

International Forum Vilnius and Other World Heritage Cities: Living Links



ABSTRACTS

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Management of the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Warsaw in the Face of Changes in the Contemporary World

Warsaw's Old Town suffered the destruction of more than 85% of its material substance between 1939 and 1945. The greatest damage occurred in August and September 1944 during the Warsaw Uprising. However, as early as February 1945, one month after the recapture of Warsaw, plans for the rebuilding of the city, including its oldest part, began. This was dealt with by a specially established Office for the Reconstruction of the Capital. The main task was to make a thorough inventory of the damage, then to secure the ruins, and finally to make new reconstruction projects. 1,500 architects, conservators, artists and building craftsmen worked on this.

The first work on the Old Town began in 1946, but it was not until 1949 that large-scale work was launched. Four years later, on 22 July 1953, the first phase of reconstruction involving the market square was commissioned. The reconstruction assumed a very conservative approach to the facades of the tenement houses, with the restoration not only of the decoration (sometimes also in the interiors), but also of historical technologies, while on the other hand it significantly rebuilt the interiors of the quarters and the flats themselves, turning the Old Town into a modern housing estate. This was the realization of the socialist idea of introducing working-class residents into the center of Warsaw. This combination of conservationist care and architectural modernization became the hallmark of the entire reconstruction process. At the same time, the reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Town also became a major exception to the prevailing conservation doctrine.

In recognition of the importance of this reconstruction, the Old Town was inscribed on the UNESCO list in September 1980. It was the reconstruction, rather than the historical (medieval and modern) cultural layers, that was included in the entry. The function of the Old Town as a residential area was also an important element of the entry.

Today, 44 years after that event, we have to redefine the values that the Old Town complex has in it. These values are, on the one hand, the authenticity of the restoration, the materials, plaster, sgraffito, paintings and decoration, but on the other hand, the unique residential function that was introduced here. And it is precisely to protect this function as well that we are looking for the best model for the management of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Management assumes that on behalf of the Mayor of Warsaw, the role of coordinator and at the same time Manager of the UNESCO Site is performed by the City Conservator of Monuments. In the context of the Old Town, he coordinates the work of other offices and institutions. He also cooperates with the government side, which is officially responsible for the affairs of Polish heritage sites before the UNESCO World Committee.

Today's Old Town is undoubtedly a symbolic place. For the unique value of the site (OUV), the residential role, the cultural role, the authenticity, the proper conservation materials, the roles in the urban ecosystem, the panoramic view from the river, the tourist role are also important. Having clarified the values that the contemporary Old Town has, it is equally important to clearly specify the risks and threats that exist in the area. Here we identify several areas:

- residents moving out of the Old Town area;
- too intensive tourist traffic;
- intensive development within and outside the buffer zone;
- climate change (heat islands, hurricane winds, heavy rainfall);
- residents moving out of the Old Town area;
- military attack;
- neglect of some buildings;
- visual advertising chaos.

Depending on the type of threat, the City of Warsaw takes a number of measures to counteract negative phenomena and reduce potential damage. These include:

- local and national acts;
- regulations in local plans;
- quality control of restoration works;
- restrictions on tourism;
- tree planting and creation of green spaces;;
- financial subsidies for heritage managers;
- guidelines for monument managers in case of attack.



Kristýna Drápalová

The City of Prague / STUDIO BISTRO (Prague, Czech Republic)

Prague: A Medieval City in the 21st Century. Notes on Managing a UNESCO World Heritage Site

The historical center of Prague, along with its buffer zone, forms one of the largest heritage-protected areas on the UNESCO list; the heritage reservation includes the entire city center, while the buffer zone covers its broader surroundings. But Prague is also a living city and the center of the entire country; the combination of heritage protection and the need to develop and adapt the city to the needs of the 21st century presents a difficult challenge.

The presentation is based on the thesis that the care of Prague's historical center is not just the responsibility of heritage preservation institutions – the protection of historical heritage and its further development must not be the sole effort of preservationists, whose powers will never be strong enough on their own, but of society as a whole. Therefore, it is essential to focus on ensuring that the people of Prague have a connection to their city and do not allow the loss of the values of its historical parts.

In the past decade, however, we have witnessed the opposite in Prague. The historical center of Prague is depopulating, with apartments being converted into short-term tourist accommodations. The streets are flooded with visual pollution and commercial activities. Due to the overwhelming number of tourists, Prague's residents avoid the most beautiful parts of their city, and many view the state of the city center as shameful. A depopulated city, living solely off tourism, is less resilient to destructive impacts that threaten its heritage values.

The presentation will cover the period between 2019 and 2023, during which the City of Prague focused on the cultivation of public spaces in the historical center. The goal was to return the city to the people and encourage a positive relationship between the citizens of Prague and the historical parts of the city. The presentation will introduce projects focused on the following areas:

- Visual pollution
- Commercial use of public space
- Methodology for creating public space details
- Urban study of the Prague Heritage Reservation

The foundation of all projects was the conviction that the quality of public spaces plays a key role in the relationship between residents and their city. The presentation will show the complications Prague has encountered – and continues to encounter – in its struggle to “return the city to the people.”



Aigars Kušķis

Urban planner, Expert in management planning questions of Historic Centre of Riga UNESCO World Heritage, Historic Centre and its Buffer-zone Planning Unit of City Development Department, Riga City Council (Riga, Latvia)

Experience and Insights on the Management of World Heritage Values in Riga

The presentation covers the following topics in the field of Conservation, Management and Enhancement of Historical Heritage: general information about UNESCO World Heritage status of the Historic Centre of Riga, attributes of its Outstanding Universal Value as well as composition of the system of its management. More detailed presentation will unveil aspects of main values of the Historic Centre core zone and buffer-zone heritage defined by the Latvian State and preservation and development of those values in municipal level by statutory urban planning and binding regulations for land-uses and construction. Insights in practical measures of sustainable development with examples and some results and projects will be presented, for example, system of architectural competitions for new construction, centers for Art Nouveau and wooden architecture, as well as specific institution for tackling of possible conflicts and better development process management in valuable historic urban areas of city center - the Preservation and Development Council of Historic Centre of Riga incorporating representatives of 6 main responsible and involved institutions and associations.



Dr. Mathias Niendorf

Historian, Professor of Eastern European History at Greifswald University (Greifswald, Germany)

City of Many Languages – Who Cares: Multilingualism as Immaterial Heritage

Those who came to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its capital Vilnius from outside were usually impressed and surprised by the diversity of languages and faiths. Even today, gravestones and memorial plaques bear witness to this unique past. This heritage is carefully maintained with the support of the state, the European Union and UNESCO. But what about the present? Visitors are presented with a contradictory picture. In the streets and stores of Vilnius, you can once again hear a babble of voices from which, in addition to Lithuanian and possibly Polish, Eastern Slavic dialects can also be heard. Lithuania is once again, as in the days of the Grand Duchy, a place of refuge for people from the neighborhood. Their languages are also tolerated, but less understood and promoted as cultural enrichment. Instead, the policy specifically promotes Lithuanian as the only state language, supplemented by English as a foreign language. At a conference under the motto “Living links”, the question arises as to the extent to which multilingualism is just a piece of a closed past for Vilnius or whether it presents opportunities for the present as well as risks.



Dr. Anna Sylwia Czyż

Art historian, Professor of The Institute of History of Art, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (Warsaw, Poland)

The Artistic Genius of Vilnius. Innovations in the Work of Vilnian Artists in the 17th -18th Century

The concepts of genius and innovation are tightly interwoven. In art, we talk of original works that surpass others in their technical mastery and which push the boundaries of our current understanding. Such realizations are rare, but in places like Vilnius, they surprise with their boldness and flair. In this populous, multicultural, and multireligious city, even if peripheral to Europe, the talents of many artists could flourish. These artists were mostly migrants who contributed their artistic skills to their new homeland.

The first artist that should be mentioned in this context is Constante Tencalla (ca. 1590, Bissone – 1646, Warsaw) – a mason and architect educated in Rome. He arrived to Vilnius at the end of 1623. He worked on the castle and cathedral and at the Church of Saint Theresa, founded by Steponas Pacas, a close aide to Sigismund III and Ladislaus IV. Based on the model architectural designs of the Discalced Carmelites, Constante Tencalla created a design that was very Roman in character.

Constante Tencalla also designed a palace for Jonušas Radvila (after 1638 - before 1653). Its compositional layout should be described as a central plan, where the pavilions connect the wings and serve as the focal point. It is also worth noting that in the Vilnius palace, in the north wing facing the garden, there was a two-story loggia with a view on Lukiškės and Pūčkoriai, i.e. on a private jurydyka of the Radvila family. Importantly, in front of the palace stretched an empty, irregularly shaped square, primarily designed to create a perspective of the residence, which could be admired both from the front and from the side.

After the times of the Moscow occupation, the most distinguished Vilnius artists were gathered around Mykolas Kazimieras Pacas, the Grand Hetman of Lithuania, and then later around his successor – Kazimieras Jonas Sapiega. Pac funded the Church of the Canons Regular of the Lateran dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul. After the premature death of its builder Jan Zaor, the construction of the church was completed by Giovanni Battista Frediani (Lucca 1627/32 – Vilnius? 1700). He was not a mason and would not work the walls, as Jan Zaor had, but rather an architect and military engineer, the greatest to work in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the second half of the 17th century. For the Antakalnis Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, he designed one of the first column facade in the Commonwealth. Frediani also built an urban palace for Mykolas Kazimieras Pacas, which included a Roman-style gate framed by columns supporting a balcony by the main representative room of the piano nobile – the first design of this type in the Commonwealth.

The architect later designed the Trinitarian Church of Jesus the Redeemer (1694–1717) for Kazimieras Jonas Sapiega, an engineering masterpiece in the shape of an octagon covered by a dome vault, then the largest such ceiling in the Commonwealth (with 18.2m long perpendicular axes).

The Vilnius circle of Italian immigrant artists grew in June of 1677, when the chronicle of the Canons Regular of the Lateran monastery first recorded Giovanni Pietro Perti (Muggio 1648 – Vilnius? 1714) and Giovanni Maria Galli (active until 1685). The stucco decoration of the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul was truly unique, not only within the Commonwealth but across Europe. What makes it exceptional is the extensive use of stucco throughout the entire interior of the church.

Before Giovanni Pietro Perti arrived in Vilnius, he had remained for some time in Rome and likely also Florence, where he met Michelangelo Palloni (Campi 1642 – Węgrów? 1712/13). Both artists Perti and Palloni collaborated at the end of the 17th century on the Chapel of St. Casimir and created one of the most beautiful sacred interiors in the Commonwealth. During the renovation of the chapel's interior, which was originally designed in the early Baroque style, mature Baroque designers created a work that brilliantly combines and unifies the two aesthetics. Today, the interior of the sanctuary appears uniform and coherent, but the two phases of work are separated by more than half a century. This harmony was achieved by using elements from the same Italian aesthetic and through an understanding and respect for the achievements of the artists who had previously worked on the chapel.

When we discuss the art of 18th-century Vilnius, we are referring to a specific style that developed in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and prevailed between 1740-1770. This style is described as 'Baroque', although its details exhibit anticlassical Rococo forms, which were applied not only in stucco decorations but also in cast-iron balcony decorations and in the spires of towers. The multi-storey towers, jagged 'attic' peaks of façades, presbyteries, and sometimes even transepts, often with wavy walls like those in the front elevation, make the structure appear light. Curved lines are used in imaginative window openings and arcades, typically without frames or orders, and divisions between storeys are often marked by a broken cornice. In sacral interiors, the baldachin scheme often prevailed, and an expanded baluster pillar supported the musical choir. The protruding plinth appeared not only on the outside of the building but especially in altars, which were designed in complex arrangements. It is also worth noting that the altars of the Vilnian churches are plastered and polychromed to imitate marble.

In the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the discussed Baroque style prevailed until the early 1770s, when it began to yield to new trends. The symbolic beginning of Classicism in Vilnius is often considered to be the portal to the White Hall in the Vilnius Academy, designed by Carlo Spampani (ca. 1740–1783) in 1773.

Through initiative of Bishop Ignotas Jokūbas Masalskis, the reconstruction of the cathedral in Vilnius began in the spring of 1777. The work was conducted from 1782 by Laurynas Gucevičius (1753–1798). The cathedral, completed in 1801, played a crucial role in shaping the emerging Classicist style in Vilnius. It had the earlier architectural styles removed, leaving only the significant early Baroque sanctuary of Saint Casimir. The city became an island of revolutionary Classicism, shaped under the influence of French architecture, with a greater artistic impact than Warsaw had.



Dr. Ieva Blinstrubienė

Architect-restorer, Researcher at the NEB Research Centre, Vilnius Academy of Arts (Vilnius, Lithuania)

Vilnius Monasteries: Influences and Origins

Monasteries, which today could be considered as international organizations with effective structures, historically based their activities on universal ideals and the spread of spirituality. Their influence extended beyond religion, shaping culture and art, including architecture. Although monastic architecture was not uniform across different orders, its structures and construction processes were strongly influenced by common monastic principles. Vilnius monasteries, like those across Europe, were part of a broader monastic network. While their development was influenced by local political and economic conditions, their organizational and construction principles mirrored those of other European monasteries. The first monastery in Vilnius was established at the end of the 14th century, when the city was still in its formative stages, becoming a suitable place for the Franciscans, who traditionally operated in urban environments. Later, new monasteries emerged alongside the city's defensive walls, and by the 17th century, they had become an integral part of the rapidly growing city. The presentation examines where these monasteries were located in Vilnius, how their buildings affected the city's urban structure and landscape, and what factors influenced the choice of architectural forms.



Dr. Auksė Kaladžinskaitė-Jocienė

Historian, Researcher at the Lithuanian Institute of Culture Research (Vilnius, Lithuania)

Artistic Relations Between Vilnius and Königsberg in the First Half of the 18th Century (or how a Prussian Soldier Created Vilnius Baroque)

Art historians have often focused on Western Europe when analyzing stylistic influences on Vilnius Baroque, overlooking the role of neighboring Prussia. This presentation aims to include Prussia in the discourse on visual culture, recognizing its influence on the development of Vilnius Baroque. The research explores the cultural and artistic ties between Vilnius and Königsberg during the first half of the 18th century, largely using new, unpublished historical data. It examines the reasons for the intensification of these ties, particularly between 1719 and 1739, and explores the significance of Königsberg's port for the economy of the GDL. The presentation also considers the impact of Königsberg merchants and their connections with Vilnius society, the Protestant community in Vilnius, and how these factors might have influenced the migration of craftsmen and artists. Specific examples of these artistic connections are discussed, along with notable individuals whose lives and work were closely linked to both cities.



Dr. Darius Baronas

Principle research fellow at the Lithuanian Institute of History (Vilnius, Lithuania)

The interface between Rome and Constantinople in Vilnius **in the 14th–16th Centuries)**

In this presentation “Rome” and “Constantinople” serve as evocative code names to denote Roman and Greek Christianity. It is obvious that the presence in Vilnius of Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox believers left the indelible mark on the townscape of the capital of Lithuania. However, less well known are their impact on the psyche of the local population in late medieval and early modern periods. Equally far from exhausted are long-distance contacts that stretched from Rome via Cracow and Vilnius to Moscow, and from Vilnius via Lviv to Constantinople. This presentation will proceed by focusing on particular knots of interaction which left their imprint in architecture (churches) and in far less monumental traces of the past (books). This paper will also remind us of the presence of Italians and Greeks in Vilnius.



Dr. Liudas Glemža

Historian, Senior Research Fellow and Associate Professor at Vytautas Magnus University (Kaunas, Lithuania)

Kaunas' Search for a Strategic Location in the 18th Century: Between Lithuania, Prussia, Poland, and Russia

The 18th century was a period of significant geopolitical change, during which the local population reconsidered their position and role in the region. These changes were driven by the rise of the Russian state, the establishment of St. Petersburg, the formation of postal services, the rise of Prussia, the effects of wars, and reforms in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the same time, the traditional concept of city development, rooted in historical memory, persisted. Kaunas provides a unique case, where its community sought to elevate the city from decline by expanding its small population and ensuring employment. Today, Kaunas is centrally located in modern Lithuania, but in the 18th century, it was considered a border town. Its proximity to East Prussia was a key factor in its economic prosperity, particularly for its merchants. As a city four to five times smaller than Vilnius, Kaunas residents did not attempt to rival the capital but rather saw Vilnius's prosperity as a reflection of their own. Reforms in the Commonwealth encouraged Kaunas to grow as a more significant administrative center, and the rise of St. Petersburg made Kaunas a potential transit hub on the route between St. Petersburg and Warsaw. The presentation uses well-preserved historical sources to narrate how Kaunas residents perceived these changes, and how their ideas were later adopted by the Russian imperial administration.



Dr. Natalia Bitous

Historian, Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Kyiv and National Preserve "Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra" (Kyiv, Ukraine)

Historical and Cultural Relations of Ukrainian Cities with Vilnius in the 15th-17th Centuries

For several centuries, the Lithuanian and Ukrainian peoples coexisted peacefully within a single state. The period of the 15th - early 16th centuries in the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was marked by reforms that affected all spheres of urban society. The consequences of the policy of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania for Ukrainian cities were:

- 1) construction of fortifications and castle structures to protect against external enemies;
- 2) urbanization, development of a network of cities, introduction and spread of Magdeburg law;
- 3) creation of a military service layer in the social structure of cities (boyars-knights or noble boyars, armed burghers);
- 4) absence of ethnic conflicts and religious tolerance;
- 5) cultural revival.

Vilno was a city of many cultures and traditions, where different languages were spoken. Ruthenians introduced the symbol of Vilna - the city of the God-saved, which is reflected in many sources of religious culture. The topos of the city's 'God's protection' as a 'second Jerusalem' also existed in Kyiv at that time. The people of Vilna maintained contacts and cooperation in the book publishing sphere with Lviv and Kyiv religious centers. The heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania continues to live on in modern Ukrainian cities.

The report (presentation) covers the following topics: Ukrainian cities in the orbit of the policy of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania; the building of fortifications and castles by Lithuanian Dukes; urbanization and implementation of Magdeburg law on the model of Vilnius; cultural relations between Ukrainian cities and Vilnius in the early modern period; the heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in modern Ukrainian cities.



Prof. Dr. Jurgita Verbickienė

Historian, Centre for Studies of East European Jewish History, Vilnius University (Vilnius, Lithuania)

**The Phenomenon of Lithuanian Jerusalem in the Context of the World
Jerusalems**

The name “Jerusalem,” used to signify the uniqueness of Jewish communities and their devotion to religious practices and study of sacred texts, often refers to Jewish communities within particular cities rather than the cities themselves. This presentation explores how the name “Jerusalem” reflects the Jewish perception of their city and how it differs from other groups’ views. Vilnius, often referred to as the “Jerusalem of the North” or “Lithuanian Jerusalem” by Jews, is not unique in Europe in this regard. The origins and chronology of this title are not well-documented, although there are several legendary explanations. The presentation discusses the cultural and heritage significance attached to Jewish Vilnius and its pre-Holocaust Jewish community. It also examines how modern knowledge about this community has developed and the factors influencing current narratives about Vilnius’ multicultural past. The presentation compares Vilnius’ relationship with its Jewish heritage to that of other Central and Eastern European cities that experienced significant depopulation during and after World War II.