

## ACTS OF CONSERVATION - APPROACHES TO ARCHITECTURE IN CHANGE

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In the PhD dissertation *Acts of Conservation – Approaches to Architecture in Change* possible architectural strategies for the upkeep and change of architecture are examined and unfolded on a theoretical, historical and empirical basis. A central assumption in the dissertation is that no matter if or how interventions are made, changes will occur, since a precondition is that time goes by. How architectural theory and practice have dealt with, and can deal with these changes, is a recurrent theme in the dissertation.

The dissertation consists of two parts: *Part I, The Definition of the Architectural Object of Conservation*, establishes a methodological and theoretical framework, through which the problems that are confronted within any architectural intervention can be seen. *Part II, The Revitalization of the Fortification of Copenhagen – A Case Analysis*, examines and discusses the ongoing revitalization of the Fortification of Copenhagen on the background of the methodological and theoretical discussions presented in Part I. The ongoing revitalization endeavours are followed up by four other perspectives on heritage-potentials that can be applied to the fortification.

Part I identifies and examines some of the conceptions and preconceptions within the architectural profession which influence the ways in which continuity and change are mediated through and in advance of architectural interventions. Thus focus in this phase points to how mapping technologies and established methodological concepts of architectural knowledge and work determine the ways in which the architectural object of conservation is construed. In relation to this, the concept of the monument is essential in so far as architecture, understood as both praxis and product, has strived for monumentality since its inception as a discipline. No matter if the object of architectural

intervention in existing landscapes and buildings is redevelopment or subtle preservation, architects will most likely try to induce some kind of new order to the site. The site is interpreted in such a way that the “new” presents itself as standstill. Used methods are as well as conscious and unconscious professional and cultural agendas crucial to how open or how closed architecture can be.

Within landscape architecture and planning it seems more difficult to conceive the architectural intervention appear as a standstill. Roads continue, seasons change and trees grow. This means that the architectural practice and the architectural product must be able to entangle with that which already is and that which may come. And even if landscape architects and planners can set up new order, start all over and make a new plan that overwrites erases earlier plans, time perspectives and changes must always be considered as a constitutive factor. This may be the reason why theorists with a background in landscape architecture and planning seem to take more interest in the examination and description of the site constituting processes that are activated in architectural mapping procedures and the subsequent physical intervention. In Part I of the dissertation, where the architectural object of conservation is encircled, landscape theorists such as Jack Brinckerhoff Jackson, James Corner and Sébastien Marot are brought into play. Especially their reflections on site-conception and its methodological premises and processes play a central role. Also Rem Koolhaas’ theoretical considerations on the common ambition in architecture to establish and preserve order are brought into play here – ambitions that, seen from a large scale perspective such as Koolhaas’ are deemed to fail. In order to shed light on different types of monumentalizing interventions, the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl whose analyses of the status of monuments in modernity are drawn in. His thoughts can give an understanding of the processuality of acts of conservation and of the site- and time-bound character of valuations made. Riegl’s theoretical considerations can as well as elements from Walter Benjamins philosophy of history and Robert Smithson’s artistic praxis and theory, serve as the outset of a critical re-examination of how architectural conservation acts can work.

The dissertation calls for a new kind of monumentality; one which – instead of establishing itself as a standstill – can include the changeability and complexity which all sites always already represent. Autonomous conceptions of knowledge and works are confronted as well as the idea of the architect as a creative artistic genius who in alchemistic ways reads and creates the context and forms a new smooth artistic whole – or standstill – on this background. Instead, more sustainable architectural solutions are sought after. The dissertation thus calls for solution in which

changes – including those whom architects and clients are unable to programme or predict – are considered and sustained. An introduction to and a discussion of sustainable development are introduced in the first part of the dissertation, partly based on the Brundtland Report and recommendations from other central normative texts.

In the second part of the dissertation, the object of my investigations and analyses is the ongoing revitalization of the Fortification of Copenhagen. The theoretical and methodological thoughts on continuity and change from the first part of the dissertation will, at this point, be brought to play as a platform of reflectivity, underpinning and qualifying the analysis of the selected case study.

The research and development work is enacted in a field expanded between analysis, critique, theory and empery and aims at elucidating that which is overseen “naturalized” or disavowed by traditional approaches to the upkeep and change of architecture. Seen in this light, the dissertation can be seen as a formulation and encirclement of some of that which is erased, blurred out, or over layered by architectural interventions no matter if the aim is to build anew, to add to or preserve the existing substrate of the site, and no matter from which scale the site is approached.

The overall aim of the dissertation is to sharpen the awareness of the acts of conservation and the production of values that are at stake whenever it is considered if or how architecture is handed over to the future. The investigation and unfolding of possible strategies for the upkeep and change of architecture points to how comprehensive the mapping and tracing of possible sites for architectural intervention can be, and how the materiality of both architecture and landscape can be transposed in ever new interventions that can be negotiated and continued.