

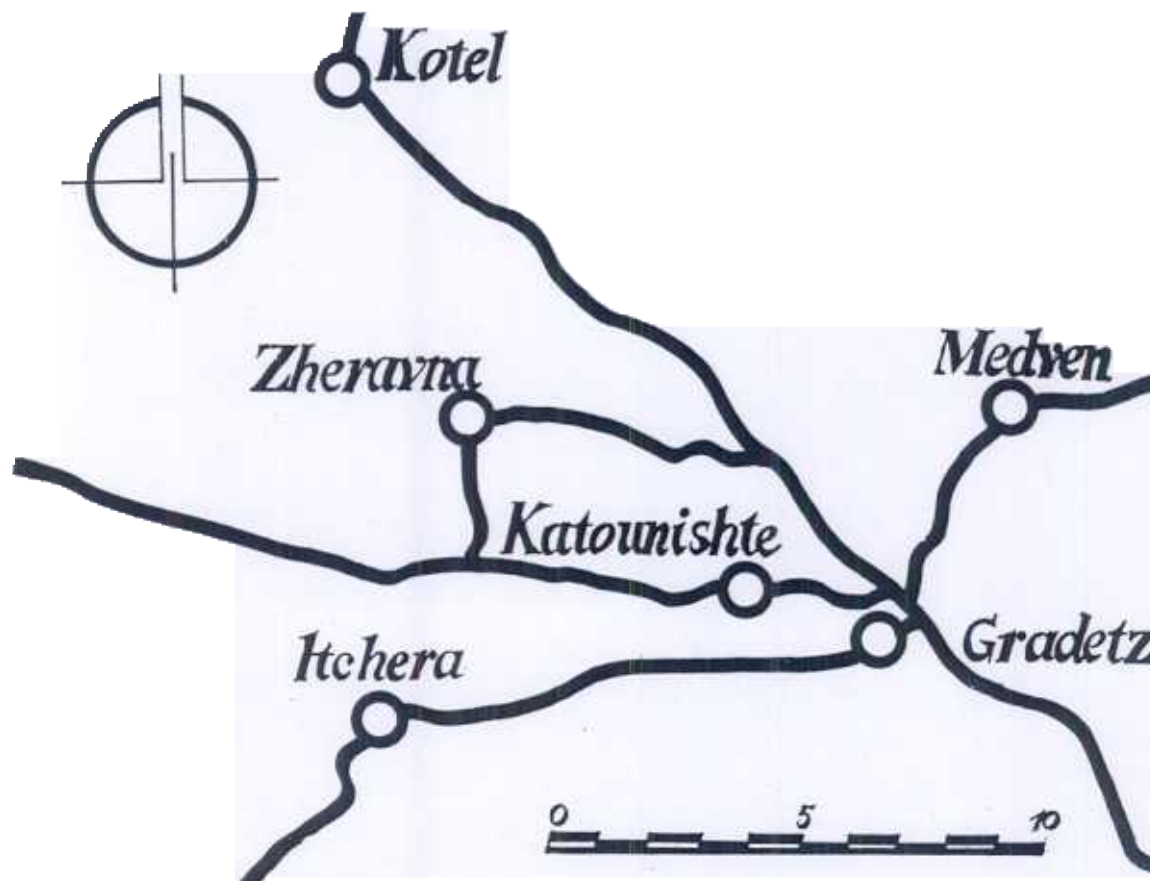
CONFLICTING ELEMENTS IN THE ARCHITECTURAL RESERVATIONS

The concept of "adaptation" carries with it the idea of a conflict between the existing entity and its future function. The aim of all professional plans for the future development of an architectural "reservation", or protected area, must be the achievement of harmony on all levels — social, economic, environmental and historical.

The present analysis of the contradictions which adaptation must overcome or to which it might give rise will be based on data gathered in the villages of the Kotel region in the eastern part of the

Balkan Range (Stara Planina). The five villages founded and developed there during the Bulgarian Revival period are today protected areas. The most prominent among them, historically, artistically and spiritually, is Zheravna. The factor which has enabled these villages to retain their Revival period aspect has been the contradiction between the rapid development of the country's economy and their distance from the big industrial and commercial centres. However, their inhabitants are being driven away by the absence of lo-

1. Scheme of the villages in Zheravna's





2. Zheravna. Houses.

cal economic development, and architecture without a population cannot be "popular" in any sense of the word.

Preservation of their vernacular architecture therefore means, first and foremost, the return of their population, rather than any revitalization through seasonal activities or conservation programmes. However, organized campaigns and large-scale economic measures to secure the return of the population may lead to a fresh conflict, namely, the destruction of the protected area as a structural unit through the creation of new production and services networks.

Examples of such a tendency are to be found in the town of Koprivshitsa with its new industries and new population, its standardized habits, lack of taste, and lack of respect for the spiritual and material heritage, or by the Black Sea coast towns with their tourist boom and the characteristic features which go with it.

Tourism as an industry may cause material damage to a protected area through new buildings and more active exploitation of the existing typical trades and services for the sake of early amortization; it may also cause moral damage to the population, which may readily accept tourism as the one occupation from which basic annual income is to be derived. This population would thus cease to be the authentic population of a region in which a harmoniously developed rural economy, with its own system of production, its trades and its habits had raised generations of Balkaners whose characteristics were their fondness for their work, their creative spirit and their national pride.

Harmonious development of a village means wholesome development of its social and cultural life and development of the network of facilities serving its local trades. The clashes in this case may arise from overestimation of the need for new buildings and the "insertion" of these into the existent

fabric of the village, instead of the accommodation of new activities — administration, postal services, clubs, shops, etc. — within the existent structures.

The harmonious and gradual revival of some of the typical local industries and the finding of other activities which, with the aid of proper urban planning, could combine permanent occupation by the existent population with temporary occupation by tourists, is rather a general principle determining long-term procedure than a concrete norm. And it may be able to produce a new, and as it were creative, form of tourism as a development of the familiar educational and congress-attendance forms of the activity.

In the absence of tourists the protected areas lose their instructive and emotional value. But if we are to overcome the contradiction between their historical mission and their value as a source of financial profit, we must put an end to certain clichés in the way tourists are catered for and to the qualitative and quantitative defects of the facilities provided. In this respect Medven and Zheravna offer abundant matter for study.

Medven is a large-scale attraction for parties of tourists, while Zheravna is a centre of universal interest visited by groups or individuals for periods of varying lengths. But neither village should have its individual flavour killed by the institution of standardized tourist facilities. In all such

villages the accent should be on jealous conservation of things in their original state and rejection of the luxury standards of "consumer" tourism. Indeed high prices for tourist services have often led to seasonal booms followed by disastrous financial slumps; but in any case, once consumer facilities take pride of place everything else will become mere background decoration of dubious authenticity.

The adoption of authenticity as the main criterion is often a source of hidden contradictions. It is, above all, an illusion to suppose that the authenticity of a town is preserved when it is reconstructed. Fortunately the tendency in this direction has been successfully combated in the Kotel region. Respect for the architecture of the past and the master craftsmen who created it primarily means study, pursuit and further development of the creative idea, never the mere copying by pupils of forms, materials and devices essentially at one with the spirit and ideas of the age which produced them.

The clashes which arise in the sphere of communications in urban surroundings owing to the size of present-day motor transport vehicles are most acute. But whereas the harm caused is everywhere fairly serious inasmuch as there is pollution of the environment and damage both to building fabric and living things (man included), it assumes other dimensions in the protected areas.

3. Zheravna. Street



4. Zheravna. Street.



The private car does not differ very greatly in size or function from the animal-drawn carts used both by the local population and by travellers in the days when the villages were actively developing. Further, as is clear from the size of their gateways, every courtyard has, or had, a shed of some sort, or at least room to accommodate a cart. But the human dimensions of the village and the fact that everything is within walking distance mean that motor transport is not an everyday necessity, and it is here that tourism creates a difficulty.

The small car is acceptable only to a limited extent in a protected village, owing to the restricted capacity of the street network and the difficulty — not technical but psychological — of driving on the old cobbles. The real difficulty, however, is that created by heavy through traffic and the tourist coaches and large-scale special facilities. Two of the villages — Itchera and Gradetz — are on the new shorter road from Sliven to Kotel. The others lie more or less off the beaten track and should

be able to do without big asphalted parking areas.

Careful solution of the problems created by such conflicting factors on the basis of the obvious need for life to continue within the protected villages may prove to provide the natural means for their survival. The adaptation of these five villages to the requirements of modern life is, in fact, one single problem and not five separate ones. A coordinated scheme for all five might help them preserve their individual scale, structure and atmosphere, and it might thus be possible, by creating one single centre for the various facilities involved, to find one central solution to the problems of transport and services.

If this guiding principle is retained during the next stages of planning and execution it may be possible to avoid the fundamental contradiction which would result from the uniform development of one and the same function for the whole group.

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RESUME

La notion même d'adaptation implique l'idée d'un conflit entre l'état actuel du bâtiment et l'évolution de ses fonctions. L'analyse des agglomérations anciennes de la région de Kotel, dans l'est de la Stara Planina, le prouve.

Dans cet exemple, une contradiction surgit entre le développement général de notre pays et l'éloignement de cette région des grands centres économiques et commerciaux. Le retard économique pris par la région a provoqué, dans le passé, une dépopulation importante. La sauvegarde de son architecture vernaculaire ne pourra être assurée que par le repeuplement des agglomérations. Des activités saisonnières ou des mesures de conservation „passive“ ne peuvent pas apporter une solution à ce problème. Un conflit apparaît alors entre les nouvelles orientations économiques et les bâtiments anciens qui ne peuvent y répondre. L'industrie tou-

ristique peut, elle-aussi, causer des dommages matériels. Le développement harmonieux de ces agglomérations ne pourra s'effectuer que par le retour progressif à certains types de production et par la création d'activités compatibles avec le maintien des habitants et le séjour temporaire des touristes.

L'augmentation de la circulation automobile et l'introduction des moyens de transport indispensables au tourisme créent de nouveaux conflits dans la région de Kotel. Pour sauvegarder les particularités des différentes agglomérations de cette région, il faudra donc trouver une solution commune aux problèmes des transports et des services.

1. Schéma de Jéravna et des villages environnants.
2. Jéravna. Maisons.
3. Idem. Rue.
4. Idem.