

NEW ARCHITECTURE IN HISTORIC CONTEXT

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'*New Buildings in Historic Setting*' was the topic of the ICOMOS General Assembly in Budapest, 1972. At the conference, it was declared that articles 12 and 13 of the Venice Charter should be used even in the scale of settlements; the architectural language should be contemporary while the new building should "integrate harmoniously" into the old surroundings not breaking "the balance of the composition". Historic context meant at that time the architecture of old town centres, like the protected zone of the Buda Castle district studied by the participants of the General Assembly in 1972.

Nowadays, the way of thinking should be quite similar even in the case of cultural landscapes that were produced, similarly to historic surroundings, by historic processes. In my presentation I deal with these issues showing some new examples from World Heritage sites of Budapest and the Tokaj wine region in Hungary.

The conflict of new architecture and traditional setting began in the period of revival styles. Although the details of the new buildings of that time were derived from historic architecture, the way these details were used, the scale and sometimes the structures and functions were alien in the surroundings considered being of value. The gap between old and new even broadened with modernism since the language of architecture had totally renewed.

Architects working in the **Buda Castle district** tried to cope with these problems and they found different solutions to these. Some of the new buildings in the district have old forms, some are fakes and some are even reconstructions on the site of disappeared buildings. Finally, after this series of unsuccessful solutions, the best architects could find the way using the language of contemporary architecture, but volume, scale and proportions were determined by the surroundings. The first building that followed this approach was built in the late 1950s. It is a dwelling house erected on some remains of a house that had collapsed in World War II. The ruins have been integrated into the new house designed according to the ideas of those times. The house stands close to a small square surrounded by houses built around 1960, 1970 and 1980 fitting into the atmosphere of the protected zone. The most famous example is not far from this site, a dwelling house inspired by the urban context. This way of

thinking was followed by several architects designing buildings in historic centres.

Although architecture was continuously changing in the last decades, you can discover the same ideas in the newest building in the Buda Castle district. A small hostel was built on two mediaeval building plots following the volume of the house that disappeared in World War II and integrating some fragments and cellars. (*Hapimag hostel, Fortuna Street*, architect: Péter Reimholz)

Studying the remains of the mediaeval building, one can imagine the Gothic façade. There is even a drawing that shows the state of the façade from the late 18th century. It would have been possible to build two, more or less authentic, façade reconstructions. Instead, the new building is a contemporary one, but it remembers the history of the site. The proportions of openings, the order of windows, the cornice remind us of the baroque period. The shape of the roof and the archway evoke the Middle Ages. The irregular blind arcades on corbels are of mediaeval origin being a kind of caricature of our own conservation practice. Several other details are of contemporary design: the arch of the main entrance, some windows, the junction line of the two mediaeval building plots, etc. The strange turret answers the corner of the neighbouring house. This new hostel is an outstanding example of new architecture in historic context.

Cultural landscape is also a kind of historic setting.

The Tokaj wine region has a very long tradition of wine growing of the highest quality. What the French king, Louis XIV, said is still true and often stated: "Tokaj wine is the wine of the kings and the king of wines". The wine region became a World Heritage site not only because of its traditional use of the land, the beautiful cultural landscape and the intangible (but drinkable!) heritage of its traditional wine making but also because it has a unique cultural and even architectural heritage. In 1990, after the political and economic changes, several new wineries were created. Foreign investors, local wine makers, architects and myself, the conservation officer, had the same idea: new buildings should fit in the cultural landscape and the architectural heritage of the region by using and developing local architectural traditions. What are the elements of the

traditional architecture of the wineries in this region? The basic element is, of course, the cellar; the oriental type is dug in the soil. There are simple ones, but very often the branches create a complicated underground labyrinth. The entrance is a small aedicule usually with a pediment. At the border of some villages there are long rows, a kind of settlement, of these entrances to the cellars. The door is usually not wider than a barrel, but there are a few ones wide enough for even a horse-drawn carriage, thus enlarging the basic form. There other types of cellars, built according to Roman traditions, under the houses of the settlements. Simplicity, wide, comfortable proportions are the characteristics of the traditional buildings in the area. Local materials, stones, tiles are used everywhere. While vineyards in other parts of Hungary are full of small buildings for pressing the grapes and storing the wine, only a few larger 'wine-houses', as they call them, were built in the Tokaj region. They belonged to rich owners living outside the wine growing territory. These typical buildings usually stand at the bottom of the slope with simple volumes, parallel with the level line.

The so-called 'Yellow Wine-house' belongs to this type. It was built in the middle of the 19th century and it was converted into a restaurant about 25 years ago. Nowadays, it belongs to the winery called *Disznókő*. The new buildings of the winery in the vicinity were inspired by this old listed wine-house. The proportions, the scale, the pitch of the roof and the colour derive from the *Yellow Wine-house*. The end facades use the enlarged cellar aedicule. The ensemble represents the entrance of the whole region. (architect: Dezső Ekler) There are similar volumes and facades in other cases. The *Degenfeld winery* is attached to an 18th century wine-house. In front of the entrance of the cellar, a large space was created for manipulating the wine. (architect: Ferenc Salamin) The building of the *Hétszőlő winery* reflects not only the architecture of cellars and wine-houses but that of other agricultural buildings and carved wooden ornaments, as well. (architect: Csaba Bodonyi)

The ensemble of the *Oremus winery* in Tolcsva was built in the vicinity of the listed church and cellars, World Heritage sites in part. It stands on the site of a manor house, the "château" of the winery. In fact the winery is a big, well functioning industrial building. In spite of this, it fits into the context. The architect (Péter Sugár) transposed the local traditions with more emphasis than they had been than in the previous examples. Additive composition, use of local stones, sensitively designed details and the high quality of architecture help the building find its place in the settlement. It is a large building indeed, but it is even larger inside, just like the traditional cellars. Some new buildings are being under construction; all of them use more or less transcribed

local traditions of architecture. In Hungary, all of the new designs to be built on a World Heritage site have to be presented to a jury of architects for professional advice and guidance. Being a member of such a jury, I think if you want to design a good building in historic context, you should study the traditions of the site, understand the logics and the system of local architecture, feel the spirit of the place and then use the language of contemporary architecture.

Just like in wine making: if you want to make good wine, you should know not only the local traditions but also the taste of wine fans of today.

Abstract

'New Buildings in Historic Setting' was the topic of the Icomos General Assembly in Budapest, 1972. At the conference, it was declared that articles 12. and 13. of the Venice Charter should be used even in the scale of settlements; the architectural language should be contemporary while the new building should "integrate harmoniously" into the old surroundings not breaking "the balance of the composition".

Historic context meant at that time the architecture of old town centres, like the Buda Castle district studied by the participants in 1972.

The way of thinking should be quite similar nowadays even in the case of cultural landscapes that are also a kind of historic context. In my paper, I'll deal with this issue. In Hungary, architectural juries have been set up to provide professional advice and expertise on important architectural designs such as new buildings in historic context even in cultural landscapes and at World Heritage sites. Being a member of such a jury, I'll show some examples to illustrate my opinion:

If you design a building in a historic context you should first study the traditions of the site, understand the logics and the system of local architecture, feel the spirit of place and then make plans of a contemporary building influenced by your knowledge.