

ՀԱՐՏԱՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ARCHITECTURE

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DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES OF CONTEMPORARY ARMENIAN ARCHITECTURE (A GENERAL OVERVIEW)

Keywords: modern Armenian architecture, period of independence, architecture, town-planning, building types, composition, design.

Introduction

The Armenian architecture in the years of independence is the building activity following the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are few academic publications along the lines of contemporary architecture, however¹. The Armenian architecture of 1991 and later, has not been updated in a methodical way, so that the research on modern Armenian architecture still leaves much to be desired. The last officially published studies about the modern period (i.e. the Soviet Armenian Architecture) include the books by A.G.Grigorian and M.Z.Tovmasyan ("Architecture of Soviet Armenia")² and Karen Balyan ("The

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¹ For more detail see for the matter: Kertmenjian 2010, 197–210. Also: Kertmenjian 2016, 4–38.

² Григорян и Товмасын 1986.

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Modern National Architecture of Armenia")³. Besides the mentioned books there are, of course, many articles on the subject but not more. This means that for more than 30 years no book has been published on the matter, and today it is urgent to carry out studies including the documentation of the modern architectural activities. It is very important to review the new activities under way as well as observe the situation of the performed architectural undertakings. In the years 2016–2018, the author of the present article gained a State Scientific Grant to work on the project "Architecture from the Independence Period of Armenia", published several articles, some of which are reflected in the references of the present study as an auxiliary matter. The present article is our first generalization of the subject in English. The main aim of this study is the systematization of the corresponding buildings and their evaluation in the light of current regional and international parallels. The objectives of the study are: the identification of the scope of historical, theoretical and practical circumstances, documentation of city-planning developments, decision making about the effectiveness of newly added infrastructures, preservation of the architectural tradition, etc. The adopted research method is the qualitative analysis, including the priorities of the time, their typological listing and stylistic trends. It should also be noted that because of the radical changes in health facilities and factories, their listing is foreseen for separate studies.

Considering the study of Architecture of the defined years, it should be mentioned that there are too many problems accumulated within the past decades, that need to be discussed. Considering the limitation allowed by an article, we shall hereby concentrate on the following three most important subjects of the matter.

The Leading Reasons of the Architectural Practice in Armenia during the Independence Period

The XX century was a dramatic period in the context of the World Architecture. No historical period created such a variety, nor has there ever been such dynamic intellectual and pragmatic progress. Indeed, Architecture achieved the highest levels of civilized development which include Hi-Tech developments, Post Modern, DE constructivism, Sustainable and Green architecture,

³ Бальян 1987.

Morphogenetic and other architectural trends⁴. Those were the means which helped to overcome the limitations created by the development of Modernism from the beginning of the XX century, International Style and futuristic ideas⁵. That situation was true for CIS countries including Armenia⁶. In Armenia, actually the main problem of the time was the search for a new stylistic trend in architecture. Despite the unfavorable conditions, such as the Spitak Earthquake of 1988, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the conflict of Karabakh, the economic blockade and the mass emigration, the development impetus never stopped. Particular development directions declared:

- 1) the reconstruction of the Earthquake Zone and exploration of new seismic design efforts,
- 2) church building activities related to the 1700th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia,
- 3) the development of urbanization programs for the new social conditions,
- 4) the provision of sustainable architecture principles to keep up with the world architectural progress, such as advanced technologies, preservation of tradition, etc.

Landscape Architecture Revisions and New Town Planning Undertakings

The landscape problems were mainly prompted by ecology and resupply of green spaces lost within the transitional decade, up until the year 2000. Such are the rehabilitation of the cascade area, urban parks associated with certain quarters, Dalma Gardens area, etc. In this category it is also possible to include the peripheral parks, particularly the parks associated with the territories of historical monuments and memorial complexes, such as the 1915 Genocide ensemble, the “Yerablur” cemetery of Karabakh victims, etc.

Despite the financial limitations of the period, some important town planning revisions were also undertaken. Besides the earthquake zone rehabilitation activities, some other rather significant projects were initiated. Among them, the North-South Highway passing through the country, the construction of new urban transportation infrastructures as well as the construction of individual bridges and

⁴ See: **Опельская** 2006, 105–116, 139–160, 163–172; **Steel** 1997, 69–105, 172–198, 202–223, 284–301; **Wines** 2000, 146–161.

⁵ **Jencks** 2002, 51.

⁶ **Иконников** 2002, 611–643.

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communication towers were of particular importance. These were in connection with regional planning projects and master plan revisions of different cities, including the capital city of Yerevan. Very urgent was the rezoning of the cities into a decentralized system of quarters. The existing green belt of Yerevan was intensively converted into series of illegally created new zones of entertainments, new amusement centers adjacent to the city's individual quarters and some others located in the vicinity or on the outskirts of the cities were promoted. The creation of new squares such as the New Municipality or Miasnikyan Square and the reconstruction of Shahumyan square in Yerevan, the Central Square of Spitak, the rehabilitation of 2 neighboring squares at the center of Gyumri, the Renaissance Square at Stepanakert, etc are also among essential undertakings . According to 1924 Master plan of Yerevan, the ground to new promenades in the central area of Yerevan was also laid, and the Northern and Main avenues, the Cascade ensemble, 2800 anniversary park and another safe way beside the Drama Theatre of the city were constructed⁷.

All the mentioned projects are notable programs in the contemporary Armenian architecture⁸. It is important to notice that the international parallels of the focused case are usually solved on behalf of sustainable architecture modifications⁹. However, such are the instances of Minneapolis Tribunal Plaza, Hnagua Solid square, Girona's Plasa del la Constitutions, Plaza Berri in Canada, Cambridge's Tanner Fountain and Plaza de Olite at Navarra, etc. Meanwhile the squares and the promenades created in Yerevan, Spitak, Gumri, Goris and Stepanakert are of urban reconstruction mode, besides being sustainable alterations.

The Listing and Documentation of Newly Built Facilities and Complexes.

As used in the studies on contemporary architecture, the listing of contemporary buildings of the Armenian architecture, besides the above-mentioned particular cases, also includes several types of buildings, the most essential of them being the transportation facilities¹⁰.

⁷ For more details see: **Kertmenjian** 2019, 61–69.

⁸ For more details see: **Kertmenjian** 2016 (1), 10–17.

⁹ See as general: **Cerver** 1998; **Cerver** 2005/2007, 134–163.

¹⁰ **Cerver** 2005/2007, 24, 48, 68, 90 etc.

a. ***The Earthquake Zone and Its Building Activities.*** These are the performed premier projects of contemporary architecture in Armenia. Most important projects performed are: the new construction of Spitak city as well as the rehabilitation of the ruined quarters in Gyumri and the addition of three neighborhoods named “Mush”, “Ani” and “Marmashen”. Hereby, the regenerated examples of individual buildings and complexes are too many. In addition to the local efforts, there are projects carried out by other countries too, such as 15 rehabilitation centers and hospitals, 10 schools and other educational establishments, 5 entire villages etc.¹¹.

b. ***Church building activities and memorials.*** These are mainly paid to enrich the national fund of the places for worship which was inactive in the Soviet years. The update of the once existed tradition was critical. However, very important was the creation of large capacity churches because of the increase of population over a century. Such cases in point are the new cathedral of Yerevan, the St. Gregory the Illuminator portal of the Holy See and the Open Altar church beside, the new Baptistery of Holy Etchmiadzin and others. Such new churches as St. Sargis, Holy Trinity, St Resurrection churches in Yerevan and especially St. James Cathedral of Gyumri, etc created by architect Baghdasar Arzoumanyanyan are particularly attractive. It is of paramount importance to mention the new stylistic manners such as national expressionism, national romanticism, tempered modernism, etc., created in the context of traditional Armenian Church architecture. Due to the mentioned, in the Independence period and marking the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as a state religion more than 200 churches of different capacities were built, the sculptural activities of Khackar (Cross-stone) were revitalized in performing art, interior wall painting instances occurred, etc.¹².

c. ***New Buildings Created as a Result of Urban Sprawl.*** As has already been mentioned, transport facilities and their urban planning accommodation are among the main priorities for contemporary architecture in general. This particularly concerns the regeneration of the

¹¹ <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/957226.htm>

¹² For more details see: Kertmenjian 2016 (2), 241–252.

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airports, train and metro stations, network of highways and bridges, squares and promenades, etc. In the contemporary practice of Armenia the question of the promotion of such buildings was very urgent. The main one was the regeneration of Zvartnots Airport by a new terminal built in 1998. The new Hi Tech complex not only was to be in harmony with the neighboring former 2 airport buildings of which one with its reinforced concrete modernization style comes from the 1970s, and the other, that is of neo-classical style, from the 1950s. But it was also urgent to handle 100.000 tons of cargo annually. The point is that Armenia entered the system of the World Trade Organization which required the enlargement of world transport means. Consequently it was urgent to increase the capacities of town planning infrastructures such as the width of the streets, the creation of new squares, the reconstruction of the fatigue points of transportation network, the construction of new bridges and other services. Actually this was the background of globalization of minimum requirements adapted to the transport infrastructures of Armenia. This was the reason for starting the construction of a new airport in Stepanakert in 2010, as well as the reconstruction of the central railway stations in Gyumri and Yerevan, etc. Very important were also the projects of constructing subterranean roads at many crossings in Yerevan, at the area of State University, the Youth Palace, and Metro Barekamutyun, etc. Another notable project among the considered was the "Tatev" ropeway which is a Guinness World Record holder with a total stretch of 5752 m, built in the year 2010¹³.

However, the world examples of the above-studied cases combine different transport facilities with one another in one agglomeration, such as the airport or the stations of different types into the country transportation network¹⁴. Actually such undertakings are far from being complete in Armenia yet. Hereby the interests are towards enlargement of the existing Metropolitan network associated with certain trade centers, malls and other complexes of city significance. With reference to this it is possible to mention the association of Metro stations with malls and underground commercial market places in Yerevan such as the Metropolitan stations of "Russia" and "Barekamutyun".

¹³ See [en.wikipedia.org/Wings of Tatev](http://en.wikipedia.org/Wings_of_Tatev)

¹⁴ Compare with **Cerver** 2005/2006, 22–109.

d. Newly Built or Regenerated Residential, Public, Industrial and Memorial Buildings and Complexes. It is a fact that the XX century witnessed technically distinguished advanced architectural developments. Such activities are very often in World Architecture of today. They are also present in contemporary Armenian architecture, conducting the following building types.

I. Cultural Facilities. The last decades witnessed the flourish of many cultural facilities, the majority of which have become symbols of tourism attractions. The flows of visitors to museums, cultural centers, art galleries and

II. libraries are common practice today. Such instances in contemporary architecture of Armenia include the following buildings.

a. The Museums of Different Types, such as the Cafeschyan Art museum, the Regenerations of Matenadaran and the museum of the Great composer Komitas, the museum of Charles Aznavour, the museum of Edward Isabekyan, the Genocide museum, and many others. They are the highlights of contemporary architecture in Yerevan as cultural identities and bearers of modern sustainable concepts of Green architecture.

b. Halls, Showrooms and Sport Facilities include the regenerations of the Sports and Concert Complex in Yerevan, State Opera House, and Academic Theatre after Gabriel Soundukyan, Cinemas "Moscow" and "Nairi", the construction of TV stations including many halls, such as "Armenia", "Shant", "Central", "H-2", the reconstruction of Republican Stadium and Velotrek in Yerevan, The Military Academy and its sports facilities, etc. All are performed in the contemporary sense of architectural concepts.

III. Schools and Universities with Their Auxiliary Facilities, Scientific Research Centers. Among such buildings are: the AUA new expansion, the international school-camp in Dilijan, the senior school called "AYB", the "Virage Logic" American concern in Yerevan, the "Amicus" laboratories, "Tumo" centers for Graphical Arts, many "techno-parks", the Military Academy complex, etc. Actually the examples are too many, herein only a few instances are listed.

IV. Shopping Malls and Other Commercial Facilities, Hotels. Such buildings are: "Tashir" department store, the reconstructions of

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"Mankakan Ashkharh" and "Ayrarat" department stores, the malls of "Yerevan", "Dalma", "Abovyan", "Mega Mall", "Vega Mall", "Rio Mall", etc. Besides, there are many commercial networks of supermarkets such as: "Terranova", "SAS", "City", "Moskvichka", etc. The amusement centers and attractions are of special interest for the flourishing tourism in the country. Such complexes are "Sayat Nova", the "Water Complex", "Shangrilla", "Venition", etc., Attractive are the restaurants including: "Bellagio", "Gandzasar", "Renaissance", "Caucasus", "Pharaon" complex in Kotayk region, etc.¹⁵

Hotel buildings have their local rich tradition in Armenia. The period of independence required its special features, so the prevailing examples of hotels and resorts were followed by certain regenerations, new hotel complexes were created. Among newly built hotels attractive are; The "Caucasus" complex on the Yerevan-Ashtarak Highway, the "Ararat" resort complex in Tsakhkadzor, "Hyatt Regency" of Jermuk, "Radison BLU", "Double Tree Hilton", "Ibis", "Alexander", "Nord", etc. In Yerevan. Newly built hotel buildings are the network of "Tufenkian" and ethnographic complexes in different parts of Armenia.

V. Public Buildings, Institutions and Offices, Banks, etc. Such buildings are public bodies, public service buildings, governmental buildings and so on. In reality, there are many new embassies in independent Armenia, which did not exist in the Soviet years. Such buildings as Embassies and consulate buildings of the UK, the USA, China, Italy, Thailand, Uruguay, France, India, Brazil and others are attractive from architectural perspective. The American University Business center in Yerevan, newly built City halls, such as the New Municipality, as well as the 3rd and 4th governmental buildings, courts and city halls of different types are also instances of office buildings. Banks as usual replace the multifunctional compounds in the system. Distinguished examples are the reconstruction of the Central bank, as well as central headquarter of Ameria bank, and its branch located in Shahumian square.

VI. Residential Architecture is of fundamental significance, inasmuch as it refers to the evaluation of the modern way of life. The preferred residential buildings in Armenia are of the following types: multifamily urban

¹⁵ For more details see: **Kertmenjian** 2017 (1), 28–46; **Kertmenjian** 2017 (2), 224–239.

homes, multifamily suburban homes, hotels and residences, semidetached and row houses, single family suburban homes, single family country homes, etc. Because of the quantity, the buildings are not specified. However, it should be mentioned that the individual private houses, such as Vahagnavan neighborhood, as well as high-rise apartments, having social services included¹⁶ are part of the new residential Architecture of this period.

VII. Multifunctional and Mixed-use Complexes. This type of buildings are prompted by the contemporary needs of life. Although they are in rare examples yet, but regarding their suitability for the economic conditions of small countries such as Armenia, they are promising. Examples of this type built rather successfully are: "Renco", "Advanced development", "Unitrans International", "Jermuk" resort and many other buildings.

Conclusions

According to the study carried out, there are 5 priorities in Armenian Architecture since the Independence period. They are as follows:

1. **Landscape Studies and Sustainability Priority**, which is observed in Shahumyan square rehabilitation performed, as well as the reconstruction of the city promenades initially conceived in the 1924 General plan of Yerevan by Alexander Tamanian.

2. **The Priority of New Town-planning Attitudes Towards Organization and Reconstruction of the City Communication Means of Infrastructure**, such as new bridges located on the outskirts of the cities and inside the cities, as well as reconstruction of the fatigue areas of roads.

3. **Reconstruction and Revitalization of Public Squares Priorities** are Yerevan Miasnikyan Square, Shahumian Square, the city Square of Spitak, Renaissance Square in Stepanakert, the reconstruction and modernization of Gyumri central squares, etc.

4. **Restudy of the Seismic Design Codex Priorities** are the Earthquake zone at large and Shirak area in particular.

5. **Problems of Image in Architecture and Discussions of Stylistic Priorities** are in the concept of traditionalism and new trends of historicism in architecture, either in new residential high rise complexes or instances of constructed public malls, corporal and administrative buildings, etc.

¹⁶ For more details see: Kertmenjian 2017(3), 272–286; Kertmenjian 2019, 34–51.

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ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ԺԱՄԱՆԱԿԱԿԻՑ ՃԱՐՏԱՐԱՊԵՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԶԱՐԳԱՑՄԱՆ ԳԵՐԱԿԱՅՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ (ընդհանուր տեսություն)

ՔԵՐԹՄԵՆՋՅԱՆ Դ.

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բառեր՝ հայկական արդի ճարտարապետություն, անկախության ժամանակաշրջան, ճարտարապետություն, քաղաքաշինություն, շենքերի տիպաբանություն, հորինվածք, դիզայն:

Անկախության շրջանի ճարտարապետությունը հետխորհրդային Հայաստանի ճարտարապետությունն է՝ սկսած 1991 թ. մինչև մեր օրերը:

Հետխորհրդային ճարտարապետության գերակա ուղղություններ դարձան տեղանքի և քաղաքաշինական փոփոխությունների, 1988 թ. Սպիտակի երկրաշարժից հետո վիճահարույց սեյսմոակտիվ գոտիների խնդիրները, ինչպես նաև Հայաստանում քրիստոնեության, որպես պետական կրոնի հռչակման 1700-ամյակի առթիվ ստեղծված ծրագրի շրջանակներում եկեղեցաշինության գործընթացի, ճարտարապետական նոր նախագծերի իրացման և այլ հիմնահարցեր:

ПРИОРИТЕТЫ РАЗВИТИЯ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ АРМЯНСКОЙ АРХИТЕКТУРЫ (общий обзор)

КЕРТМЕНДЖЯН Д.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: современная армянская архитектура, период независимости, архитектура, градостроительство, типы зданий, композиция, дизайн.

Архитектуру периода независимости можно охарактеризовать как архитектуру Армении постсоветского периода, начиная с 1991 года и до наших дней.

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Приоритетными направлениями армянской архитектуры постсоветского периода стали вопросы ландшафтных и градостроительных изменений, проблемы сейсмоактивных зон после землетрясения 1988 года в Спитаке, активизации процесса возведения церковных зданий в рамках программы 1700-летия принятия Арменией христианства как государственной религии, а также новые архитектурные проекты и решения и т.д.