

Sub-theme: Conservation and Preservation of Monuments, Districts and Sites

Title: Design of Commercial Functions in Historic Areas

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After World War I. modern architecture appeared as the new form of industrialized building methods, marking the way for the mass production of humane environment.

At the same time decline of historic monuments had accelerated, and the theory of scientific conservation was founded.

After the destructions of World War II. rapid changes took place in the life of Hungarian towns and society. Destroyed buildings were put back to function within a short time. But post war changes put down their unreciprocal footprints on historic towns and their way of life. Old institutions ceased to exist, others had emerged, long established values had suddenly disappeared.

The socialist revolution had happened.

Tremendous efforts were made in favour of industrialization.

No money was available to keep the shape of shattered cities - financial support only went into certain new developments, - and also new settlements were born, sleeping cities appeared around the industrial areas. Many destroyed and not so destroyed old buildings were pulled down as symbols of the never-to-return exploiting era.

All but the smallest houses were nationalized and there was no one to look after them any more.

Major commercial firms were nationalized and as state-owned supplying networks satisfied but the most basic needs. Other commercial companies went out of business, small shopkeepers lost interest and closed down.

Within a few years after 1956 once more a new institutional system emerged - that has been operating since. Wing sentiments calmed down, a slower but steadier development started opening the way for constructive, long distance work in every field - including conservation and organized, foresighted town-planning in the capital city of Budapest, where former war destructions also uncovered numerous archaeological values in and under old buildings. This had started a grand scale theoretical work in scientific institutions, pointing towards possible future conservation in important areas.

Nearly all historic towns soon followed their way in returning life to their tranquil centres. As soon as society could think of developing again, organized planning took over countrywide on the basis of of modern town-planning ideas dating back to the 20s and 30s, and limited reconstruction projects came in sight too.

This process was seated in major national planning offices in cooperation with local and regional authorities, financial bodies,

scientists. Their sheer existence helped local communities to think and act in a new way.

More western results started to infiltrate the functionalist town-planning methods on the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s. Already existing good examples of the "rehabilitation type" new thinking methods influenced theoretical and later practical work in Hungary. The new influence was mostly coming from West-Germany, France, the Benelux-states, Sweden and Austria.

In Hungary as well as in the western hemisphere, the deterioration of old, historic cities took place on the track of social changes, except more rapidly sometimes, and changes were more radical too. Today, when everyday news of catastrophic scale pollution and environmental destruction is present, a new kind of consciousness starts to build in the society.

A new type of architectural conscience was brought into existence by realization, that the present speed of development being regardless of humane values would lead to inhumane environment and self-destruction to mankind.

The results we expect, and the problems to solve are of material nature, and must be helped by ways of an up-to-date town-planning approach, considering the widest aspects of reviving our existing historical, picturesque, functional etc. - in one word - humane values, and fitting them into a sensible future concept of the township's life.

Even if on different social, financial and historical basis, our mutual goal is the same all over the world: improving quality of life in our settlements. Our scientific and technical methods are the same too, which we all have to use professionally to get the best possible achievements in our field.

Regarding the rehabilitation process, our general zeal is to achieve complex cultural heritage and environmental protection in harmony with the town's economically necessary developments.

In Europe and in Hungary as well historic areas are almost always having live organic connections with the modern life of the town, though their function and role has considerably changed in time, they mostly lost their importance as centres of social life and activities due to circumstances mentioned above.

Emphasis has shifted over to separately attached modern areas, mostly housing blocks, which resulted shrinking of social life, as new housing areas scarcely had their properly attached communal and commercial functions.

In the rehabilitation process the most important communal and commercial functions will be revived in the neglected area that is the focus of our efforts.

The success of the process is mostly dependent on the foresight and cooperation of professional and preferably social bodies, local and regional authorities, local and central financial supporters, the planners, scientists, architects etc.

The basis of the planning work be a grand scale scientific survey of the fabric of the town concerning every aspect from history to the historic functions of existing buildings. The scientific research work is conducted by the National Inspectorate of Historic Monuments /Országos Műemlék Felügyelőség/ that is responsible for the whole process in connection with protected areas or buildings. The planning

process is going to start with making of the programme, which process will affect everybody from the local council to the future users. The planner will literally be in crossfire from all directions as in a town, however small it is, hundreds of interests are colliding. The decision maker will have to consider the community's future needs too, and in the best interest of the township must decide which functions will be in harmony with the existing city fabric. This must be done in harmony with other conservational and development policies in order to change a disused or many times mis-used urban area into a kind of new centre, where historic and picturesque values will be combined with the city's live, throbbing needs, and the area will be housing all the necessary commercial /and other / modern functions to serve the local community and attract out-of-town visitors.

### Commercial Functions and Elements in a Historic Area

Commercial functions are the most basic and most commonly used functions in a rehabilitated central area, though there are some cases when a rehabilitation area is singularly devoted to a certain specific function as a housing or institutional district. In most cases, however, a new centre will house mixed functions, with commercial functions being the most public-oriented and as such, architecturally the most significant ones.

The most important fact about commercial functions is - in the architect's eye - that they give the essential link between a township and its people. A visitor, and a resident too, communicates with the town through its commercial facilities. If you are a visitor, you won't always be able to enjoy other people's homes, the offices won't serve your needs. But you will always enjoy its commercial facilities, through them you can gain access to the city's products its specialities - food, wine, crafts - and its people's minds too. Talking about commerce and commercial elements we might find useful to determine what do we refer to when talking about it in connection with a township, a fabric of towns, all architectural definitions.

Commercial in a wider sense could be the utilizing of components of the fabric of towns. In this sense it could be nearly everything that is bringing economical advantage utilizing the town's architectural components, as renting out newly restored apartments to customers. In this particular study, however, we are not interested in this more economic definition.

In the architects approach we only wish to deal with its strictly architectural - actually functional - side: we shall simply determine as commercial a particular type of communal buildings.

The kind where public is served directly with goods or personal services.

The most common types of commercial functions are as follows:

- Retail functions / from the smallest pavilion to the largest dept. store /
- Consumer services / personal and small industrial services for the everyday life/
- Catering kind of services /from the smallest drink bar to the great

restaurants/ .

- Accomodation type services / hotels, motels, bed+breakfast facilities / .

The importance of these functions obviously coming from the fact, that they determine the quality of life for town residents as well as out-of-town visitors.

A commercial element in a landscape or a townscape would be an object of commercial characteristics as defined earlier.

Accordingly a commercial element could be a huge department store as well as a sunshade and a plant outside a small shop enhancing its attractive role. It could even be a roadside sign informing the traveller about the nearest hotel or restaurant.

So when we have to make a decision about placing our elements into the live structure of a town, we must consider everything between the two sizes mentioned formerly.

Inserting our commercial elements into the fabric of a live city means careful considerations concerning the nature of public needs to be satisfied.

In the rehabilitation area - we have learnt it through painful experience - we cannot plant units designed to satisfy quantity needs.

We must not put a huge department store into the middle of a historic centre.

The times had passed, when we had pulled down a block of deteriorated houses

in order to erect a department store near the historic centre, just because we believed that a real centre cannot exist without one.

Those units will undoubtedly find their place somewhere out of the central area, where there is enough room for parking lots, deliveries etc.

When choosing the future contents of our historic fabric we have to select functions that carry quality.

We do not only want to attract tourists, but the town's own residents to the centre. The way to do it is planting small specialist's shops that sell things you cannot usually buy in a supermarket or mall.

Actually these kind of units attract tourists too, and motivate them to buying things they do not really need, but ones that represent value. Try to avoid the gimmicky souvenir shops that spoil impressions many times.

Everybody will enjoy a quality perfume shop a modern chemist's in the setting of a museum pharmacy, a luxuriously fitted shop selling products of the local industry, or a liquor shop with the greatest selection of local wines and spirits.

After having selected our functions for the historic centre, we have to find the proper buildings for them.

The safest way to selecting a proper house for a function lies in history .

We can be sure, that a building or a district that had been used for commercial activities for the last 200 or 100 years , will be probably able to answer our similar needs today complete with necessary modifications.

When wishing to insert your up-to-date functions, track down historic areas which were used similarly, find a historic building that used to hold a restaurant or a winecellar and put them back into it.

This is where a reversed architectural thinking has to take over.

Instead of creating a space and a shell for a desired function, we shall have to adjust our functions to the existing shells in both the theoretical and material sense.

The reconstruction work in case of an individual building too, would start with a thorough scientific survey, tracking down historical records regarding the building, detecting remaining architectural details, uncover old decorations and laying down results in the scientific documentation.

As planning starts, the architect - the scientific documentation being closely followed - inserts the new function into the building by laying out a scheme, in which he carefully keeps existing values, architectural details of past ages, enhancing traditional atmosphere surrounding the new function.

The local council's architectural department will decide whether the new scheme for the old building answers requirements for the usual standards and specific conservational aspects enforced by the local conservation officer.

The architect must ensure that the function selected for the old building will not suppress its original characteristics and does not unduly exploit it. Some improperly applied functions would outgrow their building in time, and the whole project will be undersized by the time it gets ready and starts to work.

These kind of difficulties do not only appear with lack of appropriate size. Many older buildings simply lack abilities to comply with certain functions or their extensive technological or service engineering requirements. Thus placing of out-of-scale functions or modern requirements into the body of an old building perforce might result the whole attempt failing to satisfy both conservational aspects and expectations from the modern function.

The answer to handling these problems will be the altering of the programme according to the capabilities of its future shell.

Naturally there are cases when careful considerations will lead to the decision of increasing the capacities of the historic building by adding an extension to it.

Extensions to historic buildings may be justified in the following cases:

- Replacing a missing wing or part, thus bringing back the original bulk of the building
- Applying an infill to restore the original street outline

- When the attachment does not interfere with the significant views of the original building, and there is a case of absolute necessity Service engineering problems require particular attention from the conservation architect.

Inappropriate service installations may spoil the appearance of our work entirely. Use solutions as close to the original solution as possible.

Solid brick or stone buildings scarcely require extensive air conditioning systems, the mass of stone being able to store heat or coolness for the comfort of the users. Mains feed-in lines and inside systems must be the shortest possible and hidden but in the remotest second rate areas. It is also not advisory to cover them with extensive interior decorator panels, as they are alien to the original structures too.

In historic environs even new buildings must utilize traditional materials. It is quite obvious that when we touch an existing building, the material we use must be in relation to its original counterpart.

It is not recommended to use plastics or other replacement materials when we have access to the original range. Materials used should not fall

short in quality or craftsmanship from the original, though their appearance and design might reflect our own era.

Structurally, however, usage of modern high technology practical materials can be accepted in order to lengthen the life of an old supporting structure.

Architectural elements in harmony with the historical surroundings will give the proper appearance to our commercial units.

Even the simplest design patterns can be successful when applied with the appropriate materials finished in high quality.

Elements we insert into the fabric of a city or a building must always remain within the architectural framework given - in size, in style and in materials as well.

At the same time they have to be attractive and utilizing modern commercial language appearing in trademarks, names, signs and symbols.

Organizing our historic centre, there are some grave mistakes we are apt to commit:

- Avoid commercializing the area, overloading it with too many single-sided commercial functions thus turning it e.g. into a singularly touristic attraction. In this case hordes of tourists will be pouring out of their coaches day-by-day, /but mostly in high season/ eating up and buying up everything, while town residents will hide away in the comparative silence of their homes. Out of season the same shops will be closing down, because the merchandise they sell is only bought by tourists, and the city will be sleeping until next season.

- Under-commercializing an area is committed by decision makers when they use too few commercial elements - this is generally due to a strong preference towards some other special field - many times this being too many cultural features. Too many museums or archaeological sights could be disastrous in a town centre, where visitors after seeing one or two of the sights will want to sit down and eat or have an ice-cream and relax.

Avoiding these common mistakes we shall have to insist on a very sensible balance - hoping to revive a real town, and not a reservation for tourist attractions or a cultural concept.

Establishing the sequence of functions in our historic centre, we shall have to consider another important factor, namely: time.

People using the city must be given time to enjoy the atmosphere, whether sightseeing or shopping they should be able to sit back in a setting that is part of the town's traditional values and recover sipping on their drinks or eating a good meal. Let's give them a chance to wonder about finding their way to the sights themselves, mix tourists with the residents in the centre, and do not hurry them with an arrow showing them the way to the one and only ancient ruin to see.

All theoretical considerations in this paper are illustrated with a selected slide presentation, using examples of successful historic centre conservation areas in Hungary, complete with individual examples of commercial buildings in old surroundings.

Examples quoted will include studying of the newly rehabilitated City of Budapest commercial areas, and further samples of the rural centres Eger, Kecskemét, Veszprém, Szentendre and Kőszeg.

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#### SUMMARY

In a new world, industrialization and environmental decline has called for more attention on existing values both of natural and of cultural-historic character. There is a start now for a world-wide recognition of the particular significance carried by monuments of past values.

The general<sup>\*</sup> zeal of modern society is to achieve complex cultural heritage and environmental protection in harmony with economically necessary developments. In Europe and in Hungary as well, historic areas are almost always having live, organic connection with the existing modern township, though their function and role has considerably changed in time - the main issue here is to revive historic areas by giving them up-to-date characteristics fitting new functional schemes for the rehabilitation work to be based on.

The success is mostly dependent on the foresight and cooperation of professional bodies, local and regional authorities, planners, scientists, architects and financial supporters certainly. In many cases original functions cannot survive, they will be replaced with modern commercial functions to serve and attract visitors to the area.

This must be done in harmony with other conservation and development policies, in order to change a disused, or many times misused urban area into a kind of new centre, where historic or simply picturesque values are combined with living, up-to-date attractions.

The architect's approach to planning methods within historic areas and buildings will start with the description of most widely used commercial functions in historic areas - and aspects of selecting the proper function fitting to the existing building.

Considerations of possible extensions are discussed, describing various problems to expect, including fulfillments of up-to-date building regulations, hygienic and safety regulations, structural and service engineering problems. Methods on how to achieve solutions to these problems, while keeping authenticity, historic and picturesque values, usage of traditional and replacement materials are discussed.

All theoretical considerations are illustrated by case studies of conservational areas and individual buildings presented in slides. Case studies are including well known examples and my own work, selected in order to give a wider overlook of Hungary's efforts.

Sujet: Conservation et Preservation des Monuments, Quartiers et Terrains

Titre: Projet des Unités de Commerce aux Quartiers Historiques

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## RÉSUMÉ

Dans notre monde moderne, l'industrialisation et le déclin des environnements ont suscité une attention croissante envers les valeurs naturelles, culturelles et historiques. De nos jours, on tend de plus en plus nettement à reconnaître l'importance particulière des monuments des valeurs anciennes dans le monde entier.

Ce à quoi une société moderne doit chercher c'est de réaliser un héritage complexe culturelle, et la protection des environnements en conformité avec les développements nécessaires industriels. En Europe, aussi bien qu'en Hongrie, les quartiers historiques ont presque toujours une connexion vive et mutuelle avec la ville, bien que leur rôle et fonction aient considérablement changé. Ce qui semble comme la tâche la plus importante, c'est de raviver les lieux historiques en les pourvoyant des caractéristiques modernes qui leur permettent à remplir des fonctions nouvelles sur lesquelles peuvent se baser les travaux de réhabilitation.

Le succès dépend en premier lieu de l'attitude et de la coopération des corps professionnels, des autorités locales et régionales, des projeteurs, des savants des architectes et, naturellement, des appuis financiers. Souvent, il peut arriver que les fonctions originales doivent être modifiées; elles seront remplacées par des fonctions modernes commerciales, susceptibles de satisfaire les besoins des visiteurs et/ou de les attirer aux environs.

Ça doit être réalisé en conformité avec d'autres principes de conservation et développement, pour pouvoir transformer un lieu non-utilisé, ou, trop souvent, mal-utilisé à une sorte de centre, où les valeurs historiques ou simplement pittoresques sont combinées d'une attraction moderne et vive.

Le projet d'une construction dans des quartiers et des bâtiments historiques doit commencer par la description des fonctions commerciales les plus fréquentes dans le quartier historique - pour trouver la meilleure fonction qui correspond au bâtiment donné.

La question d'une extension possible est en cours de discussion, décrivant de nombreux problèmes qui peuvent se poser, contenant les exigences des règlements de la construction moderne, des règlements hygiéniques et de sécurité, des problèmes sur le plan structural, déclarant l'importance de la maintenance de l'authenticité et des valeurs historiques et pittoresques. La question de l'emploi des matériaux traditionnels et de remplacement est également à l'ordre du jour.

Toutes les considérations théoriques sont illustrées par des études contenant des exemples bien connus et par mon propre travail.

Les études ont été sélectionnées après une consultation menée avec d'autres participants Hongrois, pour donner une image plus ou moins complète sur les efforts de la Hongrie.