

Instead of an Introduction

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Abstract. Safeguarding the Central Europe's Spirit of Common Heritage possibilities of protection

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The shift of borders in Central-Eastern Europe was one of the World War II consequences. Historic Polish heritage was moved on the territories of today's Lithuania, Byelorussia, and Ukraine while the German one is now within Polish borders. As a result, the historic buildings have for years deteriorated, deprived of their identity and their spirit of the place. Poland's accession to the EU and the policy of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has opened the possibilities of the protection of these monuments. In June 2007, Polish ICOMOS appointed the Committee of Common Heritage.

We worked out an original method for the full revitalisation of the threatened common heritage. The consolidation of activities, the co-ordination of work and fund-raising, supported by the management plan for the historical sites as in UNESCO recommendations assure the European level of the project. The sites under the threat are the topic of the present work, the first one is a unique gothic church at Marianka near Pas_ek (Prussich Holland), and other ones were appointed at the 1st international meeting in Lvov in April 2008.

New Europe, [...] urgently needs a new approach to the ways shaping its cultural life and international contacts. National borders must be gradually eliminated, similar to political and economic ones. National diplomacies [...] will have to be replaced by a common European policy and pre-established principles, rights and due procedures. Thus, the national ministries of culture may well be replaced by common European cultural institutions. Necessary regulations in this respect might be stipulated in the European Culture Charter, outlining the basic cultural rights for European citizens. (...) This Charter will oblige its parties to stimulate and facilitate super-national cultural contacts and the free flow of persons, ideas and information" (von Gesau, 1995).

The term of "common heritage" became the starting point for the considerations on the specific method for the protection of the material heritage in Central and Eastern Europe, enjoying an exceptional but unappreciated role in fostering culture against its historical and political-economic situation, causing anxiety and demanding a joint open-minded action and the expulsion of "the ghosts of the past" and hypocrisy (Frans 1995). This paper, written after many initiatives and actions were made, tells with satisfaction that we have overcome all divisions and can view this heritage as the point of our joint efforts. The history of European culture again witnesses the consequences of historic events, which are not only the shifted borders and the trauma of the Balkan War but the new possibilities which appeared after many countries became members of the European Union. Poland perceives Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Germany as most important for prospective co-operation.

The expulsion of people after the shift of borders made them abandon their material heritage, which was subsequently rejected by the newcomers, generating neglected remains (cf. the Balkans). Another type is the remains of former colonies, e.g. the Mennonite and/or Dutch heritage in today's northern Poland, Germany and Ukraine (Tomaszewski 2001).

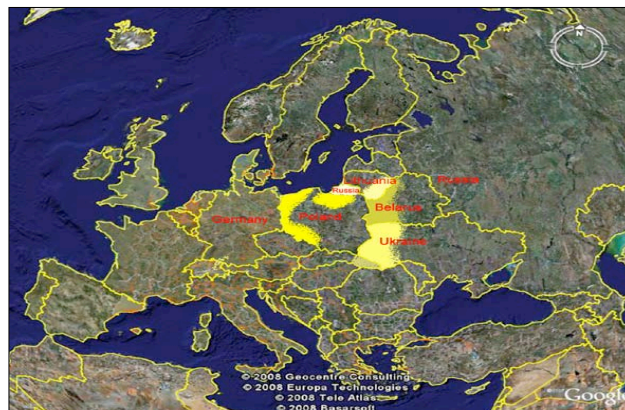


Figure 1.

After the accession to the EU, Polish-Lithuanian co-operation has become considerably easier. The most promising programmes for the future are those which take Russia and Byelorussia into account, revealing an exceptional number of possibilities of material co-operation.

Polish-Ukrainian relations are those of stronger cultural links, resulting in the quality and quantity of activities in the field of cultural heritage (Riabczuk 2005). Polish cultural policy has proved helpful in the development and appearance of new ways of co-operation. The activity on institutional and formal levels, the co-operation between towns, cities and regions is accompanied by the large effort of scientists, artists and architects, collectors, local activists, and various associations. The gathering of documentation, work in archives, practical and specialised tasks of conservation and actions of local societies are now embraced by the common denominator of *the protection of the common "lost" and "regained" heritage*.

In the case of former Polish and German territories, the role of qualified specialists from the Polish National [PKN] ICOMOS Committee, has proved very important. Hence, there appeared the idea of the Scientific Committee of the World Heritage at the PKN ICOMOS. The complexity of the issue against the help received from the EU and the reinforcement of ICOMOS structures in the form of Scientific Committees also mattered, so did the many years of co-operation with Central and Eastern European countries of the writer hereof. Finally, it must be emphasised that the comprehensive vision of the new form of help proved possible thanks to the writer's more than twenty-year-long experience as a scientist, teacher and architect, monument renovator, the designer of objects within a historical environment and ICOMOS specialist. The Scientific Committee of the Common Heritage at the Polish National ICOMOS Committee assumed the following tasks:

- facilitating contacts between people dealing with "lost" and "salvaged" (or "preserved") heritage, within existing states;
- creating the database of work in progress, divided into specialist groups and permitting the authorised on-line input of data;
- organising cyclical meetings for the exchange of practical experience, enhancing the skills and efficiency of our work by international contacts;
- co-ordinating of work on protected sites, as in the plan for the management of a monument, to safeguard the suitable level of work, reasonable distribution of means and the increased role of a given object in its region.

The role of ICOMOS is the management of human resources, safeguarding the high level of competence and intellectual openness of people working on a project, plus the best representation for scientific and

didactic institutions. The commitment of R&D and educational organisations is crucial because it enhances the rank of a given object. It also helps to use and share theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Simultaneously, a group of specialists in this newly created structure can concentrate on the educating of the local people.

As for the material aspect of the work of this body, the main effort would fall on the improvement of the condition of a given site. Here, the selection of the site itself proves crucial. We know that the most prestigious specimens "defend themselves", thus, our activity will concentrate on small and peripheral objects.

Additionally, we would base our selection on the prospective cooperation of the local milieu. Our team selected an object on the Polish territory: a gothic, Roman Catholic church in the village of Marianka near the town of Pas__k which is the common Polish and German heritage in former Prussia in the autumn of 2007. Next, we organised a meeting in Lvov to select sites located outside Polish borders and launched concrete help for them.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

What is particular about Marianka church is the amount of preserved monumental interior furniture (baroque altars, baptismal partition and Mediaeval polychromes, unique for this part of Poland). The location of the church is noteworthy: near the town of Pas__k – a multi-cultural centre for co-existing Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox and Evangelical communities. The work on and help to this church enabled us to prepare the operational paradigm for future work.

The departure point was the bad technical condition of the object, its destroyed roofing, lack of drainage and damp walls, which threatened not only the polychromes but the building itself. The renovation the building proved unfeasible for the community of c. 200 people. Yet, thanks to the support of the town and commune, the Mayor and the commitment of the Office of Monument Conservation in Elbl_g the goal was achieved and the Polish National Committee of ICOMOS began to monitor and co-ordinate the work.

After the schedule for renovation had been prepared, we concentrated on particular actions in order to elevate the site to the European level: its renovation and the exposition of polychromes and preserved items of furniture, along with the arrangement of the whole interior and its monitoring and security.

The Mayor approved the plan for the management of a monumental object in a due document, i.e. a widely propagated book. According to it, both the inhabitants of the village itself and citizens of Pas__k and the whole commune joined in the activities salvaging the church. Educational meetings with citizens were organised by volunteers who specialised in legal aspects of protection, theoretical and practical knowledge and new architecture, which raised the level of awareness of the local people.

The website of Marianka village documented all current and planned activities related to the project. The year 2009 was announced as the Year of Marianka to direct all celebrations and social events there and to raise funds for renovation. The programme "Around Marianka" includes a scientific conference, contacts and the exchange of experience between guardians of sites from neighbouring countries. The conference will be a part of the annual cycle of meetings of the Common Heritage Committee and a working platform, illustrating the progress of work and facilitating discussion on possible difficulties. It will be complemented by a scientific publication. The entire project will be monitored by the Municipal and Commune Offices in Pas__k.

The formal task was achieved, the mechanism – launched and the society duly educated according to presumed guidelines. Now, we expect a discussion after the full revitalisation of the church has been finished, sharing advantages and drawbacks of the adopted method, also in the form of a publication. We hope that the centre for didactic work will

appear and the scientific work will be crowned by the object restored to its full use.

Another objective of the programme is the links between sites and a horizontal structure of mutual support and help, fostering the inter-human relations. On the international level, we had the first cyclical meeting on the protection of common heritage in Lvov, after the preliminary selection of sites from Lithuania, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Poland. We learnt about legal and practical aspects of monument protection related to each object. Finally, we singled out two objects: the Roman Catholic church in Wo_czyn and the de-consecrated Church of the Sisters of St Claire in Lvov.



Figure 6.



Figure 7.



Figure 8.

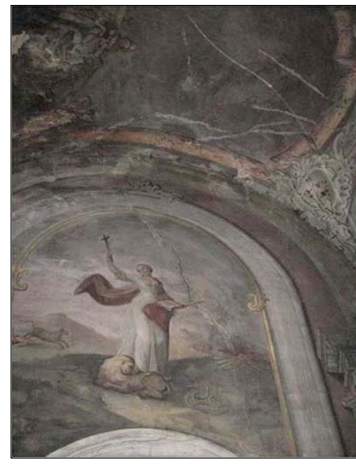


Figure 9.

The intervention here must be conducted on a completely different level. We have began the historical research and the query for initial materials. We have prepared the professional documentation of their current state and developed formal relations with their managers/owners. Today, we certainly can enjoy the commitment of the local community. We still need a group of ready-to work co-ordinators and moderators of the project to prepare management plan, which is the key element in applying to the World Monument Fund.

Summing up, the traits of this innovative method are as follows:

- Plan for the Monument Management as the basis for all activities, after the initial diagnosis and the assessment of people's availability and capacity have been made;
- No programme existing to date, whether in Poland, Ukraine or Byelorussia, on the monument revalorisation on such a scale, with so interdisciplinary a character and with such utilitarian objectives
from scientific research to the propagation of the idea locally);
- "Non-serious" objects treated seriously instead of the current "do the most urgent repairs" method;
- ICOMOS become the leading expert;
- Scientific and didactic factor (students) proved important;
- Commitment of the local community;
- Stimulation and control over an undertaking for years;
- Flexibility of applied method thanks to current adjustments;
- Common good made widely accessible and new-type specialists created.

Final point: **"Central Europe after 1989 has become a constant reminder, often misunderstood by the West, of the cultural values of Europe, hasn't it?"**

NOTES

1. Frans A. M., Alting von Geusau, *Dyplomacja kulturalna i narodowe stereotypy: czy tylko do u_ytku s_u_bowego?* [*Cultural Diplomacy: For Staff Only?*] in: *Narody i stereotypy*, ed. Teresa Walas, Mi_dzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Kraków, 1995, pp. 256, 257

2. "In fact, the point is to increase the dynamism of a region and present its heritage as an enchanting masterpiece within temporal, spatial, ethnic, cultural and geo-political dimensions. Polish and Ukrainian cultures seem to be the most suitable for such tasks. They are close enough to each other and of so big a kinship that they understand and attract each other; simultaneously, they are distant and different enough from each other to quarrel and distract each other (...) From the formal point of view, Eastern and Western Galicia correspond to the definition of a region in the European Union, *as an evidently coherent territory where the mechanism of the transmission of heritage functions and its inhabitants respect some common values and retain and develop their unique specificity in order to stimulate cultural, economic and social progress.* (Riabtchuk 2005)

3. "All questions and problems indicate how complex and often unstable 'the national measurement' of architectural works is. It is easier to place them in a cultural circle or the political borders of a state that grasp them in the categories of national affiliation. (...) Difficulties 'with national identity appear in the whole of our continent. Yet, they are exceptionally strong and dangerous in Central Europe'. This area, due to its centralised geographical location was the most exposed to the influence and merging of the culture and art of adjacent countries and, also, to the 'shifting' of political borders, which caused the situation that many architectural objects are now located beyond the borders of the states where they were originally created. Central Europe has the largest 'factor' on the continent of the uniformity of cultural landscape and the larger than elsewhere occurrence of bi- or multi-cultural areas." (Frans 1995)

4. "Following the recently-coined notion of 'European cultural goods', we need to spread the idea of common cultural heritage as 'lex suprema' and create the common policy of its cognition and protection. (...) Our road must lead through common research and the propagation of knowledge on cultural heritage in Central Europe. This requires new criteria, discussion and co-operation. We need a place and proportions for national components of culture and the precise definition of bi- and multi-cultural areas, as well as the borders for the notion of common heritage (...) This will require effort from all parties, strong will and civil courage to acknowledge the history of 'bi-cultural areas' once distorted, the pinpointing and rejection of falsehood rooted in nationalisms or instilled

in human minds by official propaganda tools, with - by the way - quite a good result. If Poles are not able to do this with regard to their western and northern parts, joined to the country after World War Two, they would not be permitted to have similar expectations from their Eastern neighbours, regarding the lands Poland lost, nor would they be able to reconcile themselves with their Western neighbour. This de-falsification must pertain not only to the distant historical truth but also to the post-war period and cultural vandalism of that time. These are difficult demands but they are inevitable for the creation of the common Europe of tomorrow where Central Europe will find its place.” (Tomaszewski 2001)

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All photographs from the author’s collection.