

Care for monuments in Central Europe regarding the revitalisation of the countryside

Památková péče na ve střední Evropě z pohledu revitalizace venkova

T. HÁJEK

Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic and Czech Committee for UNESCO

Abstract: The cultural landscape and rural areas are considered to be a key component of the European cultural heritage. The European Landscape Convention, which the Czech Republic signed in the autumn of 2002, was also formulated in this sense. Consequently, the reform of care of monuments cannot be left entirely to official workers, but is becoming an important subject from the standpoint of maintenance of the functional and demographic stability of rural areas. It is necessary to point out that the care for monuments in Central Europe is at a crucial point, that could be described as a crisis. The reasons are as follows. 1) Time extension of care for monuments as well as the spatial extension of care for monuments. 2) Care for monuments has somewhat neglected to explain and defend its significance – consequently, a great many private owners of cultural monuments are not fully aware of the ideas, on the basis of which limitations are placed on their rights to manage their property, for the good of the cultural heritage. 3) Aesthetic conclusions are increasingly important in deciding what is and what is not a cultural monument. However, this can readily be influenced by the influx of very attractive, but worthless “popular” architecture, currently being introduced by a great many development companies. 4) Care for monuments represents the execution of a particular activity rather than a fixed formulated intellectual system of canons. 5) Even under the best economic conditions, the state as such does not have the means to provide appropriate care for the cultural heritage in state ownership (including state land in the poorer areas) and is certainly not capable of creating a motivation system within its framework for searching for new ways of using this property without abusing it. 6) In general, it can be stated that condition of democratisation within the care for monuments certainly does not attain the level of participation in environmental protection. 7) Care for monuments, especially in Central Europe, tends to continue to emphasise simple conservation of monuments and is minimally concerned with reanimation of the monument fund. This is why the care for the cultural heritage must again formulate its purpose, especially in relation to the decrease in the importance of national states, globalisation and, simultaneously, regionalisation of the world.

Keyword: cultural heritage, countryside, state ownership, democratisation, reanimation

Abstrakt: Kulturní krajiny a venkovský prostor jsou považovány za stěžejní součást evropského kulturního dědictví. V tomto smyslu mluví i Evropská úmluva o krajině, kterou Česká republika podepsala na podzim roku 2002. Reforma památkové péče tedy není věcí výhradně památkářů, ale stává se klíčovým tématem z hlediska udržení funkční a demografické stability venkovského prostoru. Je potřeba konstatovat, že památková péče ve střední Evropě se nachází v okamžiku, který může být pojmenován jako krize. Svědčí o tom jak dění v Německu, tak i v České republice. Důvodů, způsobujících krizi, je několik. 1) Je to časová a prostorová extenze památkové péče. 2) Památková péče zanedbává vysvětlování a obranu svého smyslu – tudíž mnoho soukromých vlastníků kulturních památek si není plně vědomo myšlenek, na jejichž základně jsou omezováni ve svých vlastnických právech ve prospěch kulturního dědictví. 3) Estetické soudy jsou stále důležitější v rozhodování, co je a co není kulturní památkou. Ty jsou ale ovlivňovány záplavou velmi přitažlivé, ale bezcenné “populární” architektury, jak ji v současnosti prosazují mnohé developerské firmy. 4) Památková péče reprezentuje výkon dílčích aktivit spíše než pevně intelektuálně formulovaný systém kánonů. 5) Dokonce i za těch nejlepších ekonomických podmínek státu nepostačují prostředky na přiměřenou péči o kulturní dědictví ve státním vlastnictví (včetně státní půdy v chudších oblastech), není schopen vytvořit takový motivační systém ve svém rámci, tak aby mohly být hledány nové cesty k využívání majetku, aniž by docházelo k jeho zneužívání. 6) Obecně může být konstatováno, že podmínky demokratizace uvnitř památkové péče nedosahují úrovně účasti veřejnosti v ochraně životního prostředí. 7) Památková péče zejména ve střední Evropě spíše stále zdůrazňuje prostou konzervaci památek a málo se zabývá reanimací památkového fondu. Proto musí památková péče znovu formulovat svůj účel, zvláště ve vztahu k úpadku národních států, globalizaci, a naopak k regionalizaci světa.

Klíčová slova: kulturní dědictví, venkov, státní vlastnictví, demokratizace, oživení

Based on the guest lecture, given by the author at the New York University in Prague.

INTRODUCTION

Care for monuments in Central Europe is at a crucial point that might even be termed a crisis.

There are various external manifestations of this crisis. Some architects have even de facto suggested that the state care for monuments should be abolished (Hlinka 2002) The Draft Act on protection of cultural monuments and care for monuments was rejected by the Parliament and thus the Act from the time of the Cold War remains in force. In their official document (Grüne Initiative zur Stärkung des Denkmalschutzes), the Greens in Germany described the abuses in German state care for monuments in the following terms: there is a constant decrease in expenditures by the state for renewal of the German cultural heritage fund, and there is an increasing number of empty functional buildings of significant historical value. Cultural heritage funds in the Continental Europe are similar. In response to happenings on the Continent, the organisation "The English Heritage" carried out an expensive survey of the opinions of the British public on the sense in protecting the cultural heritage, as if even this organisation was not sure of itself (Hájek 2002).

However, who should resolve this crisis? Should this be the responsibility of official workers alone? Should social groups also be concerned with the renewal of rural areas? There are basically two arguments as to why the renewal of rural areas should be considered to constitute a crisis in care for monuments, the main characteristics of which are described in this work. The cultural landscape and thus rural areas are considered by the European Landscape Convention to be a key part of the European Cultural Heritage. The European Landscape Convention states: "the landscape contributes to the creation of local cultures and is a fundamental component of the European natural and cultural heritage" (Zidek 1998). A further argument consists in the fact that the funds of the SAPARD Pre-accession Program are utilised for the renewal and evaluation especially of immovable cultural monuments. Any lack of clarity in the sense and concept of the care for monuments is immediately reflected in the usefulness of means expended from pre-accession or, later, structural funds of the European Union.

ABOUT THE HISTORY OF CARE FOR MONUMENTS

Care for monuments is essentially a young field. It emerged on the wave of pre-Romantic feelings in the era between the period of Enlightenment and the full advent of Romanticism; at that time, the cult of ruins arose as an expression of the inevitability of history, which measures everything with the same scale: the spiritual essence of care for monuments at the present time is based on this cult of ruins; the most valuable aspect of a monument continues to be "the value of age", i.e. Alterswert. However, care for monuments is not a compact organism and has regionally developed differently in each country of

the Central Europe. Mention will be made of the Austria-Hungary, Germany and the Czech lands.

The beginning of systematic care for the cultural heritage in the Austrian monarchy can be considered to lie in the protection of archive materials which was made possible by an edict of the Empress Marie-Theresa and also the extensive group of objects (coins, busts, bas-reliefs) that had to be turned over to the Court offices following discovery. The events in Germany were similar to the situation in Austria.

A further step consisted in regulation of the export of monuments. The Central Commission for specification and preservation of structural monuments was established exactly in the middle of the 19th century. This was later renamed the Central Commission for specification and preservation of artistic and historical monuments, the first official national monument institution in Austria.

The "Central Commission" was a complex mechanism that also contained scientific institutions. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Austria represented the avantgarde in Europe in many respects in relation to the philosophical foundations of care for monuments, especially in connection with the writings of the initiator of the conservation method, Alois Riegl.

In Germany following the Napoleonic Wars, care for monuments was an instrument of protection over exports of historically and aesthetically valuable movable objects.

The second period occurred at the end of the 19th century. With only slight exaggeration, this period can be termed a period of fighting for good taste rather than of protection of monuments in the present sense of the word. A considerable part of the regulations consisted in laws against desecration of the appearance of municipalities and the landscape.

At that time, care for monuments was guided mainly by aesthetic intents. The aesthetic motive was gradually replaced by the need to create symbols for the emerging nation states. Georg Dehio formulated this idea pregnantly in his well-known thesis:

Monuments are not conserved because they are beautiful, but because they are part of the national existence. Protection of monuments is not an enjoyment of the eye, but an exercise in piety (Zidek 1998).

A new wave of special laws on the cultural heritage was formulated in Germany only in the seventies of the last century. This had multifarious consequences: there was an abandoning of the time fixation of old monuments, from a concentration of care for monuments on documents of church, feudal and battle histories and also a decrease in the influence of taste on evaluation of monuments; monuments can also be individual things, or groups of things and, of equal importance, monuments are human creations; however, this excludes natural monuments from the sphere of care for the cultural heritage.

The history in the Czech lands copied the developments in the surrounding countries, as they were part of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy until 1918. During the First Republic, a law on monuments was not adopted

because of resistance on the part of the owners of historically valuable real estate and, paradoxically, this became possible only in 1958. The law on care for the cultural heritage from the Communist era still remains in force at the present time, i.e. the law valid at the end of the 1980s.

CONDITIONS THAT CREATE A CRISIS

I employed the concept of a crisis: let us describe the conditions that create a crisis:

- a) In the 19th century, the relevant “value of age” was attributed to Gothic and Baroque objects that were two or three hundred years old. However, the period immediately following the Second World War saw monumental value in the creations of Czech functionalism between the Wars, not more than 20 years old. As the twentieth century progressed, an increasing number of old dormitories, railway stations, factories and sections of the traditional cultural landscape of the increasingly abandoned rural areas were classified amongst monuments. Anything can become a monument. In addition, it need not even be “old” – about 15 years is enough. We are witnessing *time extension of care for monuments*.
- b) The contemporary care for monuments is characterised by the fact that it emphasises both territorial protection (monument reservations and zones) and also protection of individual objects. Overall emphasis is placed on overall preservation of the historical environment rather than on preservation of only individual objects. This is connected with the general tendency to associate protection of nature and the landscape with protection of the cultural heritage, especially in the sphere of protection of the cultural landscape. In the extreme case, the entire cultural landscape can become a monument. *There is thus a spatial extension of care for monuments*.
- c) The specification of further characteristics is connected with the opinion that care for monuments is a purely practical activity that varies from case to case. The historical nature of the care for monuments makes it impossible to establish a theoretical basis. Alois Riegl stated:
 - 1) Care for monuments is a historical, specific and practical activity.
 - 2) If care for monuments is a historical activity, it cannot be based on a general theory. The theory of “care for monuments” is nonsense. Only technology for care for monuments is possible.
 - 3) However, philosophical consideration of the sense of care for monuments is necessary (Richter 1993).

However, care for monuments has somewhat neglected to explain and defend its significance. Consequently, a great many private owners of cultural monuments are not fully aware of the ideas, on the basis of which limitations are placed on their rights to manage their property, for the good of the cultural heritage.

- d) In addition, at the present time, the sense of care for monuments is much harder to explain than during the 19th century. The history of care for monuments is the history of gradual rationalisation of the concept of a monument. Initially, value in terms of the cultural heritage was considered to be a kind of aesthetic category. Then Professor Dehio of Strassburg emerged with his revolutionary formulation that cultural values are not preserved because they are beautiful but because they are part of the national existence. The inclination of investors to demolish historical objects and construct new buildings was corrected by the strength of the national state, which was concerned about its symbols. However, a global civilisation is being created at the present time, in which the traditions of national states lose their veracity and strength. *Aesthetic conclusions are increasingly important in deciding what is and what is not a cultural monument. However, this can readily be influenced by the influx of very attractive, but worthless “popular” architecture, currently being introduced by a great many development companies.*
- e) It can be considered symptomatic that, in the Czech Republic, there is not a single official study of the cultural heritage, nor is there any official authorisation related to monuments. An individual becomes de jure a cultural heritage worker when the works in the system of state administration of protection of the cultural heritage. There is no scientific discipline of cultural heritage worker; rather, this profession arises and disappears with the working agreement with the relevant cultural heritage institute or body of the state administration. Cultural historians, architects and environmental workers in the framework of the activities of NGOs are concerned with protection of the cultural and natural heritage fund. There are, of course, professional studies by restoration workers (including at the level of the private university in Litomyšl); however, care for the cultural heritage requires comprehensive encompassing of the phenomenon of care for the cultural and natural heritage fund. *Thus, care for monuments constitutes the execution of a particular activity rather than a fixed formulated intellectual system of canons.* It is clear, however, that it is necessary to work on an improvement in this state of affairs and the complexity of the execution of care for monuments must necessarily be certified.
- f) For historical reasons, methods of state guarantees of the public interest predominate in Central Europe over other potential approaches. The historical background of this situation lies in the fact that the land was the property of the king, who only allowed it to be used under the feudal system. This state of affairs continued in a number of countries up to the Napoleonic Wars, with the exception of Switzerland, where this system was abandoned in roughly the 16th century. In the historical Czech lands, which were basically atheistic and broadly democratic, this state was achieved by nationalisation of a number of seats of the aristocracy.

crats and church property following 1920. This republican ethos was taken to absurd lengths and turned upside down by the extensive nationalisation carried out in 1948.

Developments in the past de facto created the trap in which we now find ourselves, at least from the standpoint of the effective and economically acceptable preservation of the fund of the movable and immovable cultural heritage. Even under the best economic conditions, the state does not have the means to provide the appropriate care for the cultural heritage in state ownership (including state land in the poorer areas) and is certainly not capable of creating a motivation system within its framework for searching for new ways of using this property without abusing it. Restitution steps have returned property mostly not to the original owners, who could be expected to have a positive relationship to the property, but to members of their families. Similar to other acts of privatisation, there is no guarantee of a truly active (and simultaneously sufficiently pious) relationship of the de facto new owners to their newly acquired property. The fund of the cultural real estate heritage is too large to be financed by the state: the lack of economic motivation instruments is remedied by the strict diction of the law; however, because the overall care for the state real estate cultural heritage fund is in a precarious situation, there is a great lack of respect for the law and it is not systematically implemented (this topic is broadly commented in Čížek, Pajas 2002).

In the global culture, in the overall regionalisation of Europe, a national state does not have great prospects that would be sufficient for the care and improvement of the fund of cultural real estate property and thus it has been found essential to transfer state property to other entities that exhibit the psychological potential to consistently and realistically consider the use of this property, how to conserve it and simultaneously improve it, so that the capital of cultural real estate heritage is able to “reproduce itself” to a considerable degree.

g) In a certain sense, care for the cultural heritage has been caught in the trap of history, where the problem is exacerbated by the fact that attempts are made to prevent broader democratisation of the care for monuments, by pointing out its specialised professional character. What are the conditions at the present time in relation to public participation in protection of the cultural heritage? In general, it can be stated that it certainly does not attain the level of participation in environmental protection. In contrast to environmentalists, civic associations concerned with the cultural heritage do not have the right to enter into administrative procedures as a legitimate participant. Protection of the cultural heritage, for example, attic apartments, the quality of facades, the subject of dormer windows, etc. is dealt with through environmental legislation, i.e. through the Act No. 114/1992 Coll., on protection of nature and the landscape, which allows participation of civic associations in administrative procedures. Cultural heritage workers attempt to prevent the unqualified renewal of

historical structures or structures in a historical environment by stating that they disturb the landscape pursuant to § 12 of the Act on Protection of Nature and the Landscape. The legal institution of “character of the landscape” protects both the natural and the aesthetic and historical characteristics of the landscape. A number of civic associations and foundations and foundation funds that care for or own particular monuments are active in the area of the cultural heritage; however, this phenomenon is unfortunately not extensive.

The opponents of public participation in administrative procedures pursuant to the Act on Monuments point out the obvious relative nature of aesthetic judgements on which the care for the cultural heritage is based. Public participation in administrative procedures according to a number of environmental laws is justified by the extent and depth of the danger represented by environmental crises in relation to the basic parameters of human existence and especially the measurable nature of the environmental danger.

h) The legislation, especially of the countries of Central Europe, does not contain the concept of evaluation or reanimation of the monument fund, in spite of the fact that the European regional and structural policy does not consider the simple conservation of monuments to be an act of a structural nature and considerable means are provided from the SAPARD pre-accession fund for work in the framework of the monument fund. There is no co-operation of regional and structural policy and care for monuments from the methodical standpoint. Thus, the public and political representatives tend to see the care for monuments as a burden on public budgets, rather than considering the care for monuments to be an economic project, with consequences in favour of goals in the regional and structural policy.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a crisis in the care for the cultural heritage. In order to resolve this situation and avoid abolishment or formal survival, it is necessary to take the following steps:

- a) Care for the cultural heritage must again formulate its purpose, especially in relation to the decrease in the importance of national states, globalisation and, simultaneously, regionalisation of the world.
- b) Even though the values of the cultural heritage cannot be exactly measured as environmental values, the care for the cultural heritage must become more democratic and open itself to the general engaged public.
- c) State ownership of the great majority of monuments constitutes a dead-end. A significant part must be transferred to the municipalities or the non-profit sector.
- d) The purpose of the care for the cultural heritage does not lie in freezing and conserving the greatest number of relics from the past, but rather in imposing order on the cultural heritage and harmonising it with the un-

avoidable human need to create new, quite original values. The care for monuments must reconceive its strengthening relationship to the goals of the European regional and structural policy.

REFERENCES

Čížek A., Pajas P. (2002): The privatisation into the public hands as a way toward the rescue of cultural heritage. The landscape as cultural space. The conference The Face of Our Earth, Jaroslav Barta for Česká komora architektů, Prague: 95–161; ISBN 80-86512-14-2.

Hájek T. (2002): Countryside, tourism development and national heritage revitalisation. *Agricultural Economics*, 48 (6): 259–262.

Hlinka J. (2002): There is the gap of misunderstanding between architects and cultural heritage worker. *Hospodářské noviny* 22. 4.

Richter V. (1993): *The Monument and the Care*. Státní ústav památkové péče, Praha, 35 p.; ISBN 80-85787-61-X.

Zídek M. (1998): *The Monument Care and Protection in Germany*. Almanach programu městských památkových rezervací a zón, Praha, 55 s.; ISBN 80-902096-8-8.

Arrived on 22nd January 2003

Contact address:

Med. Dr. at Phil. Mgr. Tomáš Hájek, Podjavorinské 1606, 140 00 Praha 4, Česká republika
tel: +420 272 910 704, e-mail: tomas_hajek@env.cz
