

Social and Economic Integration of Cultural Heritage within Cities

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The development of heritage protection in Estonia during the past decades can broadly be divided into three characteristic periods:

1. Cultural heritage protection as a catalyst, school, model and test for a democratic movement

During the 1980ies the movement to protect cultural heritage became the only legal way to demonstrate a nation's attitude towards the official state policy. By the beginning of the 1990ies the movement had developed into an extensive motive power which resulted in the re-establishment of Estonian independence.

Work with heritage protection gave the future politicians and state officials a good opportunity to learn about and experience democracy in the conditions of an ending totalitarian regime. Hence protection of cultural heritage, both state and voluntary, could be looked upon as a model of democracy, as a majority of future political movements and institutions followed the process of how various heritage protection organisations were set up and used their statutes and working principles as a ground for future developments.

2. Building up a new system for heritage protection under the pressures of newly gained independence

The big dream of the 1980ies was to restore the most important "heritage object - the Republic of Estonia". Unfortunately, this did not bring about similar care for the rest of our cultural heritage. Rather on the contrary, rapid economic changes in the process of re-establishing an independent Estonia pushed heritage protection movement to the background. State institutions responsible for cultural heritage were largely left on their own and had to undergo severe restructuring. The new situation required the adoption of a new heritage protection law, which at first was to a great extent solely based on enthusiasm, and establishing a new state system for heritage protection.

In the conditions of developing "sacred private property" cultural heritage was too often seen as an obstacle which hindered economic growth.

This situation started to improve by the second half of the 1990ies. Separate heritage protection institutions were united into a state Board of Antiquities and a new Heritage Conservation Act was adopted. Allocations for financing the maintenance and restoration of cultural heritage were included in the state budget. By the end of 1990ies heritage protection which previously had been orientated mainly towards cultural heritage objects was now becoming more diverse. This was the time when several co-operation projects were initiated which in addition to heritage conservation also had a cultural, educational and economic context.

3. Current situation

The third or present period is largely characterised by a diversity of social and economic integration of cultural heritage. Heritage conservation is often part of major international and national educational, environmental and regional programmes.

At the end of 1990ies the Danish and Estonian Ministries of Environment initiated a project aiming at compiling a database and atlases describing the historic Estonian towns.

National Heritage Board is actively involved in the project called SAVE (i.e. Survey of Architectural Values in the Environment) and the common interest of the project partners is to pay more attention to historic towns. It is obvious that in the nearest future construction activities in cities will concentrate on rebuilding the already existing houses or developing new constructions into historically established parts of towns. Modern details will inevitably be added to old buildings, but all replacements and additions should nevertheless be in accordance with the uniqueness of every single city.

Serious attention to historic town centres has been paid since 1970ies. By that time 12 town centres had been taken under state protection and various regeneration projects had been drawn up. However, the projects did not include inventory of individual buildings, nor did they consider property owners or ordinary citizens.

The SAVE programme which was started in the end of the 1990ies and which will include mapping the whole town territory aims at:

1. finding out town environments and buildings which the local municipality should protect;
2. working out planning principles to integrate new buildings into the existing town environment;
3. results of the mapping will be published in a town atlas, which will serve as an information resource on the cultural heritage of the town. The inventory results will be collected into a database which will act as base for development plans. The database will also be of use to investment projects and for citizens, tourists, property owners.

The SAVE programme can be divided into three separate stages:

1. preparatory work like topographical investigations, historic analyses, architectural description, survey of individual buildings and local building traditions;
2. mapping of the architectural characteristics of previously selected objects, registration of buildings and photographing of objects. Valuable objects and environments are evaluated with special attention to historic parts of the town;
3. compiling the town atlas with reference to
 - topography of the area,
 - history of the area,
 - architecture of the area,
 - valuable ensembles,
 - evaluation maps of buildings.

The first town atlas in Estonia was compiled in Kuressaare. The atlas helps citizens, house owners, architects and builders see what is valuable and worth preserving in their town.

The SAVE project will be carried out in 12 historic towns. Work is currently being done in nearly half of the towns - in addition to Kuressaare also in Haapsalu, Viljandi, Valga and Rakvere. Work results are at the moment available for consultation through the Internet on the web-pages of the four towns.

The first results of the inventories have indicated that the SAVE programme provides local authorities, architects and planners with an opportunity to learn about the requirements of their towns, the investment situation, effects of tourism and the activities and attitudes of the population living in the historic areas of the town. For example, comparing the historic centres of big cities which as a rule are very attractive and highly valued in the real estate

market, to historic centres of small towns, it turns out that the population of such small centres is mainly comprised of elderly poorish people. Their income is often minimum, hence most of the buildings are in the state of amortisation and have low market value. One of the objects of the SAVE programme is mapping the tendencies and changes taking place in the historic areas. This has brought out several hidden reserves of the areas and caught the interest of real estate specialists. Realising and keeping the historic identity of a town helps bring more investments and increase tourism and thus improves the living conditions of the local population.

Another co-operation between the Baltic Sea states has been initiated by the ministries responsible for cultural heritage of these states. The co-operation covers several fields, one of which is called "Historic Small Towns". 10 small Estonian towns out of 45 were selected for this project with the aim of exploring the identity of each town and to include it in the town plans.

Big cities with their historic centres are in a totally different position as compared with small towns. When the small towns strive to bring more investments to them, then big cities are threatened with large-scale renovations of especially the historic parts. The role of heritage specialists is to monitor the integration of architectural heritage into the modern economy. All development plans must be based on professional research of the area and individual buildings and the results must be included in the construction projects.

A survey among the tourists visiting Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia, showed that 80% of them indicated that they came to Tallinn primarily because of the old town with its medieval architecture.

In addition to the SAVE programme I would like to introduce a national project which is starting this year and which regards a very interesting phenomena in Estonian history and culture. The project is called SCHOOLS IN OLD MANORS: PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORIC MANOR ENSEMBLES AND RENOVATION OF THE MANORS ACCORDING TO MODERN EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

This project is a co-operation between the ministries of culture, education, interior affairs and environment and deals with the issues of modern schools which are housed in old historic manor complexes. I consider this topic of utmost importance maybe also because I have the honour to chair the working group.

Schools were first housed into old manors after the establishment of the independent Estonian Republic in 1920. The land reform which was carried out soon after and the nationalisation of manors made it possible to establish schools in the historic manor complexes. Now, eighty years later there are nearly 65 manor-schools in Estonia with more than 10,600 pupils. The majority of such schools are basic schools with approximately 70 to 150 pupils in each.

The movement supporting schools in manors is very active in Estonia. It has gained a lot of attention on national, regional and local level.

Most of the manors which accommodate schools belong to the best examples of our architectural heritage and a large number of the manors is under state protection. In addition to obtaining their education the pupils in such schools have an extra benefit of first-hand experience of learning about the different periods in history, the way of life in olden times, cultural trends, technical skills and achievements of our past. It is easier for the pupils to appreciate the cultural landscape and development of their local settlement. Local authorities have worked out tourist routes connecting the schools. Manor complexes as interesting cultural heritage objects are often included in the cultural routes of a region. In many cases the manors have become important cultural centres, helping to balance the development of the town and the countryside. A wide-spread IT-project "Tiger Leap" has contributed to turning the schools into local Internet-centres. The unique historic atmosphere of the manors makes them ideal for concerts and exhibitions, which otherwise would never reach remote places.

The main aim of the national programme is to restore the historic manors as cultural heritage and at the same time turn them into modern educational establishments with all necessary requirements. A technical database is being created for the schools, information on the maintenance of historic buildings for the owners, researchers, designers and builders is an essential part of the programme.

The social and economic importance of this programme lies in the fact, that by allocating funds to renovate manors the state has foreseen means to foster the development of rural areas. In modernising the old manors the programme stresses that the schools can and must function not only as educational, but also as cultural establishments of the area. Well preserved attractive manors help raise the awareness, pride and sense of belonging of the local people and attract the interest of investors and tourists. First rather brief experience of this programme has clearly shown that economic and social activities have increased in the area throughout the year. Exhibitions, concerts and conferences are being held more often, new jobs have been created etc. Local people feel to be part of overall development and do not have the sense of having being left behind.

In conclusion I should say that the social and economic integration of cultural heritage in Estonian cities differs in each case. In big cities, for instance, architectural heritage forms an active part in the city's economic and cultural life while in smaller towns the process is only beginning.

The role of heritage protection in Estonian small towns is to pinpoint the hidden values of historic town centres. We must also look for new ways of integrating cultural heritage in the everyday lives of the citizens. Towns that have the castle as one of their symbols, have started to monitor visits to the castle in order to find out which parts are more popular than other. In many cases rare visiting is caused by difficult access to the monument.

Similarly, defense constructions are considered not only as museum objects or concert areas, but efforts are being made to integrate them into the street systems so that an organic connection with the heritage should be established. Town architects will consider heritage objects in drawing up development plans.

National programmes are being set up to draw attention to the rich cultural heritage of the countryside, which has been neglected for years. The programmes also help to balance the development between the country and the towns.