

BEAUTY OF HISTORIC URBAN CENTRES – EVOLUTION IN CONSERVATION THEORY

Teresa BARDZINSKA-BONENBERG ^a, Magdalena BĄCZKOWSKA ^b

^a Associated Prof. DSc PhD Arch. Eng.; Faculty of Architecture, University of Arts in Poznan,
Aleje Marcinkowskiego 29, 60-967 Poznań, Poland
E-mail address: teresa@bardzinska-bonenberg.pl

^b MSc Eng. Arch.; Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Bauhaus-University Weimar,
Geschwister-Scholl-Straße 8, 99421 Weimar, Germany
E-mail address: magdalena.m.baczowska@googlemail.com

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Abstract

The paper aims to investigate if the changing principles in the protection of historic urban spaces arose as a result of evolving rationale of modern architecture and town planning over the last two centuries. The research was performed using a chronological comparison of the literature, source texts and analyses of graphic materials. Considerations include the concept of beauty of a city upgraded by its reconstruction and conservation, in the perspective of the 19th century great theoreticians representing two different aesthetic attitudes: Viollet-le-Duc and John Ruskin. The theory concerning beauty as an essential value of a city underwent a radical change in the 2nd half of the 20th century. The initial theories were followed by expert groups and institutions resulting in formulating directives and charters, e.g. the Venice Charter. Conventions and regulations concerning the protection of architectural and urban heritage were the achievement of communities, also beyond Europe. They expanded the concept of beauty of a city by the aspect of cultural heritage, taking into account the human being and the role of aesthetic experience (Cesare Brandi). The research reveals a new understanding of historic urban centres. Starting with monuments protection, now conservation encompasses heritage spaces as a whole, implements legal provisions and often influences development of new methods and technologies with social aspect: sustainability and preservation of cultural continuity.

Keywords: Architectural heritage; Beauty; Conservation; Ensemble; Protection of historic city centre.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research reveals that within the last two centuries a new attitude towards historic urban centres has been established. Conservation of architecture, with its roots associated with the protection of monuments, today encompasses heritage spaces as a whole, implements legal provisions and often influences development of new methods and technologies. It is also based on a social aspect: sustainability and preservation of cultural continuity.

Subsequent, variously defined rules for “upgrading” are associated with the works of intellectuals and architects

of later years. To assess the changes that followed in the last hundred years, it suffices to glance at postcards depicting icons of architecture. The collapse of urban public spaces, distorted by the two wars and then claimed by cars and buses, has in particular damaged heritage areas. Regulations that were gradually introduced followed the way paved by the theoreticians.

The methods implemented in the research were based firstly on *in situ* observations in different surroundings: open landscape, growing cities and neighbourhoods of old and new houses. These were compared with archival sources pertaining to historical discussions recorded in the professional journals and books and

also urban experiments, the results of implementation of theoretical quests. On the other hand, the treatments received by historical buildings in subsequent decades of the 19th and 20th centuries indicate changing attitudes towards heritage. This triggered the question of the mechanisms of the observed changes. Research on heritage discussions which took place in the 19th and 20th c. was followed by studies on implementations of the new ideas, that were recorded in the first photographs, books, plans, maps and papers. As local ideas and regulations were gradually formed into legal acts in different countries, these documents were also studied. The first world war stimulated emergence and development of global institutions that has created a legislative power gradually recognized worldwide. Since then studies of different types of “protection by law” of growing number of forms covered documents edited under the League of Nations and after the second world war by UNESCO/ICOMOS Charters and Regulations.

The aim of the research was to reveal a long background history of the relatively young field of science, which encompasses the pursuit for beauty, truth and care for cultural attainments for today's and future generations. The paper conveys the idea of growing importance of the heritage idea, which now encompasses activities in all scales of landscape and urban planning and in architectural design.

2. MOTIVATIONS BEHIND CREATING AND PROTECTING BEAUTIFUL SITES IN CITIES – FROM THE OLDEST EXAMPLES TO THE 18TH CENTURY

Hippodamus of Miletus created a city plan in which public spaces were shaped with the thought of convenience and displaying the most important buildings. The medieval, geometrically laid-out French cities [2], as well as the central European founded cities were initially subject to the imperative of defence, and then were gradually furnished with both beautiful and useful elements. As a result of the growth of urban organisms, the deterioration of living conditions, security and the appearance of cities, the necessity of shaping and controlling larger areas thereof surfaced [3]. For the sake of beauty, selected private and common urban spaces such as courtyards, squares, roads and streets were developed. These were single assumptions, embedded in the urban fabric and associated with prominent buildings and celebrations. Their emergence and transformation were connected with rulers, owners, patricians and their

ambitions or sentiments. There are multiple examples from the ancient cities of Greece (Panathenaic Way) and Rome (Forum Romanum and Imperial Fora), through the medieval *hortus conclusus*, the flower garden, renaissance church and city squares, furnished with elements of street architecture.

Thus, in ancient times, imperial Rome and the late antiquity period, monuments and ruins, rooted in the consciousness of local communities, were related to the religious sphere or to the commemoration of prominent individuals. Over time, the problem of their destruction and plunder intensified. As a result of impune plundering of the remains of imperial Rome, including elements of urban public spaces, the substance of the city became protected by law. In a fragment of the codex addressed to Helpidius, vice prefect of a province, Emperor Justinian orders: “if anyone, after the enactment of this law, despoils a city by carrying ornament, that is to say, marble or columns, to rural places, he shall be deprived of the property which he has ornamented in that manner” [4].

The situation of the remains of city ruins and finds changed during the early and late Middle Ages. A new phenomenon surfaced: *to despoil* – the removal of structural fabric elements from existing, historic buildings or urban complexes and re-using them in new facilities – hence “spolia”. An example is the partial demolition of the Roman Imperial Fora for the subsequent construction of public use buildings or Christian churches (Ravenna). In the Carolingian era, the transport of fragments over long distances partially “retained the spirit of the late antique imperial legislation” [5]. Most publications devoted to the approach to historical architectural and urban fabric emphasize the role of despoiling in the context of symbolic preservation of memory and meaning (carriers of meaning and memory) relating to statehood or victory. Meanwhile, according to Meier [6], when it comes to beauty, the process of despoiling, with the desire to re-use materials such as marble due to their beauty and usability at its core is important. The pre-Romanesque St. Donat church from the ninth century in the Croatian Zadar (Fig. 1–2), is one example, where the material comes from, among others, the demolition of the nearby Imperial Forum (Fig. 3–4).

Renaissance theoretical plans of cities assumed their usefulness, i.e. defence and beauty by virtues of a clear, geometric layout [7]. The first baroque urban interventions constitute a reform of Rome's communication system with the deployment of Egyptian obelisks, the creation of Piazza dell Popolo and the creation of the Spanish Steps and Piazza Navona.



Figure 1. Interior of the Church of St. Donatus in Zadar, Croatia. Photo: M. Bączkowska

Figure 2. Detail. Church of St. Donatus in Zadar, Croatia. Photo: M. Bączkowska

Figure 3. Detail. Ruins of the Forum near St. Donatus church in Zadar, Croatia. Photo: M. Bączkowska



Figure 4.
Ruins of the Forum near St. Donatus church in Zadar, Croatia. Photo: M. Bączkowska

Efforts to emphasise façades and spatial forms of temples include the arrangement of area in front of the façade of the Santa Maria della Pace in Rome, carried out by Pietro da Cortona, square in front of the Basilica of St. Peter and many more. In the Baroque and Classicism periods, the desire to create space reflecting the aspirations of the monarchs (Versailles, Dresden, and Potsdam).

Half way through the 18th century, a new term “monument” appears in European languages, which refers to structures that were not erected as monuments, nor were monumental [8]. Derived from the Latin verb *monēre* – to remind *monumentum* [9] means “a sign of remembrance”, in practice a statue, an obelisk commemorating an event or person. The etymology of the word was similar for French, Spanish and Norwegian languages. Analogously, the German word *Denkmal* comes from the word *denken* – to think.

The term monument determined an emotional relation – the appreciation of the historical or cultural significance of an old building or place by contemporary people. Slowly, the reasons for the protection of these, usually national or ancestral, monuments,

changed from romantic-emotional to the rational, and protection was institutionalized [10]. This was due to archaeological discoveries; Herculaneum in 1709 and Pompeii in 1748, descriptions and illustrations by Vivant Denon from the time of the Napoleonic campaign in 1798 of the pyramids and monuments of ancient Egypt.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, there were increasingly more “monumental” works from the heritage of Mesopotamia, the Incas, the Mayas, the Aztecs and the Greek archaeological sites. The Apollo Sanctuary in Delphi was first, studied from 1860, then Olympia and Peloponnese, and between 1870 and 1874 Troja, Mycenae and Tiryns discovered by Heinrich Schliemann [11].

The rank of these monuments in the eyes of scientists was elevated by measurements, descriptions and images. From 1749 excavations in Herculaneum were documented by means of plans and drawings by engineer Karl Weber. The Herculaneum Academy was established in 1755, supporting research, describing and publishing discoveries in Herculaneum. Amongst others it published Winckelmann's work from 1762 [12]. Antique monuments required a scientific approach. This opened the way for similar treatment of “younger” monuments.

Drawings albums appealed to the aristocracy, potential patrons of modernization and reconstruction of their own residences. Works by Piranesi – Rome 1743 and 1745; Robert Adam's: Split Diocletian's palace 1764; G.P.M. Dumont: Paestum ruins of temples 1764; Jan Potocki: *Voyage en Turquie et en Egypte* in 1788, (in Polish translation by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz) in 1789, a book that was a “bestseller” at the time it was published. [13]

The result of these works was, among others, a turn towards neoclassical forms in art and architecture of

the 18th and 19th centuries and the extension of the concept of “monument”. The phenomenon of collecting cultivated by the aristocracy, rulers and institutions developed [14]. Beauty became the subject of deliberations and dissertations. The romantic beauty of old architecture, sometimes ruins, became a desirable element in the surroundings of palaces [15].

3. BEAUTY OF A CITY – DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY FABRIC PROTECTION ISSUE FROM THE 19TH CENTURY TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In Europe, the necessity to maintain ancient, magnificent and still used buildings: cathedrals, churches, castles required targeted actions. Following archaeological research, attempts were made to analyse ancient architecture and to periodize monuments, to introduce historical period nomenclature [16].

Alongside restorations and refurbishments, research on the history of architecture, in particular on medieval architecture continued. The most comprehensive research was carried out in France, where the technical school *École nationale des ponts et chaussées* was established as early as in 1747 [17].

In the deliberations concerning the beauty and the problem of the evaluation of relics of the past, the French Revolution and the activities of committees (*Commission Temporaire des Arts*) constitute an important caesura. In the post-revolutionary Enlightenment rationalism era, it was the conservation guide of Vicq d’Azyr [18] developed as part of a commission in 1793. The starting point for the introduced systematics and classification were the methods of cataloguing objects of the world of flora and fauna [18] based on the notion of national treasure and usability rather than its subjective value and the concept of beauty.

In conservation, the beginning of the 19th century was characterized by increased interest in monuments as relics of the past in the national aspect and the building of a community based thereupon. Special conservation services established in France, Prussia and Austria became its bodies. Examples include the inventory of national monuments in post-revolutionary France, the further construction of the cathedral in Cologne (setting of the foundation stone in 1842) and the castle in Malbork are some examples [19].

Eugene Emanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879) was an expert on medieval architecture, which he researched and restored. The architect’s efforts were under-

pinned by in-depth research, knowledge of Gothic structures and restoration experience. While working on conservation of monuments, he formulated a method of work, deserving of the name “school” (according to Zachwatowicz, 1981) [20] “To restore an edifice is not to maintain it, repair it or remake it, it is to re-establish it in a complete state that may have never existed at any given moment” [21].

An example of the application of this principle is Viollet-le-Duc’s partial repair of the fortifications of the walls and towers of Carcassonne and the reconstruction of the Gothic Pierrefonds castle. This is entirely inconsistent with today’s perception of conservation of monuments. Even though in his lectures at the Academy he did emphasize the need to prepare inventories and research documentation, and to make balanced decisions in the restoration of monuments. The “sentiment” to the Gothic style caused significant changes to be implemented. At Notre-Dame, Viollet-le-Duc was not afraid of undertaking a “discussion” with the history. The Chimeras, leaning out from behind the Notre-Dame in Paris cornices are also his “addition” (Fig. 5), consistent, by analogy, with the concept of medieval bricklayers of the cathedral of Laon [22].

He drew from history not in the semantic sphere and in the meaning of forms, but in discovering rational [24] processes behind the design and construction principles resulting from a specific need [23]. The



Figure 5.
Detail. Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, France. Photo: M. Bączkowska

only guideline was the historic integrity of the building, and beauty understood in aesthetic terms was a “byproduct” of purposeful action and fulfilment of a specific function [23]. According to Hearn, the basis of the Viollet-Le-Duc theory was an approach comparing the subject of the design to a living, functioning organism [23].

The beauty of the structures preserved at that time was unambiguously understood – they determined the beautiful places in a city.

The English artist, thinker and philanthropist John Ruskin (1819–1900) was far from the radicalism of Viollet-le-Duc. His views on architecture today are close to the contemporary trends of environmentalism, sustainability. He sought beauty in architecture in moral categories, which he described in a collection of essays – *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* [24] in 1849. These were “sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory and obedience”. He believed that the restoration of monuments is tantamount to their destruction, that old buildings should be preserved without any intervention erasing their history, inscribed in their destruction: “restoration [...] means the most total destruction which building can suffer” [24]. This put it in opposition to the principles which Viollet-le-Duc professed, with which he entered into discourse within the pages of the journals of the time. Furthermore, Ruskin in a part of “The Lamp of Memory”, is of the opinion that the description of a process as a restoration is basically impossible “[...] as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture” [24]. Ruskin sought, however, in a different way from Viollet-le-Duc, the

beauty in nature [24] and its primacy over human works [24] with natural consequences such as irregularity, destruction and erosion. According to him, beauty is possible only through imitating and deriving inspiration from nature and landscape. He valued care for architecture and repairs reduced to a minimum over and above its restoration. William Morris, who held similar views to Ruskin, even established the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* and emphasized that it is a duty to respect and maintain the building in the state it was given and not its further construction.

This dual voice became symbolic for later more and more clearly articulated opinions on shaping space in cities and gave rise to modern conservation thinking, as exemplified by the conservation and reconstruction examples described below. For Viollet-le-Duc, “the old world” died, and history should be approached instrumentally, as in the material dimension a break with the past has occurred. Ruskin saw the threat in the industrial revolution and its interference in the landscape and the city. For him, all reconstruction efforts constituted an irreversible loss of identity combined with dehumanization.

The focus on stylistic unification in buildings which are the subject of “conservation” efforts and the willingness to put them in motion led, among others, to demolition of added fragments, removal of “layers” added in various epochs of which the Angoulême [25] cathedral serves as a great example. This situation led to the creation of a display foreground and projects of tidying up of the surroundings of the cathedrals [26] in Cologne, Paris (Fig. 6), Milan (Fig. 7) and Vienna.



Figure 6. Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, France. Photo: M. Bączkowska



Figure 7. Santa Maria Nascente Cathedral in Milan, Italy. Photo: M. Bączkowska



Figure 8.

Ruins of the palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia, Croatia (1764) Plate IV. View of the town of Spalatro from the south west. Author: Adam, Robert, (1728-1792) Source: Retrieved <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/DLDecArts/DLDecArts-idx?type=article&did=DLDecArts.AdamRuins.i0011&id=DLDecArts.AdamRuins&isize=M> [Date accessed: 13.04.2018]

These concepts were far from the original character of picturesque medieval cities and contributed to the subsequent discussion among architects, art historians and conservators on the value of building ensembles and their protection. In 1899, the German-language periodical “Die Denkmalpflege” appeared, and before that in 1856, the Austrian periodical “Mittheilungen der k. k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale” which became the fora for theoreticians and practitioners of the time to exchange opinions.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the valuation system introduced by the Austrian Alois Riegl [27] (1858–1905) was key to the issue of beauty in the perception and protection of monuments. Riegl drew on the experiences of both Camillo Boito (1836–1914) as well as Georg Dehio (1850–1932). In 1905, in “Mittheilungen...” [28] Alois Riegl agrees with Dehio’s claim that “We do not preserve a monument because it is beautiful, but because it is part of national identity” [28] trying to objectify the non-quantifiable aesthetic categories discussed by supporters of conservation and restoration [29].

In 1903, Riegl, acting as the General Conservator (*Generalkonservator*) of the historic city of Split [30], prevented the implementation of a project which, in order to reveal the oldest buildings, prescribed the removal of fragments of the city within the area of the former Diocletian’s Palace (Fig. 8–10).

In his theoretical deliberations described in the 1903 book “Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung” he did not use the word beauty (*ger. Schönheit*), which is a relative term. As noted by Krawczyk, “since the subject of protection and con-

servation care not only constituted works of art, looking for an answer to the question on the genesis of the studied phenomenon, one should go beyond the boundaries of artistic problems” [31]. Reigl, on the other hand, proposed the evaluating [32], buildings by dividing them into categories:

- I. Memorial values (*Erinnerungswerte*) which include
 1. Antiquity value (*der Alterswert*)
 2. Historical value (*Der historische Wert*)
- II. Contemporary values (*Gegenwartswerte*)
 1. Usable value (*der Gebrauchswert*)
 2. Artistic value (*der Kunstwert*)
 - a) Novelty value (*der Neuheitswert*)
 - b) Relative artistic value (*der relative Kunstwert*)

Achim Hubel adds that “with the concept of relative artistic value Riegl drew attention to how quickly aesthetic assessments can change” [33]. Riegl’s concept contributed to the formulation of subsequent doctrinal documents and the “contemporary values” particularly highlighted by him have become important in recent years [34], as the subject of discussion on the contemporary paradigm of evaluating monuments and their ensembles.

Further development of the concept of protection and creation of beautiful cities is primarily seen in the writings and works of the younger generation of urban planners: Camillo Sitte (1843–1903) and Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928). However, the “discovery” of the beauty of a city would not have been possible without the works of Camillo Sitte. The book “Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen” [35], published in 1889, made readers aware of the issue of the value of the old (*ger. Alterswert*) urban fabric and the charm of medieval



Figure 9. Waterfront and the historical heart of Split, Croatia. Author: P. Jankowski



Figure 10. The Peristyle of Diocletian's Palace in Split, Croatia. Author: P. Jankowski

streets with their imperfections and irregularities.

In their opinion, building enables on a small scale with permeating greenery ensured the beauty of the urban landscape. For Camillo Sitte, the picturesque medieval cities and their beauty were the prototype (*malerische Schönheit*) [35], where diverse views, winding streets, greenery and dominant features marked out friendly pedestrian spaces. His views were a counterbalance to the aesthetics of wide straight-line communication arteries and geometric complexes on a larger scale, promoted by Otto Wagner as part of the proto-modernist *Nutzstil*.

Howard's city comprised smaller, self-sufficient units, similar to Sitte's structure. Theorists and urban planners have taken up this idea and for the following decades modern districts had "organic" plans and were interspersed with greenery. They became the model for the first suburbs.

The second direction resulted from further development of cities in Europe and America, and monumental urban designs constituted the opposite pole of activities. In this spirit, a new urban plan for Barcelona was created by Ildefons Cerdà (1850), with Plaça Reial, as well as plans of many European and American cities. All of them required the creation of squares, constituting representative centres of districts or bringing together trade and life of the surrounding communities. The representative squares formula necessitated their appropriate, stylish furnishing [36].

The aftermath of World War I is connected with the

establishment of the League of Nations in 1919 with its headquarters in Geneva and the first attempts to protect monuments. Initially, the focal point of the activities of the International Museums Office established in 1926 was the problems of museums. It was not until 1931 that the first meeting of representatives from over 20 countries was organized, dedicated to historical architecture and its preservation (*First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments*). It was there that, among others, the first valid doctrinal document, the Charter of Athens was drawn up, where, in addition to the provisions regarding the form of legal protection and the admittance of modern technologies in the preservation of historic monuments, guidelines on preserving the "picturesque character of historical areas" [37] appeared by virtue of the following provision: "Attention should be given to the protection of areas surrounding historic sites" [38]. At the same time, the primacy of conservation over the restoration and the preservation of all layers was established. It was a nod of a kind towards the Ruskin's theory of conservation. The "Carta del Restauro", adopted in Athens, became an international standard which created the foundations for the subsequent 1964 Venice Charter.

In the 20th century, increasingly more specialized international organizations, groups and expert circles replaced the great theoreticians. The theory of Cesare Brandi [39] (1906–1988) became important for conservation issues, and his reflections in the publication "Teoria del Restauro" [39] primarily concerned works of art. According to him, a work of art

carries non-material notion and is present only thanks to the recipient and their experience. Reducing a historical monument only to the material dimension makes it impossible to experience the work in a wider dimension. Brandi's theory might be transferred to the sphere of architecture and urban planning. By drawing attention to the historical, aesthetic (experiencing beauty) and spatial dimension of the interior – exterior relationship, the important aspect of experiencing a building inseparably connected with the environment is emphasized [41]. It may be compared to the content of article of the Venice Charter – articles 5, 6, 8, 11, 12 and 15. Integrity and functionality are conducive to experiencing works – without a historical lie.

Integrity issues raised by Cesare Brandi became the basis for the most important document – *The Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* drawn up during the *Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments* in Venice in 1964. Its most important guidelines influencing city space are: extending the definition of a historic building by groups and ensembles of buildings, the requirement to protect the surroundings of historic monuments, recognizing the role of cultural meanings, limiting restoration to cases necessary to exclude reconstruction. In addition, the Charter indicates the need to distinguish between newly added elements of historic buildings and original ones [42].

Another international document regulating the problems of historical cities was the *Recommendation on the protection of historical and traditional complexes and their role in contemporary life*. This is a 1976 *Warsaw Recommendation* (Warsaw/Nairobi). It expanded on and elaborated the principles for the protection of “historical and traditional complexes and their role in contemporary life” by formulating guidelines. The most important addition was qualifying of these complexes as: “universal irreplaceable heritage”, and “Their protection and their inclusion in the functioning of modern society should be a duty of governments and citizens of the countries in which these complexes are located...”. The global value of heritage complexes with a unique, regional character is clearly emphasized. Among the threats to the authenticity and integrity of the complexes, altering the shape of these complexes by locating new districts in their neighbourhood is mentioned [42].

In 2000, the *Florence European Landscape Convention* took place and became an instrument for the protection, management and planning of all land-

scapes in Europe. Covering natural, urban, rural and suburban areas, it recognized them as components of the human environment, consistent with cultural and natural diversity. Thus, the benefits of urban space have been integrated with the local natural qualities and the forms which they assume [42].

The 2005 *Xi'an Declaration* on the preservation of the surroundings of buildings, heritage sites and areas, focuses on interaction with the surroundings and contexts of historic sites. An important element of the works is understanding, documenting and interpreting the environment. The diversity of cultures for which research and efforts are carried out under different spectra of conservation requires interdisciplinary, scientific tools, regardless of the rank of the protected complex/building. In this situation, it is necessary to educate and involve local communities [42].

Increasing tourist traffic underlies the creation of the ICOMOS Charter for the protection of cultural routes (Quebec 2008), which are perceived as an element introducing the synergy effect, combining physical elements with the experience and spirituality sphere and determining routes with a concentration of points of interest of various nature. Cultural routes are very diverse and can be associated with events, people, cities or natural formations, as well as authentic historic routes. The Charter also draws attention to the economic benefits element, whose active route bestows upon the areas it runs across [42].

UNESCO's recommendations on historical urban landscape, formulated in Paris in 2011, once again focus their attention on values, including aesthetic values, which are part of building an identity of societies. The ongoing change in the concept of the role of heritage stems from demographic development, tourism, commercial use of heritage, fragmentation of historically coherent structures and climate change. The recommendations emphasize the landscape aspect of heritage protection, which is threatened increasingly more and in multiple ways [42].

The La Valetta document on the protection and management of historic cities and historic districts, also announced in Paris in 2011, draws attention to the determinants of intervention in the historical fabric of a city. Among other things, it determines the intervention criteria, including the methodology of making changes [42].

The brief review of documents presented above, aimed at protecting architectural heritage, shows a gradual expansion of the protection spectrum, aimed at exposing both the oldest monuments as well as the added layers, record of urban development, their sil-

houettes and landscape. The society is the subject of these activities – the people for whom a more or less intuitive understanding of this record indicates their relationship with the place where they live or visit.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Today, similar to circa 1900, the discussion on the beauty of historic city centres is alive and well. In a dynamically changing situation, it no longer results in the voices of researchers and scientists, but on subsequent regulations by international institutions established to track changes and prevent their negative effects. It is the result of the pace of change taking place, the progressive globalization of activities transforming historical buildings, cities and landscapes in all corners of the Earth. The contemporary conflict of interests does not only refer to differences in ideological ideals and legislative nuances, but above all to the market reality in which the centres of historical cities become a particularly valuable zone yielding to transformation.

Postulates of the great theoreticians of the nineteenth century, whose legacy lies in charters and directives adopted in the 20th century, collide with a new, rapidly changing reality. They try to keep up with it, providing the basis for a holistic treatment of the achievements of previous generations, whose scale of operations cannot be compared to today's achievements. The language of documents has shifted from the protection of structures, as it was in the nineteenth century, to the protection of communities that are losing the monuments and spaces they once created. Contemporary heritage protection strives to enable societies to maintain a sense of continuity of existence in their own area.

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