

ARCHITECTURE OF MEMORY

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Abstract. This article explores the dialogue between philosophy and architectural conservation, which is important for the preservation of cultural heritage. Philosophical concepts of value, truth and memory are linked to the theory and practice of conservation and architecture in order to shed light on the current crisis of environmental values, resulting from the deterioration of the national conservation system, loss of authenticity, damage to integral value – *the memory of the environment* and architectural erosion. The community of experts is striving, unsuccessfully, to improve the regulatory framework for conservation and architecture within the context of a ‘facade democracy’. However, a philosophical approach clearly reveals that these efforts are doomed to failure unless the model of society’s general values evolves through a genuinely democratic social order. Only under this condition will architecture be able to realise its full potential as the *architecture of memory*, playing a unique role within the *cultural environment*.

Keywords: philosophy; architecture; value; truth; memory; cultural heritage preservation; conservation

“Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to this day as living witnesses to their age-old traditions. People are becoming increasingly aware of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a shared heritage. The shared responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to pass them on in all their authentic richness.” (The Venice Charter, 1964).

Thus, right from its first paragraph, the Venice Charter – a fundamental document in the field of *conservation*¹ – defines the ethos of cultural heritage preservation as the transmission, over time, of the *values* associated with *memory*, while preserving the *truth* about them. Clearly, this ethos lies at the intersection of two distinct academic fields: on the one hand, the theory of architectural conservation, developed over the centuries (Jokilehto, 1999); on the other hand, a range of philosophical disciplines: axiology and the sociology of values, the philosophy of truth and the theory of memory. One can expect that the integration of those two scientific fields will provide an opportunity for fruitful interaction and enable us to address certain current practical issues. Unfortunately, this opportunity remains

unexploited to this day. The Great Debate that took place within expert circles at the Council of Europe, UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS, which began on the eve of the new century as a veritable intellectual explosion of ideas on environmental values and their preservation, had practically no interaction with the parallel debate taking place simultaneously, in the philosophical sphere, which remains closed to the field of conservation.

The contribution of architects to this issue of the journal “Philosophie” offers a valuable opportunity to start a dialogue between the two fields, in the hope, that such integration may help us understand: the acute crisis currently facing the preservation of cultural heritage in our country. This article should be seen as an outstretched hand in the spirit of dialogue between philosophy and architectural conservation.

1. Values and conservation

According to axiology and the sociology of *values* (Fotev, 2012), values are a product of human consciousness, are embedded in human reality and are generated by human desires, aspirations and interests. Chosen are several types of values: vital, consumer-related, emotional, intellectual, existential, economic, social, political, ethical, aesthetic, cognitive, ecological and religious. They could be *absolute* (universally valid, independent and authentic) or *relative* (varying over time). The power of values increases when they are social: shared by communities at different levels, with each community forming its own *complex of values*, featuring a specific *hierarchy* of values, ranked in order of importance and active interaction between them.

The values of the inherited environment are closely linked to the types mentioned above and can apply to each of them. Generally defined as ‘*cultural values*’, they are by their very nature value-laden with valuable messages – *legacy* from the past, insofar as ‘*the concept of culture is a value-laden concept*’ (Weber, 1998, p. 49). Furthermore, as cultural values are shared and social, they play a unifying role for each ‘*heritage community*’ (as defined during the Grand Débat – Council, 2005) at various levels, and are essential to their *identity*. They form part of the community’s specific value system and are subject to change over time. The absolute or relative significance of cultural values depends entirely on their place within the community’s current value system. For example, values with strong political connotations are relative, as they depend entirely on the changing political climate (the legal status protecting partisan historical sites dating from the socialist era was swiftly abolished in the 1990s). However, the Japanese temple of Ize will always remain at the top of the hierarchy of national values, regardless of whether or not it enjoys protected status.

The integrity of the value system and its hierarchy require a defined social order, guaranteed by *norms* (both mandatory and recommended) which form the spine

of the social system (Fotev, 2012). This is one way how to regulate the constant tension between values and interests, as *norms*, embodying socially valid values constrain unacceptable interests. The order of the norm depends entirely on the structure and hierarchy of the general *complex of values*. Contradictions within this complex can lead to a *normative crisis* and *anomie*, followed by a crisis of values: a loss of the meaning of values and of social attachment to them.

This philosophical logic finds a clear connection with preservation of cultural values, guaranteed by a normative system operating at various levels. At the international level, this protection is achieved through adopted and ratified international documents (conventions, declarations, recommendations, principles and rules). At the national level, through the national *preservation system*, where the main components include: legislation, management system, instruments and conservation actions. The dependence of this normative system on the complex actual of values and its hierarchy can be followed historically.

In a totalitarian system, the hierarchy of values, imposed by force, guarantees the political status quo. There is a desire to manipulate the past-present-future axis in order to gain an immediate political advantage, in accordance with Orwellian logic: “*Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past*” (Orwell, 2021). This explains the constant focus on the past and cultural heritage during the socialist era in Bulgaria (recall the extensive ‘1,300 Years of Bulgaria’ programme of the early 1980s). It is worth highlighting here the exceptional contribution of Professor Peyo Berbenliev, a rare combination of high-level expertise with political influence within the Committee on Culture. He endeavoured, as far as possible, to balance the authorities’ focus on the past through a regulatory framework, in the development of which he has decisive role². In collaboration with the National Institute of Cultural Monuments (NIPK), he waged difficult battles, not always successful, to preserve cultural heritage in its authenticity.

Conversely, the democratic social order allows coexistence of different value systems and hierarchies within a framework of pluralism, based on values such as dignity, freedom, tolerance, equality, the rule of law, human rights, pluralism, non-discrimination, justice, and respect for cultural diversity and identity. These shared values are at the heart of the Great Debate on the preservation of cultural heritage, that unify participants from countries with stable democracies with those from countries aspiring to become democracies, following the fall of the Iron Curtain.

At the conclusion of the debate, a consensus emerged on the key challenges facing conservation. It is recognised that conservation constitutes a priority social value that serves the public interest and the right to heritage (ICOMOS Declaration, 1998; Council, 2005). The conservation system must be open to all spheres of public life in order to ensure the integration of cultural values with other values, in accordance with the principles of ‘*integrated conservation*’ (Convention, 1985;

Convention, 1992). There is a need for the deconcentration and decentralisation of management systems, with an increased role for expert authority and active citizen participation (Declaration, 2001). Under these conditions, cultural heritage becomes a resource for sustainable development and quality of life (Declaration, 2011). New conservation tools have been introduced, based on an integrated approach (such as *conservation* and *management plans*). The role of the media in promoting heritage and as a forum for democratic debate is emphasised.

Several authors analyse the current Bulgarian version of the democratic model. Some describe it as a '*facade democracy*' (Carroders, 2003), others as a '*culture of imitating values*' (Alexandrov, 2019, pp. 77 – 91), an ostentatious display of commitment to a set of values that are, in reality, contested. Hence the mistrust of institutions and of '*the other*' in general, as well as a retreat into the family unit. This results in the disintegration of communities, an unstable identity and a regression towards a primitive form of nationalism. The term '*post-democracy*' is also used (Krusteva, 2019, pp. 161 – 177) to describe a democracy where it transformed into a shell stripped of its substance, and where the dynamics of the democratic process moves in the hands of the small economic and political elites, in an interplay between governing power and private business interests. These elite groups then manipulate the choice and distort it to their advantage (Minchev, 2019, pp. 93 – 114). In the absence of free will, empathy, tolerance, solidarity and scepticism towards authority, 'self-serving majorities' come to power that manipulate society (Smilov, 2019, pp. 179 – 198), by exercising a monopoly over information and a dependent media environment (Borudzhieva, 2019, pp. 411 – 430). All of this leads to a crisis in the social order and the normative system. Under these conditions, interests threaten values, as norms are unable to limit or regulate them. A crisis of values ensues.

These characteristics of Bulgarian 'post-democracy' have a direct impact on the preservation of cultural heritage in Bulgaria following the transition of the 1990s, explaining certain problems which, at first glance, seemed inexplicable. Thus, the transition has led to intense pressure from real-estate sector interests in historic urban centres, where cultural assets are concentrated. Under the rule of 'self-serving majorities', the already fragile regulatory framework for conservation received a full stroke and the questionable elite reinforced the belief that conservation hinders development and must therefore be restricted – a view that is contrary to the democratic ideal of heritage as a resource for development and quality of life. A new 'hierarchy of values' is taking shape, in which conservation, while presented under a democratic shell, is being stripped of its meaning. For example, twenty years after the changes, no new law on cultural heritage has been adopted, creating a state of useful chaos that suits the interests at play in historic centres. The new law of 2009 has proved inadequate. All international conventions are accepted 'pro forma', but not implemented. The management system has suffered irreversible

damage: it has become encapsulated and highly centralised, with limited expertise and a priority given to political decisions concerning cultural heritage values. The state-run expert body for conservation – formerly the NIPK, now the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage (NINKN) – is paralysed; all that remains is a small administrative unit of 40 to 50 specialists (compared with 2,000 in the 1980s!), which is objectively incapable of fulfilling its regulatory obligations. Public participation in decision-making on heritage values is severely restricted. Social division and the impossibility of democratic debate lead to a lack of solidarity with conservation objectives, indifference and disregard for norms.

One example of the consequences of this situation is the Old Town of Nessebar, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1983 and legally protected at two levels: at the global level, through *the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (Convention, 1972); and at the national level, through the national *preservation system* (Figs. 1, 2). However, the aforementioned regulatory crisis has led to structural alterations to the property, caused by illegal and inappropriate construction driven by private and commercial interests. In 2010, residents signed a petition calling for the town to be removed from the World Heritage List (this is a global precedent)... In the same year, the World Heritage Committee, in its decision, “*Expresses its deep concern regarding the overall state of conservation of the property, and in particular, serious changes due to unacceptable development of the urban fabric that are a threat to the Outstanding Universal Value, integrity, and authenticity of the property*” (Fig. 3). The Committee recommends the development of a strategic instrument: a *Management Plan*. In 2013, the Plan was drawn up by the NINKN, adopted by the Ministry of Culture and submitted to UNESCO (Plan, 2013). That same year, the Committee fully endorsed it and insisted that the State implement it. However, over the following twelve years, the Plan continued to be not adopted by the State, and the site’s deterioration continued. In 2023, a monitoring mission deemed the damage ‘*irreversible*’, raising fears that the site would be removed from the World Heritage List (Fig. 4).

The community of experts protested against the manifestations of this conservation crisis and attempted, unsuccessfully, to amend the regulatory framework: through reforms to the preservation system, amendments to the law, redefinition of the status of the National Institute, etc.

2. Truth – authenticity

Michel Foucault (Foucault, 2021) distinguishes four meanings that help to define truth: that which is revealed and made manifest; that which corresponds to objectively existing norms and remains loyal to them; that which excludes impurities and admixtures and does not tolerate difference; that which is immutable, identical to itself. He also highlights another essential aspect: ‘the courage of truth’ (*parrësia*), the boldness to speak the truth, to convey knowledge of it, and to con-

demn errors, despite the risks involved. Truth can be *objective*, proven by objective facts and reliable sources of knowledge, corresponding to an objectively existing social order and set of norms and *subjective*, varying according to the value system prevailing amongst individuals or communities. Axiology regards truth as a fundamental social value, dependent on the prevailing value system and its hierarchy. This dependence can be observed historically.

In a totalitarian context, the immutable hierarchy of values that is imposed imperatively determines the only possible truth. In a democracy, objective truth is affirmed as a fundamental value, grounded in the democratic value system, the social order and public debate. In a 'post-democratic' context, '*post-truth*' prevails (Krusteva, 2019): political discourse is stripped of truth as a value, blurring the boundary between truth and 'fake'. The state gets the opportunity to become the sole guarantor of truth, with the role of expert authority being considerably diminished. At the same time, the traumatic existing duality 'pride-shame' complex gives rise to '*aggressive national historical glorification*' (Kyosev, 2019) and forms a '*compensatory identity*' (Kabakchieva, 2019), rooted in past glory and distrustful of the present and the future – fertile ground for political populism. The media and social media further complicate the role of truth.

The difficulty of ascertaining the true value of the environment is evident throughout the history of conservation (Jokilehto, 1999; Kandulkova, 2021). While classical restoration (early 19th century) demonstrates a respect for the objective truth about the original, the Romantic and stylistic approaches (mid- to late 19th century) pursued a highly subjective and hypothetical truth regarding the monument. The Venice Charter (1964) reflects the international consensus among experts on *authenticity* – the truth concerning the monument as an absolute value, proven as objective truth through the preservation of the original materials, its location and the valuable contributions from all eras. Consequently, the restoration of the monument '*must stop at the point where conjecture begins*'. The subsequent evolution of the concept of authenticity is interesting. Its assessment as an absolute value remains relevant to this day. However, in a diverse world, the truth on this matter proves to be subjective. In Japan, for example, the criterion of truth does not lie in the preservation of the monument's original material – which is replaced every twenty years in accordance with a centuries-old tradition – but in the strict conservation of the architectural concept, the type of material, the construction and details, the context, the function and the spirit of the monument. Thus, the Great Debate expanded upon the 'Venetian' criteria of authenticity and led to a global consensus on a new normative order concerning the truth of value (Nara, 1994), recognised throughout the democratic world.

However, this very truth is under threat in the totalitarian context of socialism. The reasons are primarily political, in line with the Orwellian logic mentioned earlier. Ironically, at the very moment the Venice Charter was adopted, a government

decree concerning the development of the historic city of Veliko Tarnovo was issued, with a clear political objective: to restore the medieval Tsarevets fortress not as it was, but as it ought to be. The political motivation is eloquent: *'Our people need magnificent palaces that will inspire faith in the rise of the Bulgarian socialist state'*. The efforts of experts such as Professor P. Berbenliev (who had been involved in the adoption of the Venice Charter) to oppose this, demonstrating a desperate *'parrësia'* (Berbenliev, 1964), were in vain. The battle was lost. The Charter was declared an *'ideological diversion'*, and Tsarevets was hypothetically restored (Fig. 5). Later, in the mid- to late 1980s, the grip of power loosened for various reasons: the community of experts thwarted plans for new hypothetical interventions in Veliko Tarnovo: on the Vladishki Bridge tower, on the Church of the Forty Martyrs and inside the Church of Saint Dimitri.

Paradoxically, in the context of *'post-democracy'*, the practice of hypothetical interventions, which have acquired the public status of – *'butaforia'* (*'pastiche'/'make-believe'*), was reinstated, despite the officially adopted international normative framework on authenticity (Fig. 6). The motivations were no longer so much political as economic, linked to the absorption of European funds which, although earmarked for conservation, were instead used to build concrete fortresses *'up to the ridge'* – a process quicker and less costly than scientific restoration, and profitable for these very same *'economic and political elites'*. These motivations are masked by a political populism advocating the *'restoration of historical justice'* and the development of cultural tourism (which has not materialised). The hypothetical restoration of the *'Church of the 40 Martyrs'*, which was abandoned under socialism, was carried out in the context of *'post-democracy'*. These interventions can be assessed in the light of the four meanings of truth according to Michel Foucault. The accompanying Fig. 7 shows that this fake restoration conceals the foreign concrete beneath a camouflaged stone cladding, contravenes the international normative order of authenticity, mixes the original with foreign impurities, deprives it of any possibility of identity with itself, and replaces it with an imitation (thus, the *'culture of imitation'* finds a material expression).

Experts who have shown *'parrësia'* in denouncing such lies are vilified by the dependent media or simply sidelined administratively (such as the directors dismissed from the NINKN over the last fifteen years). Only the enforcement of the international normative order (European, 2020), on which funding here depends, puts an end to this practice.

3. Memory of the environment

Pierre Nora (Nora, 2004, pp. 35 – 71), drawing also on M. Halbwax's classical concept of collective memory, characterises *memory* as an emanation of life, carried by living groups, constantly evolving, open to recollection, ever-present, pluralistic, *'rooted in space, gesture, image and object'*. Nora contrasts this *'true,*

social and intact memory’ with *history*, which is called upon to restore what is no longer there, to be a ‘*representation of the past*’, by ‘*transforming, kneading and solidifying memories*’ in order to turn them into ‘*places of memory*’. For him, places of memory possess not only a spatial dimension (the cathedral), but also an ‘abstract and intellectually constructed objects’ (the Marseillaise, the national flag, the archives). Nora speaks poetically of memory as the ‘*tree of life*’ and for the ‘*bark of history*’, while places of memory are like shells on the shore from which the ‘sea of living memory’ has receded. According to Nora’s logic, places of memory are based on traces of living memory that have been archived, officially recognised and institutionalised – places where ‘*memory crystallises and finds refuge*’.

The question is what part of *living memory* would be recognised as legitimate and accepted as a *place of memory*. A democratic and pluralist social order would guarantee harmonious and free interaction between the multiple forms of living memory and the officially recognised network of legally protected places of memory. Conversely, the anti-democratic model would disrupt this interaction through bans and violence in order to impose the only possible places of memory, which convey the only possible truth about them.

I shall attempt to apply Nora’s philosophical logic to the spatial environment through the example of a study conducted in 1980 by a team of architects (‘The Blagoevgrad Experiment’³) in south-western Bulgaria, around the villages of Klioutch, Skrut and Strumeshnitsa, between the Ograzhden and Belasitsa mountains – the historical field of the Battle of Belasica (1014), a battle between the troops of the Byzantine Emperor Basil II (‘the Bulgar-Slayer’) and those of the Bulgarian Tsar Samuil. The Byzantine army unsuccessfully attacked the wooden fortification situated along the deep valley between the two mountains, then crossed Belasitsa and took the Bulgarians by surprise, with tragic consequences. In 1980, the site’s natural environment remained unspoilt, the valley was overgrown with centuries-old plane trees, and the only trace of the fortification was a stone watchtower, known as ‘Samuil’s Fortress’.

Studies carried out on site show that the *living memory* of the local ‘*heritage community*’ has preserved a detailed ‘script’ of the battle, reflected in legends, tales and traditions, as well as in the place names: ‘Chukalak’ (the sounds of battle), ‘Hlipanitsa’ (the cry of the dying warriors), ‘Smrdashets’ (field of the killed), ‘Kokalitsa’ (field of the bones of the dead) and ‘Ochevad’ – the place where, according to collective memory, the Bulgarian soldiers were blinded before setting out on the ‘Blind Path’... Over the centuries, the locals would light candles at ‘Ochevad’ until the socialist authorities imposed a strict ban and demolished the chapel that stood there. In 1980, the only place of remembrance recognised as being of value was ‘Samuil’s Fortress’, designated as a ‘cultural monument’. Everything else was ignored, a glaring disparity between ‘*living memory*’ and ‘*place of memory*’, which can be explained in the context of the anti-democratic model.

This rich ‘*living memory*’ of the community, embedded within the very landscape of the battle, illustrates well Nora’s reflection on ‘*a clearly defined network, an unconscious organisation of collective memory, which we must make recognisable*’ (Nora, 2004, 68). Furthermore, this network is not confined to a specific area. Another earlier study, carried out by the same team in 1977 (‘The Experiment Purvenets Hrabrino’), led to the discovery in the village of Belashtitsa, near city Plovdiv, of a hundred-year-old plane tree, identical to those in the combat zone, bearing the inscription ‘*planted by Samuil’s soldiers*. The network of living memory has therefore come a long way!

Can this infrastructure of living memory and places of memory be regarded as an integral part of the environment’s value, as its MEMORY, traces of the past accumulated over time: tangible and intangible, elements and relationships, relationships in space and in time? These traces formulate the *cultural context* of the environment, which explains the meaning and significance of each element that makes it up (Krestev, 1987; Krestev, 1994). Furthermore, the etymology of the now internationally recognised concept of protected cultural value, ‘*monument*’ is precisely linked to memory⁴. This memory awaits to be ‘recognisable’ through interpretation and presentation (The ICOMOS Charter, 2008b). For without this, it will be forgotten and erased (the living memory of the Battle of Belasica in 1980 survived only in the memories of the village old people).

The gradual realisation of the integral value of the environment is a key feature of the Great Debate. This evolution of ideas began with the assessment of the *structural values* of the urban environment (Charter, 1987), followed by those of *Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Convention, 2003) and the *Memory of Places* (Mémorial des lieux, 2003), the *Context* (Xi’an Declaration, 2005) and the *Spirit of Place* (Québec Declaration, 2008), culminating in the concept of the value of the global *Landscape* (Council, 2000) and the *Historic Urban Landscape* (Recommendations, 2011). During the debates on the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council, 2005), the concept of the ‘*cultural environment*’ was introduced, defined as the cultural dimension of the environment, its broader cultural context, its ‘territorial intelligence’⁵. Furthermore, the new heritage category of ‘*Cultural Route*’ (ICOMOS, 2008a) constitutes the macrostructure of this cultural environment at various levels, including continental and even intercontinental levels (the Silk Road, the Slave Route, etc.). This evolution of ideas stands in stark contrast to current conservation practice in our country, which is all too often focused on isolated fragments of the environment, to the detriment of its overall value.

In this debate, the role of ‘dissonant values’ is essential, particularly those linked to a recent traumatic past (Korudzhieva, 2016). A democratic system of values would enable these ‘contested’ / ‘contradictory’ values to be assessed as an opportunity for a value public debate, thereby giving them a significant social value.

(Dolff-Bonekamper, 2001). The case of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, marked by profound trauma, is particularly telling. Following an international debate, a consensus emerged regarding its preservation and protection, culminating in its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1979. This heritage site is now seen as a historical lesson about a monstrous experience that must never be forgotten, lest it be repeated. Conversely, in the post-democratic context, the fate of dissonant values is particularly critical. Controversial sites instead of being a source of fruitful public debate and democratic consensus, are politically rejected and physically destroyed (as evidenced by the Mausoleum and the 1300th Anniversary Monument in Sofia).

4. The Architecture of Memory

Architectural theory regards architecture as a multifaceted phenomenon, based on the triad of values defined by Vitruvius (1st century BC): *durability*, *usefulness* and *beauty*. In this sense, architecture is a priori value-laden (according to M. Weber). Several Bulgarian authors emphasise the contemporary significance of this distinctive feature.

In his research, Professor B. Kadinov (Kadinov, 2015) highlights architecture's intrinsic connection to the arts and emphasises the need to restore the role of the subjective and individual architectural message, of the unique creative act. To this goal, architecture must override its own boundaries, interact with other fields ('*transgressions*'), particularly the other arts as a source of creative stimulation, and be sensitive to the world changes.

For his part, Professor T. Boulev (Boulev, 2022) emphasises that architectural content is '*value-oriented*', forming part of a set of socially significant values. In his view, through architecture, humankind creates beauty in its struggle against chaos. But in order to guarantee its comprehensibility, the artist and society require shared ideas about beauty.

According to Professor G. Stanishev (Stanishev, 2016), to understand the phenomenon of architecture, it must be considered from the perspective of various fields of research: architectural theory and practice, philosophy, sociology, culture etc. This requires building bridges between architecture and other disciplines.

For Associate Professor D. Georgieva (Georgieva, 2024), this process of communication is an act of architectural '*decoding and recoding*' of messages from the past into the value, and also aims to facilitate all forms of accessibility (physical, sensory, intellectual, economic) to cultural heritage.

Understanding the architectural phenomenon is also possible: through the mechanism and psychology of the architectural creative process, during which the *architectural artistic image* is formed (Krestev, 1979)³. The architectural image reflects, on one hand, the objective truth of the world and its values, object of creativity. On the other hand, it reflects the architect's subjective truth regarding the future of this

world. At the same time, the architectural image is *hierarchical* – it organises the environment at different levels, and can thus encompass the environment's integral value as well as *contextual* – it can interpret and present the cultural context of the environment in space and time, even when that context has reached us in a highly disrupted and incomprehensible form (The ICOMOS Carter, 2008b).

In other words, through an architectural 'staging', it is possible to interpret and spatially present this integral value: the memory of the environment, the spirit of the place, and the truth about the richness of living memory and places of memory. I define this architecture as the *Architecture of Memory* – a term that refers to a particularly high degree to its integral component – architectural conservation, which takes into account, from the outset, the values of the past within the environment. I shall take as an example the Ancient Theatre of Old Plovdiv (Kolarova, 1985).

Built in the first half of the 2nd century, the Ancient Theatre is one of the most important theatres in the provinces of the Roman Empire. Discovered during archaeological excavations in 1968, it lay in ruins and with a lost ancient context – a not understandable heap of stones, amidst foreign strata from other eras (Fig. 8). The architectural restoration was carried out following an in-depth study and with the utmost respect for historical accuracy, without resorting to any hypotheses, in accordance with international standards of authenticity. The spatial-temporal context is interpreted: the ancient amphitheatre is recreated by reshaping the terrain (Fig. 9). Scattered elements of the ancient structure are returned to their original arrangement (using the anastylosis method), which clarifies the meaning and significance of each element; the authentic historical stratification of the site is restored; and continuity with the original function is ensured. In this way, the memory of the historic urban landscape as a whole is revealed, and the spirit of the place is revived (Fig. 10).

Today, the role of architecture in approaching dissonant values is also been assessed. For example, a network-based study conducted by two authors (Vasileva, 2017 and Kaleva, 2017) on Bulgarian architecture from the second half of the 20th century – the socialist period (and thus carrying connotations of conflicting value) – demonstrates its value and '*temporal relevance*' in relation to European Modernism (Figs. 11, 12). The research proposes an approach to the preservation and architectural interpretation of these values, including those carrying traumatic memories (for example, the Buzludzha Memorial), by preserving historical evidence of the ambiguous attitude towards them ('*conservation and interpretation of ruination*').

Thus, the *architecture of memory* can complement and even transcend the capabilities of today's social order of the *conservation*. In democratic societies, this role is fully recognised and encouraged by appropriate norms. For example, in France, the 2016 *Law on Freedom of Creation in Architecture and Heritage*; as well as the 1977 *Law on Architecture*, Article 1 states: '*Architecture is an expression of cul-*

ture', bear witness to this. We might also cite the 1997 Finnish Architectural Policy Programme, which asserts that '*Architecture is the mirror of culture*'.

Unfortunately, the current Bulgarian version of democracy provides a profoundly different context for architectural activity, which is losing its value, its intrinsic power and its social prestige. According to Professor Kadinov, we are currently witnessing an '*erosion of architecture*', reduced to the role of an impersonal intermediary in the investment process, subordinated to commercial and advertising strategies and interests. As a result, it is '*de-heroised and de-mythologised, and the individual creative act loses its uniqueness and sacred character*'. Society suffers as a result, and is no longer able to distinguish quality architecture from its commercial imitations. The author emphasises the need for legislative regulation of architecture's social role. In this context, the fate of Bulgarian architecture from the second half of the 20th century is critical left without protected status and under attack from a new, arrogant form of architecture, as is in the case of the compromised tourist resorts on the Black Sea (Fig. 13) (Nikiforova, 2022).

What conclusion can be drawn from this attempt at dialogue between philosophy and architectural conservation?

The main conclusion stems from the philosophical thesis concerning the absolute dependence of any normative order on society's complex of values. Consequently, the crisis of values currently affecting the environment cannot be overcome solely by the efforts of experts directed exclusively at the normative system of conservation. Genuine, rather than superficial, change in the field of conservation will only be possible if society's value system is altered. This change must establish a new social order based on democratic VALUES, amongst which TRUTH is a fundamental value, the MEMORY of the environment – *legacy* from the past is the subject of democratic debate and consensus, and ARCHITECTURE is understood as an expression of culture, playing a unique role within the cultural environment. Naturally, such a change requires political will.

NOTES

1. The broad meaning of the concept of conservation encompasses '*all efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its physical preservation and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement*' (Nara, 1994).

2. Professor P. Berbenliev was the driving force behind the first modern *Law on cultural monuments and museums* (ZPKM) of 1969, inspired by the Venice Charter (in the adoption of which he was personally involved). He contributed to the creation of a decentralised and deconcentrated management system, with a key role played by the National Institute of Cultural Monuments (NIPK), state expert body which, in the 1980s, comprised 2,000 high-level specialists, spread across five regional branches covering the whole of Bulgaria.

3. Krestev, T. (1989) *The Memory of the Environment and Architectural Creativity*. Dissertation, University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy

4. The internationally recognised concept of ‘*cultural monument*’ for legally protected values, used in the ZPKM of 1969, was inappropriately replaced in the *Law on Cultural Heritage* (2009) by the concept of ‘*cultural value*’, which has a much broader scope, particularly in light of the aforementioned developments.

5. Document resulting from a discussion held as part of the Grand Débat: *Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage, 2003. Working Group A. Observation by Mr Todor Krestev (Bulgaria). Council of Europe, CDPAD (2003) 57.*

Illustrations



Figure 1. Old Town of Nessebar (archive photo)



Figure 2. Old Town of Nessebar – stratification of the urban fabric
(photo from the nomination dossier, 1982)



Figure 3. Illegal construction in Old Town of Nessebar (2011)



Figure 4. Old Town of Nessebar – new constructions in conflict with the archaeological zone and the scale of the urban fabric (photo from the UNESCO/ICOMOS monitoring mission report, 2023)



Figure 5. Veliko Tarnovo – hypothetical restoration of the Patriarchy in Tsarevets (1981)



Figure 6. Sozopol – hypothetically restored medieval fortress “to the ridge”



Figure 7. Sozopol – process of hypothetical restoration with concrete of a medieval fortress (NINCN archives)



Figure 8. Ancient Theatre of Old Plovdiv – state after the 1968 archaeological discovery (NINCN archives)



Figure 9. Ancient Theatre of Old Plovdiv after restoration: interpretation and presentation of the context in space and in time

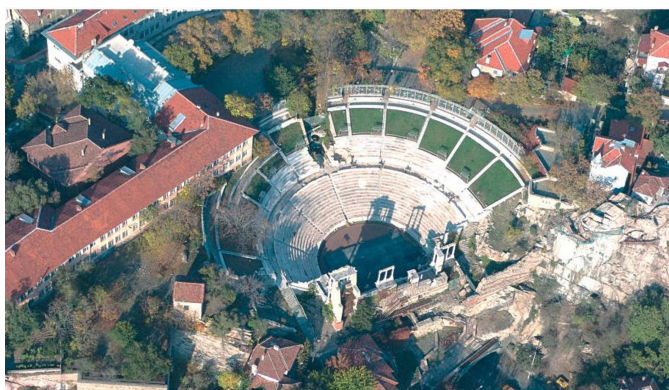


Figure 10. Old Plovdiv – the restored memory of the environment



Figure 11. “Sozopol – Nessebar” Hotel in Sunny Beach by architect N. Nikolov
(photo from 1966)



Figure 12. Variety bar in Sunny Beach by architect M. Sokolovski
(photo from 1966)



Figure 13. Variety bar in Sunny Beach, compromised by new construction (photo from 2015)

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