

LANDSCAPE AND WOODEN ARCHITECTURE: PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORIC TOWNS AND SETTLEMENTS IN RUSSIA

Olga Sevan

Leading scientific researcher, Russian Research Institute for Cultural and Natural Heritage. Address: Kosmonavtov str., 2, Moscow, Russia, 129366. Phone +7903 6631917 e-mail ecovast@rambler.ru http://www.ecovast.ru/sevan_en.htm

Abstract

The study of regional wooden architecture and landscape allows us to identify and specify the characteristics of different historical cultural zones in specific region and to show all the variety in different settlements and towns. Such investigation is significant for regional development of contemporary culture and so as for finding solutions for the problems of restoration and reconstruction old monuments and new buildings development. Today it is a very complicated process for forming the milieu of historic towns or villages with wooden buildings. Sometimes there are organizing museums as the skansen, so as 'in situ', where care to preserve not only monuments but also the cultural milieu and landscapes. However, there are some examples of different attitude to the preservation and development of the new modern part of the cities or historic settlements, which should discussed and analyzed, the methods and principles to build the new wooden architecture and there influencing to the territory and landscape in the different part of Russia. The article discusses several options for different approaches to the conservation and development of historic areas - the city of Tomsk, Irkutsk - Siberia, in the Russian North - city Vologda and two rural settlements - Shushenskoye (Krasnoyarsk territory), v. Oshevskoye (Arkhangelsk region).

Key words *historic city, settlement, landscapes, wooden architecture, preservation, new buildings*

Introduction

Present article is focused on historical towns and settlements with predominantly wooden built-up area, since they managed to keep an important ecological and traditional resource of country's development – the wood. Such analysis of historical towns` centers is important during consideration of areas and landscapes of various regions of Russia and the world, since comparative analysis of approaches towards their formation, as well as their heritage, methods of their conservation and development of historical towns and settlements proves to be instrumental on different stages of their formation.

Analyze the situation in historic areas and methods of working with them

Here we point out to the existence of many differences within historical-cultural zones (or regions), landscapes of Russia which must be taken into account in the course of developing modern culture and local population's lifestyle, as well as shaping regional settlement system, when socio-economic, demographic and other processes are being forecasted. This concerns various types of settlements within the regions under study and the

differences of these areas must be preserved and promoted. All around the world along with the search for modernized and technological patterns we witness a trend towards conservation of the distinctive features of a given area, historic enclaves of towns and rural settlements with their specific landscapes. Current situation draws our attention not only towards the analysis actual processes in different regions of the country, but also to the search of identity and distinctiveness of their resident population. Therefore our task is to show that rural areas as well as historic centers of towns of different types, monuments, and residential construction may well become the basis for promoting of cultural images and for the development of Russia's authentic culture and architecture.

Analysis of studies of historical and modern wooden constructions is really important for preserving of natural cultural environment and landscapes of rural settlements and historical towns in respect to regional identity. Elaboration of time-proved traditional dwelling's typology appears to be not only useful but also exciting in terms of understanding of culture of different ethnic groups of population. During XX century some of the most intellectual Russian architects tried and are trying to find a way to combine and use traditional forms, constructions, details in modern wooden buildings. Others explore rather different new international and interesting forms etc. Thus we're witnessing active search for solutions of the issue of old/new methods of constructions in the field of restoration and reconstruction. This implies a complex process of formation of historical towns and villages' environment in Russia. There are many new buildings combining old décor or constructions, without any connections with historic-cultural zones (or regions). This is what we most often see in towns (commercial and business centers, shopping malls "à la russe"), with many examples of so-called "folk architecture" of dachas or cottages etc. (Севах О., 2011)

Historical towns with predominant wooden built-up area, as well as rural settlements, may attract tourists thus strengthen economic indicators of the region or get the inscription on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. There are such settlements and towns with predominant wooden buildings in Russia and we may review them on several examples.

Tomsk, Siberia

This is a historical town and unique for Russia exemplar of the wooden architecture. Well-known masters worked here at the end of XIX – beginning of XX century, informing this Siberian town with originality and attraction. (Залесов, В., 2004). Twenty years ago Administration of Tomsk established Municipal institution for preservation historic heritage: "Historic Tomsk". And in 2008 "Program for preservation of the wooden architecture of Tomsk" was adopted, but before it appropriate studies of extant wooden built-up area were conducted with establishing of typology of residential buildings and their technical state and determination of restoration or maintenance mechanisms of different constructions.



Illustration 1. Tomsk, Siberia. Old wooden dwelling houses in the city, XVIII – XIX c. Photo <http://tomsk-da.livejournal.com/29371.html> (15.12.2015)

Illustration 2. Tomsk, Siberia. Restoration of the wooden dwelling houses in the city, XVIII – XIX c. Photo Lisovskaya N., 2012

The experience of creation of such center deserves a separate analysis in view of learning methodic of management of the wooden heritage in urban environment. Yet it is clear that it is exactly the availability of competent relevant experts in its administration and properly oriented management, as well as program of the heritage’s preservation, community outreach and etc. – that helped to save, renovate and restore and reconstruct many historic sites of the town. However, recently this municipal undertaking was put to rest. Right now city authorities pursue a new building policy, attracting developers to the formation of urban environment...

In 2004 on behalf of Tomsk’s region governor municipal institution “Historical Tomsk” the program “Conservation of the wooden architecture of Tomsk” was developed. (Лисовская Н., 2004) Complex dispersed structure of 3000 wooden constructions available on the town’s territory was modified into 11 group zones of the wooden architecture. It became a sort of an open-air museum with a total area of 300 ha. More than 700 most valuable assets of the wooden architecture, cited in the list of the protected sites according this program, are supposed to be restored on its original place with due respect of historic landscape, archaeology, urban-planning dominants and historical function which is intended to become and investment channel for self-development of historical area. The program has set following tasks:

- To elaborate, in view of the irreparable losses as an inherent property of the monuments, economic and legal and tax regimes of physical preservation of cultural and material fund of Tomsk. Which implies: the regime of management and delimitation of property rights, model of stimulation of the economic activity, establishment of the Fund for wooden architecture protection, Councils of local public self-government and professional groups of social design for each of the zones of the wooden architecture, conducting of consortium-designing and Building population participation project;
- To form and ideology for protecting of the wooden architecture via mass media (establishment of a single information space through a cycle of special television broadcasts, work with remote target audiences, elaboration of PR-conception and advertising strategy, development of research publishing and publication of periodicals under review, improving status and image of cultural heritage, conduction of annual thematic competitions);
- Organizing pedagogic-educational process of younger generation – future professional

personnel and cultural heritage's advocates (seven levels).

Since 2005 when the Program "Preservation of the wooden architecture of Tomsk" started to realize, 65 objects modified externally, emergency engineering utilities infrastructure was replaced, many historical town estates are constantly redeveloping. It is clear that the problem of preservation of the wooden architecture sites lies mainly in the field of administrative-legal framework. In the course of years spent in terms of the program it became apparent that for the last year the socio-economic situation in the country has changed, resulting in necessity of changing also the approaches towards preservation of cultural heritage. That's why administrative management begins to give way for economic regulation. This also means changing of a strategic aim – search for new administrative mechanisms for development.

Irkutsk, Siberia

The town, founded in XVII century, is at the same time typical and unique Siberian town with amazing and specific natural landscape, as all the others towns of the eastern borders of XVII century Russia – resulting from settlement of Siberia's territory – first as fortified camp of Cossacks detachment, then fortress. In the course of the time the town expanded territorially until 1879 when the fire virtually destroyed the entire town. However after the fire Irkutsk was promptly rebuilt. Then on a place of burnt houses new wooden and stone built-up areas were developed, stylistically very close to the previous one.

Most often there were wooden 1-2 storied houses. Up until early XIX century only religious, administrative and some public constructions were built from stone. Now some wooden built-up area fragments are extant almost intact, somewhere historic landscape, subject to many changes in time, especially during 20 century, also is well preserved. You can meet individual buildings of XVIII-XIX centuries, and groups of residential constructions still shape the street frontage, adorning carriageway line with amazingly decorated facades. Here and there in a central part of Irkutsk whole blocks of the wooden built-up area are remained intact which is now quite a rarity. Thus you can see about 700 of wooden dwelling constructions of different types, decorated casings, estate gates and other. Link with Russian North architecture is clearly visible - because this is where many settlers were coming from to live here in XVII century – in certain details, constructions, and houses` typology. Interesting elements of various ethnic cultures are also in place. Many of the objects are on the heritage sites list of federal and regional significance.

Many researches, town-planning and monument projects have been realizing for decades yet in the absence of the development program as in a case of Tomsk. However, understanding all the importance of the wooden built-up area as well as its investment prospects, regional and municipal authorities have proceeded to the development and what matters more to the implementation of the interesting project, carried out in Irkutsk in the course of three years (2006-2009), of regeneration of one of the historic district (№ 130) in an old part of town. This block, where 56 constructions are situated, was doomed for demolition. Only 6 buildings had an official conservation status – monuments of regional significance and 2 constructions, intended to obtain a status of publicly protected sites. These objects were supposed to be "collected" around Sedov Street, while the rest of the block was to be built-up with 7-8-storied residential houses.

Regeneration of historical block № 130 of Irkutsk, according to the project's authors (E. Grigorieva and M. Meyerovice), has a potential of becoming an exemplar of a new town-planning policy in solving the issues inherent to so many historical towns of Russia, which conserved their national treasure (wealth) – natural wooden identical urban environment.

(Григорьева Е., Меерович М., 2010)

Here we can observe the examples of sites` restoration, reconstruction, as well as new construction. While having its drawbacks (developers expanded surfaces and height of the buildings, modified facades etc., and pedestrian area of this part of the town was crossed during the construction of enormous shopping mall), the project remains a single exemplar of reconstruction`s conception (design) of historic part of the town. It became modern center of city dwellers` activity, youth, tourists: there are restaurants, cafes, museums, exhibition facilities (grounds), workshops, private hotels etc.

Nowadays historic block № 130 in Irkutsk is the main pedestrian street of the town, which perfectly fits into existing landscape – center of activity, especially for youth, businesspeople and tourists. There are different workshops, 2 museums, a lot of restaurants, flats. Not all recommendations for houses` reconstruction were pursued (changes of height, basement, décor etc. took place). Unfortunately, in contempt of the project developers built big shopping mall, in defiance of architects` protests (E. Grigorieva and M. Meyerovich), in the middle of the block thus breaking the integrity of pedestrian zone, while initially the place was thought to be (according to the project) an open space for citizens, youth, for conducting of public events, meetings, open-air concerts and festivities. Nevertheless the project is a noteworthy and successful example of solution for preservation and development of historical wooden towns of Russia.



Illustration 3. Irkutsk, Siberia. Typical wooden dwelling houses of the city, XVIII – XIX c. Photo Sevan O., 2013

Illustration 4. Irkutsk, Siberia. Restoration and reconstruction of the wooden dwelling houses of the city, XVIII – XIX c. Photo Sevan O., 2013

Block 130 – is an interesting example of how you can deal with wooden built-up area. Experience of its reconstruction became in the last years an example of solution of one of the most complicated problems of the state and for all of the drawbacks of realized project this is, no doubt, a brilliant exemplar of successful approach towards formation of the town`s wooden block. Yet it is clear that it is impossible to reconstruct the entire town and its individual streets, blocks` enclaves in the same way. Here it is necessary to apply different approaches, which would be instrumental in preserving of unique wooden built-up area of the town. Given that the organization of partnership for authorities of different levels, business, private persons and public organizations becomes of prior importance for groups of architects, experts from Irkutsk University and other municipal structures. (Григорьева Е., Меерович М., 2009)

It is evident that for solving of the infrastructure problems of historic part of the town the joint projects for regional and municipal authorities, experts, business and various

organizations and population are required. First of all it's necessary to establish interdisciplinary council under governor and mayor, that will involve experts of different professions. They must represent «ear-and-eye» of city life, jointly raising questions and finding coordinated solutions. Main and burning issue of many wooden towns – is the canalization and public water supply, which is a complicated yet feasible problem, necessitating fund raising and partnership, - the experience other towns already possess. That's why many experts keep explaining the urgency of elaborating of the program for developing of Irkutsk's wooden architecture.

«For sure, to engage with population, massive PR-campaign of the wooden architecture of Irkutsk is critical. Its objective – is to change the way of thinking of residents, especially young people, about old buildings which are unusable yet, on condition of installing all of the necessary utilities – may represent comfortable and ecological type of housing. Wood is a clean, reproducible material, possessing cultural and symbolical sense and value. By the way there is a quite noteworthy architectural-ethnographic museum “Taltsy”. There are only about 170 open air museums in Russia, while in Sweden – 1162. It illustrates well the residents and authorities attitudes towards their heritage! In Norway the center of historic Bergen of XVIII century is taken under UNESCO protection, people on the neighbor streets living in wooden houses and successfully renting them to tourists» (Себан О., 2013).

Perhaps the inclusion of the historic centers of Irkutsk and Tomsk to the UNESCO World Heritage List will put an end demolition of the wooden historic areas and will preserve the unique "gene pool" of Siberia?

Vologda, Russian North – is a historical town with an amazing extant environment, already extinct in many settlements with unique church complexes, monasteries, with calm and wooden built-up area and courtyards. However today quite complicated situation is came about. On one hand, big scale social movement in support of the preservation of historic Vologda has emerged recently, festivals, lectures, master-classes, exhibitions receiving assistance from local authorities. Yet on the other hand town lost about 300 wooden houses: they're wrecked, while new ones are built with bricks and timbered. Basically they are simulacra having nothing to do with wooden architecture. That's why when we talk about wooden Vologda, we seem to talk rather about some mythic concept of the historic northern heritage site.

All this happens the Soviet times basic town-planning projects, oriented on the preservation of enclaves and town's streets, dwelling constructions` restoration and reconstruction recommendations notwithstanding. However since the issue of the utilities networks was not solved for all these years adequately, all residential monuments began falling into decay and disrepair, local residents not having enough means to sanitation their dwellings. That's why authorities made decision to demolish wooden houses and construct “wooden simulacra” Built-up area of such kind, unfortunately takes place in Tomsk too. Some constructions are simply dismantled and remove to other places.

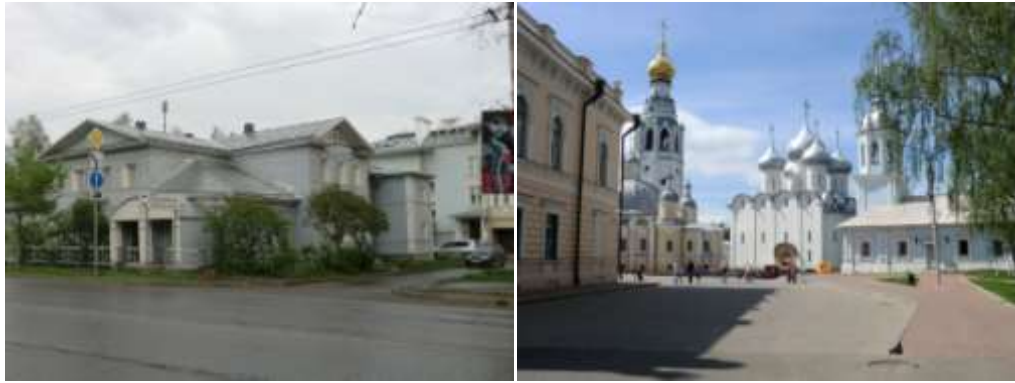


Illustration 5. City Vologda, Russian North. Main square of the city. Photo Sevan O., 2012

Illustration 6. City Vologda, Russian North. New wooden house as “Wooden simulacra”. Photo Sevan O., 2012

Shushenskoye, Siberia. This is a historical settlement in a far Krasnoyarsk territory in Siberia. Since 1970-s this is a place of a famous memorial estate “V.I. Lenin Siberian exile”. However in 1993 a new conception of development of state historic-ethnographic museum-preserve “Shushenskoye” according which the museum has changed its profile, not forgetting about its origins (Терентьева В., 2014). This is doubtlessly a unique museum which you can refer to as open-air museum of the third type, representing historic part of the village. Here are 17 extant and standing on its original place (in situ) restored objects to which another 12 local dwelling houses and household buildings were transported from the Shushenskoye as well as the region. In all there are 200 items, used as workshops and museum funds etc. Among other there is a historic block, of residential wooden houses of different types, which can serve as exemplars for modern construction and real-time use, with astonishing decorative details, typical for this Siberian region. Here you can see and feel socio-cultural life of Siberian village (well-to-do families that lived in Shushenskoye at the turn of XX century, craftsmen, peasants of all degree of wealth), and since there are reconstructions of workshops, little shops that operate, they feed the museum with life during tourists` visits.

In 2007–2011 in accordance with the decision of authorities in Shushenskoye on an area adjacent to the museum-preserve (over 3 ha) six peasant`s estates were built in continuance of one of the museum`s streets using new building materials resulting in replica of the wooden architecture monuments called “New village”. It is a separate block, yet at the same time as museum`s supplement. These are allegedly analogues of two regions of Krasnoyarsk territory (Angara`s village and Starominousinsk`s settlement). These objects serve as tourist attractions: here you may see single as well as double rooms displaying interiors built following the historic exemplars, with custom-built furniture, mirrors, utensils, rooms` decorative details. All utility system is modern (restrooms, bathrooms etc.), with electro ten heating.

New, as referred by museum workers themselves, architectural-ethnographic complex consists of 34 objects, including not only dwelling houses but also household outbuildings: guesthouse and kitchen - cafe, sauna, playground, guarded parking area etc. To lodge in new modern estates at any seasons, to taste local cuisine, to listen to the folk songs, look and try local population`s ethnic clothes - proves to be an exciting travel into the past...

Fabrication of modern replica became a new specific area of activity for the museum, instrumental in preserving of traditional know-how and technologies as well as means of subsistence for local modern craftsmen. “New village” is supplemented by adjacent to the museum natural landscape territory of about 5 ha (formerly abandoned square), which gradually becomes a place of family recreation, tourist attraction and local festivities.



Illustration 7. Old open air museum “Shushenskoye”. Photo of museum, 2014

Illustration 8. Shushenskoye, “New village”. Photo Sevan O., 2014

Village of Oshevenskoye, Arkhangelsk region, is situated in 45 km from historical town of Kargopol, includes Pogost, Shiryaikha and Niz villages. Somewhat at a distance from dwelling houses on a southern bank of the river one can see constructions of St. Alexander of Oshevenskoe monastery founded in 1453. There is extant wooden Epiphany church of 1787 with an old churchyard, which necessitates, as a church itself, restoration and renovation. Village is still full of life, as against many neighbor settlements, especially in summer owing to coming residents and tourists. There is a village library – local community life center, and in a guesthouse they keep the collection of traditional costumes and peasant’s household items, as in merchant’s house, exhibitions of interiors and northern crafts items.

Ethnographic museum “Oshevsky district (volost)” was opened in 2015, founded upon the initiative of local residents with the assistance of monastery Supervisory board, Fund for Kargopolje cultural heritage preservation “Northern heritage». There can be organized an open air museum "in situ", created in the original location covering several villages, united under the name Oshevensk. On the background of monuments of wooden architecture in it is supposed to represent the life and economy of Russian village, samples of traditional culture, the ethnographic traditions, cuisine, crafts and oral traditions arts. But for this should be carried out researches, and created a project organized by a partnership of professionals, regional authorities, local communities and various funds. (Севан О., Сазонов Б., Балобанов А., Перепелкин Л., Иванов А., 2012). Over the last 20 years a group of architects headed by famous architect and head of Theater of Architectural Form (TAF) Workshop, Moscow architectural institute professor A. Yermolaev and his colleagues purchased 11 dwelling houses from local residents of villages Shirjaikha and Pogost, including a number of household buildings and small architectural forms, thus having preserved the central part of the village. They hold master-classes and conduct training program for students and young architects coming from Moscow, relating to methods of preservation of the wooden constructions in historic environment, and its actual reinvention for the purpose of use in modern real life.



Illustration 9. Village Oshevskoye, Arkhangelsk region.
Main view to the wooden village from the river. Photo Sevan O., 2014

Thanks to designing methods intrinsic to that creative group of architects, they managed to save household facilities of some farmyards which had been already falling into decay, suggested modern methods of construction for using in educational purposes (house called “Theater of light”, baths as touristic site, spatial installations). Various interiors of extant dwelling houses were also preserved and reconstructed, modern expositions presented in reconstructed or restoring objects, along with building of new constructions, blended in the local landscape. No doubt this is one of the real examples of protection of rural environment with the help of modern design with cautious method and awareness about environmental context of historical rural settlement. Local residents as well as those coming to see this new museum under development of the cluster of villages under common name of Oshevskoye really have to praise these architects.

Conclusions

Short analysis of approaches towards preservation and development of historic centers of Russian towns with predominantly wooden built-up area reveals some main basic directions and methods of construction. These are as follows:

1. Preservation of several zones with predominant wooden built-up area through organizing a special Municipal center, responsible for overall activity within determined of preserved areas (Tomsk as an example), having invested such and organization with authority to make decisions on restoration, reconstruction and cautious new construction, including financial issues.
2. Selection of a certain town’s district of residential wooden built-up area, intended for reconstruction and partial restoration, involving in this type of project not only government agencies, but also a private sector, developers, different organizations with active assistance of governor and mayor (Irkutsk’s example).
3. Elaboration and implementation of projects, copying historic house complexes extant in certain places – these can be town estates or freestanding houses. Given that constructions look like wooden ones exteriorly, replicating décor and partially construction’s features of historic buildings being in reality merely the lining (siding). Main construction frame of the building – is made of brick or concrete etc. Therefore these so-called wooden constructions simply are simulacra (see Vologda).
4. One of the simplest and most realizable solutions for modern administrations and designers – is a recreation of copies according their own taste, taking account of certain exemplars, wooden constructions historically existing in a given region, as a kind of a game of

historicity, making use of modern building methods and materials (e.g. v. Shushenskoye, New village).

5. And finally, most complex and accepted by experts and settlements authorities – conservation of real constructions in situ, in their natural environment, supplementing them with a new context, without changing content and image of constructions. Use of cautious and conservative design's methods is welcomed (village Oshevskoye of Arkhangelsk region as an example).

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