

Abstract of the doctoral dissertation

„Adaptation of historic sacred buildings for secular functions exemplified by selected Western European projects with the use of the narrative method“

Historical sacred objects constitute an important part of collective memory and provide a sign of spiritual continuity in a given society. Due to the lack of believers and too high maintenance costs, churches in many European cities are purchased by private individuals who intend to transform them into cultural, residential, or service facilities. The issue of changing the function of sacred space and adapting sacred buildings for other purposes constitutes a multifaceted problem. The current fate of such objects exemplifies the process of desacralization and secularization of Europe. The works' main purpose was to expand the knowledge on the adaptation of sacral buildings for secular purposes on the example of selected implementations conducted in Western Europe. Another aim of the work is to determine the directions of good practice, recommendations, and conclusions regarding the adaptation of sacred buildings for secular functions. It was important to demonstrate possible solutions for adaptations that cause no profanation to holy places and cause no cognitive dissonance. These solutions should, if necessary, allow the object to be re-sacralized in the future. They combine a new function with the identity of a given place and its historical, cultural, and sacral values. Another goal was to analyze and use narrative research in the process of adapting sacral buildings. The narrative method is a holistic approach to architecture. It treats an architectural work as a product of culture embedded in mystery, culture, time and space. To a large extent, it takes into account the aesthetic, but also ethical evaluation, owing to the conclusion that the form implies value. Such a narrative approach seems justified in undertaking architectural and conservation activities aimed at preserving and maintaining monuments. Narrative research in sacral spaces can indicate an adequate and appropriate direction for the analysis and design process. It is an innovative method that can help arrive at an adequate secular destiny without desecrating a place of special religious significance and maintaining cultural identity. This holistic, universal tool combines not only aesthetic but also philosophical, ethical, and semantic categories. The narrative method can provide a useful tool for transforming, analyzing, and designing such objects. The issue of transforming places of worship is hardly a new phenomenon. The growing secularization and depopulation of some regions, the lack of believers and the shrinking possibilities to finance sacral buildings give rise to the need to

discuss the future functions of unused, abandoned former places of worship and to indicate possible adequate directions and architectural solutions.

Key words: adaptation, places of worship, religious heritage, narration.

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M. Arno

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Maria Arno, M.Sc.