

State of the Art Statement. Latvia and Riga.

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Historic structures are the most important part of cultural heritage. Latvia, a country with 2.4 million inhabitants and covering 64 589 km², possess 21 500 investigated objects of cultural value. 8428 of them are state protected. Among them 2414 are monuments of art, 2495 – archaeological sites, 3364 – monuments of architecture and 44 – historic town centres and sites. Historic centre of the capital city of Riga is inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List.

1. Historical review.

Latvia during the long time of history was a bridgehead of battles between different invaders – Germans, Russians, Poles and Swedes. It quite often caused ruination or loss of significant structures.

Country was especially heavily destroyed also during the whole 20th century. First important losses the country experienced during the “revolution” of 1905, when 128 manors were completely burned down, making away also comprehensive and invaluable collections of art, libraries and archives. The World War I also caused serious damages, especially in Riga and southern part of Latvia. The same, only in considerably wider scale followed during the World War II. In 1941 the whole central part of the city of Liepāja and about one third of Old Riga, including such national symbols of culture like House of the Black Heads or City Hall, was completely destroyed. In 1944 the central parts of the cities of Valmiera and Jelgava were turned into deserts of ashes and ruins. Jelgava, the former capital city of the Duchy of Courland, was a gem of urbanism and architecture. The historical archive of Courland and art collections of the City museum were lost aswell.

Following 45 years of Soviet occupation was characteristic with neglecting of historic and cultural values in ideology and ruination of a number of historic structures, especially in rural areas, in practice. Nevertheless, a serious work of documentation and research of cultural heritage, started in early 1980-ies.

2. Protection of monuments.

2.1 Legislation acts and regulations.

The first Law, concerning protection of monuments in Latvia, confirmed by the state parliament (Saeima) is issued in 1923 and supplemented in 1932. Actual Law of the Republic of Latvia “Concerning Protection of Cultural Monuments” is issued in 1992. Six chapters of this document determines general objectives, property rights and principles of use of cultural monuments, system of registration, principles of safeguard, control of observing the rules and adapting of international agreements. In 1992 the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia issued also Regulations “Concerning Registration, Protection, Use and Restoration of Cultural Monuments”. 27 other legislation and normative acts also contain separate paragraphs concerning conservation of cultural monuments. Among them are, for instance, “The Civil Law” (1937), “General Regulations of Construction” (1997) “Law of shelter belts” (1997), etc. Paragraph 4 of the Law “Concerning the Property Tax” (1991) is exempting from this tax the property which is the listed monument, if the owner observes the acts of legislation concerning the use of cultural monuments. In 1997 Latvia has ratified also UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.

2.2 Classification of cultural monuments.

Listed cultural monuments are of state significance and of local significance. Level of classification depends on artistic, cultural and historical value of the monument. Conservation regulations are equal for both levels, but difference is in the possibilities to receive the financing from the state or local budget for preservation needs.

A number of objects of distinct cultural and historical value is not listed but is registered as “considered”. Requirements of the Law “Concerning Protection of Cultural Monuments” do not pertain to these objects, however, they have to be taken into consideration while planning. Ensembles and complexes of cultural monuments of special artistic and historical value and of scientific interest can be declared as reservations of cultural monuments.

2.3 Implementation of the protection of monuments.

State supervision and control of the use and protection of cultural monuments is provided by the Cabinet of Ministers and carried out by The State Inspection for Heritage Protection of Latvia, functioning under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia.

Tasks and rights of the Inspection are:

- implementation of state control on protection of cultural monuments;
- registration and scientific research of cultural monuments;
- examining project documentation for any actions connected with cultural monuments;
- giving instructions on use and safeguard of cultural monuments;
- issuing licences for conservation works;
- financing of definite works of research and conservation of cultural monuments;
- examination of works of art and antiquities and issuing licences for their export;
- suspension or stopping of economic activities in case of violation of regulations of protection and causing a danger for the cultural monuments.

The State Inspection for Heritage Protection appoints a state inspector for heritage protection in each administrative region and major cities. Local heritage services with less or more extended staff exist in the cities of Riga, Jūrmala, Ventspils and Daugavpils.

There are different departments of the State Inspection for Heritage Protection – Administrative Department, Department of Architecture and Art, Department of Historical Environment, Archaeology Centre, Information Centre, Centre of Documentation of Monuments, as well as Commission of experts. Through public boards of experts – in architecture, restoration of monuments, historical organs, archaeology, art and antiquities, etc. – different qualified specialists are involved in preservation of cultural heritage.

3. Museums.

Museums are indispensable part of cultural life. They have a very special significance in the maintenance of the historic memory of the people and the national identity.

There are about 250 different museums in Latvia. 38 museums are state supported. Local municipalities finance 104 museums. Among them 14 are supervised by local districts, 38 – by cities, 51 – by small rural districts (pagasti), and 1 is regional. Almost 100 museums are private or belong to different institutions. Such a museum, for instance, is also Latvian Museum of Architecture. It is subordinated to The State Inspection for Heritage Protection.

About 44 % of museums are museums of Art, of History of Culture or combined museums of Local studies, Art and History. Collections of all museums contain 4.9 millions different articles. Average amount of visitors per year is 1.5 millions, what is almost three times lower than during the period till 1990.

More detailed information on the subject is in following publications:

- Garjāns J. Museums of Latvia. – Riga: Latvian Museum Association, w.y. – 201 pp.;
- Latvian Museums Guide. – Riga: Latvian Museum Association, w.y. – 191 pp.

4. Historical buildings and sites in Latvia.

4.1 Monuments of architecture.

Among 3364 listed monuments of architecture 1248 are of state significance and 2116 – of local significance. They encompass structures of different types, periods and styles – ruins of medieval castles, fortifications, manors and palaces, churches, monuments of vernacular architecture, industrial buildings, apartment houses and different types of public buildings. Outstanding monuments of Romanesque and Gothic styles are The Dome Cathedral (13th-19th century), St. Peter's church (13th century, 1409, 1466, 1688) and St. John's church (15th century, 1587) in Riga, St. John's church in Cēsis (1281), St. Simeon's church in Valmiera (1283) etc. Only few monuments represent Renaissance. Baroque is represented in a number of churches throughout the whole country. Marvellous example of Baroque is the Rundāle palace near Bauska (1735, arch Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli). The best monuments of Classicism are manors, churches and several townhouses. Eclecticism introduces a period that left considerably wider spectre of typology and bigger amount of monuments. Majority of the monuments of Art Nouveau is apartment blocks in Riga, Liepāja, Ventspils and other places. Public buildings like schools, banks, hospitals and cultural institutions as well as apartment houses of different scale form the heritage of Modern Movement or Functionalism.

4.2 Urban monuments.

Attention to the preservation of urban fabric for the first time was paid in early 20th century, however, only in 1967 Old Riga, the medieval core of the capital city of Latvia was declared a state-protected zone. Similar status soon obtained historic centres of Kuldīga and Cēsis. Now the urban monument of the historic centre of Riga covers not only the Old Riga, but considerably bigger area comprising also semicircle of the boulevards and former suburbs with rectangular street pattern.

Majority of 44 urban monuments in Latvia (39 of them are of state significance) is historic town centres. Peculiar urban monuments are Mežaparks in Riga (the first garden city in Europe; construction started in 1901) and area encircled by Nometņu, Eduarda Smiļģa and Talsu iela in Pārdaugava (on the left bank of the Daugava River) in Riga – a special complex of wooden buildings.

More detailed information on the subject is in following publications:

- Latvijas pilsētas. Enciklopēdija. – Rīga: Preses Nams, 1999. – 592 lpp. (The cities of Latvia; in Latvian)
- Historic Town centres in Latvia. European Heritage Days, September 2001. – Riga: Mantojums, 2001. – 88 pp.

4.3 World heritage site Riga.

The whole central area of Riga, covering 414.5 ha, in 1997 is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The architectural value of the city is expressed through the medieval Old Riga, the green semicircle of the central boulevards, historically significant timber buildings, the inventory of Art Nouveau buildings and a number of buildings of the 1920-ies and 1930-ies that are fine examples of Modern Movement or Functionalism.

Old Riga is a typical Hanseatic city. Boulevards are an outstanding urban monument of very clear and precise layout. They were constructed on the former esplanade after the demolition of ramparts (1857-1863). Construction of only timber buildings was allowed in former suburbs until fortifications were demolished. In following periods they were rapidly replaced by multi-storey masonry ones. However, many timber buildings still stand amidst them. That is not the case in most other European cities.

Enormous rapid growth of the city in the early 20th century resulted in essential change of the cityscape. Its contemporary physiognomy is completely determined by Art Nouveau. Structures of this style forms more than one third of the inventory of the buildings in the central area. Now "it is generally recognised that Riga contains the finest concentration of Art Nouveau buildings in Europe" (ICOMOS News. – 1997, Last edition. – p.25). Structures of Functionalism in Riga stand out not only due to their effective, precise and carefully designed architecture, but also because they were built almost simultaneously or even before several masterpieces, which have become the icons of this style in Western Europe.

More detailed information on the subject is in following publications:

- The Wooden Heritage of Riga. – Riga: Neptuns, 2001. – 244 pp.
- Krastiņš J. Riga Art Nouveau Metropolis. Riga: Baltika, 1966.- 352 pp.
- Krastiņš J. The Masters of Architecture of Riga. – Riga: Jumava, 2002. – 260 pp.

5. Conservation and restoration practice.

5.1 Restoration of architectural monuments.

Protection of architectural monuments and scientific restoration in Latvia has about 150 year long history. Characteristic example is the construction of the new Great Guild building in Riga (1853-1899, arch. Karl Beine, Heinrich Scheel). Two very valuable historic spaces of the older structure – the "Minster Hall" (from the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries) and the so-called "Bride Chamber" (1646) were carefully preserved and set in the new Neogothic structure. In 1891-1906 important renovation works under a supervision of architect and art historian Wilhelm Neumann took place in the ensemble of Riga Dome Cathedral and monastery.

Wide range renovation developed in Latvia after 1905, when several demolished manor palaces were reconstructed. One of the best examples of these works was rebuilding of the medieval castle in Straupe (1909, arch. Wilhelm Bockslaff). The main principles were the precise renovation of damaged elements, restitution of lost details based on analogues and the construction of some extensions (new staircases) in a contrasting shape and finish. This example actually anticipated contemporary scientific methods of restoration.

In the middle of the 1970-ies enormous restoration of the Courland's Dukes place in Rundāle started. Comprehensive restoration activities developed in 1980-ies. A number of Art nouveau facades (including Kalēju iela 23 and Smilšu iela 2, 6 and 8) and whole blocks in Old Riga were completely restored. The best examples of these activities are restoration of Reutern House at Mārstaļu iela 2/4 (1684-1688; now the house of Journalists) and of former

St.Georg's church, later warehouse at Skārņu iela 10/12 (13th-17th century, now – Museum of Applied Arts)

Remarkable and simultaneously controversial example of restoration is the Mentzendorff house at Grēcinieku iela 18. Now it is the Museum of Inhabitants of Riga (furniture and household objects). Several unique 18th century wall paintings were discovered and restored in 1982-1991, but the facades of the building were altered in accordance to the restoration architect's image of an early 18th century building, destroying the façade, created in 1902 by W.Neumann.

Contribution of 1990-ies is a number of renovated buildings throughout the whole country. Order's castle in Ventspils (1290) was retrieved from ruins, palaces in Mežotne near Bauska (1898-1902) and Durbe in Tukums (1820) were revitalised and regained their lost splendour. New life obtained a number of churches, public buildings and apartment blocks in major cities. Outstanding example of restoration and extension of a monument of international importance is the Latvian National Opera (1860, 1887, 1995, 2000).

More detailed information on the subject is in following publications:

- Conservation Training – Needs and Ethics. ICOMOS-CIF training Committee Meeting Suomenlinna Helsinki Finland 12.p-17.6.1995. – Helsinki: ICOMOS Finnish National Committee, 1995. – Pp. 195-204;
- Latvian National Opera. – Riga: Mantojums, Jumava, 2000. – 302 pp.

5.2 Threatened structures.

During the long period of Soviet occupation hundreds of churches and manor houses were devastated. A number of them still are under a threat of complete loss. Among them outstanding ensemble of Nurmuiža manor in Talsi district (second half of 16th century – early 19th century) and Bramberģe manor in Jelgava district (17th – 18th century) should be mentioned.

Rapid growth of prices and development of real estate market reflect in comparatively positive changes in cities. Nevertheless, there are still a number of neglected houses, especially in cities like Cēsis and Kuldīga where economic situation is not strong enough. Empty and half-ruined buildings are in Riga, for example, Dannenstern House in Old Riga (1696) and apartment blocks at Marijas iela 6 (1903, arch. Konstantīns Pēkšēns) and 13.janvāra iela 21/23 (1913, arch. Nikolai Yakovlew). The first one is an outstanding monument of Baroque. Restoration works with a purpose to install there a museum of seafaring started already in 1987. These works stopped after a change of economic system later were renewed, but then due to the lack of financing and necessary state support stopped again. Both apartment blocks are monuments of Art Nouveau. They are private and lack appropriate management.

5.3 Change of function and transformation of historical structures.

Decrease of during the soviet times hypertrophied industry and radical changes in the development of industry worldwide caused decay of old industrial areas and structures. Reuse of industrial buildings is one of the most actual issues in preservation of this particular cultural heritage.

Contemporary Design centre in Riga, at Brīvības iela 137, is installed in former "Leutner" bicycle factory (1894, arch. W.Bockslaff). It is an example of fitting the new function into a historic building without any important change of authentic structure. Old factory buildings at Lāčplēša iela 87 (19th century) are proposed to turn into the "Factory of dreams" – design museum, exhibition halls and workshops. An old warehouse in Riga, at Republikas laukums 1 (1727) is transformed into furniture shop. Similar transformation of a late 19th century

warehouse into supermarket of furniture, household and building materials is executed in Liepāja, at Vecā Ostmala (Old Harbour's Embankment) 22. New extension of this building (2001, arch. Agris Padēlis-Līns) is perfectly fitted into the historical context.

Former "Mündel" rubber factory in Riga, at Nometņu iela 59 (1887-1899, arch. Edmund von Trompowsky) was only modestly transformed when "Rimi" shopping centre and different services were installed in this historic structure. At the same time during construction of a new hypermarket "Alfa" at Brīvības gatve 372 (2001, Sarma & Norde architects) a factory building of 1970-ies was completely pulled down. In both cases there were no loss of cultural values.

Excellent examples of simultaneous restoration and extension of historic structures are "Hotel Royal" in Ventspils and Graduate School of Law in Riga. The former hotel building in Ventspils (1898, arch. E.Bauls) was completely renovated and changed into the office building of the Headquarters of Ventspils Free Port (1998, arch. Sergejs Ņikiforovs). It obtained also a successful, stylistically balanced and artistically expressive extension. Riga Graduate School of Law at Alberta iela 13 is located in a former apartment block (1904, arch. Mikhail Eisenstein) with extraordinary lavish and saturated decoration of the facades. Extension in courtyard (2000, arch. Gunta Grikmane) has no impact on historical streetscape.

Preservation, renovation and integration of historic structures in modern urban environment is one of the major theme of the International conference "Industrial Heritage in Modern Urban Environment: Riga's industrial heritage in the context of the Baltic Sea countries", to be held in Riga, on September 20-21, 2002.

5.4 Preservation and development of the historic centre of Riga.

The actual document of urban regulation in Riga is the Development plan of the city for the period 1995-2005. The economic development of the city becomes more and more impressive, but what is positive from an economic growth point of view often exerts pressure on the historic urban assets that are recognised to be of global value. Still is not worked out a detailed urban plan for central areas. Regeneration of the area in and around of the Town Hall Square in Old Riga is in process without any integrated planning.

In 1998 The State Inspection for Heritage Protection of Latvia initiated an inventory and evaluation of all buildings in UNESCO designated area. This information forms an important part of database, which will be used for monitoring change and formulating protection and development policies. Riga City and Ministry of Culture of Latvia established the Coordination Board for the Preservation and Development of the Riga Historic Centre to monitor and control the construction.

Main goals and concept of preservation and development of the Riga historic centre and recommendations for immediate action are fixed in the draft project "Vision 2020", worked out by The State Inspection for Heritage Protection in 2001.

More detailed information on the subject is in following publications:

- Krastiņš J. The Town Hall Square in Riga. Past. Present. Future. – Riga: Madris, 2000. – 48 pp.
- Preservation and Development of the Historic Center of Riga. VISION 2020. – Riga: Latvian State Inspection for Heritage Protection, September 2001. – 17 pp.

6. Research and education.

The main institution of scientific research of cultural heritage and architectural monuments is Faculty of Architecture of Riga Technical University. It is the only architectural school in Latvia, established in 1869. 40 students each year enter the faculty. There are

three levels of study programmes. The first level – Bachelor of architecture study programme – comprises 3.5 years of training. The second level – Architect study programme – comprises 2 years, and the third one – the Master of architecture study programme – comprises 1.5 years of training. All programmes are state-accredited. Each year medium amount of graduates is 25-30.

Small research units exist also in Latvian Academy of Sciences and Latvian State Art Academy. Since 1979 The Nature and Heritage Protection Society of Latvia in co-operation with “Zinātne” (Science) publishers have regularly published books in the series “Monuments of Architecture and Art in Latvia” (“Latvijas Arhitektūras un Mākslas Pieminekļi”; in Latvian). The 22nd book of this succession is now in process. These books are of highest scientific standard and form important contribution to the cultural history of Latvia.