

Protection of Architectural Heritage, State of Art, New Aims and Possibilities in Urban Renewal

- The Case of Slovenia -

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1. The origins and the state of art of architectural heritage in Slovenia

The territory of Slovenia is the meeting point of four different regions. The so called "central European region identity" of cultural heritage in the middle- and northeastern part has a similar history as the neighbouring Austria. The western or so-called "Mediterranean" identity of cultural heritage is deriving from influences of northeastern Italian history. The most eastern part is somehow connected to the Pannonian flat and the southwestern border region to the Croatian and Pannonian regional identity. All the historic influences were mixed to the local identity and this is the reason why the architectural heritage of Slovenia has always been very variegated and connected to the micro-regional values.

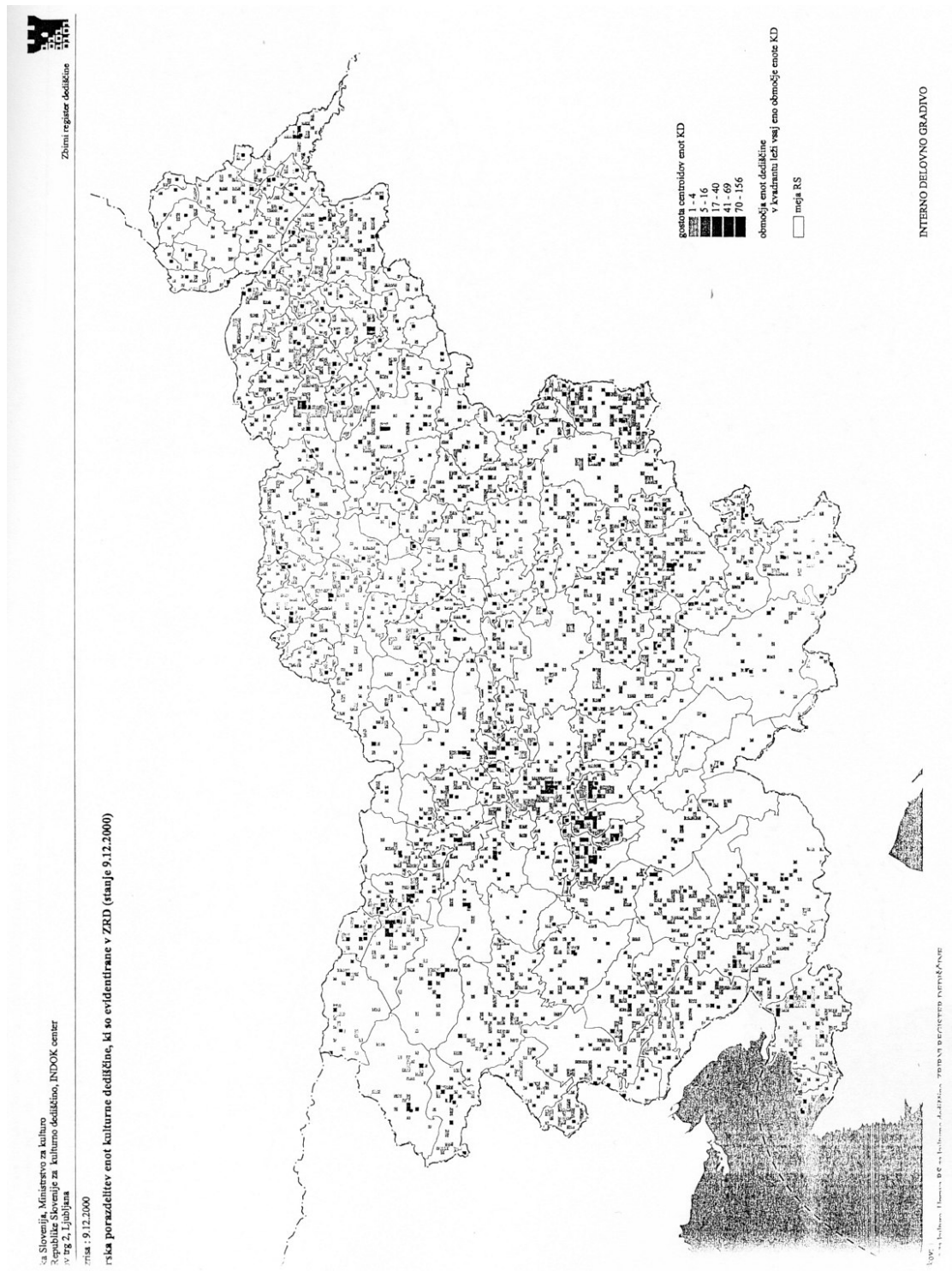
Also the history of formal protection of architectural heritage has different sources. At the beginning of the 20th Century, before the First World War, the Austrian legislation and experience gave priority to the methods of history of art. The selection of protected heritage was exclusively the work of art historians. Such relations lasted very long after the Second World War until 70's.

Not earlier than in the third part of 20th Century the so called vernacular architecture in rural regions and "anonymous" architecture in urban structures became part of protected cultural heritage and the first plan of protection of historic urban centre was accepted in 1972.

After this period intensive researches of integral architectural heritage in urban and in agricultural environment took part and different institutions are involved in it. The monopolistic regional Institute for protection of monuments was in charge as expert, administration and executing centres. This was always the reason why the financial sources were limited to the strictly conservation works on selected monuments and not for the integral protection of architectural heritage. Actual state of art is not very much better. It has been truly stated that the system of protection of architectural heritage is still too much connected to its origins (from the time of Austro-Hungarian monarchy) and it is not enough developed in the sense of modern theory, methodology and aims of European trends.

The researches has shown that in Slovenia with its 6.500 settlements (among them only about 200 developed urban ones!) the situation is the following:

- more than 700 of them there are important historic centres with well-preserved architectural heritage,
- there are about 30.000 individual architectures worth to be protected,
- there are about 1.500 architectural monuments protected as national heritage,
- more than a half of 74 "architectural landscapes (covering the whole Slovenia) is valued as heritage, etc.



The density of architectural heritage in Slovenia - centroids from 1-156 units, the state of art December 2000.

The most important quality of Slovene architectural heritage is the connection between the heritage and landscape, the outstanding monuments are always parts of high-quality ambiances. Parallel to the definition of individual architectures and parts of settlements as protected heritage the definition of so called "architectural landscapes" is very important.

The State Office for Protection of Cultural Heritage with its regional branch offices is in charge of collecting the data, preparing the expert valuations and to control the entire

registered architectural heritage. The main problem is that the institutions in charge have not enough highly educated staff to implement all their tasks and rights and that the local authorities can decide about the need of registration of every single monument and that the budget for the protection of architectural heritage is very low.

So the practise is still the same as always: the principal care is reserved for most excellent monuments, the integral protection of architectural heritage is incorporated into urban planning and local strategies.

2. Hypothesis:

Architectural heritage as the highest quality of all that man has built is always recognised by its values belonging to a real time. This means that also the aims of protection of architectural heritage have changed together with the changes of special needs through the time. It is obvious that also our actual needs and demands have changed the criteria of evaluation and at the same time the methodology and techniques of protection or renewal of architectural heritage has changed too.

As a part of global changes but also as a part of different role of architectural heritage in developed or undeveloped countries, the earlier academically aims to protect only the most artistic part of built heritage has been fundamentally changed. The new criteria of economy, new technologies and the demands for integration of built heritage into the quality everyday human environment have completed elder values.

In last three decades the role of architectural heritage (as the most influential part of cultural heritage) has been changing step by step from symbolic or even ideological values to more and more real parts of towns, landscapes, even regions. At the end of last century the protection and the renewal of built heritage became also an important part of the development strategy for better living environments, for sustainable planning of human settlements and in many cases also for better economy of regions or settlements.

Such changes certainly demand new method of evaluation of protected architectural heritage; as it has become an important part of development plans also the revaluation of old protected or restored monuments is needed. New principles, new methods and new possibilities have to be put forward in different real environments - not only for politics or experts but also for public, individual users and investors.

3. Analysis of new values of architectural heritage

There are many international documents introducing new claims of the role of architectural heritage that should be considered as new starting points for Slovene theory and practice. They represent different points of view - not so many in the sense of understanding theoretical but first of all the practical meaning of protected heritage. The theory of conservation and the international care for cultural heritage are of course special tasks of UNESCO, ICOMOS and other expert organisations. They are also developing the theory and changing the criteria together with new aims.

Without citing all special documents, charts and recommendations on the protection of cultural heritage, there are some very new important views for our new approach. Already in 70th the so-called "integral protection" of architectural heritage initiated the real role of built heritage not only as a document of history but also as a quality part of the human environment (Granada Convention). As the year 2001 is the year of architectural heritage of the 20th century, it is obvious that the criteria of evaluation of protected architectures must be changed.

The Council of Europe, Committee of ministers accepted in 1991 the Recommendation No. R (91) 13 "On the protection of the twentieth-century architectural heritage". Parallel to the usual guidelines for the protection, they accepted next recommendations:

- "the criteria for selection has to be based not only on aesthetic aspects but on the contribution made in terms of the history of technology and political, cultural, economic and social development;"
- "relevant national, regional or local authorities have a duty to encourage the most appropriate use to be made of the protected heritage... more generally also for economic, commercial or residential purposes. Encouragement should be given to finding new uses, which take account of the needs of present-day life..."

On Cyprus in 1997 the ministers of EU accepted special recommendation for regional development (CEMAT) with next statements:

- "...The integral architectural heritage is today more and more important also as the economy basis ... and as an important factor for a dynamic development of tourist industry..."
- "Protective and creative management with the settlement heritage should prevent the pressure of commercialism and cultural uniformity - both the most dangerous negative parts in the modern planning of the development of European towns and settlements..."
- "Cultural heritage should have adequate identification in the development of environment and should be considered as an important part of the development policy."

In Slovenia, the cultural (artistic) value of protected architectural heritage has always been the only important one. Even the new Law on the protection of cultural heritage (1999) only partly connects the planning of the development of settlements and rural areas with the protection of architectural heritage - mostly with single, protected monuments. However, within the new "Strategic development plan of Slovenia" there is a special part, called "Integrated protection of architectural and settlement values in the strategic development plan of Slovenia". We can expect that new European experiences and new vision of the future role of architectural heritage will change the idea of protection in Slovenia very soon too.

Until now the artistic, historical, symbolic and scientific values were used to estimate the quality of architectural heritage. The protection or even the reconstructions of the same qualities were demanded when the proper technologies were selected during the conservation acts. However, new challenges demand new values, new aims and new technologies - if we want to integrate the architectural heritage into our development plans.

Following actual theory and aims for protection and managing the architectural heritage, the new criteria of quality should be next ones

- Architectural heritage should prove the regional, local or individual specifics and qualities so as a part of "common European memory" - and as an important part of real living qualities.
- The identification of architectural and settlements' specifics should be indispensable for the preservation of regional, landscape and cultural identity - also as a very important part for a creative management and development.
- Architectural heritage should represent special cultural, social and symbolic values for local communities and for individuals.
- Real values of architectural heritage should be measured also through ecological, energetically and investment criteria regarding the possibilities of its protection and preservation.
- Selected buildings from the 20th century should be added into the list of protected (and renewed) architectural heritage. As the quantity of this heritage is huge and as

its qualities are many times disputable (especially with new values: ecological, symbolic, cultural, etc.), great attention should be paid and special researches should be made to obtain the best selection of the "new" architectural heritage.

The new system of values shows that the future protection of architectural heritage will be possible only as a part of the general strategic planning and vice versa that the quality of strategic planning of good housing will depend many times of the way of inclusion of renewal (and protection) of architectural heritage into the development of the dwelling environment.

4. The problems, that should be solved

Though in theory the conservation, restoration or even reconstruction of special qualities of architectural heritage is still the main task, the possibility of real use of preserved "old" architecture has become the most important for owners and investors today. Many times it seems that the protection of academic values of architecture is the last demand to them. As the financial efficacy is the clue to the realisation of preservation the owners, users, investors, even politicians (deciding the use of public money for protection) have become the most important partners in the strategy of management with the architectural heritage. If we add aggressive tendering firms with inappropriate or even harmful materials and technologies and the lack of real experts the positive role of architectural heritage can be understood in a wrong way only as a potential profitable aim.

In reality, the "recycling" of existing building fund and urbanised areas as well as the proper maintenance of old building constructions and materials can be an important part of sustainable development of human living space. In past centuries in Slovenia for example the so-called "developing house" was the most typical building process. From most humble cottages to the castles or churches the new quality of architecture was obtained not through new buildings and destroying the old ones. All good structures, materials or even architectural compositions were preserved, the new parts were added and the new architecture became completely "modern". In this way the finances, the energy and the continuity of architectural heritage were spared!

One fundamental question remains: how we can evaluate the built heritage of the 20th century from the point of view of new architectural heritage? We know that its influence on cultural landscape and on many architectural monuments was destructible (lost of identity because of uniformity, ecological and visual pollution, changes of important ambient, etc.). But in the same period many new qualities originated. Most of them are in the prestige parts of towns as authorial architecture, very few as parts of cultural landscapes.

After the First World War in Slovenia most new houses outside towns were built as monotonous one-family houses without architectural qualities and without influence on identification of cultural landscapes - the only influence was the destruction of existing recognisable "architectural landscape". Such "architecture" enabled higher sanitary level of dwelling but decreased the cultural and individual qualities. The question is: must we protect the buildings only because of their authors or because of their applicability to new uses or it is worthless because it does not create new "architectural" quality?

Once again we must create special methods of valuation if we want to build in new system of protection and management the architecture of 20th century together with the elder one:

- The "new" architecture as future precious heritage should indicate such quality in its ambient that it does not destroy the existing values of cultural and natural heritage and that it itself creates a new quality criteria.
- Its design and plan should be an important authorial achievement in real space and time - the valuation should be based interdisciplinary upon the relations between cultural, historical, symbolic, and applicable criteria.

- The "new architectural heritage" must create a quality living space, it should be ecological and environmentally friendly.

Such complex theoretical approach to the architectural heritage needs also the practical enlargement in special technology. Many of modern materials used in modern building praxis are harmful and unhealthy when used on old buildings. For example, the improper use of popular cement or the use of poisonous protective materials for wooden constructions, etc., make impossible the use of the "restored monuments" for normal housing. Because of ignorance or humble technical knowledge bad and unprofessional reconstructions and adaptations of architectural heritage were built - and some important architectural monuments became bad copies. New techniques and new, suitable materials must be used for renewal, but also the old techniques of building should be revived if we want to build in the precious architectural heritage for future housing and to protect the most important parts of architectural history and art as the highest qualities of living environment.

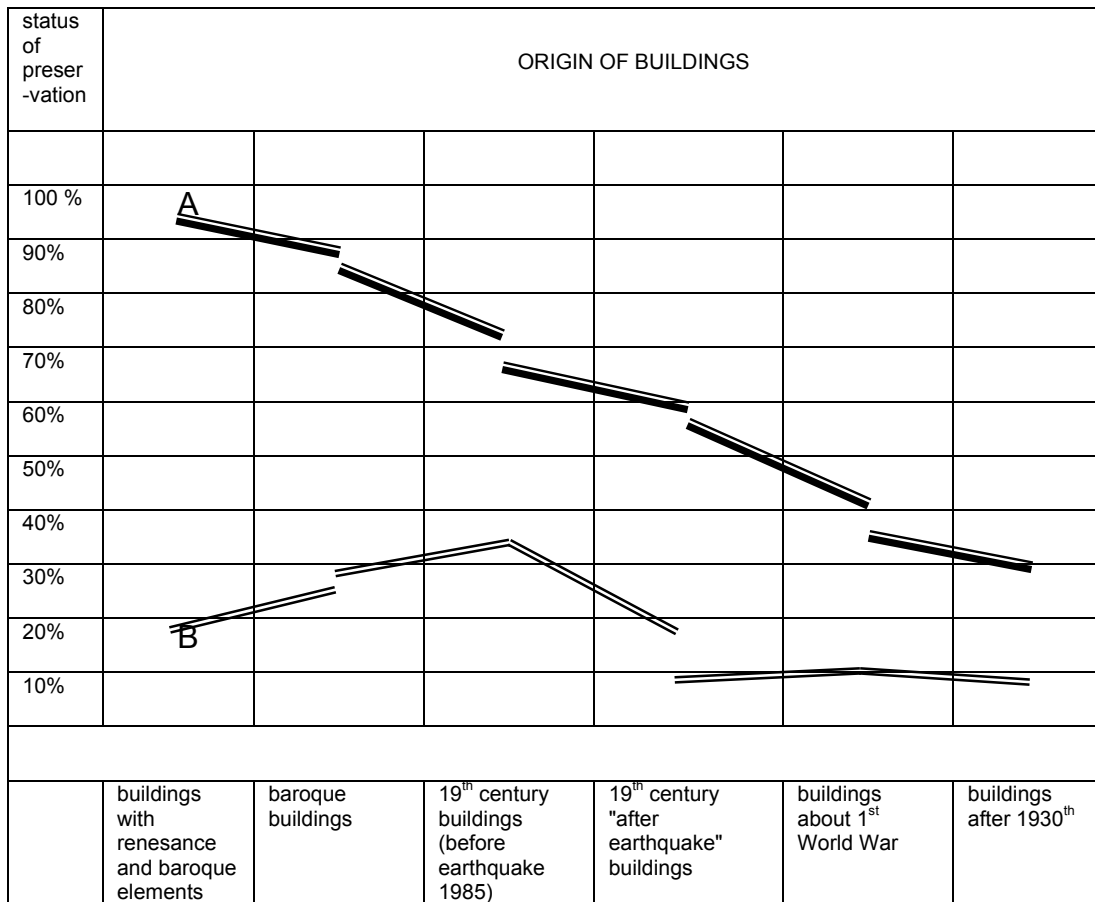
Of course, very important is also the education of all partners: specialists, politicians, developers, owners, and investors. More successful the education will be, better, more proper, sustainable and economical will be the renewal of architectural heritage - in term of protection and of new uses.

5. Possibilities for renewal of architectural heritage in Slovenia

In late 80's in Slovenia first research of real possibilities of protected ("listed") and unprotected architectural heritage was done. The results were encouraging enough. Rough calculations proved that in relation to existing number of housing units we can get inside the existing fund of buildings about 8% new apartments for a cost that generally does not exceed the costs for new buildings - with new quality standards and sparing the place and all the urban infrastructure at the same time. A very important part (maybe a half...) of this available housing fund was inside the so called "protected architectural heritage" and mostly inside the town or village centres. The general research was done for the complete territory of Slovenia and proved in detail on some selected areas (presented sample: the city of Ljubljana).

THE EXPEDIENCY OF RENEWAL OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE WITH THE POSSIBILITY FOR HOUSING

(Special research for the city of Ljubljana - Faculty of Architecture, 1990)

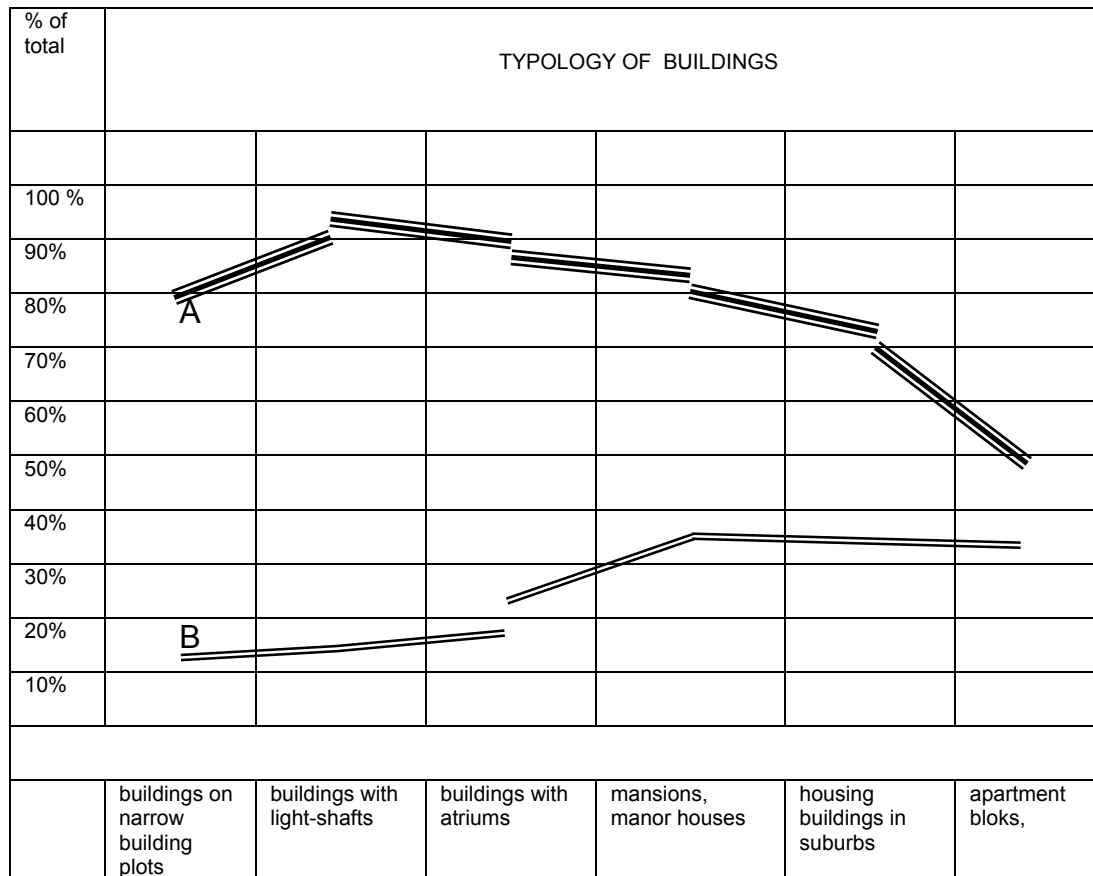


A: The degree of possible new housing space in relation to the integral renewal of buildings (reconstructed or new housing functions inside preserved architectural heritage).

B: Financial supplement exceeding the costs for restoration of architectural heritage.

FINANCIAL AND SPACIAL EXPEDIENCY OF RESTORED INTEGRAL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

(Special research for the city of Ljubljana - Faculty of Architecture, 1990)



A: Financial needs for renovation - comparable to the costs of new building with same characteristics.

B: Achievable new housing space - comparable to the existing housing space within restored "protected" architectural heritage and other elder buildings.

Also the detailed analysis of all important settlements in Slovenia proved that more than 700 towns and selected villages can gain an important part of their needs for housing - if they take into consideration the renewal strategy of existing buildings and of architectural heritage as a part of sustainable planning.

Of course, the costs should not exceed the costs of new buildings and the investors should be encouraged in specific ways - also for the protection of architectural heritage as the public interest. The economy of such strategy should not be calculated in a short period but in long one.

All above cited possibilities can be obtained only through new values of architectural heritage, using new criteria for valuation and developing new, modern technologies and materials for conservation and renewal of buildings. It seems that after two decades of discouragement there is new willingness in many communities, in general planning strategy and also between well-informed owners and investors to use this opportunity. So we hope that in future we can still take advantage from our relatively good preserved architectural

