

## RECONSTRUCTION AND ITS INTERPRETATION IN RUSSIA – 2

*Dushkina Natalia / Russia*

Professor at (MARKHI) Professor at the University of Geodesy, Cartography and Air Surveying, Moscow

---

The quantity of reconstructed monuments is insignificant to compare with the whole scope of conservation activities. However, reproduction of “old” historical buildings pretends to be one of the most intriguing aspects in conservation practice. The sharpness of numerous problems – scientific and cultural, political and ideological always revealing in relation to this action – put this phenomenon in extreme position.

The consequences of the First and Second World Wars, Revolution of 1917 with its global political and cultural cataclysms and the process of “sovietization” of the Eastern Europe in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, destructive methods of the internationally spread Modernistic mentality had formed several well-known peaks in the history of European reconstruction. Accordingly, I dare to assume that we are witnessing today the last bright splash of this phenomenon, which has started in the mid 80s and lasts until nowadays. In London, we are witnessing the unprecedented boldness in “reproduction” of Shakespeare Globe theatre never witnessed in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. In Barcelona, Venice or Drammen we are coming across different approaches and methods in reconstruction of the recently lost theatres. Wishes of full visual “completeness” and “integrity” are often heard today from the Athens Acropolis. In Russia and Germany, it is possible to trace the presence of the state programmes for national revival, which should be solved in both countries – despite obvious differences in their background, social and economic situation – by means of historical reconstruction and architecture. There are numerous examples of big scale reconstruction projects proclaiming “national identity” in the post Soviet countries (in Kiev, Minsk, Vilnius and Riga), even with reinforced concrete replicas. This list could be continued.

The author of this paper presented Russian “reconstruction” experience (within international context) for many times since the mid 1990s, including the 11th ICOMOS General Assembly in Sofia, 1996.”<sup>1</sup> This survey

---

<sup>1</sup> The theme of “reconstruction” was discussed by the author of this paper and published in: *Authenticity: Towards the Ecology of Culture*, in: Nara Conference on Authenticity. Proceedings. UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Agency for Cultural Affairs

demonstrated that at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., the notion of “reconstruction” and reproduction of copies have lost its strict boundaries and acquired the same nearness to architectural creativity as it was more than hundred years ago. The major outcome of this analysis naked the following important positions:

- Amazing survival of “reconstruction” method *in practice* despite its strict limitation *in theory* (opposing the fundamental statements in conservation history «to abandon restorations *in toto*», the Athens Charter, 1931; «all reconstruction work should...be ruled out *a priori*», the Venice Charter, 1964);
- Growing number of reconstructed structures in Russia and other countries, which start to be especially evident during the last decades. Gradual devaluation of authentic heritage on the background of this process;
- Weakening of strict scientific principles and authenticity criterion within conservation activities for which there was a wide international struggle for

---

(Japan), ICCROM, ICOMOS, 1995, pp.307-310; *Reconstruction and the Architectural Profession in Russia*, in: Conservation Training - Needs and Ethics, ICOMOS Finnish National Committee, Helsinki, 1995, pp. 85-102; *Reconstruction and its Interpretation in Russia*, in: ICOMOS 11<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and International Symposium. Symposium papers, Sofia, 1996, pp. 91-96; *Bauwut in Moskau*, in: Deutsche Bauzeitung, n 9, 1996, pp. 22-24; *Reconstruction: recent Russian Experience*, in: Restauoro. Storia e Tecnica. Quaderni ARCo, Gangemi editore, 1998, pp. 47-58; *Korabban lerombolt muemlekek rekonstrukcioja Oroszorszagban*, in: Muemlekvedelem. A public review on monument preservation in Hungary, n. 3, 2000, pp. 135-144; *Il monumento ed il mutamento del concetto di tempo*, in: Il restauro fra identità e autenticità. Marsilio, 2000, pp. 83-91; 287-295; *Reconstruction of architectural structures. Metamorphoses of Theory and perspectives for heritage preservation*, in: A Search for Identity. Moscow, GOSNIIR, 2002, pp. 21-42; and other articles published in Russia. The papers on “reconstruction” were presented in Norway, Riksantikvaren, 1997; in Spain, at “IX Jornadas de Intervencion en el Patrimonio Historico-Artistico”,1997; at ICOMOS international conferences in Sweden and Lithuania, 1998; in Germany (TU Dresden), 2000; at ICOMOS/Israel General Assembly, 2002; in Italy (ICCROM), 2002.

## Section II: Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:

understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

### Section II : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites – Menaces et outils de prévention

---

more than a century. Mutation of conservation methodology under the press of political, commercial or tourist interests;

- The ongoing degradation of professional ethics and restoration profession influenced by a spread of reconstruction activities;
- Gradual return of reconstruction work from conservation field to practising architecture.

In 1999, at the 12<sup>th</sup> ICOMOS General Assembly held in Mexico, Russian delegation proposed a draft Resolution on Reconstruction. Its aim was “*to initiate international scientific discussion in order to establish the criteria and limits of reconstruction in current conservation theory and practice*”. Several ICOMOS National Committees supported this draft. However, the Resolution Committee turned down this suggestion thus rejecting to start a discussion of this phenomenon even on a theoretical level. A warning was not taken into consideration. The next year, several organizations on heritage protection including ICCROM and English Heritage approved “The Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction”, 2000.<sup>2</sup> In fact, this text (being written as a kind of indulgence for recently built copies) gave *cart blanche* for reconstruction. Tendency for liberation from strict restoration principles, aspiration for flexible criteria was finally revealed in a declaration pretending to be a new doctrine. However, the very title of this charter is marked by a combination of two incompatible words – authenticity and reconstruction (though it is obvious that the nature of authenticity, which could not be repeated, reproduced or copied, contradicts to the notion of reconstruction).<sup>3</sup> Thus, value categories have been sacrificed for the sake of ideological and political background of this charter, which proved anew: reconstruction remains being attractive not only for governments, clients and public at large (what is understandable), but to professionals as well.

Present paper is an outcome of the analyses after continuous “reconstruction” expansion, which is going on during the last decade. Its climax is evidently in Moscow currently undergoing large-scale redevelopment. The impact of events on the city’s architectural heritage is extensive and massive. No other European city today faces such a complex tangle of problems relating to culture and the preservation of

historical heritage, scientific and professional ethics, ideology and power, as contemporary Russian capital.

In a country where the beginning of the last century was marked by harsh measures of expropriation, and for almost eight decades the state owned all forms of property (including land and the historical buildings standing on it), where “money” was effectively a virtual concept for most of the population, stupendous cataclysms have been unleashed by the activation of market economy mechanisms. The return to private property and capitalism resulted in the chaotic transformation of the city centre. Its historical stratification turned to be mixed. Heritage defenders bear the brunt of a ferocious onslaught from the authorities at various levels, the construction corporations, the architects, the investors and the developers, who are laying siege to the city centre with feverish “development projects”. “*A bacchanalia of uncoordinated construction*” is how the Russian Minister of Culture described the situation.<sup>4</sup> It is quite obvious that the forces of the opposing sides are unevenly matched. Legal mechanisms of heritage protection are unable impeding this avalanche process.

As Moscow is transformed into a gleaming European urban centre, equipped with all the attributes of expensive modern life, it is gradually losing its distinctive character as an old Russian city. Its material substance is gradually gone, cultural codes and memories laid down by generations are distorted. Each new loss increases the distance between us and the history of nation, a history intimately bound up with Russia’s ancient capital – a city fundamentally Russian in both appearance and spirit, very different from the Europeanised St. Petersburg. The gaps are filled as quickly as they appear: in rare instances by original works of modern architecture, most often by architectural clones constructed in new materials or structures that imitate the old buildings. The city’s temporal depth and perspective are shifting. Its window on the past is narrowing, shrinking like Balzac’s *peau de chagrin* condemning all attempts at forward movement to simplistic schematicism and provincialism.

One of the fundamental qualities of architectural heritage that has been dealt a crushing blow is authenticity. In the heated arguments over the fate of monuments and the historical city as such, authenticity plays a key role and is the first casualty of the methods of “renewal” and reconstruction adopted in Moscow. Strange, paradoxical situation has been established in this regard. On the Russian antique market authentic works of art, and not copies, are

---

<sup>2</sup> Stovel H. *The Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction in Relationship to Cultural Heritage*, in: Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites. Vol. 4, 2001. P.241-243; P. 243-244.

<sup>3</sup> This reminds of sometimes-used word creation “authentic reconstruction”, which is in a pure theory turned to be philological, philosophical and cultural nonsense.

<sup>4</sup> Sokolov A. A television interview on the *Rossia* channel, 2 November 2004.

## Section II: Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:

understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

### Section II : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites – Menaces et outils de prévention

---

highly valued. The fact that they are “unrestored” and their origins are certain serves as a guarantee of their value (as it does throughout the world). And yet on the Russian property market the historical buildings are attacked, declared “non-cost-effective” and commercially unviable. The Mayor of Moscow has defended the legitimacy of erecting the life-size models of historical buildings that have overwhelmed the contemporary city, as if he seriously believes that “*in Moscow culture the concept of the copy is sometimes no less meaningful than that of the original. Because the semantic, historical and cultural “charge” that such a copy carries can often be even richer and deeper than the original architectural solution*”.<sup>5</sup>

Needless to say that authenticity is the essence of the “historical heritage” concept. It is the quality that makes the heritage what it is, synonymous in the very broadest sense with what is genuine and original. It is a fundamental and inalienable aspect of scholarly restoration work, an independent sphere of activity, in which time is regarded as a directional process with a beginning and an end, a past and a future. Within this framework, a monument is the embodiment of a linear conception of time that is based on the “uniqueness” of form and substance and the “irreversibility” of events. This interpretation of the monument’s place within heritage conservation is fundamental for the advanced principles of contemporary practice.

The process on which Moscow has embarked at the new stage of its development, and which serves as an example for imitation in every other city in Russia, is a process of the gradual erosion of historical authenticity along virtually every one of its parameters.<sup>6</sup> A great deal of architectural value has already been irretrievably lost, and consequently the essential substance of Russia’s cultural heritage has been sharply reduced. This applies both to individual buildings and to the general morphology of the city – its distinctive layout, historical division into houses and plots, the balance between built-up spaces, non-built-up spaces and patches of cultivated greenery, the disposition of verticals and horizontals.

---

<sup>5</sup> Luzhkov Y. *What is the capital’s architectural style?* “Izvestia”, 19 May (No. 86), 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Along the lines of “*Nara Document on Authenticity*”, 1994, which has consolidated the basic principles of conservation within a strict framework of authenticity (form, design, materials, substance, function, use, location, setting, spirit and feeling, technique, traditions). It is worth noting that all important international doctrines and documents related to conservation and authenticity have been translated into Russian and published in Russia.

An understanding of the character of the events unfolding today in the historical centre of the city requires at least a brief overview of the sequence of events. The process can be divided into two sharply differentiated stages. The first of these – the *romantic* stage – was typified by the campaign in the late 1980s and 1990s for the reconstruction monuments that had been lost, a campaign that lingers in the memory in the words of vociferous appeals for a renaissance of the Russian historical heritage. The objective significance of this stage was determined by the unprecedented destruction of important architectural monuments and Orthodox sacred places during the Soviet period. Beginning in the early 1990s, many outstanding Moscow buildings of symbolic significance from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, destroyed in the late 1920s-1930s, were rebuilt anew. These included the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan<sup>7</sup> and the Gates of the Resurrection<sup>8</sup> on Red Square as well as the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (1837-1883), which was blown up in 1931 and rebuilt in 1995-2002 – the largest church in Moscow, with 101 m height. The reconstruction work carried out in 1996-1999 on the St. Andrei and St. Alexander Halls of the Great Kremlin Palace (1839-1849) culminated in the installation of the throne of the tsar. All of these measures, which became symbols of the “new Russian history”, evoked a powerful response from the public; they were carried out under the patronage of the authorities and completed in time periods that would have been extremely short for such restoration work in Europe. The “romantic” component of the process was intimately interwoven with questions of ideology and politics.

The value of the structures that were built – as reference points to historical space – was substantial. They achieved at last a partial restoration of a historical unity in the panoramic views and silhouettes of the centre of Moscow, which had been distorted during the Soviet period. The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour has crowned the perspectives of many streets and skyline, became a visual and spiritual dominant of a city.

However, certain parameters of these structures (within scientific conservation treatment) imprecise, marked by elements of hypothetic character. Construction materials alien to the historical structures were used (for instance, the reinforced concrete frameworks in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the Kremlin Halls). The tendency of “mutation” character (in overall dimensions, heights, texture

---

<sup>7</sup> Originally built in 1620-1636. Restored in 1925-1933; destroyed in 1936; reconstructed in 1992-1993.

<sup>8</sup> Originally built in 1680. Destroyed in 1931; reconstructed in 1994-1995; restored in 2005.

## Section II: Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:

understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

### Section II : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites – Menaces et outils de prévention

---

of materials) appeared for the first time, when the necessity of quick result began dominating over the quality of strict reproduction. In the mid-1990s no other problem related to heritage preservation was debated with such relentless polemical intensity as this one. Even at that time the criticism included warnings that the falsification of values would lead to the devaluation of cultural heritage, with the result that the public would be deprived of any coherent insight into history. This problem remains an issue of the utmost urgency in Russia to the present day.

Another important point is that the work on the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour – the most ambitious of all the projects – was effectively removed from the professional conservation sphere and handed over to practising architects. This was the precedent that determined a trend and provided the impetus for the “remodelling” of the historical heritage on an unprecedented massive scale. As a rule, it is now architects who develop the projects for “reinstitution” sites (with restorers only involved for discreet elements of the work), and the construction contracts are often awarded not to specialised restoration organisations, but to straightforward construction firms. Servile architects and builders who work quickly and do not possess any special scientific knowledge have proved convenient for the realisation of sound projects and ideological programmes. In this context the restoration methodology developed over the decades becomes a mere hindrance. Only the external “historical” form of the building is required, without the complex process of scientific restoration that would ensure the integrity and completeness of the phenomenon that we refer to as “*culture*”.

Sensational projects are carried out in other European countries too. One example is the unprecedented reconstruction of London’s Globe theatre, demolished by order of Parliament in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, which was built anew as a national treasure. There were ideological and political programmes behind this project as well, but it was fulfilled in accordance with the specific requirements of conservation work. Another striking example is the restoration of the Frauenkirche in Dresden, a grandiose 18<sup>th</sup>-century building that was destroyed by the bombing of 1945. The work was carried out on a precise scientific basis, with punctilious German attention to detail. All of the authentic fragments that had survived were collected, identified and included in the new structure. It is hard to imagine that in this case the church might have been set on a raised ground floor that altered its proportions, that several new underground stories which never existed before might have appeared beneath it, including an auditorium and garages, that originally stone details might have been reproduced in bronze or plastic (as

was the case in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour).

Moscow’s experience in the reconstruction of “monuments” in the 1990s proved that working within the framework of restoration theory and practice is not only a lengthy process, but also a much more expensive way of doing things than the “new construction” of historical buildings. Especially since the visible results are similar, or even – for the non-professional – identical. At the same time the new approach provides constant material proof that the slogan of “preservation of the historical heritage” (permanently cited for public consumption) is being put into practice.

Another logical conclusion has also been drawn. If an entire stratum of historical heritage could be so easily destroyed in Soviet times and then reconstructed, at least fragmentarily, does this not signify the emergence of a fundamentally new method for the “renovation” of monuments that is convenient both economically and politically? In other words, is it not simpler, instead of engaging in restoration, to demolish historical structures and then “rebuild” them in profitable projects with the help of architects using new and durable materials?

So the Moscow phenomenon of “a new vision of historical heritage” spawned a Trojan horse that advanced deep into the heart of the city, with results that were not long in making themselves felt. The second reconstruction period, which began in the late 1990s and is still continuing today, has been distinguished by the mass demolition of historical structures and the violation of national legislation (the law of the Russian Federation “On items of the cultural heritage”, 2002). It can justifiably be called *barbarous*.

The scale of the destruction is almost comparable with the damage that was inflicted from the 1930s to the 1960s, with the difference that today the buildings under attack are those that managed to survive Stalin’s and Khrushchev’s purges. In recent years dozens of “living” monuments from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and more than three hundred historical buildings have been demolished, as well as entire fragments of city streets and blocks of ordinary housing – from corner to corner. The historical structure of the river embankments has been distorted and transformed, Moscow’s boulevard rings, which began to be built up as an integral ensemble after the Fire of Moscow in 1812, are gradually being deformed. The idea that a city is not a mere aggregation of separate restored buildings, but a unitary structure (the appropriately named “historical fabric of the city”) in which each building forms an inalienable part of the whole, is no

Section II: Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:  
understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

Section II : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites – Menaces et outils de prévention

---

longer seen as useful in the modern context. The city's character and its "fabric" are being methodically laid waste. Today, in peacetime, the historical capital is being subjected to devastation for the rapid generation of super-profits.

All the discussions that accompany this process at the administrative level ignore the fact that in contemporary setting the development of the living historical city is taking place in a fundamentally different cultural environment from that of the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In those times, including both post-war periods, the radical re-planning of city centres was still possible. But today it is hard to forget that we have long lived with scientific institutions actively working on heritage conservation, that a juridical basis and legislation that did not exist before have been created; that the "zealots of antiquity" and restorers should now be strong enough to oppose architects and town-planners. In this context the authenticity of historical buildings ought to be regarded not only as a spiritual and cultural value, but also as an economic resource capable of generating revenue. Mass-produced goods and the various phenomena of globalisation have sharply increased the significance and value of the unique. The Russian paradox is that the age of a building is seen only as a factor that reduces its worth and market value, leading to it being demolished so that new construction sites become available.

Declaring buildings dilapidated and unsafe condemns to demolition large, robust structures located in the very centre of the city, an extremely attractive area for investment. In 2003-2004 this process has led to the destruction of the famous "Voentorg" department store (1911-1913) from the Art Nouveau period and the hotel "Moskva" (1932-1938) close to the Kremlin – a symbol of the Stalinist era and of the city as a whole. Next in line are the "Children's World" department store (1953-1957) and other major buildings of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. All structures with wooden roofs are also under threat of "reconstruction", which as a rule is often a euphemism for demolition. For every one of these buildings plans had been drawn up that involved the construction of multilevel underground space, with the subsequent construction of a copy of the demolished building.

The city continues to live under the banner of "preserving the historical heritage" even as the city centre is swamped by the construction of surrogates, pseudo-historical buildings and reproductions. Dozens of clones of historical buildings have appeared, making up entire streets and architectural ensembles. There are even some almost unbelievable examples of the "reinstitution" of classical monuments of wooden architecture from the 18<sup>th</sup> century "in more enduring

materials" – brick and reinforced concrete. A true professional approach, based on definite principles and a clear ideology has become unnecessary, valueless. It is replaced by the kind of activity that serves the commercial interests of specific structures and a small group of the population.

This is essentially a process that goes outside ethical restraints. On the one hand, there is no need to conserve, which is to say that the need for costly restoration work no longer exists. At the same time, there is no need to make any intellectual effort and attempt to construct a new building that is equal in quality to the old one or even surpasses it. What we get instead is a "reconstruction" of what has been just demolished. Of the three possible scenarios following the demolition of a building, the choice has fallen on the worst – which requires the least expenditure in terms of intellectual effort, creative imagination and costs. The growing numbers of such structures glorifying the cult of "newness" introduce an imbalance into the cultural space of the city, gradually shifting the historical architectural environment outside the range of the concept of "heritage" and devaluing genuine architectural monuments. Under these conditions, deformation of consciousness and professional qualification of both practising architects and restorers is going on. The brand of Russian capitalism has ushered in a new age breaking through legal and cultural restraints to take possession of the city.

On 13 April 2004 the Museum of Architecture held one of the most vividly symbolic events of last year. Participants in a round table discussion on saving the 20<sup>th</sup>-century architectural monuments, including certain world-famous structures created by the Russian avant-garde, shifted levels to become a discussion on strategy for the survival of the national heritage as a whole. They have adopted an appeal to President and the leaders of the country requesting that measures be taken to preserve the historical and cultural heritage. The problems have reached critical mass, and the emergence of public protest in one form or another has become inevitable.

The text of the appeal published in the central newspaper "Izvestia" not only stated the losses suffered by the city in recent years, but also called for a halt to the ongoing destruction: "*Commercial gain and the redistribution of property cannot justify the annihilation of our own history, culture and national identity*".<sup>9</sup> The letter, signed by more than three and a half thousand signatures, represented highly visible personalities of the Russian intelligentsia and a

---

<sup>9</sup> "Izvestia", 15 April, 2004

Section II: Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites:  
understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses

Section II : Identifier la vulnérabilité du cadre des monuments et des sites – Menaces et outils de prévention

---

cross-section of society. Writers, artists, scholars and art historians, architects, performers, theatre directors and journalists, as well as the directors and staff of Russia's major museums, libraries, journals and publishing houses, television programmes, ordinary office workers and students supported it. It is possible to talk on historical significance of this appeal even a year later. Russian mass media presented numerous publications and programmes thus reaffirming absolute topicality of a problem. «Moscow Architecture Preservation Society» (MAPS), an organization originally founded by foreign journalists living in Moscow, was established. The theme acquired an international character.

A reaction followed immediately from the government of the city. For the first time the head of the capital offered a summary of his “architectural” activity, putting forward the surprising claims that the public protest was serving specific interests and had as its sole aim to influence resolution of property disputes over the ownership of historical monuments by the federal and municipal authorities. This was followed by accusations of a political character, creating the clear impression that the actual nature of the problem raised – the continuing destruction of cultural heritage – had simply not been understood – and even gone unheard.

But this deafness just seemed. The sharp reaction by the government of Moscow and its continued discussion of the problem in the mass media actually testified to a certain degree of progress. In June 2004 a new Moscow law was adopted: “Concerning a special procedure for the regulation of urban planning activity in historical areas”. This law was remarkably severe in the context of the current situation and resulted in new construction work being frozen in protected zones. About 350 historical buildings in Moscow were placed under state protection. The rate of demolition declined slightly and several monuments were saved from oblivion.

However the present lull is deceptive. Russia's historical heritage stands on the brink of a mass privatisation of historical monuments on a scale absolutely without precedent in the history of any modern state – the final redistribution of property inherited from the Soviet period. Late in 2004 the national government adopted an explicit policy of “saving monuments” by selling them into private or corporate ownership. Historical monuments are entering a zone of unpredictable deformation. The former Minister of Culture and present Head of the Federal Agency of Culture and Cinematography, who for last years was responsible for the national heritage, recently described the situation in quite unambiguous terms: “We have to realise that we live in a

*country of disappearing monuments. The loss of any one of them is a loss of historical memory ... the preservation of our monuments is the preservation of the nation”*.<sup>10</sup>

Simplification and commercialisation are engulfing the whole of contemporary international culture, which is characterised by simplified global vision and the devaluation of meaning. The erosion of values is an ongoing process. But it is a rare case where the neglect for law and professional principle is so evident. There was a time when Russia showed the entire world what a revolution could give to a people with an ancient culture. Now it is showing what happens if a historical city is given over to unregulated exploitation by investors and construction companies.

In 2001 the Milano Europa 2000 Grand Prix was awarded to the Russian architect and artist Alexander Brodsky. His sculptural installation represented a section of a lovely city extending along the banks of a river. The body of the city was encased in a kind of box and set on a surgical table under drip feeds releasing drops of used engine oil in a regular rhythm. As time went by, it was possible to observe the changes taking place in real space. Gradually, very slowly, the gleaming liquid flooded the streets and the squares. The ground floors of buildings disappeared beneath the black slime. After a month the box was completely filled with a viscous mass that had engulfed the entire city. The installation was called “Coma”.

---

<sup>10</sup> Shvydkoi M. “The Kremlin and Bolshoi Theatre must not be sold”. “Izvestia”, 5 November, 2004.

### **Abstract**

This topic was first introduced at the XI ICOMOS General Assembly in Sofia, 1996. Present paper is an outcome of the last ten years' period analyses after continuous "historical reconstruction" expansion. This Russian phenomenon reveals the most intricate mixture of problems in the field of culture, conservation, ethics, ideology and power. Moscow historical centre living under the banner of "preserving the historical heritage" is the most striking example. Metropolis is going through gradual destruction of its historical fabric and swamped by the construction of surrogates, pseudo-historical buildings and reproductions. Since the mid 90s, dozens of clones of historical buildings have appeared, making up entire streets and architectural ensembles. On the one hand, there is no need to conserve, which is to say that the need for costly restoration work no longer exists. At the same time, there is no need to make any intellectual effort and attempt to construct a new building that is equal in quality to the old one or even surpasses it. What we get instead is a "reconstruction" of what has been just demolished. Of the three possible scenarios following the demolition of a building, the choice has fallen on the worst – which requires the least expenditure in terms of intellectual effort, creative imagination and materials. The growing numbers of such structures glorifying the cult of "newness" introduce an imbalance into the cultural space of the city, gradually shifting the historical architectural environment outside the range of the "heritage" concept and devaluing authentic architectural monuments. Thus, deformation of consciousness and professional qualification of both practising architects and restorers is going on. A genuinely professional approach, based on definite principles and a clear ideology has become unnecessary, valueless. It is replaced by activity that serves only the commercial interests. The brand of Russian capitalism has ushered in a new age breaking through legal and cultural restraints to take possession over the historical city.