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RULES OF THE GAME WHILE PLAYING WITH ARCHITECTURE IN THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

REGUŁY GRY I ZABAWY ARCHITEKTURĄ W ŚRODOWISKU KULTUROWYM

Abstract

Frequently the built-up environment, including historical, becomes the venue of creative activity for an architect. The environment requires an architect to have the relevant conservation background, the ability to assess the value of a historical monument and its cultural context, and above all humility in his/her design work. This article presents the rules of the game applicable to the cultural environment, rules which are defined by conservation theory and the doctrine shaped by the Venice Charter.

Keywords: architectural design, monument, the Venice Charter, ICOMOS

Streszczenie

Środowiskiem twórczych działań projektanta jest często zagospodarowane środowisko, w tym historyczne, które wymaga od niego wiedzy konserwatorskiej, umiejętności oceny wartości zabytku i jego otoczenia kulturowego, a przede wszystkim pokory w podejmowanych działaniach projektowych. Artykuł przedstawia reguły gry obowiązujące w środowisku kulturowym, które ujęte są w ramach teorii i doktryny konserwatorskiej ukształtowanej przez Kartę Wenecką.

Słowa kluczowe: projektowanie architektoniczne, zabytek, Karta Wenecka, ICOMOS

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Games and play with architecture take place simultaneously, both in the virtual world created by architects during the design process and in the real world when architectural visions are finally implemented. It frequently happens that built-up areas, including the historical and cultural, become the environment for creative activity. This environment requires the architect to have a conservation background, an ability to assess the value of a historical monument and its cultural context, but first and foremost humility in his/her design effort.

When commencing any game, architectural included, its participants need to follow principles and rules that they should learn in advance. Omission of that stage may lead to conflicts between the parties involved and finally the failure of the game. It is this framework, which is defined for all parties in the game of architecture, such as architects, conservation officers, investors, and users, which determines the success or failure.

These games in the historical context enjoy a long tradition and have a sound foundation in terms of principles developed over the past two centuries by distinguished conservation authorities such as Eugène E. Vilotet'le Duc, John Ruskin, Alois Riegl, Georg Dehio, and Camil Boito. The principles of conservation and design have developed through frequent conflicts and debates moving in the spectrum of theory and practice from refraining from intervention to complete freedom of intervention [3, p. 121].

At the moment, the basis for the contemporary game of architecture in the cultural environment is established by charters, declarations, and conventions, which define cohesive principles and rules that are gradually updated and complemented. The list of documents defining the doctrine, which are a kind of catechism for the architectural game in the cultural environment (by reference to *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* by Max Dvořak of 1916) includes the following:

- International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites – the Venice Charter, 1964,
- Declaration of Amsterdam adopted by the Congress of European Architectural Heritage, 1975,
- Convention for the Protecting of Architectural Heritage in Europe – the Granada Convention, 1985,
- International Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas, ICOMOS – the Washington Charter, Toledo – Washington, 1987,
- Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage, ICOMOS, Lausanne 1990,
- Charter on the Protection and Management of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, ICOMOS, Sofia 1996,
- Declaration of San Antonio 1996,
- Declaration of Sofia 1996,
- Principles for the Preservation of Historic Timber Structures, ICOMOS, Mexico 1999,
- International Cultural Tourism Charter, ICOMOS, Mexico 1999,
- Burra Charter, Australia ICOMOS 1999,
- European Landscape Convention, Florence, 2000,
- ICOMOS Charter – Principles for the Analysis, Conservation and Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage, 2003,
- Valletta Principles, 2011,
- Cracow Charter, 2000,
- Charter of Historical Ruins – Resolution of Polish National Committee of ICOMOS, 2012.

ICOMOS, an international organization established in Warsaw in 1965 and based in Paris, cares for historical sites and promotes cultural landscape protection activities. Its Polish counterpart, namely the Polish National Committee of ICOMOS, is a self-governing association “aimed at developing and supporting the preservation, conservation and appropriate use of the historical facilities that comprise the cultural heritage in Poland”. (Association Statutes of 19 April 2000, §1.1.). The Association is very active in publishing documents, and organizing conferences on the protection and conservation of Polish historical sites¹. Its output includes about 19 publications².

In particular in the Polish context, the impression may be received that the discussion on improving conservation doctrines and theories supported by the community of theoretical conservators is detached from practice. Despite the well-established opinion regarding the rules of the game in the field of cultural heritage, the rules are challenged, especially during the design process (crisis of practice?). The reasons behind this situation can be found, inter alia, in the insufficient implementation of conservation theory in Polish law. The main legal document in the field of historical site conservation is the Act of 23rd July 2003 defining the “object, scope and form of historical site protection and conservation, principles underlying the national programme for protection of historical monuments and conservation, restoration and construction works on historical facilities, as well as establishing bodies responsible for historical monument conservation” (art. 1). The Law does not define theoretical rules applicable to design, conservation and execution, or the values of historical facilities that need to be protected. Moreover, no additional requirements are set for designing and designers, apart from technical standards that stem from construction law and technical standards to be met by buildings and their locations³. Summarizing, since the law does not specify the rules, the rules become non-obligatory. The application of these rules depends on conservation guidelines (applicable only to facilities listed), and the sensitivity of the designer, his/her background and creative awareness, as well as the power to convince the investor that it is necessary to protect historical values in line with the conservation doctrine, and not only mere economic calculation.

As regards the doctrine itself, design in culture specific areas should be guided by “the idea of protecting a historical facility as evidence of the past”, contrary to the common opinion that it focuses on restoring the lost grandeur [3, p. 124]. “Basic values of a facility include: **genuineness** (no false elements), **completeness** (integrity) and **clear historical message**. The message, however, can be complex and include various layers (...), as well as reflection of elapsed time in the form of patina, traces of use, and damage. ... Protection of a monument (including its conservation) should be preceded by a thorough analysis of its historical message and the defining historical information it conveys, and distinguishing

¹ Website of the Polish National Committee of ICOMOS: <http://www.icomos-poland.org/>.

² ICOMOS Poland publications are available at (15.06.2015): <http://www.icomos-poland.org/index.php/pl/publikacje-pkn-icomos>.

³ Construction Law of 7 July 1994 (JoL 1994 No 89 item 414), Regulation of the Minister of Infrastructure of 12 April 2002 on technical conditions to be met by buildings and their locations (JoL 75 item 690). Proposed *Standards for developing design documentation for immovable historical facilities* developed by Prof. J. Tajchman in 2003 available at (15.06.2015): <http://www.icomospoland.org/images/dokumenty%20doktr%20i%20uchwaly/Jan%20Tajchman%20Standardy%20dla%20tzw%20zabytk%C3%B3w%20nieruchomych%20%28propozycja%29.pdf>



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- III. 1, 2. Greifswald – Pommersches Landesmuseum, an adaptation of historic buildings for the museum by Architektenbüro Gregor Sunder – Plassmann (contest in 1996). In front of the main building is square with an underground garage. Source: I. Kozłowska, 2014
- III. 3. Greifswald – modern fountain in front of the gothic – baroque town hall. Source: I. Kozłowska, 2014
- III. 4. Greifswald – example skilfully shaped the cultural environment: in the foreground part of the medieval walls, behind the underground garage in front of the Pommersches Landesmuseum, in the background – silhouette of the Gothic cathedral. Source: I. Kozłowska, 2014
- III. 5. Greifswald – a modern building erected on the site of the former mediaeval walls, with reference to historic material and form. Source: I. Kozłowska, 2014
- III. 6. Greifswald – modern buildings in historic street, which retain the historical scale, parceling and form. Source: I. Kozłowska, 2014

between primary and secondary values of that information, as well as the role of the facility in the larger context (architectural, urban and landscape) [3, p. 126].

Design in a historical environment is guided by the conservation theory defined in the Venice Charter, which can be described by **seven golden rules**:

1. *Primum non nocere* – first do not harm,
2. Maximized respect to authentic substance and tangible and intangible values related to it,
3. Reduced intervention,
4. Removing deteriorating elements from a genuine facility (preservation of layers developed over each period),
5. Possibility of distinguishing new elements from the authentic substance,
6. As regards methods and materials, ensuring reversibility, repeatability and use,
7. As regards heritage, any activity should be in line with the best knowledge and good will [2, p. 107].

The major rules presented above should be supplemented by the provisions of the Venice Charter, such as:

8. Using a facility for social purposes is desired when it does not change the arrangement or decoration of that facility,
9. Restoration ends when guessing starts,
10. Research should precede all work,
11. Complementary work may use an architectural composition containing traces of modernity,
12. Traditional techniques should be used,
13. Extensions are possible, provided they link harmoniously with a historical facility and its historical surrounding, with due respect to all major parts of the building (comprehensive reconstructions are unacceptable)⁴.

The above rules should be complemented with further regulation taking into consideration new technologies and doctrine development:

1. Preservation of a historical message over contemporary use,
2. A historical facility should not be a background for developing contemporary architecture. Modern elements should be subordinated to the historical values of a facility and promote preservation and presentation of the latter,
3. Complement to rule 5: apart from the possibility to distinguish new and restored elements, aesthetic harmonization should be ensured,
4. Complement to rule 2: elements which from a technical point of view cannot be preserved should be replaced using original technologies and form,

⁴ Rebuilding of historical facilities damaged during WWII, which are well documented and deeply established in social awareness is an advisable practice used while restoring a number of buildings in Poland. At the moment, our western neighbour also follows those rules in reconstruction, e.g. rebuilding of Faruenkirche in Dresden in 1992–2005, Royal Town Palace in Potsdam in 2005 – 2012 and Royal Castle in Berlin in 2013–2019. The same applies to reconstruction of buildings resulting from experimental architectural and archaeological projects, e.g. Villa Urbana in Wroxeter, Great Britain. Apart from ruins of a Roman villa discovered in 1914, the project of 2010 reconstructed a building using traditional Roman materials and techniques.

5. Any activity in the historical environment should be documented and archived [3, p. 128],
6. When providing missing elements in historical cities their spatial arrangements should be preserved together with the division into plots, scale of existing buildings, and highlighting the nature and values of historical facilities,
7. Contemporary elements can be included, provided they are harmonized with the rest of the development,
8. Instead of rebuilding historical ruins, it is better to protect them against further deterioration and make them accessible to tourists⁵.

Not only should the rules of the game presented in this article play the role of a catechism for conservators, but primarily for architects designing in the cultural environment. The artistic sensitivity of architects (architecture is after all the art of shaping space), their technical knowledge, and knowledge of the rules applicable to the historical environment and determination in promoting those rules among other parties in the game determine the success or failure of design.

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⁵ In recent years in Poland, reconstruction was provided to a number of historical ruins, e.g. Royal Castle in Poznan, Castle of Tykocin, Piast castle in Bobolice, Castle of Tropstzyn in Wytrzysszcze. The reconstruction was heavily criticized by the conservation and architecture community as unacceptable.