been spread to a large extent, and is a great threat to the heritage, is the design of new structures "in the style" of the existing architectural framework, which is not restricted to the devastated regions within the historical core, but ancient structures are sometimes demolished in order that new ones would be constructed in their place. To utilise a model means to constantly degrade the heritage values, not only in the sense of form, but also in the cultural, historical, utilisation, ..... sense, since application of the old architectural-urbanistic matrixes, lay-out solutions, forms, proportions, often can not meet the requirements of contemporary man, his way of life and work. With regard to the fact that our consciousness about the values of the old - the inherited has evolved and that the technical possibilities have opened up new spheres of action such mode of construction in the 20th century

historic districts may be considered as unallowable. We can not go back to the ideas of Viollet le Duc or the 19th century when his role and significance were indisputable. Past can not be a lexicon for outfrom which we can select forms as stated by S. Giedion.\*

The repertoire of historic forms and the stage effects could not be accepted also since artificialness causes adverse effects in the observer and decreases the value of authentic heritage parts. As far as the role of an architect in such a process his creativity is consciously restricted and can not be fully expressed. Going back to the past and imitating old styles means conscious inhibition of progress showing our present and future generations that we have not understood the value and the essence of heritage and inevitability of evolution. For this reason we should strive for new structures in historic districts to reflect our contemporary age both in the technical and the aesthetic expression, for only in that way we shall be able to the full extent to emphasise the heritage values and make a contribution to the development of architecture in general. Indeed, we must not forget that "the past, the present and the future are merged in the creations of our age in an inseparable totality of human destiny.\*\*

This third aspect of intervening has been for a long time already been present in all the environments, but frequently these new structures appear in a new vehement relation without much compromise towards the real context within which they are constructed. Acting in a defined space does not mean only a respect for the external borderline location conditions but taking into account the subtle relations with the old areas. For the purpose of realisation of these intentions it is inevitable that conservationists and architects should act jointly. The interests must not be on the relation that the conservationists represent the old and the architects the new. A conservationist must help the architect to integrate his new creation into the old tissue with the due respect for the old, i.e. the architect ought to create a new value amongst the existing ones.

"Quality is not an independent phenomenon; it always relates to something. In the case of the erection of a modern contrasting structure within the setting of ancient development, the created quality must relate to what already exists. ... It is not the formal proximity that is decisive, but the inner content, proportion, design anaplasticity, repose and motion, the inherent principle of creation.~~\*\*\*~~

There are already in existence exceptional new creations in old districts and we must strive that their number is overwhelmed in the intention of realising a correct integration of the new and the old. We can conclude that to date we have reached a certain cultural level and it is normal to expect that we are interested in uniting the cultural-historical heritage and contemporary architecture. We are well aware that the destiny of the construction heritage and implementation of real values in space depend on their harmony.

The above attitudes will be well illustrated by an analysis of three examples of structures erected in Yugoslavia, the region of Herzegovinia.

The recently erected structures in the town of Mostar, a well-known historical place where a monumental 16th century bridge is situated which has rendered its name to the town (most = bridge), can serve as illustrative examples of how to construct in a historical core; and of what is considered an unallowable style of construction in such a core. It is real pity that his unsuccessful and unallowable intervention is situated in the nearest vicinity of the Old bridge which by its form and construction characteristics has an international significance (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 The Old bridge in Mostar and the new structures in its vicinity (photo V. Sanković Simčić)

The old tabhana (Turkish tannery) located in the vicinity of the Old bridge had been preserved in fragments into which later structures with no artistic value were built so that the structure did not serve for its original purpose. We were of the opinion that the original parts should be freed from later valueless additions, and conserved and harmoniously incorporated into a new architectural structure since a need arose for revitalisation of this valuable space which had been inadequately utilised. The old mills, well preserved and located between the Bridge and the tabhana at a somewhat lower level were to be restored and actively protected connecting them with the new structures. An ideal reconstruction at the present moment was not considered justified from the scientific point of view, and it should be emphasised that the structure in its original state did not possess outstanding architectural and aesthetic values. By opting out for the construction of a modern structure on the preserved remains of an old one we considered that a new creation would be realised in the historical core and that it would accentuate the multicharacteristic values of the Old bridge and of the historical core in general. It should

be noted that it was a very complex and exceptionally difficult task and a challenge since the position of the old tabhana is of inestimable value with regard to the bridge, the river and the historical core. But, however, the completed structure does not meet the set architectural-urbanistic requirements, it entirely nullifies them. The authentic tabhana remains have not been conserved as stipulated by the heritage protection doctrine, and the newly built architectural structures are in pseudo-stylistic architectural trend (Fig. 2). A quasi-historical creation has been constructed by means of a direct imitation of stylistic elements and a combination of building materials (wood, stone, concrete and plaster). Such a design degrades the real heritage values and this should under no circumstances be our task and goal.

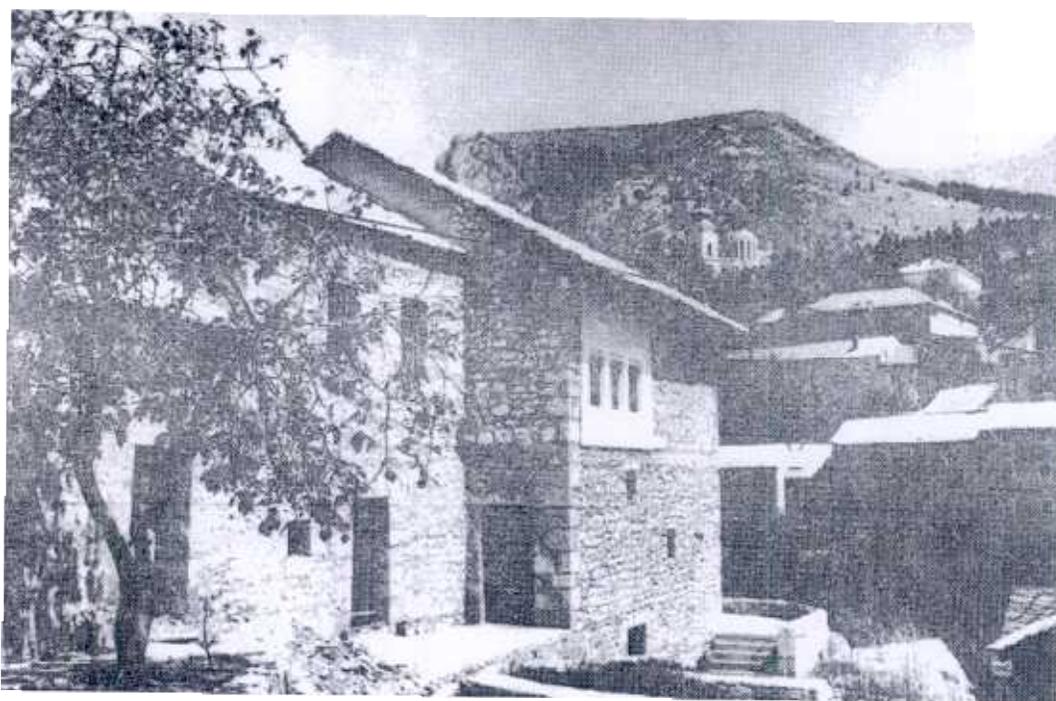


Fig. 2 A pseudo-stylistic creation of the new structure  
(photo V. Sanković Simčić)

A significant step in the design of new structures in old districts has been made by the construction of the "Ruža" Hotel in Mostar. The designer skillfully and with great sensibility utilised modern materials and architectural forms, without reminiscance of passed styles, and created a harmony of the old and the new architecture by the method of contrasts (Fig. 3). In this exceptional creation there is not a single element which might mislead any one observer about its origin. The new - contemporary architectural language has additionally emphasised the heritage value which expresses cultures of centuries passed. To go into retrospective would mean a restriction of progress in architecture in general as well as in the field of protection and revitalisation of architectural heritage. Also, it should be pointed out that the designer has utilised all

the advantages of the location: the contact with the river and its penetration into the structure, the relation between the vegetation and the structure and the view towards the historical core and from it to the Hotel.

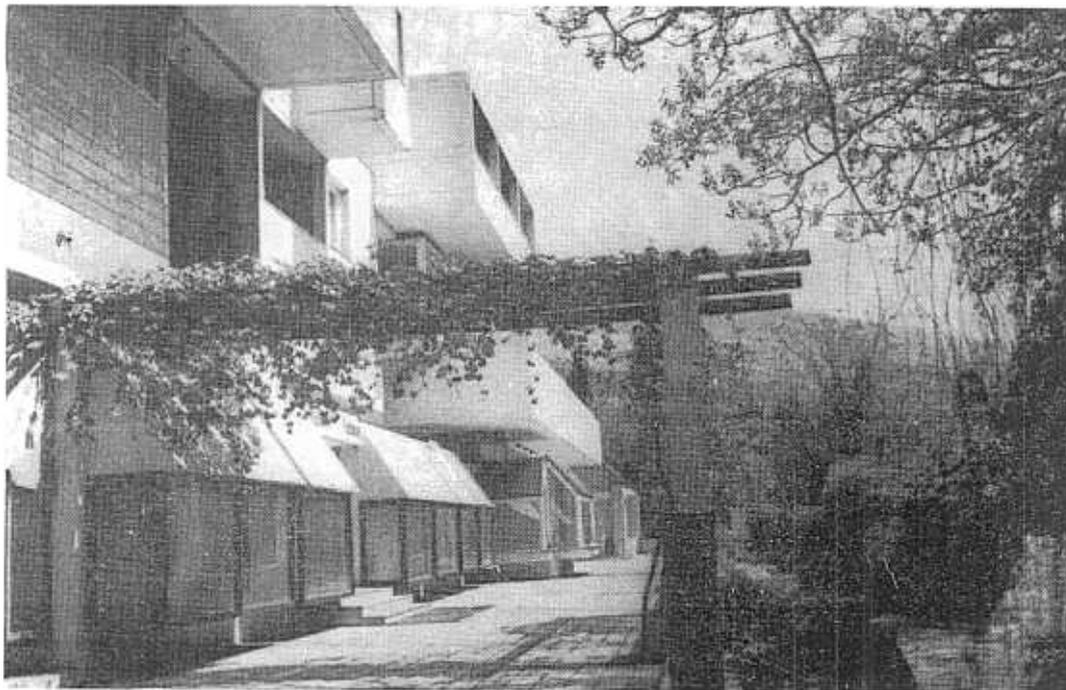


Fig. 3 The "Ruža" Hotel, Mostar - (a modern creation in a historical district (arch. Z. Ugljen, photo V. Sanković Simčić)

To date, we are unfortunately not rich in such creations, not because there are no real potentials, but because in many environments the consciousness and knowledge of the heritage values and of a correct attitude towards them have not yet prevailed.

There are creations which in a very sensible manner utilise the local architecture values, not by blind imitation, but by certain free interpretation these values are incorporated into new urbanistic and architectural designs. These are the values of local tradition which have resulted from the way of life and climate. Application of these elementary values which have for centuries marked out the route in a culture and a people have found a full justification, can not be considered as mere imitation in the creation of a new structure in an old district. These old values should only be perceived, i.e. they should be gently woven into a modern creation, and not give an aggressive effect on the observer. It means that their interpretation should not be overemphasised, it must not cause confusion with regard to the authentic inherited values.

The "Bregava" Hotel in Stolac can be considered a creation in which the above mentioned principles are expressed. A small hotel was to be built next to the edge of the Stolac historical core

and on the riverbank. The designer has confirmed that he was well acquainted with the way to a correct analysis of values, and also as a consequence to the real synthesis and thus realised a creation permeated by the regional tradition elements, however, not by direct copying but by virtuoso creation. The achieved harmony has been fully expressed both in the interior as well as in the exterior facing a medieval fortification - the historical core with Oriental-Mediterranean characteristics and in relation to the water and landscape. Although the creation is located outside the very historical core it is tightly connected with it, but in a positive way (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 The "Bregava" Hotel (arch. Z. Ugljen, photo V. Sarković Simčić)

CONCLUSION: Every new structure built in a historical district should reflect our time and achievements in the architectural creative work, but under the condition that heritage values are not degraded, and that a new value is attained in that space. Such an approach will ensure preservation of real values of heritage and the development of contemporary architecture.

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- \* S. Giedion, *Prostor, Vreme, Arhitektura, Građevinska knjiga*, Belgrade 1969.
  - \*\* Ibidem.
  - \*\*\* Cristoph Hackelsberger, from *New Building in Old Settings*, State Museum for Applied Arts, Munich, 1978.

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## S u m m a r y

Today we can state with certainty that no other age as this post-war period has had such developed cultural-historic heritage protection doctrine, owing to the desire to save and emphasise its values. Despite this, we are witness of the fact that many interventions do not comply with the existing theory. There are frequent reconstructions of old buildings, although the Venice Charter excludes them à priori. Fascimiles are created which in majority of cases are not "real" since they are not faithful copies of that which once existed. The second aspect of intervention, which is also frequent, imposing great danger upon the heritage, is the design of new structures "in the style" of the existing architectural framework, which is not limited only to devastated regions within the historical core, but sometimes old structures are demolished in order that new ones should be built in their place. Since our consciousness of the values of the old-inherited has evolved and that the technical possibilities have opened up new spheres of action, such manner of construction in the 20th century historic districts can be considered unallowable. Retreating into the past and imitating old styles means a conscious restriction of progress and showing the present and the future generations that we have not understood the value and the essence of heritage and inevitability of evolution. For this reason we should strive that new structures in historic districts should reflect our contemporary age both in the technical and in the aesthetic sense since only in this way we shall be able to completely emphasise the heritage values and make a contribution to the development of architecture in general.

We know that new structures in old districts have for a long time been present in all environments, but in a vehement relation and without a compromise with the real context in which they are constructed. It is evident that acting in a defined space does not mean only respecting of the borderline location conditions, but also taking into consideration of the refined relations with the old spaces.

Despite numerous failures, there exist exquisite new creations in historic districts which have not degraded the heritage values, but on the contrary have emphasised them and together with them created new values in the space. All efforts should be invested for the purpose of achieving a correct integration of the new with the old. In order to attain this harmony it is inevitable that the conservationists and the architects act together, and not only on the relation: the conservationist supports the old and the architect the new. It can be concluded that we have achieved a certain cultural level and it is natural to expect that we should be interested in a unity of the cultural-historical heritage and modern architecture. We are well aware that on their harmony depends the destiny of building heritage and creation of real values in space.

ETUDE DE BATIMENTS NEUFS DANS LES DISTRICTS HISTORIQUES

Résumé

Aujourd'hui, plus que jamais, nous pouvons confirmer avec certitude qu'aucune époque, comme celle après la guerre, n'avait pas développé la doctrine de protection de l'héritage culturel et historique, dans le désir de garder et de mettre en valeurs ses valeurs. Cependant, malgré tout ça, nous sommes témoins que de maintes interventions ne sont pas conformes à la doctrine existante. Les reconstructions d'anciens bâtiments sont assez fréquentes, bien que Venis Charter les exclue. On réalise des facsimilés, dans la plupart des cas "faux", étant donné qu'ils ne représentent pas de vraies copies de ce qu'existait jadis. Une autre forme d'interventions, assez fréquente et laquelle représente un vrai danger pour l'héritage, apparaît sous forme d'études de nouvelles structures "en style" du cadre architectural existant, ce qui n'est pas uniquement limité aux régions dévastées dans le cadre du noyau historique, mais très souvent on détruit les structures anciennes pour construire à leur place les structures neuves. Etant donnée que notre conscience sur les valeurs de ce qui est ancien et hérité a évolué et que les moyens techniques ont ouvert de nouveaux domaines d'activités, cette manière de construire en XXème siècle, dans les districts historiques, peut être considérée comme inadmissible. Revenir dans le passé et imiter les styles anciens, signifie empêcher volontairement le développement et montrer aux générations présentes et futures que nous n'avons pas compris les valeurs et l'essentiel de l'héritage ni la nécessité de l'évolution. C'est la raison pour laquelle il faut lutter pour que les nouvelles structures dans les districts historiques reflètent notre époque moderne, tant au point de vue technique qu'esthétique, étant donné que cela représente le moyen unique de valoriser les valeurs de l'héritage et la seule possibilité de donner notre contribution au développement de l'architecture en général. Nous savons que les structures neuves sont depuis longtemps présentes dans les districts anciens, mais dans un rapport véhément, sans compromis par rapport au contexte réel dans lequel elles ont été construites. Il est évident que, agir dans le cadre d'un espace défini ne signifie pas seulement le respect des conditions limites de la localité, mais aussi le respect des rapports subtils avec les espaces anciens. Malgré de nombreux échecs, dans les districts historiques nous pouvons constater l'existence de nouvelles créations remarquables n'ayant pas dégradé les valeurs de l'héritage, mais par contre, les ayant mises en valeur et ayant créé avec elles les valeurs neuves dans l'espace. Il faut investir le maximum d'efforts pour que leur nombre soit le plus grand possible dans le but de réaliser une bonne intégration du neuf et d'ancien. Pour pouvoir réaliser cette harmonie il est indispensable que les conservateurs et les architectes agissent en commun, et non sur la relation: conservateur favorise l'ancien et l'architecte le neuf.