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## CHANCE FOR REVIVAL – SYNAGOGUE IN SUBOTICA

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### ABSTRACT

Research presented in this paper considers the problem of the Synagogue restoration in Subotica, built in 1902, which has been deprived of its basic function, left without financial means for maintenance due to the changes in the social, economic system and great changes in the population structure during the First and Second World War. Lack of financial resources, poor interest for the building and Balkan wars in nineties caused that the restoration works on the synagogue were performed partially, where often several construction seasons had to elapse before the next works were undertaken. This resulted also in decay of those parts of building that have already been restored or conserved earlier. Today it seems that there is a solution to complete the restoration and revitalization works of a synagogue, building that was four times on the World Monuments Watch list and in 2014 listed among "7 Most Endangered monuments" by Europa Nostra programme. The primary objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of a continuous process of maintenance and conservation to preserve building heritage, which has to actively involve all levels from government to the citizens and their initiatives.

Key words: *building heritage, synagogue, cultural heritage, restoration, revitalization, preservation*

### INTRODUCTION

The Synagogue in Subotica (*Szabadka* in Hungarian) was constructed in 1902 based on the designs by two Budapest architects: Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab. At the time, Subotica was a part of Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the Synagogue design was obtained on a public contest organised for the construction of a synagogue in Szeged [1]. Even though analysis of political changes in Yugoslavia and Europe is not the subject of this paper, it nevertheless needs to be emphasised that the social and political circumstances have largely influenced general attitude towards this building and had impact on its overall condition.

The Synagogue was built by the wealthy Jewish community of Subotica, however, not without difficulties, and this resulted in application of cheaper materials of lower durability [2] (Figure 1.). Austro-Hungarian Empire dissolved after the Great War and Subotica was included in the newly established Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Between 1923 and 1926, repairs were carried out on the Synagogue building, yet without much impact on its original design. During the Second World War majority of Subotica Jews were deported to Nazi concentration camps, and only a small number of them returned to the town after the war was finished. Weakened and impoverished Jewish community which had had most of their property expropriated, similar to all other wealthy citizens of Yugoslavia, found it difficult to maintain the building of the Synagogue independently. In 1974, it was detected that the outer dome of the Synagogue had become tilted and that was at risk of collapsing. Municipal Board for Culture made proposal to the municipal Executive Council for the Synagogue to be

protected by the law as a cultural monument. Vojvodina Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments from Novi Sad adopted the decision to proclaim Subotica Synagogue a cultural monument [3]. Subsequently, the process of restoration and revitalization of Subotica Synagogue has commenced, and lasted to this very day.



Figure 1. Synagogue at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Postcard collection –Municipal Museum of Subotica)

The part which has always been exposed to the most serious risk was the roof of the Synagogue, while the biggest damage was made by the water penetrating the building. Partial restorations usually failed to produce satisfactory results, so upon the conclusion of works, the Synagogue would be left exposed to even greater damage. One of the principles that need to be applied in case of any work on a protected building is to carefully document every intervention. However, after so many years of working on the building of Subotica Synagogue, it is hard to detect what parts of the building have been worked on and at what point. This research has in fact been made, by exploring the disorganised records of the Inter-Municipal Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, to emphasise the importance of careful documentation of research and conservation work, as well as to draw attention to the huge contribution by a large number of people involved in this process, but also to disadvantages of partial works on cultural monuments, that are more likely to destroy authenticity of monuments, than to contribute to their preservation. The research also stresses the fact that sustainable management and continuous maintenance are highly important in preservation of the buildings belonging to architectural heritage.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUBOTICA SYNAGOGUE

In the corpus of buildings which formed the urban core of Subotica, at the turn of the twentieth century, Subotica Synagogue represents one of the most significant achievements. Its values frequently fuelled and informed research, papers, books, campaigns and expert discussions and arguments. Providing that it was included in the list of cultural monuments of particular importance [4], detailed research and valorisation of the Synagogue have been undertaken by the professionals employed by the institutions protecting cultural monuments. Furthermore, a number of papers have been published about the Synagogue, the most significant of these being included in the literature list provided at the conclusion of this paper. During the summarisation of these pieces of research and analysis, it has been noticed that among numerous characteristics of the Synagogue, one of the most valuable is its pioneering structure, with its entirely original and inventive design of the vaults and the main dome, which involved the use of gypsum concrete reinforced with wire lath. [5]. Apart from the structure of the building which was constructed using the combination of traditional tile walls and steel pillars and beams supporting the vaults and the dome, the Synagogue design involved implementation of a unique architectural style inspired by Hungarian folk art – Hungarian Secession [6]. Another original characteristic of Subotica Synagogue is the central organisation of the interior, untypical for synagogues built in Central Europe at that time [7].

## RESTORATION WORKS ON SUBOTICA SYNAGOGUE BETWEEN 1976 AND 2000

In 1976 and 1977, after it had been perceived that its dome is in danger of collapsing, a series of interventions were performed with the purpose of protecting the Synagogue from further deterioration, mainly including repairs of the building's outer layer, primarily the roof. Simultaneously, expert associates of Subotica Cultural Centre took measurements of the building. In the following year, experts of the Institute for Photogrammetry of the Faculty of Geodesy, University of Zagreb, were engaged to make photogrammetric recordings of the Synagogue [3]. What ensued was compilation of the "Approximate Financial Estimation of Costs of Restoration and Rehabilitation of Subotica Synagogue" for the five year period of 1979-84, with the idea to turn the Synagogue into a multi-purpose cultural centre [8].

Subotica Jewish community was certainly aware of the fact that necessary investments for the repair of the dome were huge, and at that time, in the communist Yugoslavia, they were unable to provide sufficient funds. In September 1979 the Jewish Community of Subotica donated the building of the Synagogue to the Municipality of Subotica, as the holder of rights of use and management, to become public property, irrevocably and without time limitations [8]. By this transfer of ownership rights, the Synagogue became responsibility of the city, and it was thus made possible for its restoration to be financed by state institutions and funds. The Department for the Protection of Cultural Monuments established in 1975 within Subotica Cultural Centre, was promoted in 1980 into an independent institution: Inter-Municipal Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments (Inter-Municipal Institute) [9] and the competences pertaining to the works performed on the Synagogue were transferred to this institution. The works on straightening the outer dome of the Synagogue, implying lifting of the dome structure by means of hydraulic presses, were performed in 1980 under the supervision of the civil engineer László Király, thus returning the roof structure to its original position [5]. The works on the Synagogue's restoration were continued in the following years, in line with the five-year plan. Up until 1984, tinsmith, carpentry and roofing works were performed on the wooden structures of the roofs of the main dome and four smaller domes. These works were performed in a highly professional manner, by qualified craftsmen, and on that occasion the zinc-coated sheets of the main dome were replaced by the cooper sheets of superior quality, while the original Zsolnay pyrogranite tiles were replaced with the tiles of a domestic manufacturer [10].

In December 1984, the Inter-Municipal Institute prepared the five-year "Program of Rehabilitation, Restoration and Reconstruction of Subotica Synagogue". This program envisaged for the first phase of the works to include roofing works in 1986, rehabilitation of the façade in 1987 and the conclusion of the façade works in 1988. The second phase was to include definition of the required works and preparation of the design documentation within the same timeframe, while the beginning of interior works was envisaged as a part of the third phase in 1989. [8]. Regardless of the fact that restoration of the Synagogue was underway, the building was given to the use of Subotica "National Theatre – Népszínház" [11]. Certain protection measures were undertaken in the Synagogue, a podium required by the theatre was made above the original wooden benches, to protect furniture and fittings from damage. However, the avant-garde theatrical performances which were being organised in the Synagogue in the following period, largely contributed to the devastation of the building. In 1986, lightning protection and electrical installations were mounted in the building, while the following year the works ceased altogether. On the last day of 1987, the Inter-Municipal Institute adopted the decision on the monumental character of the Synagogue complex, including the main and accompanying buildings – ritual slaughterhouse and Jewish Community Centre [3].

As soon as 1988, professionals employed by the Inter-Municipal Institute visited the Synagogue and established that the users of the building had not only failed to take proper care of it, but that they had also performed unskilled adaptations on the Synagogue's interior and exterior in order to create better conditions for theatrical performances [12]. After this incident, "national Theatre – Népszínház" temporarily relinquished the Synagogue to the Inter-Municipal Institute, for the purpose of restoration of the decorative painting of the central dome. In July, the team of the company named

“Standardprojekt”, led by the main engineer László Király, inspected static stability of the interior wire lath dome [3]. In 1988, apart from restoration works on the decoratively painted main dome of the Synagogue, both male and female toilets were built in the cellar area of the Synagogue, below the staircase leading to the gallery. After conclusion of the works, in February of 1989, the building was re-handed over to Subotica “National Theatre – Népszínház”. In the following period, the restoration of the Synagogue ceased once again, yet the efforts to move out the National Theatre from the building became more and more intense. In January 1991, representatives of the Inter-municipal Institute noted in the Synagogue a curtain which was scorched by a thermal accumulation heater. Thermal accumulation heating for the benefit of theatre performances also resulted in the increase of condensation within the restored dome and caused paint to peel off (Figure 2.).



Figure 2. Interior of the synagogue dome displaying damaged layer of paint (Authors photograph from 2016.)

In mid-1991, the war broke out on the territory of former Yugoslavia, which largely influenced first slowing down, and finally termination of the restoration works on the building. At the same time, the Inter-Municipal Institute made the Program of Works on Subotica Synagogue for the period between 1991 and 1994, which included the works on the outer layer of the Synagogue [8]. The Program was developed by Gabor Demeter, architectural engineer. During the same year, the Inter-Municipal Institute submitted two official requests to the Municipality of Subotica for the “National Theatre – Népszínház” to be moved out of the Synagogue, due to devastation of the building. Another request was submitted in February 1992, yet to no avail.

At the beginning of 1992, new pyrogranite decorative elements manufactured in the Zsolnay factory in Pécs (Hungary) were delivered to be used for restoration of the façade of the Synagogue [13]. Near the end of that year, Inter-Municipal Institute once again reclaimed the Synagogue in order to enable continuation of the building’s restoration, after which the “National Theatre – Népszínház” finally moved out. Due to insufficient funding, during 1992 up until the beginning of 1993, only the central chandelier of the Synagogue was restored. Apart from minor interventions on the protection of the Synagogue, in 1994 the original floor was disassembled, sewage and waterproofing systems were installed and concrete base for the new floor was cast. Original ceramic floor tiles were not re-laid after these works had been finished. Before the performance of these works, original wooden benches were taken out of the Synagogue and stored in the warehouse of the state-owned company “Integral” – Machinery and Transport. After these works, the Synagogue was left without supervision. The wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia and introduction of the economic sanctions resulted in impossibility to secure funding for continuation of the works on the Synagogue, so the building was left to further dilapidation. During the years, there have been a number of vandal incursions into the building, and they resulted in the furniture being destroyed, stained-glass windows being broken. On 31 March 1996, one of these incursions ended up in setting up fire. The fire swallowed two chests stored in the Synagogue, which contained new pyrogranite decorative elements for the façade. In June of the same year, during a storm, the Star of David fell off the top of the main dome where spike of the lightning rod had been mounted. In a couple of years that followed, there were no works on the Synagogue building, and its condition deteriorated quickly.

## PARTICIPATION OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE EFFORTS TO SAVE SUBOTICA SYNAGOGUE

In September 1989, first international initiatives were propelled with the aim to emphasise the importance and secure preservation of Subotica Synagogue. UNESCO Commission visited Subotica and the Synagogue, and was subsequently followed by Samuel D. Gruber, Chairman of the Jewish Heritage Council, a non-profit organisation founded by the World Monuments Watch from New York City. The Government of the Republic of Serbia pronounced the Synagogue a cultural monument of exceptional value in December 1990 [4]. Simultaneously, representatives of the Inter-Municipal Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments submitted the application for funds intended for the development of restoration designs for the Synagogue, which was to be submitted to German and Norse UNESCO commissions, under the international project entitled "International Joint Cultural Study and Action Project to Preserve and Restore World Art Nouveau/Jugendstil Architectural Heritage" which was also participated in by former Yugoslavia [14].

The outbreak of war caused these activities to die down, yet cooperation between individuals and international organisations pertaining to the Synagogue's condition, continued throughout the 1990s. In 1996, the Synagogue was included in the List of 100 Most Endangered Sites of the World Monuments Watch Program which had been initiated the year before by international organisation World Monuments Fund [15]. The program was also joined by the American Express. "Through this collaboration, WMF and American Express give further expression to common goals: to focus public concern on the precarious situation of many of the world's greatest cultural sites; to spur government action to save these site through the catalytic effects of recognition and seed funding; and to help attract more money, from both the public and the private sectors, for conservation of historic buildings and sites." [16] World Monuments Fund initiated the Jewish Heritage Program, which defined Endangered Historic Jewish Sits in the following way: "Endangered Historic Jewish Sites describes ten endangered synagogues of historic and artistic importance which face perils ranging from neglect to environmental damage to the ravages of war. These sites have been selected on the basis of careful evaluation of historical significance, intactness od original fittings, urgency of the need for intervention, and the presence of a responsible local community or authority to oversee conservation work and ongoing maintenance" [17].

In the war torn country, inclusion of the Synagogue on the WMF List of 100 Most Endangered Sites drew no attention whatsoever, yet international initiatives did not cease. On a conference which was held in Paris, in January 1999, Samuel D. Gruber, consultant of the Jewish Heritage Program asked András Román, expert for the protection of cultural monuments from Budapest and honorary member of the ICOMOS, to perform inspection of the Synagogue, together with other experts in the fields of static structure and restoration of cultural monuments, and to submit the inspection report upon the completion of the task. This was followed by the establishment of a committee the membership of which included: PhD András Román, architect, Klára Deák, restorer and conservator, MA Tamás Fejérdy, architect and Viktorija Aladžić, architect [18].

During the inspection of the Synagogue, the committee established that the exterior gutter system had been entirely destroyed, due to winds, causing water to leak and penetrate the walls of the building. The most serious damage was evident on the tambour of the Synagogue's main dome. One of the northern tambour window panes had been dislocated, which allowed water to penetrate the wooden structure of the roof. Obstructed horizontal drainage system also caused water to penetrate the tambour. The two main wooden joists – struts of the outer layer of the dome were damaged by the penetrating moisture, so in case this continued, stability of the dome was once again to be jeopardised. Roofing of the entrance section of the building was gravely damaged, which caused continuous rainwater dripping and leaking, leading to breakage in the wire lath layer of an interior vault. Through this opening, large quantities of atmospheric water poured into the Synagogue's interior. A great number of roof tiles had been dislocated during the years, and they also presented great hazard, since they allowed penetration of water and thus caused decay of the roof structure. The building was once again in very poor condition, in spite of all previously performed restoration works (Figure 3.). The

report also emphasised that the Synagogue had often been targeted by vandal attacks, so that it was necessary to employ a guard and solve the problem of the missing fence on the location of the former Jewish school which had been torn down in the final years of the 1970s.

After the committee report had been submitted to the representatives of the Jewish Heritage Program, in 2000, the Synagogue once again made it to the List of 100 Most Endangered Sites of the World Monuments Fund. Subsequently, within the newly established Jewish Heritage Grant Program, Ronald S. Lauder Foundation granted funding of 60,000 USD for the performance of the most urgent roof repairs, to protect the Synagogue from further decay.

During 2001, the Inter-Municipal Institute made cost estimate for the intervention works to protect the most vulnerable parts of the Synagogue from further decay, as well as cost estimate for the development of documentation for implementation of the measures of technical protection in restoring and reconstructing the roof and all façade elements of the Synagogue [3]. On 29 September 2001, a meeting was held by the members of the future managing board: Estera Votaw, Ruth E. Gruber, Ištvan Išpanović, József Kasza, Viktorija Aladžić and Mira Poljaković. The establishment of the “SOS Synagogue” Foundation for Restoration and Revitalisation of the Synagogue was agreed on that occasion. The Articles of Association of the Foundation was adopted, József Kasza was appointed to be the Chairman, while Ruth E. Gruber became Deputy Chairwomen of the Foundation. The role of the Foundation was to collect funding for restoration of the Synagogue.



Figure 3. Detail of the north façade damaged by water (Authors photograph from 2000)

During the winter of 2001/2002, urgent roofing works were performed to stop water from penetrating the building's interior, gutter system was rehabilitated, dislocated roof tiles were replaced, and holes in the roof were thus sealed, while one of the wooden joists was replaced. In 2002, after the author of this paper had submitted the application, the Synagogue was once again included in the List of 100 Most Endangered Sites of the World Monuments Watch. In 2003, in the Inter-Municipal Institute the “Main Architectural and Structural Design for Reconstruction and Restoration of the Roof and Related Elements I and II” was made by Jagoda Alavantić and Gabor Demeter [3], together with the “Main Design of the Structure within the Main Architectural and Structural Design for Implementation of Technical Protection Measures in Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of the Roof and Related Elements” [3]. During 2003, funding was secured from various sources for the works on the Synagogue building: out of the budget of the Republic of Serbia 2,000,000.00 RSD was allocated for the Synagogue, while the Municipality of Subotica granted additional 1,310,000.00 RSD. These funds served to pay for the new roof tiles, as well as for the missing pyrogranite decorative elements for the façade, ordered from the Zsolnay factory in Pécs. The Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Serbia, upon the request submitted by the Inter-Municipal Institute, secured 1,914,761.00 RSD to finance the making of the technical documentation for the outer layer of the Synagogue [3].

In March 2004, upon the request by the Ministry of Culture and Media of the Republic of Serbia, the Inter-Municipal Institute in Subotica made the application on behalf of the Synagogue, for the

inclusion in the Priority Intervention List for Architectural and Archaeological Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe compiled by the Council of Europe. During 2004, no major works were performed on the Synagogue. Instead, this period was mainly used for organising tendering procedures for the required works, scaffolding and making of the additional designs necessary for interior works, namely the preliminary design for electrical and HVAC installations. The tender was also organised for examination of physical and mechanical characteristics of the building materials used, as well as for the inspection of primary and secondary structures and the design for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Synagogue's structure [19].

Reconstruction and restoration of the south-western and north-western angular domes were finished in June 2005. At the end of 2005, the Inter-Municipal Institute developed "Main Architectural and Structural Design for Reconstruction and Restoration of the Interior of Subotica Synagogue", Vol. I, followed in 2006 by "Design for Conservation Works on the Interior Decoration of Subotica Synagogue", Vol. II [3]. "ThermoGas" from Subotica made "Preliminary Design of HVAC Installations", which was authored by their designer, mechanical engineer Atila Alacker. In November 2005, the Curatorium of the "SOS Synagogue" Foundation was informed that the WMF had donated another 100,000.00 USD for reconstruction and rehabilitation of Subotica Synagogue [3].

In 2007 the works on reconstruction and restoration of the roof structure were initiated [3]. In June, representatives of the contractor "Subiro" filed a complaint against anonymous persons who, during the weekend of 2-4 June 2007, had stolen the copper rain gutters and drainpipes from the Synagogue building. During August of the same year, unknown persons removed majority of the brass ornaments from the previously restored central chandelier of the Synagogue, thereby inflicting great damage [20]. At the beginning of 2008, the chief designer Gabor Demeter made "Amendments to the Main Architectural and Structural Design for Reconstruction and Restoration of the Outer Layer of Subotica Synagogue" [3]. The works on reconstructing and restoring the roof lasted until December 2010. These works did not include the roof section above the main entrance of the Synagogue (Figure 4.), which was especially endangered by atmospheric water after the vertical drainpipes had been stolen, or the zinc covering of thesegmental domes on the Synagogue's corners. Thus, in mid-2011, representatives of the Inter-Municipal Institute requested that the funds be allocated for intervention works, in order for these sections of the roof to be restored too. Urgent intervention of repairing these defects was not undertaken until mid-2012.



Figure 4. Damaged main entrance ceiling (Authors photograph from 2011.)

In the final months of 2012, as a part of the interstate cooperation between Serbia and Hungary, the City of Subotica was approved the cross-border IPA project entitled "Jewels in turn of Century – Thematic roving of the world of Art Nouveau" [21] under which reconstruction of the north-eastern façade was envisaged. Even though restoration of the Synagogue's roof had been completed in 2010, it was detected in 2013 that water was still leaking into the interior of the wooden roof and dome structures at a number of points. In August 2013, the restoration commenced of the north-eastern façade of the Synagogue. Almost simultaneously, the WMF granted 70,000 USD for the restoration of the south-western façade of the Synagogue.

At the beginning of 2014, the works performed on the north-eastern façade were completed, and restoration of the south-western façade began. Hungarian Government announced 100 million HUF in aid for restoration of the Synagogue's interior [22]. During 2014, invitations for tender were issued for the works on the central dome of the Synagogue, reconstruction and restoration of the south-eastern façade of the Synagogue and for preparation of design documentation for the Synagogue – rehabilitation of the interior design and lighting [23].

At the end of 2013, the author of this paper filed application for the program named “7 Most Endangered Monuments and Sites” implemented by the Europa Nostra organisation. The program was initiated in 2013 with the Institute of European Investment Bank Program as a partner and co-founder, and the Council of Europe Development Bank as a joint partner, with the aim to serve as a catalyst for further action in helping endangered heritage, raise awareness of the risks that heritage is exposed to and promote “the power of positive examples”. The program provides funding for the work of a team of international experts in the field of heritage and financial experts of the EIB Institute, who cooperate with local actors on assessing sites, development of sustainable solutions and rehabilitation plans for the 7 sites which are deemed to be endangered the most. The list of “7 Most Endangered Monuments and Sites” for 2014, also included Subotica Synagogue [24].

This selection once again confirmed the importance of this building, and the need for its complete restoration to facilitate its future functionality. In the final months of 2014 the works on restoring the south-eastern façade of the Synagogue began. At the beginning of 2015, Hungarian Government announced the allocation of another 400 million HUF for the restoration of the Synagogue's interior [25]. In March 2015, the presentation was held of the design documentation for: restoration of the north-western façade of the Synagogue (review of the existing design from 2003), interior (review of the existing main design from 2006), electrical, mechanical and HVAC installations, as well as decoration of the Synagogue's yard with rehabilitation of the fence and full structural testing.

These designs assumed restoration of the entire building, and envisaged that the restored Synagogue should become a venue for exhibitions, smaller concerts, gatherings and religious ceremonies. According to these designs, in winter months, the Synagogue is to be heated to the temperature of 12° C, in order to protect the building and enable its functioning. Specially designed ventilation system should enable functioning of the building and control air humidity in the interior, so as to prevent condensation of water on cold surfaces. Floor heating is planned for the ground floor, with polyethylene plastic pipes integrated in the concrete screed, while the gallery is planned to be heated by means of floor convectors installed on the floor level, below the external windows. Attic heating is also planned, with the sole purpose of maintaining the temperature of the dome, so as to prevent condensation within the dome and the vaults. In mid-June 2015, the restoration of the south-eastern façade was completed, while the works on the north-western façade of the Synagogue were also finished in June 2016 (Figure 5.).

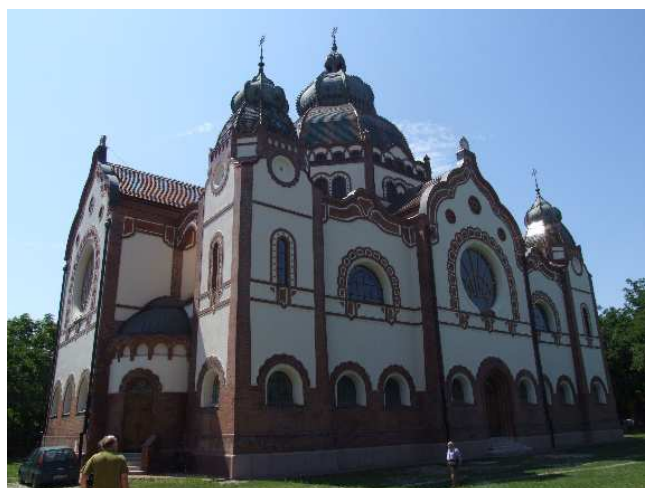


Figure 5. Synagogue after the restorations of facades (Authors photograph from 2016.)



In the final months of 2016, the works on the restoration of the interior commenced. Forty years after the initial intervention works on rehabilitation and restoration of the Synagogue, it can finally be realistically expected that the works will be completed. What is still unknown is what would happen afterwards. No specific and clear concept for the future use of the building has been presented to the public yet.

## CONCLUSION

From the very moment of noticing the initial signs of decay on the building of Subotica Synagogue, there have been no coordinated, synchronised or continuous actions with the purpose of its maintenance and restoration. Many of the restoration works have been repeated over and over: certain sections of the roof have been repaired and restored three or four times; stained glass windows have been restored up to three times; the original floor has been destroyed; original plinth removed and gone missing; painted decoration of the dome, already restored once, will soon be restored again; almost all pyrogranite decorative elements have been replaced; the façade mortar was replaced with the new mortarlayer; exterior wooden doors were replaced with new ones, etc. The works would begin and then stop, due to the shortage of funding. Partial restoration failed to stop deterioration of the Synagogue, but rather postponed the decay of the repaired parts, while simultaneously compromising the authenticity of the building. Concept for the building's use has been changed a number of times, which resulted in changing the designs, the fact which also had serious financial impact. The money spent on the numerous designs, could have been spent on the maintenance, its safeguarding, or restoration works. The restoration works in recent years have been of poor quality, especially on the roof and outer layer of the central dome, which resulted in water penetrating the roof structure almost immediately upon the restoration completion. The parties that used the Synagogue also inflicted significant harm, as well as nightly vandals during the period in which the Synagogue had no night watchmen.

The example of Subotica Synagogue illustrates the difficulties inherent in the relationship between economy and architectural heritage [26], whereby the parties responsible for the Synagogue failed to opt for sustainable use of the Synagogue which would contribute to its maintenance, rather than devastation, as was the case while the Synagogue was used by the "National Theatre". What has been missing from the very start is meticulous care for the building and its continuous maintenance, which would contribute to the prevention of decay and thereby also to the decreased need for financial resources necessary for the restoration of the Synagogue. Research of other examples evidenced the economic effects of the continuous maintenance of buildings [27], especially when it comes to architectural heritage.

Regardless of all the challenges and deficiencies, wars, financial crises, political changes, impact of the transition and law amendments, the example of Subotica Synagogue shows that continuous efforts by individuals, international organisations and agencies for the protection of cultural monuments, as well as years of campaigning nevertheless succeeded in engaging the critical mass of interested participants, including the supreme state institution of Serbia and Hungary, as well as international organisations and EU funds, whom with their joint financial support made possible for the Synagogue restoration to finally be completed in 2017. Today it is evident that restoration works on the Synagogue will be finished, yet the future concepts of sustainable management, and especially maintenance for the building, are still undefined, even though this is crucial so as to avoid the past tendency of the Synagogue being periodically deserted altogether and left to decay. Another thing which is still uncertain is the performance of works on the Synagogue's roof, necessary to counteract the damage inflicted by the latest unskilled restoration efforts. Without these works, all other efforts on the building's exterior and interior would prove to be futile, as the water leaking through the roof would devastate the restored elements as soon as the next winter. In case these works are performed on time and the Synagogue's interior is finally protected from weather impact, this significant building will be ready for a fresh start. The example of the long-term struggle for restoration of the Synagogue demonstrated that sustainable management and continuous maintenance are essential for preservation of every heritage building.

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